

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE  
NEW ORLEANS CITY PARK IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

A meeting of the Board of Commissioners (the "Board") of the New Orleans City Park Improvement Association (the "NOCPIA") was called to order Tuesday, June 9, 2020, at 3:30 p.m. by President Larry Katz. Due to the COVID-19 virus, the meeting was held in person at Filmore in the Oaks as well as via Google Meets.

PRESENT: Commissioners Adkerson, Arata, Arnold, Baker, Banks, Batt, Cahn, Dale, DeBlieux, Gardner, Hess, Katz, LeCorgne, Lester, Lupo, Masinter, Morrell, Pate, Pineda, Savoie, Seamon, Spears, Taylor, Thorpe, Waller, Williams, and Worley

ABSENT: Commissioners Fitzpatrick, Giarrusso, Hollis, King, Leger, McNeil, and Nossler,

STAFF: Bob Becker, Rob DeViney, Keith Hemel, Casie Duplechain, Sarah Olivier, and Denise Joubert

COUNSEL: Henry Kinney

GUESTS: Stephanie Bell, and Edmund Schrenk

Larry Katz, President of the NOCPIA Board of Commissioners, called the meeting to order. He thanked the staff of Filmore in the Oaks for hosting the meeting.

A quorum was present and voting throughout the meeting.

The minutes of the February and April board meetings were approved.

Anyone wishing to comment on any item on the agenda must sign the sign-in sheet and indicate what item they want to comment on.

Katz recognized and thanked Senator Jimmy Harris and State Representative Stephanie Hilferty, who has championed City Park in the State legislature. He also thanked Lt. Governor Billy Nungesser, who is working hard on behalf of the Park. Nungesser will sponsor a breakfast in Baton Rouge for the staff and legislators hoping to generate additional support for the Park in the appropriations bill.

Katz introduced Guy Williams, president, and CEO of Gulf Coast Bank, as the appointee for the New Orleans Chamber of Commerce. Williams expressed his interest in the Park, and is happy to join the Board. Katz also introduced Stephanie Bell, the new Executive Director for the Friends of City Park.

Chief Executive Officer, Becker reported on the following:

He shared a document with the Board and staff outlining the current financial status of the Park. He stated that the Park lost a considerable amount of money in March, April, and May. We expect that the same will occur in June. He expressed how important it is for the Park to receive support in the legislative appropriations bill.

Becker said that it has been a difficult task trying to prepare a budget for the FY 20-21 because there are so many unknowns. We don't know if or when we will receive permission from the State, and the City to host various events, and the uncertainty of how the public will respond. Also, we had hoped to hear by the end of May if the Park would receive help from the State, but the general session ended without action on the appropriations bill.

Becker presented and reviewed management's recommendations for the 2020-2021 operating budget. Becker noted that a joint meeting of the Executive, Audit, and Finance Committee reviewed management's budget recommendation; and unanimously recommended the budget for approval by the Board.

Becker reviewed major budget factors for FY 2020-2021.

- Revenue will decrease by \$4.5M from 22M to 17.5M
- Receive no financial assistance from the State
- No allocation for insurance payment
- No spectators at sporting events
- Celebration in the Oaks will return as a driving tour and a limited walking tour
- All large events such as Voodoo Fest and Scream Park are canceled
- Partial salary restoration
- No funds for capital investment, all capital improvements will be limited to funds from Friends of City Park, TIF, donor, grants, and money we receive from House Bill 2.
- Reduced amount for slot tax from 1.9M to 1.1M
- Allocated 1.25M from the City millage that begins January 2021. We expect to receive the 1<sup>st</sup> payment from the City in Feb 2021 and the remaining 80% of 2M by June 2021. The City cannot confirm how much money we will receive due to the uncertainty of how much property tax will be collected. All money collected will be allocated to the operating budget.

Commissioner David Waller asked how severe is this budget and how does that translate to the Park. Becker responded, saying that all of our facilities, except golf and tennis, will be closed on Mondays and Tuesdays. He continued that we are not able to hire our regular summer crew to support our maintenance staff. We will have reduced concessions at football games. Celebration in the Oaks will be a driving tour and modified walking tour. Tennis and golf will no longer host large tournaments. He noted that Amusements is unclear. We will submit a specific plan to the State for amusements to reopen, outlining how we will operate at 50% capacity. Without any help from the State, we won't be able to provide all the services that we normally do. Our job as managers will be to try to minimize the changes we will have to make. But more than anything,

it will mean pushing back our expenses to a later time. He noted that if we can't restore salary cuts, we will lose experienced employees; who have to do what is best for their families. We have furloughed about 10% of our full-time staff. Becker said that we entered this pandemic in a much better financial position than we were before Hurricane Katrina.

Chief Financial Officer Keith Hemel stated that a lot of time and effort went into the budget, but things change every day. For example, we have to replace our phone system that is no longer serviceable. We negotiated and received quotes and realized that the \$25,000 we expected to spend might not be necessary since we discovered money in a Friends technical account. He said that this is a very conservative and solid budget.

President Katz said that he thinks we have to look at this budget a little differently than we have in the past. He stated that this budget is a living, breathing, changing document. Katz noted that we expect the budget to change, and we hope it changes for the better. We will give monthly updates about any changes that occur. The 2020-2021 budget was unanimously adopted.

#### Committee Reports:

P, A&E – Edmund Schrenk reported that the construction of the maintenance facility has continued through the COVID-19 pandemic. The pilings have been driven, the slab has been poured, and power has been brought up through the slab. He said that he could not say when construction will be complete, but the work is continuing.

#### CITO/Special Events – No Report

Development – Casie Duplechain thanked the Board members who reached out to State legislators to gain support for the Park in the appropriations bill. She stated that since the COVID campaign began, the Park received \$231,000 for general support, from 964 contributors. She noted that 45% of those contributors were first-time donors and is a testament to the importance of the Park to the community. She thanked all the Board members who supported the campaign and noted that \$100,000 of the \$231,000 was donated by Commissioners Larry Katz, Richard Cahn, Lori Savoie, the Azby Fund, and Oscar J. Tolmas Charitable Trust. She also acknowledged Commissioners David Waller, Carro Gardner, Susan Hess, Karen DeBlieux, Paul Masinter, Byran Fitzpatrick, Ryan Adkerson, and Edmund Schrenk for their support.

Duplechain reported on the following:

- Working on the renewal of the Pepsi Tennis Center agreement.
- Reached out to Coca-Cola to recommit their three-year pledge of \$25,000 annually.
- Working with Rob DeViney and Julie LaCour on drive-in movies, and hoping to get sponsorships for the project.
- Received \$2,000 from Shell Oil for water hyacinth removal.
- Received \$5,000 from the USTA to help reopen the tennis facility.
- Received \$7,500 from the New Orleans Town Gardners for a project at Big Lake.
- In the process of applying for ten additional grants.

- Working with Amanda Frenz on the Park's new branding and website. The RFP was issued, and all submissions are due on June 19.

Environmental Stewardship – Commissioner Carro Gardner reported that the lagoon redesign project by Batture is proceeding, and the scoping document will be available soon for review. The staff is working on scheduling public tours of Couturie Forest. Temporary signage has been installed at the Big Lake Native Plant Trail. Shell and Batture have donated funds for the Park to maintain spraying of water hyacinth. Gardner commended Dionne DiMello for the online plant sale and encouraged everyone to support the program.

Finance & Audit – Budget was presented, with no additional report.

Friends – Commissioner Larry Dale reported that Give Nola Day was held on June 2 and raised over \$71,000. In addition to a matching sponsor gift, donations by the community, and prizes from the Greater New Orleans Foundation, we surpassed our goal of \$25,000. The funds will benefit Celebration in the Oaks. He attributed the success to the Park's Development department, the Friends of City Park staff, and volunteers. Friends Fest will not be an in-person event. However, we are working in conjunction with City Park staff to celebrate being a Friends member. Also included, there will be a Virtual Friends Fest 5K race. Martini Madness will take place on September 18. Since this will be a much smaller event, he recommended purchasing your tickets early if you plan to attend. Lark in the Park will be held on November 20, in conjunction with Celebration in the Oaks, depending on restrictions from the City. Stephanie Bell reported that Friends currently has 5367 members, 457 more than this time last year. She continued that the membership drive is typically held in May; however, this year, it will be pushed back until June. This year's campaign will highlight "What City Park Means To Me."

H&G Committee/Dog Park – No Report

Legal & Risk Management – Commissioner Paul Masinter reported that the committee is working on the Cooperative Endeavor Agreement between the Sewerage and Water Board, and the City of New Orleans for the storm water retention project. He said that there is a lot to consider, including what will happen during construction; and how the facilities will be operated once they have been constructed. Masinter said that it is very important to clarify for future generations how the system will work. Katz thanked Commissioners Paul Masinter, Rob Worley, and Adam McNeil for their time, effort, and expertise that they bring to the Park.

NOMA – President Katz reported that on June 1, the Sculpture Garden began charging admission. Becker stated that the gardens were initially free of charge. However, there is a clause in the agreement that allows the Park to negotiate with NOMA to receive a percentage of the admission fee if charges are imposed. Becker stated that we have reached an agreement and will receive 15% of the revenue after the first \$50,000. The admission fee will continue through the end of the year. If the decision is made to keep the admission fee, we will have a basis to renegotiate the agreement. The admission fee is currently \$5.00 per adult and \$3.00 per child.

Wisner Tract – No Report

Public Relations – No Report

Nominating – No Report

Sports – No Report

Tennis – Commissioner Rob Worley reported that tennis has been opened for roughly three weeks, and was one of the earliest facilities to open in the Park. The hourly rates have increased from \$17 an hour to \$20 an hour. He mentioned that we are currently not planning to host any tournaments, and unfortunately, that includes the Sugar Bowl tournament.

Botanical Garden Foundation – Commissioner Rebecca Lester reported that the New Orleans Botanical Garden online plant sales have been averaging \$6,000 in sales. Chef Pat White offers online food orders on Wednesday evenings and Sunday brunch at the Outdoor kitchen in the Botanical Garden. She stated that the Botanical Garden Foundation is working toward accreditation for the Garden, and revising the Strategic Plan. Lester noted that the Magic in the Moonlight fundraiser, usually held on the second Friday in October, was moved to Thursday, November 5. The change is mostly due to the weather being warm in October and less competition from other events. Commissioner David Waller commented that part of the strategic planning process involved conducting a survey. He noted that we received 12 pages of single-spaced comments that were amazingly positive.

OTHER REPORTS: President Katz asked all Commissioners to consider moving up their annual giving to the Park. He also asked everyone if they can donate to the Park, please consider doing so. He thanked Commissioners Richard Cahn, David Waller, Lori Savoie, Susan Hess, Paul Masinter, Carro Gardner, Bryan Fitzpatrick, Karen DeBlieux, Edmund Schrenk, Ryan Adkerson, and Stephen Pate for their support.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

NEW BUSINESS: Commissioners Chenier Taylor spoke and challenged the Park to ensure that all Park visitors feel safe and welcome in the Park. She said that we should let our Black Community know that we stand in solidarity with them. Taylor asked that City Park consider the following actions. She suggested that we communicate with our employees and let them know that we support them. She recommended that we seek out bias training for our police department, employees, and Board members. She also requested that we develop and seek funding for diverse programming that is more reflective of our City and State. Taylor challenged Board members to discuss with their committees, and examine how we can accomplish these goals.

Becker acknowledged that this is obviously a critical time, and strongly supports additional diversity training. He mentioned that the State's training programs that are available to employees fall short in this area. Becker said that he is exploring possibilities for diversity and bias training, and hopes to have some ideas that the Park could invest in. Commissioner Guy Williams noted that this could be an opportunity for one of the bank's foundation partners to sponsor the training. He asked if there are any streets in the Park that are inappropriately named.

Becker responded, not that he was aware of. Katz thanked Commissioner Taylor for her comments.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:50 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, July 28, 2020, at 4 p.m.

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Denise Joubert  
Recording Secretary

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Bryan Fitzpatrick