

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, July 28, 2020, at 4 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 Google Meets.

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

ABSENT: Commissioners Banks, Batt, Giarrusso, Hollis, Leger, Masinter, and Nossner, and Seamon

STAFF: Bob Becker, Rob DeViney, Keith Hemel, Casie Duplechain, Amanda Frenz, and Denise Joubert

COUNSEL: Henry Kinney

GUESTS: Stephanie Bell, Steve Pettus, Andrea Legrand, Edmund Schrenk, and John Hopper (call-in)

Anyone wishing to comment on any item on the agenda must sign-in or submit their comments via email and indicate what item they wish to comment on.

Larry Katz, President of the NOCPIA Board of Commissioners, called the meeting to order.

In accordance with Executive Orders issued by Governor John Bel Edwards, this notice shall serve as a certification of the New Orleans City Park Improvement Association's inability to operate in accordance with the Louisiana Open meetings law as a result of the COVID-19 public health emergency. Members of the public may attend the meeting in person, observing all appropriate public health guidance or submit an email prior to the beginning of the meeting, which will be read to the Association's members prior to any action on any agenda item.

A quorum is present and voting throughout the meeting.

The minutes of the June board meeting were approved.

Chief Financial Officer Keith Hemel reported that the Park had \$3.3 million in cash at the end of June. We lost \$775,000 in revenue to the budgeted amount for June due to the revenue-generating departments being closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. At the end of the fiscal year, we were \$300,000 below our projected budget. We lost \$4.5 million in revenue but reduced our expenses by approximately \$4.1 million since the start of the pandemic. Through June, we lost roughly \$300,000 from canceled events and returned about \$200,000 in deposits. On a

positive note, golf ended the year with a net income of approximately \$250,000. We submitted our COVID related expenses for reimbursement through the City. Becker pointed out that our losses would have been greater if not for the measures we took in March. He said that we are doing everything we can to reduce expenses. We have laid off, furloughed, or terminated about 30% of our full-time staff, almost all of our part-time staff, canceled contracts, cut salaries, and stopped 457 contributions.

Chief Executive Officer Becker reported on management's projections through February, given the current restrictions resulting from the COVID pandemic. He continued saying that the projections must be taken "with a grain of salt" because things continue to change. The total revenue projections include:

- Revenue received from tenants in the Park
- What we expect to receive from the State for the Slot Tax at the Fair Grounds. We are allowed to receive \$2.2 million from the State, but in each of the last two years, we received \$1.9 million. This year the legislature appropriated \$1.6 million, which we receive quarterly. Becker said that what we receive is based on how much money is generated by the slot tax
- What we expect to receive from the City for the millage passed last year
- Pre COVID, the estimated self-generated revenue is 90% of our total revenue. City Putt, Tennis, Storyland, the Botanical Garden, and Golf are open. Other than golf, the facilities that generate significant revenue, such as Amusements and Catering, remain closed.
- Budgeted a driving tour for Celebration in the Oaks

Expense projections include;

- Payroll has been reduced from approximately \$500,000 to \$300,000 per month
- Refunds of approximately \$500,000 in deposits for weddings.

There is a possibility that we could run out of money sometime in October - November. We generally maintain \$1.5 million in reserves for necessary or emergency expenses. However, the reserves could fall below that, sometime in September. The Park will owe employees up to 300 hours of annual leave, close to \$500,000 in total. We also contribute to the hospital and pension plans for retirees. This information has been transmitted to the Governor, the Commissioner of Administration, and the Governor's Chief of Staff, who understand our situation. Still, they could not offer any assistance at this time. We also informed our local legislative delegation, Senator Harris, Representative Hilferty, as well as Congressional Representatives Scalise and Richmond, about our situation. We plan to brief the Mayor, the City Council, and our main donors. By mid-August, if we don't see a way forward, we will put a statement on our website to make the public aware, and let them know that their expectations of City Park will not be met. We eliminated the Concessions Department, Planning and Sustainability, and most of the staff in Catering. The majority of the remaining employees are directly related to taking care of the Park; cutting the grass, and picking up trash.

Becker reiterated that one of the Park's bright spots is golf, saying that it is the only department generating significant revenue and is responsible for 25% of the Park's acreage. He recalled that

our golf consultant said that it would be three years before the course would see a significant profit. Becker believes that the State will step up and support the Park as they did after Hurricane Katrina. He stated that the Park could have never recovered if the State hadn't intervened. Steve Pettus noted that we have to envision how we build better and stronger than before; build foundations that can carry us forward if something happens again. Becker added that the legislature put two of our projects back into the budget; expansion of the tennis courts and repairs to the old maintenance facility. He said that we are also likely to get money from the City's capital budget for the full funding to expand the Conservatory in the garden and additional funds for the tennis court coverings. He echoed Pettus's statement that it is about re-tooling and figuring out how to do things better.

President Katz said that he was optimistic that if the bill before the Senate passes, it will give the Park some flexibility to apply for the payroll protection or the employee retention credit. He said that Representatives Scalise and Richmond are actively working on the Park's behalf with the State government. We will speak to the Mayor about the possibility of getting an advance on some of our millage money, and we will also seek help from some affiliate organizations. Failing other methods, we will initiate a public fundraiser that he believes will be successful to some degree. He thanked the Commissioners who have met their annual giving responsibilities and asked everyone if they can donate to the Park, please consider doing so.

He mentioned there is one sponsorship opportunity remaining at Storyland, the Dragon Slide, which is \$75,000. Becker noted that he and Casie recently made a pitch for support to a local foundation. He asked all Commissioners to let him or Casie know of any potential organizations or individuals they think could help the Park. But understands that this is a difficult time because so many are hurting.

Commissioner Richard Cahn asked what the Park would look like if the activities slowed down. Becker replied, saying that the golf course would remain open. He continued saying that we would slowly have to cut back on some of the things that we do in the Park. The horticulture staff is generally responsible for plantings and flowers around the Park; they are currently working at the greenhouse cultivating plants for sale to the public. He noted that plant sales have been very successful. We would keep open the facilities generating enough money to take care of their expenses; Tennis, City Putt, the Botanical Garden, and Storyland. The Athletics staff are now working with the grounds department; since there are not many athletic events. It is necessary to maintain the grounds as so many are using for relief during the pandemic, and to keep a public health hazard from developing. However, at some point, maintenance of the Wisner Tract and the Festival Grounds will likely stop. He said that once we stop taking care of an area, it will quickly become a health hazard, overcome with animals and a homeless population. We know this because of our experiences following Hurricane Katrina. He went on to say that if nothing happens for us, we will eventually have to lay-off the entire staff. That would be the worst-case scenario, and he doesn't expect that to happen.

Commissioner Chenier Taylor asked if we were ready to present the scenario just introduced to the Mayor, the Governor, and for public viewing on the Park website. Becker responded, saying that we have already presented the information to the Governor; and plan to brief the Mayor soon. We would only put a single page statement on the website for the public. He continued that

we will let the Mayor and the City Council know that if we are unable to maintain areas of the Park, it will become a serious health problem in the City.

Commissioner Emily Arata asked what is the Park's monthly funding gap. Becker responded, saying that the chart we distributed gives a monthly breakdown of how we expect to go through the Park's reserves. By the end of July, we will have spent about \$700,000 of our reserves; and another \$500,000 in August and September. We will go through another \$250,000 in October. If we get through October, our cash will be down to about \$250,000. At that point, we will have to stop so that we can pay the legacy costs. We will update the chart at the end of each month.

Resolution 2020-02 was unanimously approved requesting the City of New Orleans to collect the 2021 property tax on behalf of the City Park Improvement Association and disburse those collections to the Association.

A motion was made by Commissioner Rob Worley, seconded by Commissioner Richard Cahn, and unanimously approved to amend the agenda to add Resolution 2020-03.

Resolution 2020-03 was unanimously approved, authorizing Robert Becker to sign the lease for the new golf carts.

Committee Reports:

P, A&E – No Report

CITO/Special Events – No Report

Development – Casie Duplechain provided an update on the COVID-19 campaign. She reported that since the COVID campaign began, the Park received approximately \$199,000 from individual donors. She noted that 43% of the contributions came from first-time donors. Total organizations and foundational support was \$350,000;

Friends of City Park – pledged \$180,000 to help support staff salaries

Botanical Garden Foundation – pledged \$90,000

The Azby Fund - \$50,000

Oscar J. Tolmas Charitable Trust - \$10,000

Shell - \$10,000 – water hyacinth removal

Batture - \$5,000 – water hyacinth removal

USTA - \$5,000 – grant to help re-open the tennis complex

She reported that a meeting was held with Pepsi to discuss the renewal of the tennis center agreement and with a local trust regarding the naming rights for Storyland. We are in discussions with the Azby Fund and ZeMurray regarding accessing endowment funding that we have already received. In the packet is an action plan created to solicit feedback from the Board. We are

meeting with the Executive Committee, the Friends of City Park, the Botanical Garden Foundation, and Jackie Shreves from the Dog Park to align our efforts. We are developing an ad-hoc committee for anyone interested in working on the campaign.

Environmental Stewardship – No Report

Finance & Audit – No Report.

Friends – No Report

Commissioner Guy Williams mentioned that he met with Michael Hecht and that GNO, Inc is willing to do anything they could to assist the Park.

H&G Committee/Dog Park – Commissioner David Waller reported that the tree survey is postponed. Katz mentioned that there is a new sundial garden in the rear of the Botanical Garden.

Legal & Risk Management – No Report

NOMA – No Report

Wisner Tract – No Report

Public Relations – No Report

Nominating – No Report

Sports – No Report

Tennis – No Report

Botanical Garden Foundation – No Report

OTHER REPORTS:

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

NEW BUSINESS:

The meeting was adjourned at 5:25 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 22, 2020, at 4 p.m.

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Denise Joubert

Recording Secretary

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Bryan Fitzpatrick

Secretary