

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, October 27, 2020, at 3 p.m. by President Larry Katz. Due to the COVID-19 virus, the meeting was held in person as well as via Google Meets.

PRESENT: Commissioners Arata, Banks, Batt, Cahn, DeBlieux, Fitzpatrick, Giarrusso, Hess, Hollis, Katz, King, Masinter, Nossier, Nossier, Pate, Pineda, Rodriguez, Savoie, Seamon, Spears, Taylor, Thorpe, Waller, and Worley

ABSENT: Commissioners Adkerson, Baker, Dale, Gardner, LeCorgne, Leger, Lester, Lupo, McNeil, Morrell, and Williams

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

COUNSEL: Henry Kinney

GUESTS:

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 before the beginning of the meeting, which will be read to the Association's members before any action on any agenda item.

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. The board recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

A quorum is present and voting throughout the meeting.

The minutes of the September board meeting were approved.

Katz reminded all Commissioners that the Ethics and Sexual Harassment training must be completed by December 31.

Katz congratulated Commissioner Guy Williams for being recognized by Biz Magazine as one of the top 12 real estate influencers in the area.

In his President's report, Larry Katz reported that the sale of the Celebration in the Oaks Driving Tour tickets are going well. He said that we have sold approximately 1600 tickets, which represents about \$36,000 in revenue. He reported that we have included a donation option when the tickets are purchased, and 600 of the 1600 people who purchased tickets donated to City

Park, which represents 38% of the total tickets purchased. Chief Operating Officer Rob DeViney stated that we now have the ability to include the donation option for all of the Parks ticketed events. Katz said that since the Storyland improvements, we have seen an 85% increase in attendance. He mentioned that we raised \$1.4 million in donations for Storyland, and are working on improvements to Pinocchio and the whale, adding computer graphics to Little Red Riding Hood, and Mirror – Mirror on the Wall is now working properly. We also added new branding in Storyland. We added a large Storyland banner on the Treasure Chest Rock, naming it the Storyland Selfie Rock. He continued, asking Board members to let him know if anyone is interested in sponsoring the Treasure Chest Rock.

In the Management Report, Chief Executive Officer Becker reported that the Park had a good month financially in September. We are still drawing about \$200,000 a month of our reserves, which is less than we initially projected. He stated that this resulted from cost cutting measures that were initiated. He noted that revenue was less than we originally projected, because we thought that the City would have lifted more of the COVID restrictions.

Becker reported that in the Second Special Session of the State Legislature, \$2.5 million was allocated to the Park from the State's General Fund. The bill is currently awaiting the Governor's signature. He noted that once the bill is signed, we will have a discussion with the Commissioner's office, about how the funds will be distributed. We have submitted a new request for operating funds for the new fiscal year which begins July 1. The request amount is \$3.2 million. Commissioner Susan Hess asked if the money from the state would be in addition to the Fair Grounds tax money. Becker said that it would be in addition to the Fairgrounds money. Becker also said that we have requested to be put on the State bond commission agenda, seeking funds for the planning of the tennis court expansion, and the renovation for historic building.

Chief Financial Officer Keith Hemel reported that in September we ended approximately \$50,000 ahead of budget due to an early quarterly slot machine tax reimbursement of \$222,000. The State budgeted for \$1.6 million, and the Park budgeted for \$1.1 million. He said that the state would revisit that account each month. But given the situation with the pandemic, it is uncertain that we will receive more than \$222,000 in future payments. He mentioned that although we were conservative with our estimates compared to the States, it seems that the slot machine money is going to be less than we estimated. Hemel said that through the first quarter, the Park's cash position has decreased approximately \$200,000 per month. In September we held several weddings and received about \$50,000 in donations. Through the first quarter, tennis beat its budget by \$16,000. Golf also had three strong months. They are about \$175,000 ahead of budget; \$160,000 being from the first quarter of the fiscal year. Becker added that if you total the amount of money we have received in the State's capital outlay bill, money recommended from the planning commission for the City's capital budget program, together with the stormwater grant that the City received on behalf of the Park to improve storm water retention, as well as a CBDG grant of \$1,000,000 that we received during the regular session of the State legislature; totals about \$28,000,000 in capital money that will flow into the Park over the next two to three years. He said that the Park has never received that amount of money during a

single time period. Commissioner Susan Hess offered her appreciation of the good job that has been done. President Katz thanked everyone for having faith through the dark times, and predicted that the Park will be back stronger, and better.

Committee Reports:

P, A&E – No Report

CITO/Special Events – No Report

Development – Casie Duplechain stated that the Steering Committee has been very helpful with the Covid campaign. She mentioned that Liz Sloss has identified several individuals as potential major donors.

Duplechain reported on the following:

- Received a \$15,000 grant from Blue Cross/Blue Shield to develop an app for City Park, highlighting the walking trails to promote healthy living.
- Received a commitment of \$250,000 from the Oscar J. Tolmas Charitable Trust for unrestricted support. She noted that \$60,000 would go toward Ghost in the Oaks. We will receive another \$65,000 in 2020 and \$125,000 in January 2021.
- Working with the Grounds Department on a new volunteer program, "Adopt a Piece of the Park". Park adopters will work with the Park to identify and help maintain areas in the Park. She said that the program will accept financial donations and volunteer contributions.
- Distributed a handout showing various ways to donate to the Park. She thanked the Commissioners who have generously donated.
- Distributed a handout showing various way to donate to the Park. She mentioned that Planned Giving is another program available for those who want to contribute as part of their legacy.

Environmental Stewardship – No Report

Finance & Audit – No Report.

Friends – Commissioner Leigh Thorpe reported that in the past, Ghost in the Oaks has been a four night event, with approximately 800 people per night attending. However, it will be virtual this year, with special packages distributed to families to participate in fun activities. Each party package costs \$99.00; the goal is to \$100.000. The proceeds will be dedicated to the Covid campaign. Thorpe thanked the Tolmas Foundation for their \$50,000 donation; and Waymon Morris and his staff for their help with set-up and for the beautiful decorations.

H&G Committee/Dog Park – No Report

Legal & Risk Management – No Report

NOMA – No Report

Wisner Tract – No Report

Public Relations – Casie Duplechain stated that Becker will meet with the Editorial Board for the Times Picayune. The Search Influence campaign has begun. She mentioned that we will begin scheduling Birthday parties in Storyland in the next couple of weeks. Julie LaCour is working on packages for pop-up weddings in the Park.

Nominating – President Katz submitted the names of the officers for 2020 that will be put into nomination at this meeting, and voted on at the November meeting. Those officers are Carro Gardner, Vice-President; David Waller, Vice-President; Liz Sloss; Vice-President; assuming that she will be elected to the board for next year, Bill LeCorgne, Treasurer; and Bryan Fitzpatrick, Secretary. The Committee recommends Robert Lupo, Lori Savoie, and Richard Cahn to serve a second four-year term on the Board. The Committee further recommends Jessica Brandt, Liz Sloss, and Karen Coaxum for three of the open at-large positions on the Board. The Board will take action on these nominations at the November Board meeting. President Katz thanked the members of the Nominating Committee for their work. Katz mentioned that two of our longest serving, and generous board members are rotating off the board; Paul Masinter, and Susan Hess. Katz expressed the hope that both will continue to be involved. He said that both will be ex-officio for life, which gives them all the rights and privileges of board members, except that they cannot vote.

Sports – No Report

Tennis – No Report

Botanical Garden Foundation – Commissioner Paul Masinter commended the park staff, the board and everyone involved with the efforts to raise funds over the last few month. He singled out Casie Duplechain, Amanda Frentz, and Stephanie Bell for their outstanding efforts. The Botanical Garden is finishing its long term strategic planning, and will present to the CPIA board. He also reminded everyone about the Thursday night dinners in the garden. He said that the food is great from some outstanding chefs such as Susan Spicier, and Frank Brightsen. He also reminded everyone of the Wednesday night dinners that offers curbside pick-up. Masinter mentioned that the letter for Magic in the Moonlight fundraiser was sent out informing everyone about the fact that we are not hosting the fundraiser; but instead asking for donations at least equal to the amount that would have been spent on the event. The letter also ask recipients to consider joining the 1,000 for \$1,000 Oak Tree Circle. He said that we to date we raised about \$30,000.

OTHER REPORTS:

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

NEW BUSINESS:

The meeting was adjourned at 4:25 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 24, 2020, at 4 p.m.