

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, September 22, 2020, at 4 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, Batt, Cahn, DeBlieux, Fitzpatrick, Gardner, Hess, Katz, King, LeCorgne, Lester, Masinter, McNeil, Morrell, Nosser, Pineda, Rodriguez, Savoie, Seamon, Taylor, Thorpe, Waller, and Worley

ABSENT: Commissioners Adkerson, Baker, Banks, Dale, Giarrusso, Hollis, Leger, Lupo, Pate, Spears, and Williams

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

COUNSEL: Henry Kinney

GUESTS: Stephanie Bell, Andrea Legrand

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. Katz welcomed Commissioner Richard Rodriguez, the appointee for the Speaker of the House. Rodriguez said that he was happy and excited to be a part of the City Park board.

A quorum is present and voting throughout the meeting.

The minutes of the July board meeting were approved.

Katz reminded all Commissioners that the Ethics and Sexual Harassment training must be completed by December 31. Also, the Personal Financial Disclosure form must be completed by May 15, 2021.

Katz reported that the state legislature is back in session for a month. The focus will be on the governor's emergency powers, unemployment insurance, followed by assistance to southwest Louisiana. Senator Harris and Representative Hilferty will be actively working on the Park's behalf seeking financial assistance. Becker mentioned that he and Katz would be sending a letter to all metropolitan legislators to bring our difficult financial situation to the forefront. The Friends of City Park will also send letters to the legislators, and their lobbyist will be representing the Park during the session. Becker said that we have asked consistently for \$5 million since March. The money would go toward replenishing our reserves and helping to make up for lost revenue. He said that we would also consider rehiring some staff that has been furloughed if there is work for them.

Katz said that he is hopeful that the Mayor will move into Phase 3 next week and loosen some of the restrictions. This would allow the Park to open some of our facilities, such as Catering. Becker said that there will still be restrictions at events. There will be no live music, or dancing, and social distancing would still be required. He noted that the key will be reaching the 250 attendance limit.

In the Management Report, Chief Executive Officer Becker reported that the Park had a good July and August, related to the budget. He continued saying that the Park budgets to lose money every month except December when Celebration in the Oaks takes place. The loss is offset with the revenue we receive from the slot tax at the Fairgrounds. In August, we used about \$300,000 of our reserves, which is \$250,000 less than we projected. He stated that this resulted from unexpected revenue that we generated from plant sales, movies in the park, and dinners in the garden. He said that expenses were below budget due to furloughs and reduced spending. As of September 1, we had about \$2.1 million remaining in reserves. He continued saying that golf has done very well. We applied \$100,000 from the golf profit last year to the Park operating expenses. Keith Hemel mentioned said that the allowance for high school football games should help generate additional revenue. Commissioner Susan Hess inquired about the status of the property tax millage funds. Becker said that we are not scheduled to receive millage money until February 2021. The city said that we should expect to receive \$400,000 by the end of February, and the rest in partial payments throughout the year. We asked the City if it were possible to advance the property tax money, but the city turned down that request. Commissioner Leigh Thorpe asked if the Park is responsible for social distancing and other Covid restrictions at the football games. Becker responded by saying that only 250 people will be allowed at the games, and the bands are included in that number. He said that the schools are responsible for temperature checks, managing the sidelines, locker rooms, and the Park is responsible for the bathrooms. Becker noted that the Park is planning to open the playgrounds by the end of the week.

#### Committee Reports:

P, A&E – President Katz reported that the Committee toured the new maintenance facility. Becker said that for the first time since Hurricane Katrina, we will be able to maintain our equipment away from the weather. Becker thanked Commissioner J. P. Morrell for his help in moving this project forward.

## 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 – Stephanie Bell reported that Ghost in the Oaks will be virtual this year, special packages will be 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. She mentioned that clean-up crews have started, and volunteerism is going well. She thanked Commissioner Masinter and Cahn for their help. Commissioner Rebecca Lester asked if there was a problem with the homeless people in the Park. Becker said that this issue is faced by all large parks, and it is not as bad as it could be. He said that with the unemployment rate rising and the restriction on evictions lifted, it could increase. He said it could be a tough issue to deal with because there are few social services available to resolve the problems.

H&G Committee/Dog Park – Commissioner David Waller reported that memberships to the Dog Park increased tremendously since the pandemic. Members of several garden clubs are interested in maintaining various planted areas around the Park. Tim Benton is propagating oak trees from acorns collected in the Park. They are a hardier species than some that we have recently purchased. The Park is working on a plan to purchase the trees at a reduced rate.

Legal & Risk Management – No Report

NOMA – No Report

Wisner Tract – No Report

Public Relations – Amanda Frentz stated that all four stations have given media coverage to our fundraising campaign. She said that a press conference is scheduled next week to announce the driving tour for Celebration in the Oaks. The route will be 2.25 miles long and is different than the route in the past. Commissioner Susan Hess asked if there will be a discount for members of the Friends of City Park. Stephanie Bell responded that Friends members would receive one free admission on Mondays, Tuesdays, or Wednesdays from November 30 through December 16. She said that Friends members would also receive an additional 50% discount during that same time period. Becker said that we may still have some kind of walking experience, based on the restrictions at that time.

Nominating – President Katz mentioned that Commissioners Susan Hess and Paul Masinter would be rotating off the board in December. He said that they would be sorely missed, but he hopes that they will remain active.

Sports – No Report

Tennis – Commissioner Rob Worley reported that Tennis is moving forward with the much-needed construction of six new covered courts. The covered courts are in great demand because of the heat and rain. Becker said that the Park received about \$3.5 million from a combination of city and state funds. He said that we should receive the City's contribution in January 2021. The state contribution will be split between design money allocated in January 2021 and the remaining construction funds in March 2021. The new courts will be built in the rear of the facility where the long shelter is located.

Becker said that the City has also agreed to fund the Conservatory expansion in the Botanical Garden. He said that there is a good chance that both projects will be completed by the end of 2022.

Botanical Garden Foundation – Katz thanked Commissioner Rebecca Lester for the progress, programming, and great work in the garden. A dedication is scheduled for the Sundial Garden, which was endowed by the Backer family. Lester reported on upcoming events scheduled in the garden. She reminded everyone about the curbside pick-up dinners from the garden kitchen. She also reminded everyone about the Sunday brunches and Thursday and Friday dinners.

OTHER REPORTS:

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

NEW BUSINESS:

The meeting was adjourned at 5:25 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 27, 2020, at 4 p.m.