

PROCEEDINGS OF THE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY TAKEN AT A  
REGULAR MEETING ON THURSDAY, MARCH 7, 2019

Those present: Miles Matt, Mike Delcambre, Gus Rezende, Lisa Thomas and Greg Walls.

Those absent: Jim Keaty and Ross Fontenot.

Staff present: Anita Begnaud, Jolene Harris and Hunter Hebert.

Others present: Corey Jack, Bruce Conque, Danielle Breaux, Carlee Alm-LaBar, Blake Douet, Pat Lewis, Eric Crozier, Tim Skinner, Liz Payne, Kevin Blanchard and Brad Ridge.

The meeting was called to order by Matt.

Public comment cards were available on table in the back of room for anyone who wished to speak in regards to items on the agenda.

Administrative Approvals/Reports

February Minutes – The February Minutes were presented for approval. Walls motioned to approve the February Minutes as presented, Rezende seconded, all voted in favor.

January Financial Statements – The January Financials were presented for approval with Harris making note that the majority of the special assessment funds were received. There being no further comments or questions, Thomas motioned to approve the January Financial Statements as presented, Delcambre seconded, all voted in favor.

Main Street Preliminary Engineering Study

Matt noted that at the previous meeting, Geoff Dyer had come to town and gave a presentation in regards to the Main Street project. To bring all board members up to speed, it was noted that in 2014 to 2015, this project had been put together and the grant applied for and obtained. In November of 2018, a letter was received from the APC on this grant in which Matt and Begnaud began attending meetings with different parties to receive advice and learn the procedures moving forward in order to maintain the funds. A letter was recently sent to the APC to acknowledge DDA's interest in maintaining the funds and have since sent an additional letter to give APC an update. LCG's, Alison Lognion in Public Works was appointed as the responsible charge person with the next step to receive a project number. Matt and Begnaud had met with Mayor-President Robideaux and the city engineer and the plan was to at least do the engineering component of the project which would cost about \$500k and were working to find the 20% match where LCG would need to come up with the \$100k for DDA to tag on the other \$400k. It was further noted that Matt and Begnaud felt that if the right people were to be involved that DDA could maintain some semblance of control even though the project would be managed by the state. Discussions followed. In conjunction with this project, Begnaud noted on the City Council agenda for the following week, a resolution would be brought forward to move funds from dormant projects to other projects as well as a communication issue between the APC and the City Council. Conque would be having a community conversation about dormant projects in general on moving funds from and to other projects. Discussions followed. It was further noted that the resolution would be sent out to all board members. Conque noted that Tuesday would be broader than just the downtown issue, there was \$10m in play currently and the council had not been part of the conversation. The protocol from the Acadiana Metropolitan Planning

Organization which was a part of APC, was that they notify the governing authority which would be the mayor-president. However, the City Council had never seen the communication between that group and the mayor, but learned about it through DDA. Conque's resolution was to request that all future communication dealing with the dormant projects money would include the council; the second part to the resolution was that they delay any action; and the third part was to ask that the mayor president communicate with the council. It was further noted that the \$9 or \$10 million and the projects the mayor had identified, were described as new projects but this was unclear exactly what this means which was the purpose of the resolution to be clear that the council should be part of the communication. It was further noted that the resolution would be on the following Tuesday's agenda but the transfer of funds would not be considered until late April. Discussions continued.

### Downtown Parking

Danielle Breaux noted that they were in the process of putting together an RFP to go out the following week, there were 2 parcels that made up the Buchanan garage and adjacent surface parking lots combined that made up about 1 acre. This was also in an opportunity zone and LCG would require the developer to provide LCG 265 parking spaces between Monday and Friday for the courthouse.

Begnaud and Hunter had been researching the downtown district and meeting with Development & Planning, as well as Public Works who were over parking and transit, to discuss the issue at hand with the Buchanan garage closing and the displacement of courthouse employees. Hebert gave a detailed power point presentation making note of all the various parking spaces in the downtown to include public and private. It was noted that the only public parking currently was the Vermilion garage with 521 parking spaces, on-street metered parking 710 spaces, and public lots 156 spaces for a total of 1,387 public parking spaces. Since the displacement of courthouse employees due to the Buchanan garage being closed, the metered on-street parking spaces were always at full capacity and the Buchanan garage was at about 50% occupancy on the busiest days. Since the close of the garage, courthouse employees had been given parking tags that allowed them to park any public place downtown for free which had put a strain on the businesses/restaurants to have adequate parking for their customers. Photos were shown of the parking downtown on President's day which was a federal holiday and the courthouse was closed. With the courthouse closed, there were few cars parked on the streets and the public lots where there was parking available for restaurants, etc. Photos were shown on a day when the courthouse was open where there were no metered spots available to include public lots as well as many of the restaurants lot spaces also being occupied by courthouse employees. It was noted that many of the restaurants had lots that were privately owned or leased and they were still being occupied by courthouse employees where the restaurants were having to maintain their lots in order to keep the courthouse employees from parking. With the courthouse employees filling up the metered spots where there was no turnover throughout the day, there was a loss of the revenue source for Parking & Transit as well as a hardship on the local businesses. This had caused stress among the restaurants and local businesses to finding spaces for their own employees as well as their customers. Discussions followed. It was further noted that there were about 260 spots available at any time in the Vermilion garage but the courthouse employees were not required to park there. Another diagram was given that reflected the size of the Acadiana Mall inside of the downtown district to show that the walking distance was not as far as people seemed to perceive from their work to the Vermilion garage. The hope was for the courthouse employees to begin utilizing the Vermilion garage instead of parking on Jefferson St. and the side streets as well. Discussions continued with Begnaud making note that there needed

to be discussions to determine if the parking rates were correct for the metered spots and also if the Vermilion garage was being marketed in order to utilize the available spaces downtown. Matt noted that the people needed to be able to solve the problem had never been in a room together in order to discuss where a solution could be found. Begnaud further noted that she had met with Public Works and believed that they were open to working with DDA, but they were also interested in hearing from DDA their thoughts on how to move forward with the parking issues downtown. The conversation needed to begin on the next steps on parking rates in the downtown district with the eventual goal to move toward a parking benefit district. Begnaud further noted that the changes that would be made now would impact how we get to a benefit district. Conque noted that the parish was not compensating the city for the loss in metered revenues and these issues had never gone before the City Council. Begnaud noted that she would be working on forming a small committee to address the issues at hand in order to find a temporary solution.

### CEO Update

Begnaud noted the following:

AT&T Pole Removal – continued to work with AT&T to secure a date for the poles to be removed and working with LCG to coincide with those efforts.

DDA/DLU Collaboration – working towards how both entities should be collaborating with each other; hired the first DLU Director who was doing a great job and have seen about a dozen new members join; working hard on the CFB fundraising and close to securing a presenting sponsor.

Properties at Underpass – DOTD boarded up their two properties on Jefferson St. before the underpass which was at the Evangeline thruway corridor. These two properties were purchased for the connector and there was a lot of drug activity at those two locations according to police reports. The windows needed to be boarded up but now a more appealing look was needed as it was the gateway into the downtown. Currently working with local artists who applied for a grant with LEDA and ACA to discuss putting murals on those building. Once a funding stream was secured, would begin the conversations with the city and DOTD to work through that process. On that same note, there was also conversations regarding the beautiful gateway sign but going through the underpass to where it was located, was very dirty and unattractive. Exploring what that would look like to clean up and possibly put another mural in the underpass and were also exploring other entrances into the downtown with possible partnerships with different agencies as well as the partnership between DDA and DLU.

DTA! – Outdoor concert series would begin on Friday, March 7 with a great lineup and a lot of sponsors for the season. It was further noted for the board to be sure and thank sponsors that they know.

Development Downtown – Being in a few meetings, the feedback was that folks were interested in developing downtown; met with Development & Planning and there were lots of interest with developers and interest in the opportunity zones, currently there were a number of future mixed-use projects that folks were doing their due-diligence; spoke with two folks on the revitalization of their properties and two conversations about a grocery store downtown, with Walmart closing on Evangeline Thruway; Grocery Tavern & Delicatessen would be opening adjacent to the Juliet Hotel to compliment the hotel with a bar and food; various business owners were looking at either relocating downtown or coming downtown for the first time.

Businesses opening downtown – OB's Bar & Grill was still planning to open in the old Office Bar around Mardi Gras, Uncle Luck's would be opening on Vermilion St., Central's Parklet opened, Oats and Moreno's parklet was approved and in the works, meetings scheduled with other business owners interested in putting in parklets, a new restaurant that hasn't been publically named would be opening in the next couple of months, George Favaloro new owner of Marley's and Adam Ray of Jefferson Street Pub.

Sewage Capacity Improvements – looking ahead, the right of way acquisition was one of the things that was the heaviest issues and would take the most time. As LUS begins to develop their engineering and the route that they would take to improve the sewage, DDA would need to come up beside them to assist with conversations about right away. DDA would be looking at the businesses that would be located along that route in order to have smaller meetings to discuss LUS's plan to help right of way acquisition.

Fall Election – would be voting this fall on Mayor President, City Council, and Parish Council Members. Have been meeting with folks who were interested in running for Parish Council who understood the importance of downtown.

#### Reports/Updates

Business Development – There were no business developments at this time.

Councilman Update – Conque noted that they would be considering a resolution seeking an attorney general's opinion on the precinct description and the charter for the attorney general to give his opinion and would be considered by the City Council on Tuesday. Discussions followed.

P.D Security Downtown – Captain Ridge noted the following: there were no major incidents occurring, PD was preparing for Festival International, the intergovernmental agreement for the downtown security should be submitted to the City Council soon, the downtown Precinct was still planned for April. It was further noted that the sheriff has notified the courthouse that they would not provide security once the employees left the property and the suggestions were to contact the police in order to be addressed since there were concerns on clerks that worked late hours, leaving from 6 to 8 pm.

There was no further business and the meeting was adjourned.