

LOUISIANA COMMISSION ON CIVIC EDUCATION

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Louisiana Commission on Civic Education

APPROVED MINUTES

November 9, 2017

I. CALL TO ORDER

A meeting of the Louisiana Commission on Civic Education was held on Thursday, November 9, 2017 in the John J. Hainkel Jr. Room at the State Capitol in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Sitting member Shan Davis called the meeting to order at 3:11 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

The secretary called the roll and the following was noted:

MEMBERS PRESENT

Judge Wendell Manning, Chairman
Clay Fourrier (on behalf of Beth Courtney)
Fredell Butler
Peggy Cotogno
Shan Davis
Barry Erwin
Brenda Hodge
Polly Johnson
Josh McNemar
Kevin Hayes
Sen. Beth Mizell (on behalf of Sen. Blade Morrish)
Lawrence Narcisse
Kelly Pepper
Rep. Rick Edmonds
Lauren Russell
Criketa Matlock

MEMBERS PRESENT, CONTINUED

Anita Sexton
Judd Jeasonne
Steven Harman
Donald Songy

MEMBERS ABSENT

Sen. Yvonne Dorsey, Vice Chairperson
John Alexander
Doris Hicks
Rep. Patrick Jefferson
Terry Landry

STAFF PRESENT

Tammy Crain Waldrop, Researcher
Candace Shields, Secretary

Ms. Davis made a motion to appoint Judge Wendell Manning as chairman for today's meeting. There being no objection, Judge Manning was appointed as acting chairman.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Butler made a motion to approve the minutes of June 9, 2017. There being no objection, the minutes were approved.

IV. APPROVAL OF ANNUAL REPORT

Mr. Erwin made a motion to approve the 2016-2017 Annual Report. There being no objection, the report was approved.

V. PRESENTATIONS

A. ACE Adult Civic Education Inaugural Training Program - Peggy Cotogno:

Judge Manning explained the program. He stated the Adult Civic Education (ACE) program will be inaugurated in January 2018 by the Louisiana Center for Law and Civic Education. He said it provides resources and training to members of the legal community, such as judges and attorneys, who go to communities and civic organizations to present lessons to the public in civic literacy. He stated it is a way to encourage citizens to become more involved in learning about the constitutional republic, basic rule of law, and constitutional principles.

Testifying and providing information to the commission was Peggy Cotogno, representing the Louisiana Center for Law and Civic Education.

Ms. Cotogno provided an information packet to the commission members. She stated there is a flyer which has information on a program seminar in their packet, and asked if they would spread the word as they would like to train as many people as they can. She said they modeled the program after a very successful benchmark program in Florida, and two people who created the program will be speaking at the training seminar.

**B. Overview of National Service of AmeriCorps in LA - Volunteer Louisiana -
Stephanie Trahan:**

Testifying and providing information to the commission was Stephanie Trahan, representing Volunteer Louisiana.

Ms. Trahan stated she is the Senior AmeriCorps Officer with Volunteer Louisiana which is housed in the Office of the Lieutenant Governor. She presented a PowerPoint presentation entitled "National Service in Louisiana" to the commission – a copy of which was provided for the record.

Ms. Trahan stated the Corporation for National and Community Service organization was created in 1993 through the National Community Service Trust Act which was signed into legislation by President Clinton creating an umbrella organization bringing together existing national service initiatives to be implemented across the country. She said the goal and mission of the corporation is to support people in organizations utilizing citizen service which has been done over the last twenty-five years by the corporation and state commissions across the country. She stated there are two main branches – AmeriCorps and Senior Corps – and under each of those two main branches there are three subsets. She said the first branch existed prior to 1993 through variations of Senior Corps programs for Americans that are 55 and older to their communities in three different ways: Foster Grandparents program, Senior Companions program, and the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) initiative. She stated the Senior Corp members go to schools and provide volunteer support and mentor services to students in the office, cafeteria, computer lab or library. She said the Senior Companions program members contribute their time with the goal of allowing elderly and homebound citizens to stay independent for as long as possible. She stated the third component of Senior Companions is the RSVP initiative. She said professional retirees volunteer in non-profit organizations or faith-based organizations by providing services, such as receptionist, accounting, bookkeeping or marketing services. She stated they currently have nineteen programs with 409 locations with over 3,600 Senior Corps volunteers in Louisiana. She said the majority of them serve through the Councils on Aging. She stated there are three different types of AmeriCorps members. She said AmeriCorps Vista

are volunteers who serve with the primary goal of fighting poverty in communities who contribute a calendar year of service in a full-time capacity at a single site location. She stated they are placed directly with local non-profit organizations with the goal to strengthen the capacity of that organization so it is better prepared to provide services to the community, such as grant writing, marketing and research or curriculum development. She said as of February 2017, AmeriCorps Vista has eighteen projects at approximately 64 service locations across the state with 102 Vista members.

Ms. Trahan stated AmeriCorps NCCC is another branch of AmeriCorps, and is a National Civilian Community Corps modeled after the conservation programs of the 1930's. She said these initiatives are team based and there are five AmeriCorps NCCC campuses across the country. She stated the members live on the campuses while serving in a full-time capacity for a calendar year. She said NCCC teams travel across the country over the year as a group with six to twelve week assignments. She stated the teams primarily respond after a natural disaster. She said the single largest assignment of NCCC to date was Hurricane Katrina when members from all five campuses responded. She stated they respond after all types of natural disasters such as earthquakes, fires, tornados or floods to do things such as gutting houses, picking up debris, cleaning or rebuilding services. She said the teams can also do non-disaster things such as cleaning state parks or designing new trails, and digging water wells in areas that may be in a drought. She stated AmeriCorps members must be at least 17-years old and no older than 24-years old.

Ms. Trahan stated the last AmeriCorps program is AmeriCorps State & National which her office oversees and is managed by the state service commission which is Volunteer Louisiana. She said the national programs are funded directly by the federal government through parent organizations and they replicate their model in more than one state like Habitat for Humanity. She said there are 27 nationally funded programs in 82 locations with 266 AmeriCorps members in Louisiana.

Ms. Trahan stated Volunteer Louisiana funds and oversees state programs which are direct service initiatives funded with pass-through money directly by the state. She said there are 17 programs which operate in 26 parishes with 175 service locations and approximately 1,000 AmeriCorps members in Louisiana. She stated there are over five thousand AmeriCorps members in all six of streams of service in Louisiana.

Ms. Trahan stated Volunteer Louisiana is a legislatively created state service commission that filters dollars into state programs. She said Volunteer Louisiana generates over \$12 million in federal and local dollars with a return investment of 48 to 1.

Mr. Butler was concerned if a background check was part of the RSVP program process.

Ms. Trahan stated any individual or organization that receives any type of federal funding through the corporation is required to have a state and FBI check as well as National Sex Offender Registry check with the cost going to the entity that holds the grant so the member does not incur the cost.

Mr. Erwin was concerned how the word gets out about the programs.

Ms. Trahan stated both the state and national organizations promote through individual organizations. She said once an individual organization is awarded the grant, they promote and recruit members to fill the positions and to provide the service. She stated on a state-wide basis, they do ongoing outreach over the course of the year through meetings in communities. She said their Board of Commissioners members assist with outreach and promoting within their own communities.

Mr. Jeasonne was concerned what benefits were accrued for the individuals who serve and how did they engage with their communities after their service.

Ms. Trahan stated AmeriCorps programs – entities that are awarded a grant – recruit to fill positions that they are awarded. She said the grants come to the organizations as reimbursement grants with allocations of slots to be filled in an organization. She stated the AmeriCorps members come into the organizations and commit to a specific period of time to provide their service. She said they receive training and on-going personal development opportunities that are provided by that organization to strengthen the individuals on a personal level. She stated they also receive in exchange for their service a stipend which is similar to pay but it is not a wage because it is not provided to them in exchange for a number of hours worked but is merely dollars provided to them to supplement their living expenses while they are serving. She said once they complete their term of service they are also eligible to receive an education award which is money that comes to them in the form of an electronic voucher, and they can use that money for up to seven years until it is spent to either pay back qualified student loans they may already have or to further their education and pay tuition at any institution in the country that accepts federal financial aid.

VI. UPDATES

A. Legislative Youth Advisory Council - Megan Bella:

Testifying and providing information to the commission was Marian Luzier, representing the Legislative Youth Advisory Council.

Miss Luzier stated she is the president of the Legislative Youth Advisory Council.

Testifying and providing information to the commission was Joseph Howard, representing the Legislative Youth Advisory Council.

Mr. Howard stated he is a council member on the Legislative Youth Advisory Council.

Testifying and providing information to the commission was Reed Broussard, representing the Legislative Youth Advisory Council.

Mr. Broussard stated he is vice president of the Legislative Youth Advisory Council.

Miss Luzier stated Leadership Day was held at the Capitol. She said it is orientation day for members to get to know each other from different areas and to start campaigning.

Mr. Howard stated members wore pink that day in honor of Representative Julie Stokes and her campaign #FightLikeJulie. He said she explained economics and Louisiana's fiscal problem.

Mr. Broussard stated Senator Claitor explained how he does his homework as a legislator and how his background affected his career as a senator. He said they also spoke with Representative Steve Carter and Representative Lance Harris who explained how he went from a local business man to a legislator.

Miss Luzier stated Mayor President Sharon Weston Broome discussed her obstacles in her position.

Mr. Broussard stated Mr. Cooper Roberts explained the legislative process in the Senate Chamber and Mr. Ron Smith explained how to vote in the House Chamber.

Miss Luzier stated the LYAC secretary is Ruby Roburg, the Parliamentarian is Jesse Landry, the Communications Officer is Katie Hall, and the Historian is Nydia Cooper. She said they held several campaigns and hers was "Donut Forget to Vote for Marian Luzier" so she brought donuts.

Mr. Broussard stated Senator Sharon Hewitt did a presentation on "The Seven Habits of Highly Successful People" and provided copies of the book to members of the council.

Mr. Howard stated LPN Producer Kevin Gautreaux spoke about "Louisiana Public Square". He said for each LBP segment, at least two LYAC members get to participate. He stated they were told about World Peace Day and the legislators' Back to School Program.

Miss Luzier stated Representative Denise Marcelle took questions on her work on criminal justice reform. She said Ms. Morgan Tanner, Miss Louisiana 2017, spoke about the loss of her mother and how it lead her to become a seat belt safety advocate.

Mr. Howard stated after orientation, they had their first LPB taping of "Louisiana Public Square" in July, and LYAC members Alexia Basdon and Erin Wilson participated. He said the discussion was on the state's industrial tax exemption program. He said in August, he participated with Gabrielle Fontenot and they discussed TOPS scholarships.

Miss Luzier stated in their meeting in September they wanted to put together a piece of legislation. She said Commissioner of Administration Jay Dardenne came to the meeting and took questions. She stated several bills were run past him and he gave pros and cons of their bills. She said they are still trying to decide on a bill.

Mr. Howard stated they broke up into committees to discuss ideas. He said one idea was to allow boat owners to register their boats as emergency vehicles to use in the event of emergencies, and another idea was requiring public schools to cover the cost of dual enrollment courses. He stated he presented raising the minimum age for marriage. He stated other ideas were to encourage more political activism in young adults by providing information about the legislature; banning plastic water bottles at school; and starting a penny drive to benefit school districts and pediatric healthcare. He said Council member Bobby Alexander hosted a Back to School with Representative Crews at Airline High School in Bossier City which helps more youth get involved in the government process.

Miss Luzier stated World Peace Day was held October 1st at the Capitol, and as president she gave a speech to encourage others to take action and encourage peace. She said they collected artwork from schools from all around the state that showed peace and displayed them in the Memorial Hall of the State Capitol for the month of October.

Mr. Howard stated in October, they held another "Louisiana Public Square" to discuss the AIDS epidemic in Louisiana. He said he and Nydia Cooper participated. He stated the discussion centered on the need for education and the stigma that an HIV/AIDS diagnosis carries.

Mr. Broussard stated LYAC has a new website which can be accessed from the House website.

Miss Luzier stated the next LPB "Louisiana Public Square" will be on November 16th on "Louisiana: Sportsman's Paradise or Problem?". She said the next LYAC meeting is November 18th at the Louisiana Municipal Association Building.

Mr. Fourrier thanked them for the participation in "Louisiana Public Square", and said LPB wants to get the youth of this state involved to get their opinions and to train youth to be the new leaders of Louisiana.

B. Legislative Back to School Program - Morgan Robertson/Lauren Russell:

Testifying and providing information to the commission was Morgan Robertson, representing the Senate Legislators' Back to School Program.

Ms. Robertson stated she works for the Senate Communications Office and she also handles the Senate Back to School Program. She said at the last commission meeting it was decided to have some of the membership talk about the Back to School Program on the Senate and House floors because of low participation numbers. She stated last year only eleven members participated and this year she is already up to eleven members and it is only November so maybe the floor announcements made a difference.

Testifying and providing information to the commission was Lauren Russell, representing the House Legislators' Back to School Program.

Ms. Russell stated she works in the House Communications Office and handles the House Back to School Program. She said she has seen an increase in participation after the announcement was made by Representative Edmonds and when LYAC members requested members to participate. She stated the new members seem to be especially interested.

Senator Mizell stated Representative Bishop had a bill on littering last year with a curriculum that was going to go into the schools. She said when it come before the Education Committee, she recommended to him that it be incorporated into the legislative visits to the schools. She stated she knows there may be a cost involved, but it could be done online to let the schools take the initiatives rather than bring in the actual binders. She said her district desperately needs an emphasis on littering that starts at a really young level. She was concerned if this has been incorporated into the legislative visits.

Ms. Robertson stated a lot of members choose not to bring anything because they like to do their own thing, but it is on a list of suggested topics along with TOPS and other issues to discuss. She said there is no stipulated curriculum they are required to do. She stated it would be a good idea for those who do choose to get hand-out materials to also print them black and white flyers.

Representative Edmonds stated he would do the announcement again. He said there are good attendance records at caucus meetings, such as the Rural, Democrat and Republican, where they

could make announcements. He stated he could introduce the LYAC officers in the House Chamber to provide visibility which could be helpful.

Ms. Russell stated a problem she has is the House members go but do not tell her.

Mr. Songy stated as a former school principal, he could not emphasize enough how important it is when elected officials go to a school as it is something the students will remember for a long time, and he encourages legislators to do that. He said he would like to see elected officials go anonymously to schools and be a substitute teacher to really understand what teachers go through.

WITNESSES PRESENT:

Information Only:

Peggy Cotogno, The LA Center for Law and Civic Education _
Stephanie Trahan, Volunteer Louisiana, Baton Rouge, LA
Marian Luzier, LYAC, Walker, LA
Joseph Howard, Slaughter, LA
Reed Broussard, Youngsville, LA
Morgan Robertson, Senate Legislators Back to School Program, Baton Rouge, LA
Lauren Russell, House Legislators Back to School Program, Baton Rouge, LA
Megan Bella, LYAC, Coordinator, Baton Rouge, LA

VIII. CONSIDERATION OF ANY OTHER MATTERS THAT MAY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

Mr. Fourrier stated Ms. Courtney requested he bring before the commission a game called "PolitiCraft - An Action Civics Card Game". He said Ms. Courtney can get the game creator Kevin Lyles to provide a demonstration of the game.

Judge Manning stated he could be invited to the next meeting to give a presentation.

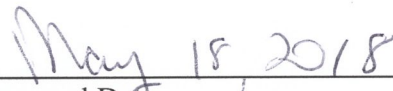
V. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the commission, Representative Edmonds moved to adjourn. Without objection, the meeting was adjourned at 4:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Beth Courtney, Chairperson



Approval Date