LOUISIANA NAVAL WAR MEMORIAL COMMISSION
MINUTES OF MAY 29, 2025 MEETING
Unapproved

MEMBERS PRESENT:
Leslie Nicholson - Chairman
David Couvillon - Treasurer
Roderick Wells – Secretary
Robert Hawthorne
Earnest Buckner
Timothy Credeur II
Elise Angelique Bergeron
Karen St. Cyr
Ashley Taylor
Deborah Todd

MEMBERS ABSENT
Katie Pryor - Excused
Keith Chappell – Excused
H. Davis Cole – Excused
John Patrick Mulhearn – Excused

OTHERS PRESENT:
Parks Stephenson – Executive Director
Tim NesSmith - Ship Superintendent
Gabrielle Fulton - Business Manager
Elijah Otto – Curator
Nate Bergeron – Master Fabricator
Molly Bahlinger - Social Media Coordinator

Richard Cannon- General Manager of the Belle Casino
Henson Moore - former Louisiana Congressman and Father of the USS Kidd

CALL TO ORDER: The Chairman called the meeting to order at 4:05 pm and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM: The Secretary called the roll of Commissioners. Ten members were present; the four absences were excused by the Chairman. The Chairman confirmed the existence of a quorum.

INTRODUCTORY MATTERS: The Chairman introduced our guests. Richard Cannon, the General Manager of the Belle Casino and Henson Moore, former Congressman from Baton Rouge and Father of the Kidd. The Executive Director introduced Tim NesSmith, Gabrielle Fulton and Elijah Otto, his senior staff members.

APPROVALS: The minutes of the Commission meeting on February 27, 2025 were previously distributed to all Commissioners along with the agenda for this meeting, a copy of which is attached as Exhibit A. The Secretary noted that Molly Bahlinger's last name was incorrectly misspelled in the February 27, 2025 minutes. Accordingly, a motion was made to approve the minutes with that correction. After being duly seconded, the motion was approved by the Commission. A copy of the Minutes of the Commission's February Meeting is attached as Exhibit B.

REPORTS: Mr. Otto and Mr. NesSmith presented their reports, attached as Exhibits C and D, respectively. After summarizing their reports, each answered various questions posed by the Commissioners.

The Executive Director presented his Report, a copy of which is attached as Exhibit E. Given that his lengthy detailed report had been circulated to the Commissioners for their review well before the meeting, Mr. Stephenson elected not to summarize his report. Instead, he asked for and answered the questions posed by the Commissioners with regard to his report. He then announced that Mr. NesSmith was about to celebrate his 30th anniversary with the USS Kidd, which was roundly applauded by everyone. The Chairman expressed the Commission's appreciation for the clarity and comprehensiveness of the Executive Director's report and the many contributions made by Mr. NesSmith over the years.

Commissioner and Treasurer Couvillon presented the Commission's Financial Statement as of April 30, 2025, and revised budget for 2025, a copy of each of which is attached as Exhibit F. He explained that there had been a programming error in the earlier financial statements and, the 2025 budget approved at the last Commission meeting which resulted in a $108,000 understatement of available funds. That error has now been corrected. Accordingly, the revised budget for 2025 was approved pursuant to a motion duly made and seconded.

The Chairman briefed the Commission on his negotiations with the Belle Casino regarding its requested Roadway Changes, the adverse effect of those changes on the Museum and the benefits obtained in exchange by the Museum from the Casino under the Parking Agreement that had been executed. A copy of the Parking Agreement that had been circulated to the Commissioners prior to the meeting for their review is attached as Exhibit G. A motion to approve the Parking Agreement was duly made, seconded and approved. Finally, the Chairman advised the Commission about the $4.75 million being requested from the legislature with respect to the additional work needed by the USS Kidd and the $500,000 in operational funds needed by the Museum. The Chairman and the Executive Director also discussed the deficiencies in the Museum itself and the improvements being made to the roof, cooling system and internet service. Finally, they discussed the schedule for completion of the Kidd's repair if the funds requested were made available and the uncertainties facing the return of the ship as to timing and positioning.

SEAL FOR THE COMMISSION: The Seal, attached as Exhibit H, was developed by the Executive Director. After he explained its components, a motion to adopt the Seal for the Commission was duly made, seconded and approved.

COMMISSION'S COMMITTEE STRUCTURE: Following a discussion about the

Committees referenced in the Commission's bylaws not having been used over the years, the Chairman appointed an ad hoc committee consisting of Commissioners Credeur and St. Cyr to provide recommendations as to the Committees that should be utilized. Mr. Credeur accepted the Chairman's request to Chair the Committee. The Chairman then stated that coordination of the Strategic Plan adopted by the Commission last year with the Master Plan being developed by the City and the Casino's developments next door was so important that he wanted to create a Strategic Planning Committee as soon as possible. To that end, he asked Commissioner Angelique Bergeron, the Executive Director of the West Baton Rouge Museum, to serve as Chair of that committee and to consult with him on its membership. She agreed.

NEW BUSINESS: Mr. Cannon thanked the Commission for inviting him to attend and discussed the Casino's plans for opening its new operations this Fall. In response to questions about the damage done by the river to the Casino's elevated walkways and its dock, he advised that the Casino planned to repair that damage when the river levels dropped sufficiently. He closed by stressing the Casino's interest in being a good neighbor and its desire to work with the Museum.

Mr. Moore congratulated the Commission for the work it had done restoring the USS Kidd and revitalizing the Museum.

ADJOURNMENT: The Chairman adjourned the meeting at 5:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Roderick Wells, Secretary