

NOCPIA  
BOARD MEETING

10/27/2020

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, Nossner, 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 Celebration in the Oaks Driving Tour tickets is going well. He said that we sold approximately 1600 tickets, which represents

about \$36,000 in revenue. He reported that when the tickets were bought, we included a donation option and 600 of the 1600 people who bought tickets donated to City Park, which represents 38 percent 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 several of the displays. In Storyland, we have also added new branding. On the Treasure Chest Rock, we added a large banner, calling it the Storyland Selfie Rock. He continued, asking Board members to let him know if someone wants to sponsor 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 the City would have lifted more 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 discuss how the funds will be distributed with the Commissioner's office. We have submitted a new request for operating funds for the new fiscal year, which begins July 1. The requested 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 been put on the State bond commission agenda, seeking funds to plan the tennis court expansion and the renovation for historic buildings.

Chief Financial Officer Keith Hemel reported that we ended approximately \$50,000 ahead of budget in September due to a 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 State's, it seems that the slot machine money will be less than we estimated. Hemel said that Park's cash position has decreased approximately \$200,000 per month through the first quarter. 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 stormwater 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 would be stronger and better again.

Committee Reports:

P, A&E – No Report

CITO/Special Events – No Report

Development – Chief Development Officer Casie Duplechain reported on the following:

- Launched a new 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 would accept financial donations and volunteer contributions. Our first group F3 NOLA adopted the area behind the Casino building and around Popp Bandstand.
- Briana Spruille is working on grant applications for CDBG funding, state capital outlay and CITO sponsorships.
- We submitted a formal application to the Goldring/Woldenberg Foundation for general support.
- The current COVID campaign has raised approximately \$240,000. We received a \$250,000 commitment from the Oscar J. Tolmas Charitable Trust for unrestricted support
- 74 members are participating in the 1,000 for \$1,000 campaign as of today. She mentioned that we would send a letter recognizing everyone that donated.
- Celebration in the Oaks Sponsorships are at \$70,500, the goal is \$100,000.
- We received \$35,000 for repairs since the Carousel vandalism. She noted that we had a great interest from individuals and businesses wanting to donate their services.

President Katz said that Development has raised close to \$1,000,000 in donations. He congratulated Casie Duplechain, Brian Spruille, Stephanie Bell, Paul Soniat, Paul Masinter, as well as several members of the board, and future board members. Becker reminded everyone that Park employees contributed over \$300,000 through involuntary pay cuts. He proceeded to say that our workers recognized the appropriate measures that were taking place, and that all workers are back at 100 percent of their pay. He added that he plans to re-institute the contribution of the Park to the retirement program.

Katz reported that we only had 5 members when Commissioner Hess began the Oak Tree Circle in 2014, but now we have 74 members. He said it must continue to expand and become a steady source of revenue that can be relied on by the Park. He continued saying that all board members will receive a form to donate to the Oak Tree circle. Katz asked several board members to express their reasons for being on the Board. Katz thanked everyone for their advocacy and service. Commissioner Mike Hollis expressed his reasons for being a board member and committed to \$7,500 sponsor for the Treasure Chest Rock in Storyland. Katz thanked him for his

contribution. Katz reminded everyone that the Park is still losing about \$200,000 a month; and needs the help and resources of all Commissioners. He stated that member of the board should contribute \$1,000 to the Oak Tree Circle. He acknowledges, however, that everyone might not be in a position do that but other forms are possible. For example, you could attend a dinner in the Garden or bring a prospect to the Park who could assist.

Environmental Stewardship – No Report

Finance & Audit – No Report.

Friends – Commissioner Leigh Thorpe reported that in the past, Ghost in the Oaks had been a four-night event, with approximately 800 individuals attending each night. However, this year the event will be virtual, with special packages distributed to families to participate in fun activities. Each party package costs \$99.00; the goal is \$100,000. The proceeds will be dedicated to the current fundraising campaign. Thorpe thanked the Tolmas Foundation for their \$50,000 sponsorship and Waymon Morris and his staff for help with the set-up and the 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 is scheduled to meet with the Editorial Board of the Times Picayune/Advocate. The Search Influence campaign has begun. She mentioned that we would 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 officers' names for 2020 to 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. 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 rotate off the board; Paul Masinter and Susan Hess. Katz expressed the hope that both will continue to be involved. He said that both would 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 for their efforts to raise funds over the last few months. He singled out Casie Duplechain, Amanda Frentz, and Stephanie Bell for their outstanding efforts. The Botanical Garden is completing 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 offer curbside pick-up. Masinter mentioned that the letter for Magic in the Moonlight fundraiser was sent out informing everyone that we are not hosting the fundraiser but instead asking for a donation equal to the amount that would have been spent on the event. The letter also asks recipients to consider joining the 1,000 for \$1,000 Oak Tree Circle. He said that 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.