



Board of Commissioners Meeting Minutes

14 September 2015

Commissioners Present

Jeremy DeBlieux
Brian Furness
Mia Matassa
Jim Oliver
Steve Pettus
Sal Sunseri
Robert Watters
Ted Young

Commissioners Absent

Darryl Berger
Al Groos
Lary Hesdorffer
Kim Rosenberg

Guests

Emily Remington, Executive Director

I. CALL TO ORDER: ROLL CALL: INTRODUCTION OF ATTENDEES

Steve Pettus called the meeting to order at 12:08pm. Emily Remington called the roll.

II. Approval of Minutes

Robert moved that the Board approve the June 2015 minutes. Ted seconded. Those in favor were Jeremy, Brian, Mia, Jim, Steve, Sal, Robert, and Ted.

IV. Chairman's Comments

Steve welcomed attendees. He told attendees that the Board will vote on officers in November and asked them to let him know if they are interested in a position. Steve reported that the FQMD had executed a lease with the City of New Orleans. Steve announced that \$75,000 had been secured from NOTMC for operational expenses. Steve thanked Jeremy for the great job he is doing as Treasurer. Steve noted that a July 30 New York Times article identified Sidney Torres and the work of the FQ Task Force and said that FQMD is still working out its financial commitment, almost \$40,000, from Torres. Steve said that we are paying our bills and have had several meetings with the Louisiana State police. Steve stated that crime continues to be our major issue.

V. Executive Director Report

Emily announced that the new FQMD website had launched and encouraged Commissioners to spend some time exploring it and to give her feedback. Emily said that she and Steve Pettus would present to the Greater New Orleans Hotel and Lodging Association on September 16. Emily mentioned that she is working to gather bids for the FQMD

annual audit. She mentioned that several partner organizations were hosting events in the upcoming months: VCPORA's gala is September 27 at Napoleon House, FQBA is hosting a graffiti cleanup on October 10, the French Quarter Advocates are hosting a "secondline for safety" fundraiser for the French Quarter Task Force on October 3, and the VCC Foundation's gala is on October 26.

VI. Treasurer's Report

Jeremy asked Commissioners to look at the reports he was submitting for July and August. He explained that we have three different checking accounts. He said the operating account is in very good shape through the end of 2016. Both CVB and NOTMC are committed to the same amounts of funding for next year, plus the 5% admin fee goes into the operating account. The only activity on the Bourbon Patrol account is an order for checks. Albin asked about NOLA Patrol; Jeremy stated that FQMD does not oversee NOLA Patrol, as it is an initiative of the Mayor's office and run by NOPD. Jeremy said that the French Quarter Task Force is in good shape through the end of the year, but if the EDD doesn't pass, it will be hard to maintain. Robert suggested that if the EDD doesn't pass that FQMD look into insurance premiums to determine whether liability coverage could decrease. Steve said that he is sincerely grateful for Bob Simms and his many efforts on FQMD's behalf.

VII. Discussion of Committee Membership

Steve said that it has been brought to his attention that Committee meetings are not achieving quorum. He suggested that the Board accept nominations for committees in October, to be elected in November. Steve suggested that proposed Committee members sign a written commitment. Steve asked for Committee Co-Chairs to let him know their lists in October.

Steve noted that he had forgotten to get a vote on approval of the Treasurer's Reports. Sal so moved, and Robert seconded. Those in favor were Jeremy, Brian, Mia, Jim, Steve, Sal, Robert, and Ted.

VIII. Status of CEAs and related matters

Steve said that he had met with the City on the CVB funding. He stated that FQMD cannot publish the CEA until it is executed, and the supplemental police program CEA awaits the Mayor's signature. Right now, \$75,000/month is being received via a handshake agreement. Steve said that on some shifts FQMD has more FQTF officers patrolling than the 8th District. Steve said that the future of the FQTF is contingent upon the EDD, and that voters are going to have to get it passed for the FQTF to continue.

Robert asked what the PR strategy was for the EDD. He asked if FQMD should disseminate information to the public. Steve said the CVB will put the message out. Meg stated that Ryan had verbally committed to a Town Hall in the French Quarter, but we are now six weeks from the election, and none has been planned. Steve said he would reach out to Ryan. Jim suggested an informational campaign begin as soon as possible. Susan said that Ryan would present to the FQC on October 15. Pat said that she had written a letter to Ryan asking him to live up to his commitment.

IX. Report by Chairs, Infrastructure Committee

Gail presented information about a Sewerage and Water Board (SWB) pilot program to provide storm drain protection. Robert noted that there was a welding program in the early 90s, but it never had a budget to maintain the ironwork, which got removed/stolen through the years. Travis said that SWB's Environmental Affairs department would maintain the storm drains. Steve suggested that the drain covers are put where most of the trash is, so that they can have the greatest impact. Bob said the drain covers were made of scrap metal, and Colonel Jernigan has suggested plastic for these purposes.

Gail said there is a disconnect with DPW about permits for oversized vehicles; she stated that the traffic engineer doesn't understand the permitting process.

Robert asked about MegaBus. Gail said that the FQMD's Infrastructure Committee's proposal about using Union Passenger Station had finally been adopted and that MegaBus had moved its illegal terminal on Elysian Fields to UPT. Steve thanked Gail for her efforts.

Steve said that he's had several conversations lately about NOLA Patrol and their ineffectiveness at enforcement. He said that the Mayor's office has asked that NOLA Patrol be given until the end of the year. Mia said the only time she's seen them is driving around in vans. Gail noted that with the amount of funding NOLA Patrol receives, the City could fund twice as many FQTF patrols. Robert said that FQBA is continuing to poll its membership. Jeremy said that this idea came from the Mayor, so by God it was going to happen.

X. Report by Chairs, Security Task Force

Bob presented. Bob indicated that 70% of app calls are about street people. Robert said that Commander Walls has stated that NOPD is discouraged to deal with this, and it completely exhausts officers. Bob said that street people don't need to go to jail because they're not criminals, but they know how to handle the system. Bob said that the Task Force has been focused on it, and all the officers can do is move them along. Most street people comply. Jeremy said that at 8:45am, many people are out with signs, and NOPD no longer sees them. Mia said that the Polaris drive right past street people. Robert asked if Bob had any ideas how we break this deadlock. Bob said that he believes a low barrier shelter is the solution; one worked in San Antonio. Robert said that he met with Kurt Weigle, and it might be 2-3 years before New Orleans has a low-barrier shelter. Robert expressed concern that BB St. Roman's plan was dead. Bob disagreed and said that her plan can be pulled off in six months once a building is purchased. Robert asked if hers was a sellable plan. Bob discussed her grants' components, including letters of support from French Quarter businesses. Jeremy asked if it was possible to have 60 consecutive days of enforcement; Gail suggested that NOLA Patrol do this. Mia indicated that the consent decree changed the ordinance in favor of vagrants. Bob said that problem began when the underpass closed. Jim suggested that the Louisiana State Police, given the amount of money and in-kind donations they had been given, be empowered to remove street people. Jeremy asked what Commander Walls thought about the problem and whether NOPD's numbers had improved. Bob said that the night shift at the 8th District is shockingly low. Robert said that this is a broken promise in the CEA between FQMD and the City. Bob said that the Task Force and troopers are well integrated. Robert suggested that there be one roll call for LSP and NOPD. Bob disagreed and said that it's a work in progress. Bob said that LSP was also mad about the oversized trucks and pedicabs breaking traffic laws. Steve said that we need to change the formula. Brian questioned Walls's reluctance. Bob said that the Mayor doesn't allow public distribution of deployment or activity data. Brian indicated that the CEA gives hotels a great deal of leverage. Steve said the City has to live up to its expectations.

Albin said that the Polaris go too fast down his street. Bob said that the point of the FQTF is to proactively patrol and to deter crime. Mia suggested that slower driving would result in a more proactive patrol. Bob said that sometimes patrols are going to back up someone else, because there is often not another 8th District person to back an officer up.

Robert asked when FQMD would run out of money for Bourbon Patrols. Bob said in six weeks.

Robert asked about the EDD. Meg said that they were overall supportive. She said that the residents' groups don't want to give any reason to the City to retract services further. Susan said that lots of people don't understand the quarter for the Quarter. Jeremy asked if the residents' groups had taken a position. Meg said no, that the administration needs to sell the administration's plan. Albin said he worried that this is going into Mitch's magic chest unless there was a specific commitment in writing.

XI. New Business

Albin said that short-term rentals 13 years ago were a nuisance and now it is a cancer on the French Quarter. Short-term rentals are affecting businesses, and musicians and service industry employees are not able to rent. Albin said that we have laws that the Mayor has refused to enforce. Albin stated that people who intend to short-term rent are now buying up Treme. He stated that there are 3800 properties on Airbnb in New Orleans, and these properties are not regulated to ensure safety (like functional fire alarms) or to pay taxes. Albin said that French Quarter employees have been pushed

out to New Orleans East, and they will only come to work until they get a new job closer to their home. Robert asked if Stacy Head's proposal was dead in the water. Susan said that all of the problems are not addressed in Head's proposal. Carol said that there is a public comment meeting set for September 29, and then Head may write a new ordinance. Carol expressed concern that short-term rentals take affordable housing off the market. Meg suggested that attendees look at insideairbnb.com and NOLarentalreport.com. Jim said that he had recently attended a hotel industry conference during which the president of Airbnb presented; the hotel industry has resigned to figure out how to work in concord with short-term rentals, since they are here to stay.

Fred Radtke discussed Operation Clean Sweep. He indicated that Feral and Reznor have been active in the French Quarter and other communities. He said that he would like to offer a graffiti abatement program to FQMD.

XII. Future meetings

The next meeting will be October 5 from 2-4pm.

XIII. Adjournment

Robert moved to adjourn at 3:35pm. Mia seconded. The meeting adjourned.