

French Quarter Management District
Security Task Force Meeting – 3pm on September 16, 2015
Antoine’s Restaurant

Introductions of Attendees

List of attendees provided at end of notes.

Introduction of Guest Speaker, Lt. Joseph Piglia, Louisiana State Police.

Lt. Piglia advised that LSP deployment strategy in the French Quarter is always evolving and adjusting. It’s a handpicked deployment that always takes a proactive stance, and they work in pairs (not what troopers usually do). Staffing is lighter Mon-Wed (minimum of 14). More troopers from up north are taken in for the heavier days, Thurs-Sun, placing a minimum of 2-3/block on Bourbon and several vehicles patrolling the Quarter. They are not present 24 hours; would be spread too thin for that much coverage. Additionally, one Polaris vehicle circles the Quarter, and two units are stationed pro-actively in Marigny.

Troopers work closely with Cmdr. Walls, and are pushing a lot of violent crime out of the area. Stats since March 23: 1,174 arrests, 424 narcotics, 111 weapons seizures. Also, working with NOPD they have recovered 156 stolen vehicles. They present their weekly reports at the Comstat meetings.

Lt. Piglia introduced Mark Fontenot, head of the LSP Plain Clothes Division. They have a presence of 2-4 on weekdays, increasing to 8-10 on weekends, focusing on 8th District and Quarter surrounds. They are able to work citywide when a situation calls for it, i.e. following out of the Quarter to make an arrest.

LSP handles many traffic violations, which actually are utilized as a tool for discovery of other criminal activity, such as illegal drugs and weapons. Lt. Piglia also acknowledged there are many other FQ problems, i.e. homeless and mentally impaired vagrants, but LSP (like NOPD) have run into roadblocks with processing into jail. Since there is no place to keep them, they are right back out on the streets.

LSP want the public to pass along their concerns – they have been given strict orders to not discount any request, although some must be passed along to NOPD.

Pete Wypyszinski inquired if their Comstat report can be requested if unable to attend the meeting – YES. He also inquired as to specific drug types. Lt. Piglia reported more heroin than cocaine; marijuana and meth predominant, although everything is seen.

Contacts: Joseph.piglia@LA.gov and Mark.fontenot@LA.gov.

Ellie Christakis, owner of Mena's Palace restaurant at Chartres/Iberville, generated much discussion by relating stories about the early morning world of prostitutes and pimps around 100 blocks of the Quarter, still on the streets at 9:00 AM, preying on tourists. This prompted Officer Pierre to propose setting up a sting operation (complete with officers posing as prostitutes).

We also discussed the continuing frustration over vagrants sleeping in doorways, and Rouses' ineffectual security in 700 block of Royal. Bob reminded that the public is welcome to voice their concerns at Comstat and NONPACC, weekly reporting meetings that are also used for citizens to make NOPD aware of situations.

Economic Development District (EDD)

Bob explained how the current security presence cannot last forever, which is why the EDD was developed with the Mayor's Office to create a sustainable revenue source to pay for troopers. But more is needed. **IF** the EDD vote is passed, the hospitality industry will match for permanent trooper presence (5 years), as well as funding the FQ Task Force. Proposed is a .0249% sales tax in the FQMD area, a small amount for residents, with cost borne mostly by tourists. Chart shown with example calculations.

Binding documentation, a CEA with the City, needs to state precisely where the tax monies will be directed. At present the CEA is unsigned, subject to change. Much concern by all that the City has not yet planned a public meeting to educate the (confused) residents about the tax. This is the responsibility of the City; Ryan Berni has stated it would be scheduled, but it needs to be done soon.

Note: Subsequent to the meeting the CEA was released (attached) and FQMD announced it would cohost a public forum on October 6 at 6pm in the Grand Saloon of the Royal Orleans Hotel, 621 St Louis Street.

NOPD Staffing

Bob reminded that NOPD's staffing level five years ago was 1600 and has fallen to less than 1100 today. It will take 5+ years to rebuild the ranks of the NOPD so it's critical that the EDD vote passes and allow the LSP and FQ Task Force to continue. A detailed chart was shown that reflected more police coverage in the French Quarter than for many years.

FQ Crime Maps

Charts showed upticks in July and August, typical for summer. The trend for September was good compared to previous years; Bob noted that NOPD is good at solving crimes.

Low Barrier Shelter

Photos shown of vagrants, sleepers in doorways, etc. Majority of app calls are concerning these type problems; Royal St. particularly bad in 100, 200 and 700 blocks. NOPD can move them along but the problem just moves to another block. Ongoing problems at the jail make officers unwilling to arrest these types of individuals. Bob believes the answer is BB St. Roman's vision for a low barrier shelter, a controlled environment where any person will be accepted no matter his condition. "Crescent City Village" could handle 200-250 people/day. This would at least alleviate some of the pressures on the street. Cmdr. Walls has repeatedly stated if there were a low-barrier facility to take some people, it would allow NOPD to better address the remaining street problems. BB is working on finding grants; she feels it needs to be done privately, not by the City. About \$50,000/month would be needed for operating expenses. Three possible sites have been scouted; best is located near Poydras/Galvez, and would cost \$1 million to purchase. The 24/7 facility would be set up as a indoor tent system, having social workers, individual privacy tents, lockers, a air conditioned lounge, and 24/7 security.

FQ Task Force

- Several charts shown detailing shifts, times, names, etc.
- Polaris' presently have 25,000 miles on them.
- Criminals now using the app to send police the wrong way, but Task Force GPS tracker helps detect bogus reports.
- Proactive patrols are the key - map showing proactive patrols by zone. (NOPD does not have enough staff do such patrols.)
- Many times someone is stopped for a minor violation that results in discovery of outstanding warrants.

Bourbon Street Pilot Program.

- Charts showing shifts, times, names, etc. – fully staffed in first week.
- Chart shown with record of arrests – plan to step it up.
- This patrol are required to wear baseball caps to differentiate between regular on duty NOPD and FQ Task Force (so that Bourbon St. business sponsors can recognize).

Second Line for Safety

Bryan Drude, President of French Quarter Advocates, announced that his organization's annual fundraiser would contribute 100% of proceeds to the FQ Task Force. "Second Line for Safety" will take place on Saturday, October 3, in Congo Square in Armstrong Park. Donors can start meeting there between 11 AM and 1 PM, then depart Congo Square at 1 PM to second line through the FQ, returning to Congo Square to enjoy live music and purchase beer, water and food from food trucks. Cost is \$25 for FQA members, \$40 for non-members. Registration/donating will be set up on FQA's website, as for a race. Go to www.FQAnola.org to register and learn more about the event.

Meeting adjourned.

ATTENDEES:

Members: Chairperson Bob Simms, Bev Fulk, Emily Remington

Guests: Lt. Joey Piglia, Mark Fontenot, Ann Kessler, Brittany Mulla, Pete Wypyszinski, Robin Weiss, Bryan Drude, Meg Lousteau, Ellie Christakis, Officer Alicia Pierre, Lawrence Callender

NEXT MEETING: October 21, 2015 at 3 PM – Antoine's.

Notes compiled by Beverly Fulk and reviewed by Bob Simms.