

Thursday, March 2, 2017; 10-11am

Bienville House Hotel, Vieux Carre Room

320 Decatur Street

New Orleans

**Security and Enforcement Committee Meeting Notes**

The meeting was called to order at 10:06am.

Committee members present:

S. Caputo (tardy)

A. Guillot

D. McComsey

B. McGovern

R. Simms

R. Watters

Committee members absent:

B. Fulk

A. Kesler

V. Marcello

M. Tilbury

J. Zimmermann

Guests included:

Emily Remington, FQMD Executive Director

Jenna Burke

Gail Cavett

Bryan Drude

Ethan Ellestad

Brian Fitzpatrick

Pam Fortner

Bob Freilich

Brad Giacone

Susan Guillot

Daniel Hammer

Hannah Krieger Benson

Meg Lousteau

Terry Scriber

Jesse Sewell

Remington gave an overview of progress made with the CEA and stated her hope that it will be ready for the Board to approve in March. Simms noted that the G4S contract would be renewed for an additional 60 days in order to have administrative coverage of the FQTF until the CEA was signed.

A. Guillot stated that he observed traffic jams both weekends of Mardi Gras. Attendees discussed the need for more off street parking. Simms observed traffic was better the second weekend; his stated that the people manning the barricades the first weekend were Sewerage & Water Board employees who were new to this assignment and seemed to let everyone or nobody in. Simms stated that a former plan was implemented for the second weekend, using officers from Angola and other prison facilities.

Simms stated that a full closure was in place from Friday until Mardi Gras Day, with access points placed further out. Drude said it was a good thing to see as a trial for Bourbon becoming a pedestrian mall. Discussion continued; general consensus was that cars and people shouldn’t be mixed on the same street, and locals not coming to the Quarter is a sense that the Quarter isn’t safe.

Watters stated that a comprehensive parking plan for the Quarter is a keystone to progress in the Quarter. Discussion continued about the complete gridlock that All Star weekend caused, and attendees stated concern about emergency vehicles being able to navigate traffic.

Krieger Benson asked if there was any deliberate or concerted effort about to how to educate people on the changes. Watters stated that the streets became a congested area without exit and suggested limited access on Decatur and Rampart and large significant signage before drivers enter the morass.

Conversation about traffic congestion continued. Cavett remarked her pleasure with traffic being the worst effect of Mardi Gras on the Quarter.

Remington asked how the traffic had affected business. Watters stated that new records had been hit, and they would track the amount of local traffic via credit cards. Simms stated that when NOPD releases data, they will show it was a very good couple of weeks for crime. Unfortunately, there were hundreds of pickpocket cases, as professional pickpocketers come in from out of town. McGovern noted that scammers were out on Decatur in full force both weekends. Watters and A. Guillot observed that it was a nicer, gentler, happier crowd. Simms conjectured that word had gotten out that if you came to the Quarter, you’d see a lot of police presence; he observed that LSP had had a significant presence.

S. Guillot asked if the fire department had a contingency plan for when the traffic is so bad. Watters suggested the Committee meet with the fire chief to discuss their plan.

Simms suggested “where are the best places for barricades?” become a project for this Committee, perhaps in conjunction with the Infrastructure Committee. Watters stated that the broad brush policies are proposed and then suddenly implemented without any transparency. Cavett concluded that the Mayor’s administration has a top down approach that does not gather information from the community its policies are affecting. She stated that most people in City Hall don’t live or work in the FQ, so they don’t know what they don’t know.

Watters asked why is the DDD and Pinnacle getting involved in Jackson Square and stated his concern that the FQMD was not included in conversations about how to protect Jackson Square. Attendees expressed concern about the NOPD use of overtime as a long-term solution to manpower issues.

Discussion continued that concluded that we need further education from the City on the Mayor’s plan to secure Jackson Square and where FQMD Committees could assist. Attendees discussed the vagrancy issue and agreed that vagrants are bad for business and for residents.

Simms brought up the issue of lighting; Cavett provided insight for the VCC guidelines creation and implementation.

Watters moved that January 2017 notes be approved. Simms seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Watters suggested that the FQMD Committees host a combined meeting to bring the appropriate parties from City Hall to present clarifications to the Mayor’s proposed plan. A. Guillot suggested that the fire marshal be present, too.

Simms offered a summary of the French Quarter Task Force statistics from January 2017, including the number of miles patrolled, number of arrests, number of app calls, and staffing percentages. 18% of app calls in January came from the 700 block of Royal; 15% came from the 900 block of St. Louis. Attendees discussed the presence of vagrants and drug dealers. Simss discussed new updates for the FQTF app and then discussed G4S’s effects on the administrative management. Drude stated that the French Quarter Advocates have purchased a Smart Car to donate to the FQTF.

Meeting adjourned at 11:31am.