

Notes Government Affairs Committee Meeting

Wednesday, 22 July 2020
2:10 to 3:40pm

Via Teleconference:

<https://meetings.ringcentral.com/j/2047589217>

Meeting ID:

204 758 9217

Video:

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Audio:

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- I. CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 2:10 pm and the agenda was read into the record.
ROLL CALL:

Committee Members			
First Name	Last Name	Present	Absent
David	Bilbe	X	
Sherry	Cannon	X	
Jane	Cooper	X	
Jeremy	DeBlieux	X	
Brian	Furness	X	
Juliet	Laughlin	X	
Brittany	McGovern	X	
Christian	Pendleton	X	
Kim	Rosenberg	X	
Frank	Zumbo	X	

INTRODUCTION OF ATTENDEES:

Guests		
First Name	Last Name	Role
Karley	Frankic	Executive Director
Erin	Holmes	VCPOA
Gail	Cavett	Commissioner
Robert	Simms	Resident
Chris	Young	FQBL
Matthew	Emory	Commissioner
Sue	Klein	Commissioner

- II. Public Comment: Anyone who wishes to comment on actionable items must announce their name for the recording and indicate the item(s) on which s/he wishes to comment.
- III. Approval of June 2020 meeting notes (action item)
- Ms. Cooper moved to approve the previous meeting notes, Mr. Pendleton seconded the motion, and the motion was approved.
- IV. Update from on state funding efforts by Jeremy DeBlieux & Juliet Laughlin
- Mr. DeBlieux & Ms. Laughlin stated that they had nothing new to report.
- V. Discussion of the French Quarter Economic Development District Sales Tax
- Mr. DeBlieux reported that he, Mr. Pendleton, and Ms. Frankic had had several conference calls with the City Administration and District C regarding the renewal of the French Quarter Economic Development District (FQ

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EDD) sales tax. And thus far, the Administration is unwilling move off their position to renew the sales tax, have all of the funds under their control, and use the funds their non-post certified patrol as well as some NOPD details. FQMD has asked the Administration to increase the number of post certified police officers and to have FQMD to be the administrative arm of the program. The Administration did not agree but said they would take it into consideration. There is another call scheduled for today at 4:00pm. In the interim FQMD has heard from the appointing entities of most of the board of commissioners and they are all adamant that the funds from the FQ EDD sales tax renewal to come to FQMD. We will know more from our 4:00 pm meeting today.

Ms. Cooper asked if any discussion about the Louisiana State Police (LSP) Troop N was being considered to be retained in the French Quarter by the City? Mr. DeBlieux said no.

Mr. Emory said that in his conversation with the Mayor's office, they are inclined to provide 5 key points on the call today that provides significant oversight to the FQMD, with respect to the accountability and deployment of these funds. FQMD will not be in possession of the funds but will have oversight as to how the funds are deployed, with recourse mechanisms if they are not deployed in the manner in which we have negotiated with them. We need to look at the details of their proposal. But FQMD needs to reevaluate the need to have possession of the funds. \$1.2M is allocated to security and anything over that amount the Mayor's office will allow FQMD on an annual basis to develop a Quality of Life expenditures and determine how the money will be spent. Mr. Emory said that is what will be presented on today's call. Mr. DeBlieux has noted that the City has refused to comply with the CEA with New Orleans & Company in returning funds are required by the Agreement. This put promises from the City in question.

Mr. Pendleton reported that he has been informed by the Louisiana Restaurant Association (LRA) that they will not only not support but will actively fight against the renewal unless the money is to come to FQMD. The reasons are 1. The history of the City is promises without no follow through. This is not exclusive to this administration. 2. The idea of starting another administrative security force that cannot improve or sustain the property values of the residents, or the security of the businesses of the French Quarter is a non-starter, and 3. The outright refusal of the City to negotiate in good faith what is clearly the will of the people that live and work in the French Quarter. 4. It is a common belief that the City will be in an economic hole next year and for some years to come and the LRA believes that the City will take the sales tax money and use it for other purposes despite promises.

Mr. Simms said that when the FQMD Supplemental Police Patrol Program (SPPP) was started things in the French Quarter were not good for security. The combination of the LSP, the SPPP and NOPD that made the French Quarter much safer. The supplemental part of that is LSP roughly 200 hours/day, the SPPP with 50 hours/day, the Royal Street Patrol with 10 hours/day, and the French Market Patrol with 20 hours/day. That is 280 hours/day of police protection. What we are talking about now is 24 hours/day in the Mayor's proposal. Whatever oversight, we will end up right back where we were before without enough police in the French Quarter. And when you talk 2 or 3 officers is irrelevant. The big driver today is the LSP with over 200 hours/ day. We have a safety problem coming up. Mr. DeBlieux noted that there has not been evidence that those hours have been staffed as patrols within the French Quarter.

Mr. Emory noted that when Inspector General caught a discrepancy, there was no effort to make an adjustment or to provide further details. He remarked that NOPD has said that the FQ EDD has been a benefit to them, but we cannot be just turning over dollars to them. Also, we know that LSP has been sued for activities that they have engaged in within the French Quarter for unlawful detention of citizens.

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Mr. Simms said that the French Quarter is paying for 280 hours of post-certified officers. The Mayor proposes 24 hours and that is a huge difference. Mr. DeBlieux noted that Mayor's plan also includes non-post certified officers as well. Mr. Simms responded that this is still not relevant to helping NOPD not being able to expand their ranks and we need additional post-certified officers. Mr. DeBlieux agreed.

Ms. Laughlin commented that Mr. Simms was most experienced to talk on the matter. Unless the officers are post-certified, they do not have the power to arrest. They would be customer services reps with no power to enforce the law. So a drastic reduction in post-certified officers is a big deal. She compared the plan to the security in Times Square in New York with no power to enforce the law. Soon people will figure that out and its pointless to have those security guards. She noted that she has heard from her neighbors that they are happy with LSP. The person she would like to have speak to the committee is LSP.

Mr. Bilby said that Hotel Association has always supported FQMD and he can't imagine that they would not going forward. Their board meets next week and that when they will take any action to support any funds going through FQMD. He noted that as the City built this budget is unlikely that this sales tax will generate the amount is has historically based on where they see business levels for the future, not just through the end of this year. So, any program budget built around a number that has any reference to the historical collections is foolish.

Ms. Klein said that when she was reviewing what went before the City Council (FQ EDD Governing Authority) the original language was for sales tax and the final language was for sales tax and or ad valorem tax and that needs to be clarified. Mr. DeBlieux said that he hoped that the stakeholders would be heard on all of the language on the ordinance and the ballot. Ms. Frankic clarified that the language Ms. Klein was referring to was from the legislation that authorizes the FQ EDD Governing Authority to collect a tax. It was not ballot language. That will be approved at the August 20th meeting. The Governing Authority Notice of Intent approved in July was the first step to applying for approval at the State Bond Commission. It is imperative upon our stakeholders that our elected officials in the Administration, the City Council, and the state legislators that sit on the Bond Commission understand what the stakeholders want to see in that ballot language. Mr. DeBlieux said that one of those things is that this needs to sunset in five years.

Mr. Simms said that the ballot language should include the language "to hire post-certified police officers". He is not going to vote for hiring another version on NOLA Patrol. It has to be post-certified that the money is spent on. He is not against the plan the Mayor proposed, he just thinks that sales tax money needs to be spent on post certified officers. Ms. Rosenberg, Ms. Klein Ms. Laughlin and Ms. Cannon all agreed. Mr. DeBlieux agreed and that the money needs to come to FQMD to assure that this is how moneys are spent. Ms. Cooper and Mr. Furness agreed.

Ms. Rosenberg and Ms. Klein recapped that the four points that the committee discussed are 1. No ad valorem taxes are raised 2. The sales tax has to come to FQMD 3. That the funds be used to hire post-certified officers, and 4. There is a five-year sunset on the sales tax. Mr. DeBlieux said that he did not think that we should restrict the funds to just hiring post certified officers we need to be careful how we word this because we may want to use some of that money for administrative purposes. If this going to be the funding pay for the SPPP so that a professional can be hired to replace Mr. Simms and allow him to step back. Ms. Rosenberg agreed.

Ms. Cannon asked if the City does not compromise on the FQMD role what is the fall back plan? Mr. DeBlieux suggested that if he ballot measure fails, then FQMD could work on a new ballot measure that would be acceptable to the voters.

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VI. New Business

No new business was discussed

VII. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting will be Wednesday, August 12th

VIII. Adjournment

Ms. Cooper made the motion to adjourn and Mr. Furness seconded the motion. The meeting will be adjourned at 2:55 pm.