

**MINUTES OF
LAKEFRONT MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY
RECREATION/SUBDIVISION SPECIAL COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY, MARCH 16, 2021**

PRESENT: Chair Robert Romero
Vice Chair Esmond Carr
Commissioner Stan Brien
Commissioner Eugene Green
Commissioner Dawn Hebert

STAFF: Louis Capo – Executive Director
Madison Bonaventure – Assistant to the Executive Director
Daniel Hill – Director of Engineering & Operations

PUBLIC: Jay Baudier– Lake Vista Property Owners Association
Capt. Michael Brenckle – OLDPD
Ann Duffy– Lake Oaks Resident
Wilma Heaton – LMA Chair
Brian Hope- Lakeshore Property Owners Association
Nathan Junius– Lake Vista Property Owners Association
Tom Long– Lake Vista Resident
Supt. Kerry Najolia – OLDPD
Rick Mickler- Resident
John Skinner– Lake Oaks Resident

The Recreation/Subdivision Committee of the Lakefront Management Authority met on Tuesday, March 16, 2021, in the Lakefront Airport Terminal Building, 2nd Floor Conference Center, 6001 Stars and Stripes Blvd., New Orleans, Louisiana.

Chair Romero called the meeting to order at 4:40 p.m. and Commissioner Brien led in the pledge of allegiance. Louis Capo, Executive Director, called the roll, and a quorum was present.

Opening Comments:

Chair Romero recounted some issues with tree permitting in Lake Vista. He reminded residents that certain tree work required a permit from the LMA and commented on the negative impact of the loss of oak trees.

He reminded the Committee that an outside architectural firm reviews house plans for the LMA’s Letter of No Objection process. He proposed that the LMA incorporate tree protection as part of the process for all neighborhoods.

He said he and Director Capo met with Mr. Cleveland Spears to discuss locating one of his current festivals to the lakefront in October of 2021. He complimented Mr. Spears on his past successes with festivals and large-scale events.

Motion to Adopt Agenda:

A motion was offered by Commissioner Green, seconded by Commissioner Hebert, and was unanimously approved, to adopt the agenda.

Motion to Approve Minutes:

A motion was offered by Commissioner Brien, seconded by Commissioner Hebert, and unanimously adopted, to approve the minutes from the February 9, 2021 meeting.

Public Comments:

Brian Hope, of Lakeshore Property Owners Association, inquired if there was a program to track and replant lost oak trees. Chair Romero responded that there was no program or budget implemented through the LMA for oak trees.

Commissioner Hebert confirmed that Save Our Urban Landscape (SOUL) was a non-profit that had participated in those efforts.

Chair Heaton added that trees were planted as part of the Southeast Flood Protection Authority – East’s (FPA) Seawall Erosion Project along the lakefront for erosion mitigation efforts.

Mr. Jim Moriarty gave an update on behalf of the Ancient Order of the Hibernians of Louisiana, Inc:

- He announced that the following day was St. Patrick’s Day, and the group would be laying a wreath in remembrance of the deceased Irishmen at a socially distanced ceremony.
- The Superdome would be lit green in celebration of the holiday.
- The group had applied for Capital Outlay funds again and would be participating in GiveNOLA Day.
- They were pursuing grants through the Irish government in hopes of producing a film on the topic of the New Basin Canal construction.
- The group wanted to launch an initiative to sell bricks and pavers to fund the construction of the park.

Chair Romero thanked Mr. Moriarty and said if the Committee was comfortable, Mr. Moriarty should give reports quarterly as opposed to monthly. There were no objections.

Director’s Report:

Director Capo said staff had planned for increased trash pick-up for the Easter holiday weekend. He said that pick-up teams would be on site the Saturday before Easter, and there would be an increase in teams on the following Monday.

Director Capo explained that in response to demand, staff ordered port-o-lets to increase restroom facilities along the lakefront.

Chair Romero said the LMA was contacted by WWL reporter Paul Murphy regarding the condition of shelters. He explained that the photos he had from his source were of a shelter that had been padlocked due to its inoperability, so the shelter must have been vandalized by

someone for the person to have gained access to take the photographs. He reminded the Committee that LMA maintenance crews address instances of vandalism often, and shelters were also often damaged from repeated flooding events.

Daniel Hill, Director of Engineering and Operations, showed a slideshow of projects in progress. He explained that the brackets for the lakefront benches were finally being shipped after being custom made at a machinist shop, and maintenance crews would soon be repairing the benches as a result.

He announced that staff was not taking shelter renovations based on COVID-19 restrictions and current cost of booking. The daily rate for a shelter rental on the lakefront was set at \$300. He said staff was exploring a rate increase as other public institutions, such as City Park, charged upwards of \$800 for shelters.

He showed photographs of the flooded Shelter No. 1 due to Hurricane Zeta conditions (approximately eight feet). He said staff was working to get all the shelters in operation and were exploring flood mitigation efforts if possible. He added that the FPA was also investigating why the area east of Shelter No. 1 was holding a significant amount of water after flooding events.

He explained that water service was damaged at one time at Shelter No. 4 rendering restrooms inoperable, and approximately two to three feet of water flooded it due to Hurricane Zeta as well. He said other items such as the roof, hot water heater, and painted exterior needed to be addressed as well.

Mr. Hill explained that the Mardi Gras Fountain was operating, but the lighting display was malfunctioning due to a faulty computer system which needed to be replaced.

Old Business:

1) Update on the Lakeshore Drive (L-05 to Shelter 1) Roadway Configuration Project.

Director Capo said that the LMA had received an update from the FPA's engineering department:

On March 15, 2021 they issued notice to proceed to the selected contractor. The duration for the project would be about 120 days, and the scheduled completion date was July 13, 2021. The contractor would be mobilizing that week, and on-site work would begin once the traffic control plan was approved by the FPA engineering department.

Commissioner Hebert asked who initiated the project.

Director Capo confirmed that the FPA initiated it as it was their project.

Commissioner Hebert said she believed the project was a taxpayer funded traffic jam.

Director Capo said staff had requested that someone from the FPA be available at the Board Meeting to discuss the traffic management plan.

Chair Romero said he understood there were many complaints about speeding on Lakeshore Drive and concern for pedestrian safety.

Commissioner Hebert offered that there was so much traffic on weekends that it would be impossible to speed.

Chair Romero said he did not want to exclude anyone from visiting Lakeshore Drive.

Commissioner Hebert believed flashing lights and stop lights would enhance safety.

Director Capo understood that the roadway reconfiguration would include those items.

Commissioner Hebert asked why the Shelter No. 1 parking lot was closed.

Captain Brenckle said the Shelter No. 1 parking lot had been closed for concern about public safety since the shelter house was damaged.

Mr. Hill said it was his understanding it was closed after Hurricane Zeta due to a large amount of debris in the parking lot itself and informed Captain Brenckle that the shelter's damage had been contained.

Commissioner Hebert requested that the parking lot be reopened. Captain Brenckle acknowledged her request.

2) Update on potential festival, produced by the Spears Group, along Lakeshore Drive near Shelter 3 (Fall 2021).

Chair Romero explained that he and Director Capo had met with Mr. Cleveland Spears again, and Mr. Spears wanted to move one of his successful festivals to the lakefront as opposed to introducing a new festival as originally planned.

He said the festival would be free to the public and would include musical acts and food vendors. He said legal considerations and security plans needed to be further discussed before staff would accept the location agreement.

Director Capo said Mr. Spears would be reaching out to the Lake Oaks President Phalon Cornist. Commissioner Carr thanked him for the consideration and offered that Mr. Spears could attend the next Lake Oaks meeting.

Commissioner Hebert inquired about parking for the festival.

Chair Romero advised that Mr. Spears was planning parking arrangements with the UNO Lakefront Arena.

Director Capo said it was staff's goal to bring the item to Board at the April Board Meeting.

Commissioner Green concurred that the event would be a success, and he thought the location's zoning was appropriate.

New Business:

1) Discussion regarding preparations for the Easter holiday weekend on Lakeshore Drive.

OLDPD Supt. Kerry Najolia introduced himself to the Committee. He said explained that he and his team have needed to increase coverage for Easter weekend each year and would be needed especially this year as visitation at the lakefront has been historically high. He likened the crowd volume at the lakefront on Easter weekend to a Mardi Gras parade.

He informed the Committee that the past two weeks had been very busy, and the Sunday crowds were volumes they were used to seeing on pre-coronavirus pandemic holidays.

He said that his department, in collaboration with other partners such as Louisiana State Police and NOPD mounted police (supplied by the LMA), would have 50 officers detailed to Lakeshore Drive.

He thanked the Commissioners and Director Capo for supplying the mounted police in the past because they were very helpful at busy intersections.

He explained that officers would be in different vehicles such as bicycles, ATVs, and motorcycles for accessibility to various areas; some officers would be roving while others would be stationary. He said that the officers had many years of experience with other departments and are accustomed to managing large crowds. He said in previous years he has been with OLDPD they had no injuries on Easter weekend.

He stressed that OLDPD's primary concern was the abundance of traffic that inhibits responses to emergencies; though, he said that slow speeds do keep pedestrians safe, and he was hopeful that the new roadway reconfiguration would aid in moving pedestrians north and south safely.

Commissioner Hebert expressed concern over the traffic conditions that the roadway reconfiguration construction and results may cause.

Supt. Najolia said it was his understanding that the engineering design was focused on pedestrian safety for those going to and from restaurants, condos, and recreation areas. He informed her that he had not yet seen the final design, but offered that slower traffic was beneficial to pedestrian safety.

Commissioner Hebert asked what Supt. Najolia thought would happen after the project was complete. Supt. Najolia could not confirm but informed her that his team would do their best to manage traffic and crowds.

Commissioner Hebert asked if the department had any incidents when managing the crowds.

Supt. Najolia said they have not had major incidents when managing crowds but did have a shooting on Mother's Day about two years before, and the perpetrator was apprehended.

Commissioners Hebert and Green discussed other traffic issues involving OLDPD with Supt Najola.

Announcement of next Regular Recreation/Subdivision Committee Meeting:

- 1) **Tuesday, April 13, 2021– 4:30 P.M.**

Adjourn:

A motion was offered by Commissioner Green, seconded by Commissioner Brien, and unanimously adopted, to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 6:02 P.M.