



**BATON ROUGE NORTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT
REGULAR BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

Thursday, April 20, 2023, at 12:00 noon
BREC Administration Building 6201 Florida Blvd.
Baton Rouge, LA 70806

Attendees:

Tasha Clarke-Amar, Chairwoman
Gary Chambers, Vice-Chair
Dr. James Gilmore, Board Member
William Pizzolotta, Board Member
Stephanie Cargile, Treasurer
Dr. Eugene Johnson, Board Member
Terra Williams, Board Member

Board Staff:

April Hawthorne, Executive Director
Melvin Davis, Board CPA
Nashon Route, Esq. – Board Attorney
Nikita Parker, Executive Assistant

Absent:

Dr. Leroy Davis, Board Member

Quorum was established for this meeting.

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 12:20pm and welcomed all in attendance.

II. OPENING PRAYER

Prayer was led by Dr. Eugene Johnson.

III. ROLL CALL

Five (5) board members were present at roll call.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: Gary Chambers moved to approve the minutes of the February 16, 2023; meeting as presented. Seconded by Dr. Eugene Johnson. Motion Carried.



VI. AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA

Motion: Gary Chambers moved to amend the order of the agenda so that the finances and other items requiring decision would be discussed first. Seconded by Mrs. Tasha Clarke-Amar. Motion Carried.

VII. FINANCIAL REPORT

Melvin Davis, CPA provided an overview of the financial statements as of December 31, 2022, and March 31, 2023, respectively.

Discussion took place regarding funding for the Façade Signage program, which totaled \$8,039 as of March. It was noted that \$6,500 of that amount was previously approved for program recipients. The Board directed that as much of the remaining funds as possible be allocated to the recipient business and asked that Management explore low cost options to market the program.

Motion: Gary Chambers moved to adopt the December 31, 2022, and March 31, 2023, Financial Statements as presented. Seconded by Dr. Gilmore. Motion Carried.

Mr. Davis walked the Board through the 2023 Proposed Operating Budget, noting that since the budget was adopted for public inspection in February, further review was undertaken and an additional \$60,598 in cost savings identified. This brings the total deficit to \$47,982. The need to increase and diversify funding sources, including unrestricted funds, to ensure financial sustainability of the organization was highlighted.

Mr. Davis reported that there was one minor change to the 2022 Amended Budget that was adopted for public inspection in February. This is reflected in the actual expenditures and did not substantially change the budget totals.

Motion: Gary Chambers moved to adopt the 2022 Amended Budget and the proposed 2023 Operating Budget as presented. Seconded by Dr. Gilmore. Motion Carried.

VIII. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

a. Joint Executive/Finance Committee Action Report

The Board was asked to consider and ratify actions and recommendations from a joint meeting of the Executive Committee and Finance Committee held on March 28, 2023.



Motion: Dr. Gilmore moved to approve the appointment of Tasha Clarke-Amar to the Board as the Community Developer. Seconded by Terra Williams. Motion Carried.

Motion: Tasha Clarke-Amar moved to approve proposed amendments to increase Executive Director contract for insurance. Seconded by Stephanie Cargile. Motion Carried, with an objection noted by Dr. Gilmore.

Motion: Gary Chambers moved for the approval of the attorney contract for 2023. Seconded by Dr. Gilmore. Motion Carried.

Motion: Gary Chambers moved for the approval of the CPA contract for 2023. Seconded by Dr. Gilmore. Motion Carried.

Motion: Terra Williams moved for the approval of the 2023 employee contract for Nikita Parker. Seconded by William Pizzolato. Motion Carried.

IX. CHAIRWOMAN'S REPORT

a. Committee Appointments

Mrs. Amar reported that committee appointments have been shared with Board Commissioners as part of their meeting packets. Going forward, the Board will meet bimonthly (six times per year), with committee meetings taking place on the alternate month.

X. COMMITTEE REPORTS

There were no committee reports.

XI. PARTNERS REPORT

a. Joshua Combs (BRAC)

Joshua Combs introduced himself as the new Manager of Economic Development at BRAC.

The Board expressed its desire for true partnership between BRAC and BRNEDD; and asked that Mr. Combs consider opportunities for BRAC to provide resources and support for BRNEDD to continue its work and efforts to develop the community. The Board also asked for updates (as appropriate) from BRAC on programs and initiatives of relevance to the North Baton Rouge area.

Mr. Combs shared that efforts are underway to bring a grocery store to the Scotlandville area.

Action #1: Mr. Combs to attend the next BRNEDD meeting to provide an update on ongoing and upcoming activities in the district.



A request was also made for BRAC's continued support in advocating for a minimum wage increase in the state.

b. Senator Barrow

Senator Barrow shared that proposals to increase the minimum wage have been a longstanding item which has not made it out of committee. There is an increasing recognition however, of the challenges in the post-covid era to attract and retain talent across industries at the current minimum wage. It is unclear how long this trend will continue, and so there is hope that this item will make it out of committee this year.

Senator Barrow provided an update on some of the bills on her legislative packet, noting that as it is a fiscal year, tax raising measures cannot be brought forward. Proposed bills include the Baton Rouge North Economic Development Bill, which aims to revise the Board composition, allowing each legislator to have a more of a voice on improvements to their district, and to also bring more development in terms of how people shop and play in the community. Other bills include crime prevention measures and legislation that would allow women who are incarcerated for crimes related to domestic violence to utilize expert testimony in their cases.

It was noted by a member of the Board that previous legislative changes to the composition of the district have created challenges for the functioning of the Board. A request was made for meaningful consultation with the Board around proposed changes, along with community meetings regarding these changes.

XII. NEW BUSINESS

None

XIII. ANNOUNCEMENTS

- a. Financial Disclosures are due on May 16, 2023
- b. Ethics Training due on December 31, 2023
- c. Next Board Meeting Thursday, May 20, 2023

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

Motion: Tasha Clarke-Amar moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by William Pizzolato. Motion Carried.