



**BATON ROUGE NORTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT
REGULAR BOARD MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, October 19, 2023, at 12:00 noon**

Attendees:

Tasha Clark-Amar, Chairwoman
Dr. James Gilmore, Board Member
Dr. Eugene Johnson, Board Member
Anthony Kenney
Myra Richardson

Board Staff:

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

Absent:

William Pizzolota, Board Member
Stephanie Cargile, Treasurer
Terra Williams, Board Member

Quorum was established for this meeting.

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 12:12__pm.

Special welcome was extended to new Board Commissioners Mr. Anthony Kenney and Ms. Myra Richardson, who were also provided an opportunity to introduce themselves.

II. OPENING PRAYER

Prayer was led by Mr. Anthony Kenney.

III. ROLL CALL

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

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

None



V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: Tasha Clark-Amar moved to approve the minutes of the April 20, 2023, meeting as presented. Seconded by Dr. James Gilmore. Motion Carried.

VI. FINANCIAL REPORTS

a. April 2023, May 2023, June 2023, July 2023, August 2023 & September 2023

Melvin Davis, CPA provided an overview of the Financial Reports for April through September 2023, noting that all statements were reviewed by the Finance Committee at its recent meeting. He noted a change in the fund balance for the Façade and Signage Improvement Program which decreased from \$6,692.97 in September to \$1,000 in October.

It was noted that the General Fund Statement and the Special Revenue Funds reflect budget line items with unfavorable variances due to in-year budgetary changes as well as changes in the coding of a number of expenditures. These variances will be corrected during the budget review process currently underway and in accordance with the district's fiscal policies and procedures.

b. June 22, 2023 – Audit Review Findings

Mr. Davis reported that the audit review for the year-ended December 31, 2022, found no significant findings. A CPA will be engaged to conduct the review for 2023, and the engagement letter submitted to the legislative auditor for approval by December 31, 2023.

c. 2023 Budget Amendments & 2024 Proposed Budget Discussion

Work is underway to complete the 2023 Budget amendments as well as the proposed budget for 2024. Both will be brought forward for consideration at the November meeting, and subsequently posted for public inspection ahead of final approval in December.

Motion: Tasha Clark-Amar moved to accept the Financial Report for April through September 2023 as presented. Seconded by Dr. James Gilmore. Motion Carried.

VII. CHAIRWOMAN & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

a. Delta Regional Authority Workforce Development Grant – Board Resolution

The Executive Director reported that an agreement was signed with Delta Regional Authority in July for a \$450,000 grant to establish a decarbonization workforce program at Southern University A&M College. Pending Board approval, work will be undertaken to finalize details regarding the proposed budget and implementation of the grant period,



following which a cooperative agreement will be signed with Southern University.

Motion: Dr. James Gilmore moved to approve the Board Resolution authorizing the Executive Director to execute contracts for professional services for implementation of the Delta Regional Authority Workforce Development Grant. Seconded by Myra Richardson. Motion Carried.

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a. **Cooperative Endeavour Agreement ACT 119 - \$150K**
- b. **Cooperative Endeavour Agreement ACT 170 - \$150K**

The Executive Director reported that tentative approval has been received from the Treasury that would allow both CEAs to be used for real estate acquisition and renovation improvement projects. There is a requirement to expend funds for both CEAs by June 2024.

Discussion took place regarding opportunities to consider existing master plans from organizations such as Southern University, CPEX and others to identify areas of alignment that BRNEDD can support and maximize the use of the funds. A suggestion was made to also consider developers in the immediate area who do self-funding and to explore opportunities to support their work.

Motion: Tasha Clark Amar moved to combine both grants for redevelopment and acquisition within the Baton Rouge North Economic Development District. Seconded by Dr. Eugene Johnson. Motion Carried.

Action #1: Executive Director to circulate the strategic plans for Southern University and CPEX following the meeting.

Action #2: Executive Director to meet with relevant groups and review projects, bringing back recommendations to the Board in November for potential use of the funds.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

- a. **ACT 397 - \$100K Cooperative Endeavor Agreement & Board Resolution for continuing the Façade and Signage Program with a business service initiative**

Motion: Myra Richardson moved to authorize the Executive Director to enter into a \$100,000 Cooperative Endeavour Agreement, and to approve the Board Resolution for continuing the Façade and Signage Program with a business service initiative. Seconded by Anthony Kenney. Motion Carried.



b. Policy discussion re: disabilities

A new public meetings law has been enacted by the state which includes allowance for virtual participation by individuals with disabilities. It was noted that pending adoption of a formal policy, BRNEDD may be able to leverage this to enable Board members who may be ill to participate in meetings. This is particularly important given the ongoing environment with covid and other risk factors.

Motion: Dr. Gilmore moved to direct the Board Attorney to draft a BRNEDD policy aligning with State public meeting law, particularly as it relates to virtual participation in meetings. Seconded by Tasha Clark-Amar. Motion Carried.

X. PARTNER REPORTS

a. Southern University – Office of Strategic Partnerships – Dr. Michael Stubblefield, Southern University A&M, Vice Chancellor

Action #3: Update deferred to November meeting.

b. East Baton Rouge Planning Commission – Future EBR Presentation – Jeffery Leuenberger and Jasmine Thomas

Jeffrey Leuenberger and Jasmine Thomas presented the Board with an update on ongoing efforts to update the comprehensive master plan for the city parish, noting that updates are required every five (5) years to ensure the plan keeps pace with the changing environment. Public outreach has been completed and the plan will be brought forward to the Planning Commission in November, ahead of adoption by Metropolitan Council. A draft version of the document is available online and comments can still be submitted in the interim.

In response to a question raised, it was noted that MyPermitNow – MGO has been transitioned to a fully online platform, which has led to a decrease in the overall processing time for permit approval.

Action #4: Future EBR to send information to the BRNEDD Executive Director on the number of restoration tax abatements that have been given to people in North Baton Rouge.

Discussion took place regarding challenges to the permitting process for tiny homes, as well as provisions to facilitate development of these and other forms of affordable housing.

XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION

a. E.D Performance Review



Copies of the Executive Director performance evaluation was circulated during the meeting to Board members for completion. Forms are to be returned to Dr. Gilmore, Chair of the Personnel Committee and Nashon Route, Board Attorney within the next 14 days. It was noted that the current contract for the Executive Director will expire in August 2024.

Dr. Gilmore reported that a request was received by the Finance Committee from the Executive Director for salary increase. Feedback from the committee indicated the need for a performance review in advance of any considerations regarding a raise.

Action #5: Following receipt of completed forms, Board will hold an Executive Session to discuss the results of the performance evaluation. A meeting will then take place with the Executive Director regarding results and next steps.

Action #6: ED to conduct performance evaluation for Nikita Parker.

XII. ANNOUNCEMENTS

- a. Ethics Training Certification due on December 31, 2023
- b. Parliamentarian Training due December 31, 2023
- c. Next Board Meeting Thursday, November 16, 2023

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion: Tasha Clark-Amar moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Myra Richardson. Motion Carried.