



**Board of Directors**  
**Public Meeting Minutes**  
Thursday, September 20, 2023 | 5:30 PM  
City Council Chambers  
312 E. Charles Street, Hammond, LA 70401

**I. CALL TO ORDER:** John Exnicios

**II. Roll Call:** Michelle Kendall, Executive Director

Todd Delaune	Absent
John Exnicios	Present
Elsbet Hollywood	Present
Chelsea Kessenich	Present
Kali Norton	Present
Cassie Ragan	Present
Evan Singer	Present

**Old Business**

**1. Approval of the July 2023 financial report**

Cassie Ragan made a motion, seconded Kali Norton, to approve the July 2023 financial report

Todd Delaune	Absent
John Exnicios	Yes
Elsbet Hollywood	Yes
Chelsea Kessenich	Yes
Kali Norton	Yes
Cassie Ragan	Yes
Evan Singer	Yes

**Motion carried. Yes: 6 | No: 0 | Abstain: 0 | Absent: 1**

**2. Approval of the August 2023 financial report**

Evan Singer made a motion, seconded by Cassie Ragan, to approve of the August 2023 financial report.

Todd Delaune	Absent
John Exnicios	Yes
Elsbet Hollywood	Yes
Chelsea Kessenich	Yes
Kali Norton	Yes
Cassie Ragan	Yes
Evan Singer	Yes

**Motion carried. Yes: 6 | No: 0 | Abstain: 0 | Absent: 1**



**3. Approval of the meeting minutes from July 19, 2023**

Cassie Ragan made a motion, seconded by Kali Norton, to approve of the meeting minutes from July 19, 2023 as written.

Todd Delaune	Absent
John Exnicios	Yes
Elsbet Hollywood	Abstain
Chelsea Kessenich	Yes
Kali Norton	Yes
Cassie Ragan	Yes
Evan Singer	Yes

**Motion carried. Yes: 5 | No: 0 | Abstain: 1 | Absent: 1**

**4. Approval of the meeting minutes from August 16, 2023**

Elsbet Hollywood made a motion, seconded by John Exnicios, to table the approval of the meeting minutes from August 16, 2023 and vote to approve at the next board meeting on October 18, 2023.

Todd Delaune	Absent
John Exnicios	Yes
Elsbet Hollywood	Yes
Chelsea Kessenich	Yes
Kali Norton	Yes
Cassie Ragan	Yes
Evan Singer	Yes

**Motion carried. Yes: 6 | No: 0 | Abstain: 0 | Absent: 1**

**New Business:**

**1. Approval of loan for Luma Coffee Roasters**

Cassie Ragan made a motion, seconded by Chelsea Kessenich, to approve the loan for Luma Coffee Roasters.

Todd Delaune	Absent
John Exnicios	Yes
Elsbet Hollywood	Yes
Chelsea Kessenich	Yes
Kali Norton	Yes
Cassie Ragan	Yes
Evan Singer	Yes

**Motion carried. Yes: 5 | No: 0 | Abstain: 0 | Absent: 1**



## **2. Design Committee Report (Cassie Ragan)**

### **a. Approval of a façade grant for 305 E Charles St**

Elsbet Hollywood made a motion, seconded by Kali Norton, to approve the façade grant for 305 E Charles St.

<b>Todd Delaune</b>	<b>Absent</b>
<b>John Exnicios</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Elsbet Hollywood</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Chelsea Kessenich</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Kali Norton</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Cassie Ragan</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Evan Singer</b>	<b>Yes</b>

**Motion carried. Yes: 6 | No: 0 | Abstain: 0 | Absent: 1**

## **3. Merchant Meeting Feedback**

Ms. Kendall discussed general feedback received from a downtown merchant meeting held that morning. The meeting was composed of fifteen different business owners to have a group discussion regarding the rebrand of Hot August and future events lined up for the fall. A survey response summary was provided for merchants at the earlier meeting to display overall Hot August results. The same response summary was provided to the board to review.

### **a. Hot August Stroll Recap**

Ms. Kendall recapped the event with the board. Next year, she anticipates making a few adjustments to the annual event such as booking a headlining band that plays a more agreeable genre of music that more people will gravitate to. Mr. Exnicios inquired to know what feedback there was during the slower time period of event, 12pm-3pm. Ms. Kessenich voiced on behalf of her business, Mariner's Inn, they appreciated that specific time frame because it allowed her restaurant and staff to recoup and prepare for the evening. Ms. Kessenich attending the merchant meeting that was held in the morning and informed the group that additional feedback from merchants was that they would enjoy seeing daytime events driven for shops and retail while evening events focused on bars and restaurants. Ms. Norton voiced she likes that direction and would like seeing Hot August be more of a restaurant and bar event while Starry Saturday be more of a shopping and retail event. Ms. Kessenich added that merchants enjoyed Hot August Stroll being on a Saturday but would prefer to see it be an evening focused affair. Starting the Wine & Cheese Stroll later on was also discussed. Ms. Hollywood and Ms. Norton felt there would be a better turn out for children's activities if it was focused more so in the morning due to cooler temperatures. Mr. Ragan informed her business was busy throughout the event but traditionally, the event is not retail focused. Ms. Kendall discussed that there may have been some lack of clarity for event goers and businesses about the events for the day – it was the intention to design the event to be a full-day layout so people could pick and choose what they would like to do and not feel obligated to remain



outside in downtown from the beginning to the end of the event. Ms. Ragan voiced Hot August should be more of a food and music evening event and if retail shops would like to promote specials during the day then they may. Next, downtown parking availability was discussed and how it affected the event as well as businesses. Ms. Kendall and Ms. Kessenich then reiterated why the event was held on a Saturday along with the minor changes such as having Charles Street be closed off. New ideas from the board were discussed such as having the second stage be in Morrison Park, involving the Columbia Theatre for music during a gap period, etc. Ms. Kendall also provided the group with a cost breakdown of the event.

**b. Homecoming / Railroad Roar (October 10th)**

Ms. Kendall informed the group that the DDD is partnering with the Tangipahoa Chamber and SLU Alumni Association to host Railroad Roar together. The storefront spirit contest will be available so businesses may sign up and have a chance to win free marketing as prizes from the contest. Ms. Norton voiced that free marketing as raffled prizes for participation is a great idea for businesses.

**c. Downtown Trick or Treat Village (October 25th)**

Ms. Kendall kicked off the discussion by reiterating that this event has been on an off of the table quite a few times. Partnering with the Louisiana Children's Discovery Center will occur for this year's event. Together, the DDD and LCDC has explored the idea of having a Halloween village be set up in Cate Square Park. After receiving feedback from the merchant meeting, it was decided that there will not be a village set up in Cate Square Park and the event will be formatting as it was in previous years – brick & mortars having the option to participate from their storefront or have a booth set up opportunity in downtown. There was about a 50/50 response from downtown merchants on their favor of the event. The group then discussed how last year's Trick-or-Treat went including the pros and cons. Leann Miller, owner of The Wooden Grove in downtown, then spoke to make a public comment. Ms. Miller voiced her opinion in favor of the event. Ms. Kendall informed the group that Chief Bergeron conveyed that he is in favor of the event and will do what needs to be done to ensure safety of the event. The group then discussed different ideas of the layout of the event and the logistics it would entail. Ms. Hollywood reiterated that the LCDC would take charge of putting on the event so the DDD could be more hands off for it.

**d. Starry Saturday (November 18th)**

Ms. Kendall began going over details of the event such as branding designed by a DDD graphic design intern, keeping the Starry Saturday name, and the run of show for the event. The DDD will be orchestrating the Wine and Cheese walk for the event and may make it smaller and more curated. Next, she discussed details of the Movie Under the Stars at Cate Square Park, organized by the Hammond Rotary. Ms. Kendall will orchestrate a holiday train to be enjoyed by families. Cate Square Park, Railroad Park, and the parking malls will be decorated by the City of Hammond. Ms. Ragan proposed the idea of having the wine and cheese portion be a daytime event to benefit retail merchants. Ms. Kessenich suggested the idea of hot chocolate and cookies be offered during the wine and cheese walk so it could be more family oriented and children would be able to tag along with parents.

**5. Staff Report**

Ms. Kendall informed that the History Exhibit project is in the production phase. The DDD is finishing up state reporting for the project. The exhibit is anticipated to be completed in late fall/early winter. The second round of benches to be installed in Railroad Park are anticipated to be complete





by December 1<sup>st</sup>. The welcome sign project is currently in the city's hands as they search to contract an architect. The sidewalk reimbursement program is undergoing final review and Ms. Kendall anticipates doing direct outreach when it is complete. Holiday promotions, plans to execute an updated Front Porch Project with Kali Norton, and a professional development course offered to Ms. Kendall are a few upcoming anticipated activities. Ms. Kendall has an opportunity to explore other DDA's in the state in October. Ms. Kendall informed that the farmers market has been going swimmingly with Savannah on board as the farmer's market manager. Ms. Kendall is still working on having a separate bank account for the farmers market. New vendors are being added on to the market and a fall fest is being planned for October. Ms. Kessenich inquired if the vendor rental fee has increased. Ms. Kendall is working on a guideline revision that will incorporate an increased rental fee which will hopefully be complete by November. Ms. Kendall is working on board seat nominations which will be released mid-October. Lastly, the DDD office will be closed on October 9<sup>th</sup> in observance of Columbus Day.

Mr. Singer inquired to know details regarding sponsorship opportunities. Ms. Kendall reviewed the sponsorship opportunity details with the board and current businesses that are interested. She overviewed that there are two businesses lined up to sponsor Starry Saturday and one business that would like to sponsor the farmers market. The money goes into the miscellaneous revenue or the promotional/fees account, dependent on how the method of payment was received. Mr. Singer lastly inquired for an update on downtown business outreach. Ms. Kendall responded by stating a lot of outreach was done for Hot August and more outreach will continue with the holiday season and events approaching and how businesses can get involved.

Public Comment

**Adjournment**

