

Downtown Development District Board of Commissioners Meeting
Ronald E. Gardner Board Room
September 4, 2024– 3:00 PM
In Person

Roll taken, Quorum present – Meeting called to order at 3:06 p.m.

Members Present: Chair Chris Ross, Vice-Chair Alex Glaser, Secretary Scott Polakoff, Treasurer William Bradshaw, II, Commissioner Gregory Curtis, Commissioner Kenny Rubenstein, Commissioner Miles Tully, Jr., Commissioner Ryan King, Commissioner David Piscola, Commissioner Frank Zumbo,

Members Absent: Commissioner Edwin Murray,

Staff/Counsel Present: President & CEO Davon Barbour, Bianka Brown, CFO, Christopher Kane, Legal Counsel Adams & Reese, and Erika Sensenbrenner, Adams & Reese

Notice: The time, location, and agenda had been adequately and publicly noticed

Call for Public Input Cards: N/A

Public Comments: N/A

Action Items:

1. Board of Commissioners Term Allotment – **Action Item***
2. Election of Officers - **Action Item***
3. Approval of Meeting Minutes from June 4, 2024, Board Meeting – **Action Item***
4. Resolution 24-01 to Set Millage for 2025 – **Action Item***
5. Resolution 24-02 to Adopt Work Plan and Budget for the Year 2025 – **Action item***
6. Resolution 24-03 of Check Signing Authority – **Action Item**

Board of Commissioners Term Allotment – Action Item*

William Bradshaw – 1 yr

Gregory Curtis – 4 yrs

Alex Glaser – 3 yrs

Ryan King – 1 yr

Edwin Murray – 2 yrs

David Piscola – 3 yrs

Scott Polakoff – 2 yrs

Chris Ross - 3 yrs

Kenney Rubenstein - 1 yr

Mike Tully – 4 yrs

Frank Zumbo – 2 yrs

Election of Officers - Action Item*

• **Executive Committee:**

Chair Chris Ross

Vice-Chair Alex Glaser

Treasurer William Bradshaw, II

Secretary Scott Polakoff

Motion to approve the Executive Committee Slate by Commissioner Glaser. Seconded by Commissioner Gregory Curtis. Motion Carried.

- **Finance Committee:**

Treasurer William Bradshaw, II (Committee Chair)
Secretary Scott Polakoff
Commissioner David Piscola

Motion to approve the Finance Committee Slate by Commissioner Bradshaw. Seconded by Commissioner Piscola. Motion Carried.

- **Quality of Life Committee:**

Chair Chris Ross
Vice-Chair Alex Glaser (Committee Chair)
Commissioner Kenneth Rubenstein
Commissioner Miles Tully, Jr.

Motion to approve the Quality-of-Life Committee by Chair Ross. Seconded by Commissioner Glaser. Motion Carried.

Motion to submit the nominations to the city and the city's nominating committee, made by Vice Chair Alex Glaser. Seconded by past chair Gregory Curtis. Motion carried.

Approval of Meeting Minutes from June 4, 2024, Board Meeting – **Action Item***

Motion to approve by Chair Chris Ross. Seconded by Commissioner Rubenstein. Motion carried.

Resolution 24-02 to Adopt Work Plan and Budget for the Year 2025 – **Action item***

The Resolution was read, a vote was taken; the Resolution was adopted.

Resolution 24-01 to Set Millage for 2025 – **Action Item***

The Resolution was read, a vote was taken; the Resolution was adopted.

Resolution 24-03 of Check Signing Authority – **Action Item***

The Resolution was read, a vote was taken; the Resolution was adopted.

Cooperative Endeavor Agreement (CEA) for the French Doors project- **Action Item***

Motion to give staff the ability to execute the lease made by Treasurer Bradshaw. Seconded by Commissioner Curtis. Motion carried.

Summary:

- Davon Barbour, President & CEO of the Downtown Development District in New Orleans presented the 2025 work plan and budget for approval. He highlighted the district's role in driving downtown development, promoting economic growth, and making downtown a world-class destination. Davon Barbour also discussed the challenges faced by the district, including reduced revenue and the need for strategic partnerships. He detailed various initiatives, such as enhanced public safety, improved park spaces, and economic development strategies. Davon Barbour also presented the proposed 2025 work program and budget, emphasizing three pillars: providing a safe and welcoming environment, curating a physically attractive public realm, and delivering infrastructure that builds community resilience. He concluded by stating that staff would continue to pursue outside funding to advance their critical work.

- Bianka Brown, the Chief Financial Officer, presented the 2025 millage assessment overview. Public space operations will receive \$3.4 million (4.75% of the millage). Public safety will receive \$3,099,582 (4.32% of the millage). Economic development will receive \$488,773 (0.68%). Communications will receive \$250,000 (0.35%). Administration and interest income total \$1.9 million, while debt services payment totals \$803,950. The total expected revenue is \$9,847,306. CFO Brown discussed a 10-year budget analysis, the 2023 adopted budget, the 2024 proposed budget, and the 2025 forecast. The 2024 budget reflects a \$9.8 million ad valorem tax collection with a 4% fee. Reserves have been depleted to balance the budget. An outstanding 2021 bond series for infrastructure improvements is expected to be paid off by 2030.
- Concerns were expressed about the significant reduction in the budget for economic development and planning. The board discussed exploring opportunities for earned revenue and emphasized the importance of a clean and safe environment for businesses to grow and for the city to attract new residents. The board discussed the financial aspects of the DDD operations, including the fund balance. It also highlighted the need for more funding to operate the organization effectively and the impact of larger vacancies on valuation and assessment.
- Chris Kane, Counsel spoke on the millage rate: The city's millage rate is 22.97 mills, approved by voters in 2005, was set to not exceed that amount. It was explained that the city council can set millages, which are due for renewal in 2029. It was suggested the board should start considering when to put the proposition back on the ballot for renewal. It was also noted that the city council denied a request to maintain the millage at 17.12 mills in 2024 due to lack of political will. The conclusion was that it would be challenging to increase the millage from a political standpoint in 2025.
- Concerns were expressed about the potential consequences of approving a budget with a positive revenue of \$100,000, emphasizing the importance of considering the impact of these decisions on future budgets and the level of services provided. Secretary Polakoff shared his discomfort with the level of service cuts, particularly in areas like clean and safe and economic development. Staff discussed the adopted budget for 2024 and the proposed budget for 2025, highlighting discrepancies and the challenges of forecasting due to the agency's cash basis operation. The idea of showing a budget with a shortfall in existing revenue and a recalculation of savings was suggested by commissioners.
- There was further discussion about the need for clearer communication regarding budget allocations. It was suggested the DDD use terms like "interim operating expense" to better reflect the use of funds and emphasized the importance of setting a precedent for budgeting and agreeing to less services. Also discussed was the need to balance the city council's approval and the citizens' support for additional funding, suggesting a more strategic approach. It was clarified that the city no longer has approval authority for the budget but still has the authority to set the millage and levy the tax. The board agreed to move excess cash flow into an expense line item and maintain the budget as projected, with the understanding that adjustments could be made if necessary. The Downtown Development District Board resolved to set the property tax millage rate at 13.73 mills for the year 2025, a reduction from the maximum 22.97 mills approved by voters in 1978.
- Davon Barbour, President & CEO progress made in Super Bowl preparations, infrastructure improvements, and beautification efforts. The French Doors project, aimed at improving the 100 block of Bourbon, was also discussed. President & CEO mentioned that the project would be

funded by GNO Inc. and would require board approval for DDD to accept the funds. He also mentioned the Bio District's strategic plan, which includes tax increment financing for improvements within the district. Mr. Barbour also touched on the downtown planning efforts, including grants for the Howard Avenue corridor and transportation planning. Lastly, he mentioned the upcoming Downtown NOLA Awards.

- President & CEO Davon Barbour, discussed the implementation of a French door strategy in the 100 block of Royal Street in the French Quarter, involving a public safety outpost in a 2,000 square foot space at the former Alexis Hotel Lobby. The plan was borrowed from downtown Houston and aims to create a public-private partnership to transform the area and reduce loitering. Mr. Barbour also mentioned plans to reach out to the Police Foundation, the New Orleans Hotel Alliance, and others for support. The responsibility for the space was identified as belonging to DDD, with Starwood offering to assist at a cost. The board voted in favor of giving staff the ability to execute the lease.

Steps:

- Staff to continue aggressively pursuing grant funding opportunities to supplement the budget.
- Board to review and consider the level of service cuts in the proposed budget, particularly in economic development and planning.
- Staff to ensure pristine conditions in the district for the upcoming Super Bowl, potentially seeking additional support from governmental bodies.
- Board to evaluate the facade improvement program and its budget allocation.
- Staff to provide updates on ongoing facade improvement projects in the pipeline.
- Board to consider long-term strategies for maintaining and improving services with limited budget.
- Staff to continue monitoring and reporting on ad valorem tax collections and potential impacts from office vacancies.
- Board to consider strategies for both attracting and retaining commercial and residential stakeholders in the district.
- Staff to submit the approved millage rate and budget to the city
- Bianca Brown, CFO, will provide the bylaws electronically.

Chair's Report: see summary

Old Business: N/A

New Business: N/A

Executive Session: Motion by Chair Ross to enter executive session for personnel issue. Seconded by Treasurer Bradshaw. Roll Called. Motion carried. Motion to exit executive session by Commissioner Curtis. Seconded by Secretary Polakoff. Motion carried. No decision, no action taken during the executive session.

Adjournment: Motion to adjourn by Commissioner Curtis. Seconded by Treasurer Bradshaw. Motion carried.