

St. John the Baptist Parish
Economic Development Committee
Minutes of Regular Meeting
Monday, March 1, 2021

ATTENDANCE

Present:

Elizabeth Joseph
Evin Stein
Demetria Robinson-Carter
Robert Taylor
Randall Triche
Tyler Lewis

Staff:

Stanley Bienemy
D'Neil Figuero
Terri Abadie

Councilman Warren Torres
Councilwoman T. Schnyder

Guests:

Wayne Aucoin
Chassity McComack
Julia Fisher-Perrier
Shannon Smith-McGee
Yasmaine Magee
Monica Morrison
Tommy Scott
Ana Gale-Orellana
Katie Kliebert
Trina Sanders

Absent:

Suzanne Cupit
Kevin Patel

Call to Order

Chairman Tyler Lewis called the meeting to order at 12:02pm.

Roll Call

Six (6) Committee members were present. Quorum was met.

Opening Prayer / Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Tyler Lewis asked for a board member volunteer. Evin Stein volunteered to lead the prayer and Tyler Lewis led the Pledge.

Public Comments – Two (2) minute limit – no public comments

Adoption of Minutes from December Meeting

Motion by Elizabeth Joseph to approve minutes. Randall Triche seconded the motion to adopt the February 1, 2021 meeting minutes. The motion passed with 6 yeas.

Director's Report – Stanley Bienemy (see report).

- Evin Stein asked if the Business Directory is updated by the parish or by business owners individually. Stanley Bienemy explained that the parish has updated the site itself, but business owners are encouraged to update their own business information. The Economic Development Department is in communication with the SBDC to assist local businesses, especially older folks, on modern practices on how to utilize this tool.
- Evin Stein suggested “getting a team together” to help businesses “get on the map” to help our parish move towards using more technology such as Google. He “would be

more than happy to help any business” that is interested and he hoped others would be as well.

- Stanley Bienemy stated “if the Chairman sees fit it would be a great idea to start a committee, let Evin head it, and work with Wayne and the LSBDC to devise some trainings to help get the word out”.
- Evin Stein stated he “thought there were classes being offered already through the Chamber or SBDC, but he feels it’s hard for people to attend or they may not even know about them so maybe we need to get the info out there.”
- Chassity McComack agreed that “we need to do what our businesses need today, not three to five years from now”. Chassity informed the committee about the start of roundtable discussions with targeted business that many St. John small businesses are invited to participate in.” She agreed that “this is the best time to begin to help all businesses have the resources they need, so we need to come together as a unit.”
- Chair Tyler Lewis asked for guidance on forming a committee, and the opinions of the board members.
- Director Stanley Bienemy consulted the bi-laws and reference that the “Chairperson has the ability to establish a taskforce or subcommittee composed of no more than three (3) committee members.”
- Evin Stein volunteered to serve on the committee.
- Randall Triche volunteered to serve on the committee. He would like to start with a list of businesses in the parish and check them off one by one.
- Vice Chair Elizabeth Joseph relayed the information that Stanley Bienemy was able to discover pertaining to the formation of a committee. “It is your privilege as a chairperson to appoint a committee and it is a three-person committee.” Discussions would be between the new committee and they would report back to the board at the next meeting as an agenda item. Vice Chair Joseph agreed that a “boots on the ground approach” is best due to COVID-19, especially since these meetings have been offered in the past.
- Demetria Robinson-Carter volunteered as the third person to serve on the new committee.
- Chair Tyler Lewis opened a discussion for a committee name. Evin Stein, ALL members in attendance participated by giving suggested ideas including, but not limited to, business, online, education, action statement, St. John, promotion.
 - Establishment of Business Online Promotion Committee – EDC members appointed were Evin Stein, Randall Triche and Demetria Robinson-Carter. Motion by Chairman Tyler Lewis and seconded by Darlene Smith. Appointment of EDC board members to said committee passed with a vote of 6 yeas.
 - Evin Stein inquired about meeting rules in order for the new sub-committee to move forward.

Old Business – no old business

New Business

- Housing Program Discussion – Trina Sanders, Exec. Director SJBH Housing Authority Committee member Demetria Robinson-Carter requested this item to be added to the agenda. Director Stanley Bienemy contacted Trina Sanders as a housing expert & representative.

- Currently the housing authority is revamping itself, and focused on the amount of vacancies in the parish. Units built in the 1960 Study was performed and determined it is not prudent to use federal dollars to continue to bandage the problems.
- Public housing units will be demolished in SJBP by next year.
- Voucher programs, home ownership programs, and Section 8 programs are potential plans for the future.
- Evin Stein asked how many housing units are in SJBP now. Trina Sanders answered, “200 dwelling units within Laplace, Reserve, Garyville, Edgard – all will be demolished”. Evin Stein asked, “what will happen to the land? Will the parish sell it off?”. Trina Sanders informed him that “the land is not parish land, it is federal land and belongs to the Housing Authority”.
- Have the option of disposing one or more of the properties, and/or leveraging with tax credits to how to build affordable housing in the future, but none of that has been determined yet.”
- Tyler Lewis asked, “how can the EDC help strengthen the (Section 8) program? Trina Sanders suggested that the committee help market the programs offered to help educate the public.
- Darlene Smith asked if “SJBP participates in the project-based voucher program in partnership with Louisiana Dept. of Health & Hospitals?”. Trina Sanders answered. “No, we do not. The programs are only through HUD”.
- Tyler Lewis asked, “in the near future, is it possible to have the same project that took place in Garyville last year, could it be offered in other areas in St. John such as Reserve, LaPlace, and Edgard”. Trina Sanders explained, “the options will be available for public housing, but they are looking at how to fulfill the immediate needs and could possibly partner with a developer to help identify resources and which options would best serve St. John Parish.
- Demetria Robinson-Carter asked “if there are different types/levels of Section 8 funding?” Trina Sanders answered, “other parishes (like New Orleans) have Home Ownership Program that they have established and have additional employees to help facilitate/manage that program, but St. John has limited resources at this time, but it can be done. St. John is such a smaller agency and does not have the wealth of resources in house to immediately develop those types of programs.
- Tyler Lewis thanked Trina Sanders for joining the meeting to share all of her valuable information.

Community Partners’ Update

- Entergy Louisiana – Ana-Gale Orellana
 - “Nothing to report today”
- Louisiana Small Business Development Center – Wayne Aucoin (see report).
 - FastTrac Program beginning March 4, 2021 – have 12 participants, aiming for 14/16. Referrals welcome to obtain a few more business owners.
 - QR codes are now being incorporated on flyers.
 - Elizabeth Joseph hopes to help Wayne Aucoin find a few more participants for the FastTrac class.
- Port of South Louisiana – Julia Fisher-Perrier
 - New Administration Building construction will be finished by 2022.

- Betty Joseph asked Julia Fisher-Perrier to share an informational flyer with the board. She would like to share it with the Tourist Commission.
- Evin Stein mentioned how great the flight training program was when he participated.
- River Parishes Community College – Monica Morrison
 - Will host two (2) Covid-friendly graduation ceremonies on May 22, 2021.
 - Beyond the Block initiative – year-round awareness for black history, cultural diversity, and diversity equity & belonging. Collaborating with community partners, offering various face-to-face events, virtual events, social media posts to promote community and internal awareness.
 - CDL Training Program – partnering with Fletcher Community College to ensure as much participation as possible.
- River Parishes Tourist Commission – absent
- River Parishes Workforce Development – Tommy Scott
 - CDL Training Program application process has had a substantial turnout at the St. John site. Tommy Scott thanked Director Stanley Bienemy for the vision and Mrs. Monica Morrison for her implementation. May have to stop accepting applications.
 - Working diligently to re-open the St. John location of the Workforce Commission.
- River Region Chamber of Commerce – Chassity McComack (see report)
 - General Membership Meeting was held and LED Secretary Don Pearson presented. Link can be ascertained on the LED website.
 - Annual Banquet will be March 25th at St. Charles Community Center – 10am Only 75 participants can be accepted, but the event will be livestreamed.
 - Next Perks Event – April 8, 2021 @ 8am at Elite Affairs
- South Central Planning and Development Commission – absent
- St. John Business Association – Phyllis Madere
- Next meeting will be Wed. 3/10 – 6pm at Petra’s Restaurant. Speaker is Louisiana State Police Superintendent Col. Lamar Davis.
- St. John the Baptist Parish School Board – Shannon Smith-McGee
 - “Nothing to share at this time”.

Announcements

- Darlene Smith stated that there are grant opportunities for developers for housing for vouchers to those that are caring for disabled families and she would like to get more information on that topic.
- Tyler Lewis is looking forward to the new Business Online Promotion Committee.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Evin Stein, seconded by Elizabeth Joseph. Motion passed with 7 yeas. Meeting was adjourned at 1:24pm.