

**St. John the Baptist Parish  
Economic Development Committee**

Minutes of Regular Meeting  
Tuesday, July 11, 2017

**ATTENDANCE:**

**Present:**

Peggy Joseph  
Tomy Acosta  
Robert Taylor  
James Oubre Jr.  
Elizabeth Joseph

**Absent:**

Michelle Jenkins  
Kali Jenkins  
Leroy Mitchell  
Evin Stein

**Staff:**

Jerry Jones  
Denise Burrell  
Terri Abadie

**Guest:**

Shannon Smith  
Mala Taylor  
Lois Frank  
Jo Banner  
Larry Sorapuru  
Linda Prudhomme  
Craig Carman  
Ed Carman  
Eliza Eugene  
Lennix Madere  
Larry Snyder  
Rodney Nicholas  
Pamela B. Allen

**I. Call to Order**

Chairwoman Peggy Joseph called meeting to order at 12:14 p.m.

**II. Roll Call**

Five (5) Committee members were present. Four (4) were absent. Quorum was met.

**III. Prayer and Pledge**

Elizabeth Joseph led prayer. James Oubre Jr. led pledge of Allegiance.

**IV. Public comment(s)**

Meeting open for public comments (3) Minutes

- James Oubre Jr. – Addressed concerns of debris in ditches around Walmart strip mall area
  - Jerry Jones' response
    - In the process of scheduling meeting with developers to discuss trash, vacant areas within their retail, ideas towards filling spots, what are they doing to make their areas more enticing
    - Spoke already with LaPlace shopping center
      - Church's and Popeye's do not belong to the owner of the center
      - Owned by two different entities
      - Through our research; church's is no longer franchised but currently going through corporate
    - Economic Development (ED) Department is working on the getting the property owners in accordance.
  - James Oubre Jr. suggested including the request to the developers in the Economic Development newsletter.
- Councilman Larry Sorapuru
  - Attended the ED basic training workshop. He enjoyed to workshop; very informative; reality check to see what he could do to help economic development in the community. Recommended that if anyone has not attended that type of workshop, they should do so. Councilman Sorapuru was thankful for the invite.
- Deputy Assessor Rodney Nicholas
  - Pro Economic Development

- Anything our office can do to partner; we are here

## V. Adoption of Minutes from June 12, 2017 Meeting

Motion by Tomy Acosta and seconded by Robert Taylor to approve and adopt the minutes of the June 12, 2017 meeting with no changes or corrections.

## VI. Monthly EDC Update – Director’s Report

Greetings,

- To the Committee, Stakeholders, and citizens of St. John the Baptist Parish, I would like to thank everyone who is in attendance today for our monthly Economic Development Committee (EDC) meeting. **The St. John the Baptist Parish 4<sup>th</sup> of July** festivities was a huge success! We can now turn our attention towards a re-cap of the St. John the Baptist Parish 4<sup>th</sup> of July festivities. The response to both the Veterans Luncheon Celebration and 4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks events was extremely positive. I would like to once again say thanks to all of our partners for their assistance with such a huge endeavor.
- Unfortunately, due to scheduling conflicts, I have not been able to attend the **Rotary Club of LaPlace** meetings. I am missing the meetings both this week and next week due to being out of town for vacation.
- During our previous EDC meeting, we launched our new **website**. This site will continue to evolve. Once again please review our website at [www.OpportunityStJohn.com](http://www.OpportunityStJohn.com).
- Met with Livability Magazine who is doing the **St. John Livability Economic Development Magazine**. This is an Economic Development data driven magazine that will highlight editorial pieces on positive stories about the parish. Education, Small Business Development, Developments on the Levee, the Port and how it is a major contributor to not only St. John but the country as well.
- We have already started our discussions on the **2017 Andouille Festival**. We are beginning to schedule committee meetings and taking the necessary steps to ensure the festival is a success. More information will come as we began to hold more meetings concerning this event.
  - 2017 Andouille Festival meetings include staff, Parish Council and EDC members to share upfront in the responsibility and communication for all areas of the festival to operate smoothly
- Special thanks go out to the **Delta Regional Authority (DRA)**, Economic Development Administration (EDA) and International Economic Development Council (IEDC). Last week on July 6-7, 2017, St. John the Baptist Parish’s Economic Development Department hosted the **Economic Development and Economic Resiliency Training**. They provided this two-day intensive boot-camp in an effort to help prepare local elected officials, community leaders, and economic development practitioners to support economic development and disaster resilience activities in our community. This event was subsidized by the grant fund they have secured to provide this training. Once again we would like to thank everyone who participated in the event.
- **Baumer Foods INC, of Reserve**, was recently awarded the Lantern Award for the Bayou Region as presented by Louisiana Economic Development (LED). Award winners receive lanterns handcrafted and donated by Bevolo Gas and Electric Lights of New Orleans. The lanterns have become an internationally recognized trademark of New Orleans and Bevolo is the oldest and largest copper gas lantern manufacturer in the U.S. and the second-oldest in the world.
  - Since LED launched the **Lantern Awards** in 1979, the program has recognized more than 300 Louisiana manufacturing businesses. LED’s program partners include the Louisiana Industrial Development Executives Association and the Louisiana Quality Foundation. Congrats to Baumer foods and thanks for the contribution your business provides to St. John the Baptist Parish economy.
- Residents of St. John Parish and surrounding areas will have the opportunity to receive no-cost medical, dental and eye screenings from July 12-22. Services are provided by the **Delta Regional Authority (DRA)** in partnership with the Department of Defense. Any resident can participate, and no identification or insurance is needed to get treatment.

- The clinic in St. John Parish will be open to the general public from 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m., July 12-22 at: **East St. John High School #1** Wildcat Drive, Reserve, LA 70068
- No appointments are necessary, but residents are encouraged to arrive early to ensure an opening for services. Services provided will include non-emergency medical treatments and screenings, dental cleanings, fillings, and tooth extractions, eye exams and single-vision prescription glasses. In addition to receiving medical services, residents will be able to obtain information at clinic sites about local healthcare services, public health programs, resources and general healthcare information.
- The “**Louisiana Cares**” clinics are part of the U.S. Department of Defense’s Innovative Readiness Training program, which prepares military personnel for wartime missions while providing healthcare services to underserved communities. “Louisiana Cares” also fulfills DRA’s mission to improve lives across the Mississippi River Delta Region and the 252 counties and parishes it serves.
- A ribbon cutting was held for Judge Sylvia Taylor’s Law Firm. Parish President Natalie Robottom, Economic Development Director Jerry Jones and other Administrative staff and Councilmen Snyder, Madere and Sorapuru joined Judge Sylvia Taylor for a ceremony for her new private law practice. Members of the River Region Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Committee were also in attendance.
  - **Judge Taylor** remains dedicated to strengthening her knowledge of how best to start a small business with such a strong foundation, as the Economic Development Director, I’m excited about the future of her law firm.
- St. John the Baptist Parish announced the establishment of a **Cultural District Coalition**: a new community partnership aimed at spurring revitalization of the Parish’s historic and culturally significant areas. Serving both a communicative and advisory role, members of the coalition will consist of local stakeholders, community leaders, and staff from several Parish Departments. The Coalition will meet quarterly to develop a strategy to promote four proposed cultural districts located in LaPlace, Reserve, Garyville and River Road on the west bank.
  - This effort follows an application made by the Parish in March of 2017 with the **Louisiana Office of Cultural Development** to establish four cultural districts. If approved, residents and business owners within the proposed districts would become eligible for both state historic rehabilitation tax credits and tax exemptions on the sale of original works of art. Established in 2007 by the State Legislature, the cultural district program has led to the successful revitalization of many rural and urban historic areas across the state of Louisiana. We are excited as a department to look forward to working with Planning and Zoning on ways to build a strong cultural based economy here in St. John the Baptist Parish.
  - [www.crt.state.la.us](http://www.crt.state.la.us)
- **The Fairfield Inn & Suites LaPlace**, owned by Marriott, will have 94 rooms, which includes approximately 23 suites. The hotel will also have an outdoor pool, fitness center, sundry shop and meeting room. The hotel will serve **breakfast** in its expanded lobby breakfast room area. SMC Hotels is a privately, family-owned hotel management and development company that will develop, manage, and own the hotel. “We did a lot of research in this area and it shows that there is potential for major development and growth for the **Belle Terre Boulevard corridor**,” said Delton Smith. “We thought this was a really good location and want to take advantage of the region’s success.” Upon completion, the **hotel** will employ 15-20 full-time employees, which includes 3 management positions. Depending mostly on weather, the hotel is expected to open sometime next year.
- We will continue to work on other efforts to grow the **economic** viability of our parish. Thank you all for continuously sharing your ideas. I truly appreciate them. It is important we highlight what contributing advantages economic development has on **St. John the Baptist Parish**. If you have any other ideas that you would like to share, please do not hesitate to contact me at any time.

## VII. Old Business

No Old Business to Report

## VIII. New Business

No Old Business to Report

## IX. Community Partner(s) Reports

- **Entergy Louisiana** – Absent
- **Louisiana Small Business Development Center (LSBDC)** – Absent (Jerry Jones shared on behalf)
  - Spoke with Wayne Aucoin – They are getting ready to prepare for the upcoming FastTrac Program
  - Working with department on “Lunch and Learn” events which should start by the Fall.
- **Port of South Louisiana** – Linda Prudhomme
  - Dedicated new bldg. -To keep existing company at the Port by adding 90,000sqft bldg. to and existing building.
  - Working on new projects
  - Visit from U.S. Senator Cassidy’s Southeast Regional Director
    - Provided a river tour of everything that goes on the other side of the river like an interstate commerce a lot goes on
    - Most important topic discussed - dredging of the Mississippi River
- **River Parishes Tourist Commission** – Jo Banner
  - Canon cameras hosting press tour July 12
  - Five Chinese photo journalists will be arriving to visit San Francisco Plantation and Evergreen Plantation in St. John Parish
  - Received requests from two more Chinese journalists who are coming in on Sunday visiting the Whitney Plantation
  - Next travel show will be in August
  - Travel media showcase: Will be meeting with 40 journalist doing 15 minutes appointments
    - Information of our different attractions.
    - They can ask questions: we are in hopes of getting articles and media pieces to have us out there and bring in more people/tourist to St. John Parish
  - Two more journalists are expected to visit in December from the show last year so it does produce.
- **River Region Chamber of Commerce - (RRCC)** – Absent (Jerry Jones shared on behalf)
  - **July Events**
    - Thursday, July 6- Information Meeting #3- Leadership Program- 8:00 AM- 9:00 AM
    - Monday, July 10- Information Meeting #4- Leadership Program- 8:00 AM – 9:00 AM
    - Thursday, July 12- Chamber Perks- Ochsner Medical Ctr, LaPlace - 7:30 AM- 9:00 AM
    - Thursday, July 20- Workforce Development Meeting- 4:00 PM- 5:00 PM
    - Wednesday, July 26- The Jambalaya Shoppe- Ribbon Cutting Event- 10:30 AM- 11:30 AM
    - Thursday, July 27- Board Meeting- 4:00 PM – 5:00 PM
  - **August Events**
    - Tuesday, August 1- Public Policy Meeting- 2:00 PM – 3:00 PM
    - Wednesday, August 2- Picture Me Flawless- Ribbon Cutting Event- 11:00 AM- 12:00 PM
    - Thursday, August 3- Chamber Perks- Raising Canes- 8:00 A- 9:00 AM
    - Friday, August 4- Chamber 101: What can you get from your investment? – 11:30 AM-12:30 PM

- Tuesday, August 15- Workforce Development Meeting- 4:00 PM – 5:00 PM
  - Friday, August 18- Executive Meeting- 8:30 AM – 9:30 AM
  - Thursday, August 24- Board Meeting- 4:00 PM – 5:00 PM
- **River Parishes Community College** – Absent (James Oubre shared on behalf)
  - Penelope Freeman has been very busy with the transitioning and combining of two colleges
  - Concern: Only 10% of our students are from St. John Parish
  - Delgado Community College's Free Industrial Maintenance Program offered at River Parishes Community College:
    - Only 25% of the class are from St. John Parish
    - New classes begin Tuesday, August 1, 2017
- **South Central Planning and Development Commission** – Absent
- **St. John Business Association** – Craig Carmen (Jerry Jones shared on behalf)
  - Next Meeting: Tuesday, July 12 at 6:00pm at Petra's Restaurant
  - Guest Speaker: State Representative Randal Gaines
- **St. John Community Center & Soundstage** - Jo Banner
  - July 6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> - SJBPA Economic Development Basic ED Training Workshop
  - July 22<sup>nd</sup> - Backpack Giveaway
  - Aug 3<sup>rd</sup> - Planning & Zoning hosting LA Safe Meeting
  - No private events as of yet but people are signing up to book the center
- **St. John the Baptist Parish Public Schools** – Shannon Smith
  - We are working on the students making sure they are aware of River Parishes Community College
  - Seeking assistance in developing/providing a hook to attract the students to the Community College
  - Schools Reopening
    - Lake Pontchartrain - January 2018
    - East St. John High School - August 2018
  - Early indications is that we are growing
- **Workforce Investment Board** – Absent
- **EME Consulting Group** - Eliza Eugene
  - Ambassador for St. John Parish Small Businesses
  - Shared her process in connecting with local businesses in the parish
    - Presents businesses with a package about St. John
  - Provide services to small business
    - 15 – businesses total as of July
    - 8 – microenterprise (starting up businesses)
    - 3 – ambassadors
    - 4 – BRE
    - Outside of attending various meetings
  - Worked with Congressman Richmond office on upcoming Small Business Expo taking place at Delgado Community College on August 24<sup>th</sup> from 11am – 3pm. There will be small businesses there to help other small businesses to do business on a federal level.
  - Kirston Pittman of Garyville, LA came through the ambassador program as well as the St. John Business Center with Wayne Aucoin. He was selected to compete on Steve Harvey Funderdome Show to present his product for cash investment. Mr. Pittman competed and won \$35,000.

- Backpack event Saturday July 22<sup>nd</sup> with various local sponsors

## **X. Announcements**

- New Student Program in the planning stage to interest the high school students of St. John Parish to attend the River Parishes Community College.
  - Peggy Joseph recommended Robert Taylor join the committee
- Elizabeth Joseph
  - 4<sup>th</sup> of July - suggestions to improve for next year 2018.
  - Website - really thrilled and knows that it will evolve more currently with technology.
  - Would like to attend and be involved in Andouille Festival meetings.
  - ED Basic Training Workshop was really good and they talked about business retention team. Inquired whether we have a team. Jerry Jones confirmed that we do have a BRE Team and working to address the pieces to make it better.
- Jerry Jones
  - Adding to website how an individual citizen can play a role in the economic development of St. John Parish
  - Identify how to bring the community to economic development so that when come they will be more informative
- James Oubre Jr. inquired of a new business, beer brewery in Reserve. Jerry Jones to research.

## **XI. Adjournment**

A motion to adjourn was made by Tomy Acosta and seconded by Elizabeth Joseph. Meeting was adjourned at 1:22 p.m.