



Board Meeting

Date and Time: February 23, 2024, at 9:00 a.m.

**Meeting Place: 5367 I-49 S. Service Road
Opelousas, LA 70570**

AGENDA

- 1.) Welcome
- 2.) Pledge and Opening Prayer
- 3.) Roll Call
- 4.) ODDD Business Recognition Program – Black Pot Book Shop
Jennifer Woodson, Owner
104 E. Landry Street, Opelousas, La. 70570
- 5.) Approval of January 19, 2024, Meeting Minutes
- 6.) Monthly Financial Report
- 7.) Executive Director’s Report
 - a. Monthly status report of activities for and effecting the ODDD.
- 8.) Old Business:**
- 9.) South Park Project (Action)
 - a. Bonding Commission (Update)
 - b. Vacant Structures Ordinance Proposals – (Action)
 - c. ODDD Big Grant (Update)
 - d. TAP Grant – Landry Street (Action)
- 10.) New Business:**
 - a.) Going Sebastian fisher Lebouef Engagement Letter - Action
 - b.) 2024 Arts Expo
 - c.) Main Street Presentation – Sarah Branton
 - d.) Love the Boot
 - e.) Love Fest (April 13, 2024)

Board Member Comments:

❖ **Public Comments** – Limit to 3 Minutes

❖ **Adjourn**

The following members were present in person: Lena Charles, Don D’Avy, Keith Broussard, Pat Fontenot, Rob Hillard, Sarah Branton

The following members were absent: Ogden Pitre

The following members were present virtually:

The following SLED members were present: Janece Riser (SLED)

Guests present in person: Mr. Landon Boudreaux (SLEMCO), Mr. Bobby Ardoin (St Landry Now), Mr. Chris Rideau (City of Opelousas), Ms. Jennifer Woodson, Mr. Travis Wright (City of Opelousas), Mr. Lance Ned (City of Opelousas), Mr. Jonathan Sebastian (Main Street Opelousas), Ms. Polly Koury (SLEMCO), Mr. William Jarrell (Morgan Goudeau & Associates), Mr. Herman Fuselier (St Landry Tourism)

Guests present virtually: Ms. Emma Short, Attorney Eric Lafleur, Mr. John Mayeux

Chairwoman Lena Charles welcomed the board and guests and opened the meeting at 9:05 AM.

It was determined that a quorum was present.

ODDD Business Recognition Program: Chairwoman Charles announced the business of the month as Black Pot Book Shop and welcomed Ms. Jennifer Woodson, the owner/operator. The business is located at 104 E Landry Street. Ms. Woodson stated that she started the bookshop in 2001 and before that was at The Spotted Cat. Chairwoman Charles thanked Ms. Woodson for her entrepreneurial spirit.

Approval of January 19, 2024, Meeting Minutes: A motion was made to approve the January 19, 2024, minutes as submitted by Mr. Keith Broussard. A second to the motion was made by Mr. Don D’Avy. The motion was carried without objection.

Monthly Financial Report: Mr. Keith Broussard gave the financial report and advised the board on the income and expenditures. Mr. Broussard stated that the board has \$681,692 in the checking account and wanted to propose that they move \$500,000 to an investment account. Mrs. Sarah Branton asked if there are any expenses that they need to think about coming out of the checking account before they make that decision. Chairwoman Charles said yes, there are expenses to come out. Mr. Broussard clarified that it could be moved to the Money Market Account and Mrs. Sarah Branton stated that yes, in the MM Account they can still write checks if they need to. Mr. Don D’Avy made a motion to authorize the treasurer, Keith Broussard, authorizing Mr. Broussard the authority to investigate the interest rates and make the best selection and move \$500,000 from the ODDD Checking to the account that he recommends. A second to the motion was made by Mr. Pat Fontenot. The motion was carried without objection. A motion was made to accept the financials as presented, by Mr. Pat Fontenot. A second to the motion was made by Mr. Rob Hillard. The motion was passed without objection.

Executive Director’s Report: Chairwoman Charles stated that CEO Bill Rodier is not available to give his report as he is at another event. Chairwoman Charles stated that Chik fil A needs a

call to give them the information of whom to call when there is a boil advisory. Discussion ensued.

Old Business:

South Park Project Update: Chairwoman Charles stated that Mayor Alsandor called a meeting on January 30th where he announced his decision to postpone the start of the renovation of the Donald Gardner Stadium until after the 2024 Football Season due to games that are scheduled to be played at home. Mr. Don D’Avy stated that Opelousas Catholic is proposing to build a stadium on their property where their practice field is currently which means they are not going to be utilizing Donald Gardner. Mrs. Sarah Branton stated that OC couldn’t get the zoning that they needed, but they may be able to be grandfathered in. Mr. Don D’Avy stated that the zoning was approved, and they can go ahead with their project. Chairwoman Charles stated that the school has the responsibility to make choices that are good for them and that she doesn’t believe it will affect the project of the park. Mr. Pat Fontenot stated that the OC sports already have a negative effect on the neighborhood because of the current parking situation and he feels that the people of the neighborhood have the right to be heard. He further stated that the parking situation creates issues with getting an ambulance through to the hospital as well. Mrs. Sarah Branton stated that at the council meeting it was voted down to change the zoning. Mr. Bobby Ardoin stated that OC had lights back in the 60’s but it was aligned differently. Discussion ensued.

Chairwoman Charles introduced Attorney Eric Lafleur who was available to give an update on the bonding commission. He gave a little background of the process and then reported that there are two offers. He stated that financing is available but that he needs to know from the board a close approximation of the actual amount of the project because it will make a difference in the financing. He stated that it might be beneficial to delay the borrowing, which can be done without delaying the project. Mr. Lafleur stated that interest rates went up and now are coming back down so he needs to know when to pull the trigger on the bidding process.

Mr. John Mayeux with Sun Securities was available to make a brief presentation. Mr. Mayeux explained that his firm went out and interviewed many banks, some local and some not. They received some responses from some smaller and some larger banks. Mr. Mayeux expressed the same concern as Mr. Lafleur had and stated that watching the rates for a period and then locking them in will be beneficial. He stated that he concurs with Mr. Lafleur that the trajectory has been up and down from where we were a year ago. Regarding the two proposals, the Simmons Bank Proposal includes a 12-month draw down fund, where you would use funds as you go. He stated that Simmons will allow the board to prepay the bond at any time without penalty and they have a significant amount of coverage.

Vacant Structures Ordinance Proposals: Chairwoman Charles stated that she had an opportunity to meet Mr. Lance Ned and introduced him to the board. Mr. Ned is the Interim Code Enforcer for the City of Opelousas. Chairwoman Charles stated that she met with Mr. Ned to bring him up to speed and go over the ordinance with him. Together they discussed getting a current list of vacant properties. Chairwoman Charles stated that she called Kelly Calhoun who is with Calhoun Preservation and already working for the board on the historical project. She asked if she could get a list put together of the vacant properties. Ms. Calhoun has agreed to put

some numbers together and come back with a proposal. Chairwoman Charles stated that Mr. Ned is getting a letter ready to go out to the property owners giving them a date when they will be required to register their properties and the fees and the dates, they will be charged going forward but there needs to be a current list and correct addresses. Mr. Ned stated that the City has to be aggressive with the ordinance. Mr. Ned stated that he has sent a request for help from the ODDD for the demolition of 124 East Grolee Street, a vacant building owned by the City of Opelousas. He further stated that if the city doesn't take care of their own blighted building, how can they ask the property owners to take care of theirs. He suggested that a parking lot be put in that space. Chairwoman Charles stated that the board is in possession of a letter from Mayor Alsandor supporting the request. Mr. Jonathon Sebastian, Chairman of the Downtown Historic District stated that tearing down that building is not the way to go because it could lead to losing the city's status as a historic district which could affect the taxes and rebates that we get. He stated that any time something is to happen to a building in the historic district it must go before the committee / commission for approval. He further stated that if the city wants to demo that building, they can do that but first they must fill out the application which will then be approved or denied. If it's denied the council can overrule that denial. That said, they took the step to ask for help with demolition too early. They need to follow the process. Mr. Sebastian stated that he is asking that the city postpone their decision to give them time to see if they can bring someone that might want to rehabilitate the building. Mr. Sebastian gave some ideas such as auctioning it off to entice someone to take on the rehabilitation if it's at the right price. Mr. Sebastian stated that he looks forward to working with Mr. Ned as they walk through the process together. Mr. Ned stated that "At the end of the day, if you don't take care of your own building, how can you tell anyone else how to take care of theirs?" Discussion ensued. Mr. Don D'Avy stated that he has some history of other buildings that were nearly in the same condition, and he feels that the building should be taken down immediately for safety reasons. A motion was made by Mr. Pat Fontenot to go forward with helping the city with funding the demolition up to \$25,000. and allowing for due diligence by the city and approval by the city council. A second to the motion was made by Mr. Rob Hillard. The motion was carried without objection.

Chairwoman Charles stated that Ms. Kelly Calhoun has a proposal for her to work on a current and accurate list of vacant and blighted buildings in downtown Opelousas. A motion was made By Ms. Sarah Branton to move forward with the proposal by Kelly Calhoun and Calhoun Preservation to do the work on the list of all the current owners of the Vacant properties in Downtown Opelousas of \$3000.00. A second to the motion was made by Mr. Don D'Avy. The motion was carried without objection.

BIG Grant: Mrs. Sarah Branton stated that for the 2023 Building Improvement Grant season they paid out \$56,088.09 in grant money. The \$6,088.09 was carry over of unused grant money from 2022. That grant money became an investment into the city through the projects of the property owners of \$218,241.00. Mrs. Branton also stated that from the inception of the BIG, their grant total of \$79,329.59 led to investments of \$388,537.00 through 2023. Mrs. Branton stated that the more they can give, the more money that is spent. She asked for an increase in funds for the 2024 season which will launch in March of 2024 with a deadline of April 1, 2024. Mrs. Branton also stated that she anticipates having a zoom workshop for potential recipients to help with the application process. Mrs. Branton stated that the review committee will meet in May and the recipients will be announced on June 1st. This completes the 2023 report for the

2023 Big Grant. A motion was made by Mr. Don D’Avy that we accept the final report for the 2023 BIG as submitted by Mrs. Branton. A second to the motion was made by Mr. Pat Fontenot. The motion was passed without objection. A motion was made by Mrs. Sarah Branton to fund the Building Improvement Grant of 2024 at \$100,000. A second to the motion was made by Mr. Don D’Avy and Mr. Pat Fontenot. The motion was passed without objection. Conversation ensued.

TAP Grant Update and Amendment: Mr. William Jarrell was present to give an update on the TAP Grant Sidewalk Project on Landry Street. He stated that the punch list items from the last meeting were completed, and they just have the handrails to complete. He stated that after that there will be a walk through with the DOTD to finalize everything and then he (Mr. Jarrell) will close out the project with the City of Opelousas with the DOTD. He stated that he is unsure what that will entail and how long it will take. Chairwoman Charles reminded the board that Board member Ogden Pitre had requested that the board provide railings for the sidewalk and steps because of the height and for safety of the public on the steps. Mr. Don D’Avy showed some examples of prefabricated railings that he found during his research. It was discussed that three bids need to be obtained. Mr. D’Avy stated that the prefabricated sections are 8 feet long and 42 inches high and are \$223.00. Mr. Jarell stated that the entire block is about 300 feet long but will get a measurement. A motion was made to move forward on the railing project by Mrs. Sarah Branton and a second to the motion was made by Mr. Pat Fontenot. The motion was carried without objection.

Chairwoman Charles stated that there is an amendment to the Morgan Goudeau contract which increased from \$79,000 to \$150,000. The amendment is for ODDD to increase their payment to Morgan Goudeau not to exceed \$150,000. A motion was made to accept the amendment not to exceed \$150,000 by Mr. Pat Fontenot and seconded by Mr. Rob Hillard. The motion was carried without objection.

Mr. Don D’Avy made an announcement that the agenda needs to be amended to allow the subject of the M&M Associates Contract for Lobbying for the Capital Outlay to be discussed. Mrs. Sarah Branton made a motion to amend the agenda to include under Old Business, the M&M Contract for Lobbying for Capital Outlay. The motion was seconded by Mr. Rob Hillard. The Motion was passed without objection.

M&M Contract for Lobbying for Capital Outlay: A motion was made to accept the contract of \$2500 a month with M&M Associates by Mr. Pat Fontenot and seconded by Mrs. Sarah Branton. The motion was carried without objection.

New Business:

Going, Sebastian, Fisher Lebouef Engagement Letter: Chairwoman Charles stated that Mr. Keith Broussard has the engagement letter from Going, Sebastian, Fisher and Lebouef for continuation of their services. Mr. Broussard stated that There were no changes in the document and it’s a standard scope of services letter. Mr. Don D’Avy noted that there is no fee listed. Mr.

Broussard stated that it is the same basic contract, but we need to make sure that it is the same fee that we have been paying. He further stated that once the fee is determined, he recommends that we move forward with continuing the relationship with Going, Sebastian, Fisher and Lebouef. A motion was made to allow Mr. Keith to further review the engagement letter by Going, Sebastian, Fisher and Lebouef by Mr. Rob Hillard and seconded by Mr. Pat Fontenot. The motion was carried without objection.

2024 Arts Expo: Chairwoman Charles stated that the 2024 Arts Expo is scheduled for March 23, 2024, and Mr. Don D'Avy reminded the board that the motion was made and approved for \$7500 at the last meeting.

Historic Main Street Presentation: Mrs. Sarah Branton was available to give a presentation regarding a building in the Main Street Historic district. Mrs. Branton stated that Ms. Gretchen Erlingson mentioned this topic at the last meeting regarding the property that was donated to Main Street by the Weir Family across from Creative Travel on the corner of South and Court. She stated that it is an empty lot with a big Oak Tree and was once a mobile home park. Mrs. Branton stated that Main Street has had a vision of making the piece of property into a Pocket Park that could be utilized during city events, such as the Arts Expo which would include wrought Iron railings for hanging artwork on, a small stage, rest rooms, solar powered lighting. A proposal for the project was presented to the board for \$150,000. Mrs. Branton stated that she would love to ask for the entire \$150,000 right now, but that they could settle on \$9,000 to be able to get started with the official architecture rendering and plans to take the plans to other organizations to request funding so that the entire amount wouldn't have to come from the ODDD. Chairwoman Charles stated that Ms. Erlingson has been diligently forming a relationship with the ODDD Board and has brought the possibility of the Pocket Park as a discussion on several occasions as well as personally meeting with Chairwoman Charles. A motion was made by Mr. Pat Fontenot to move forward with the \$9,000 to Main Street to get the architectural renderings and plans completed. A second was made by Mr. Rob Hillard. The motion was carried without objection.

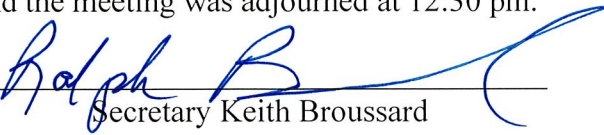
Love the Boot: Ms. Janece Riser stated that we had applied for a grant for garbage cans for the city and were not approved however, the City of Opelousas also applied, and they were approved. The city received eight garbage cans that will be distributed in the downtown area. Ms. Riser stated that Love the Boot is in April, and we partnered with the city to keep Opelousas Clean last year contributing about \$200.00 in supplies. Mr. Rob Hillard suggested that this be tabled until the March meeting as we still have time to decide on donation of supplies.

Love Fest (April 13, 2024): Chairwoman Charles reported that Love Fest will take place on April 13, 2024, and there will once again be vendors, food, music and fun for families and individuals at North Park. Chairwoman Charles suggested that the ODDD be a vendor and be able to give the board exposure to the community. There is no registration fee. A motion was made by Mrs. Sarah Branton that the ODDD Board participates in the Love Fest 2024. A second to the motion was made by Mr. Pat Fontenot. Motion carried without objection.

Board Member Comments: None

Public Comments: Mr. Herman Fuselier reported that there were over 4000 people downtown for Mardi gras and there was about 5000 of people per day during Mardi Gras in Eunice.

Adjourn: With no further business to bring before the board, a motion was made to adjourn by Mrs. Sarah Branton and seconded by Mr. Don D’Avy. The motion was carried without objection and the meeting was adjourned at 12:30 pm.


Secretary Keith Broussard


Chairperson Lena Charles

