

The mission of St. Landry Parish Economic Development is to provide leadership in economic and community development that facilitates growth opportunities leading to enhanced prosperity for St. Landry Parish businesses, communities, its citizens and its youth.

# **Executive Directors Report**

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#### I - Business Center/Small Business Update

The facility continues to be used on a regular and ongoing basis by partner entities, such as the ULL SBDC for small business counseling, the newly formed ECJC for the Harry Guilbeau Road District, and the SCPDD and APC in meeting with local mayors and community leaders. We also anticipate having a recurring small business development seminar held in the center that encompasses multiple partners as part of an ongoing series.

Work within the Business Center on items related to the LBIA Grant Award has been completed. This work has included:

- The installation of a central HVAC system in the warehouse office suites
- Upgrades to the A/C on the north side of the building
- Computer systems upgrades
- New sound system in the community and business education area
- Installation of a vent system for the attic in the front of the Business Center, as well as vent fans for the warehouse

We anticipate an announcement for the 2015/16 LBIA Grant to come out over the next several weeks. We anticipate this grant will be for 25k and there will be a 20% match component. Some of the items being included in the application include:

- Widening the entry door in the kitchen to ADA compliance standards.
- Closing in the kitchen and making windows that match the current structure to the outside, which will allow 2 additional office spaces.
- Making the restroom in the back larger and in compliance with ADA requirements. This would also include putting a ceiling over the foyer area around that entrance.
- Closing off and insulating the door leading to the board room from the far west office.
- Upgrading both video presentation systems to include the latest in Wi-Fi connectivity.
- Doing a complete rework off all the front side building insulation, while simultaneously checking and sealing all the a/c line joints across the building.

The ownership of the Business Center ownership transfer is complete! Bruce will be filing the required transfer of ownership documentation with Parish Government this week. Many thanks to all those who have invested a lot of work necessary to make this a reality!

As of July 1<sup>st</sup> we have the following businesses/spaces in the Center.

• C&C Painting and Pressure Washing

- Excellent Drivers Academy
- Boone Speech and Learning Services
- Miracle Ear
- Happy Housemaids
- Magnolia Community Development Corporation
- Victory Manufacturing (Spin)

### **II - Communications**

We are currently in the implementation stages to launch a parish- wide branding campaign that will enable the community to discover its untapped potential as a thriving locale. An initial stakeholders meeting was conducted on July 7<sup>th</sup> to inform our parish leaders of this initiative and to collectively gain buy-in moving forward. All stakeholders present collectively understand the importance of moving forward as a parish and have agreed to participate in conveying this powerful message to audiences both within and outside of St. Landry Parish We have scheduled follow-ups with each of the nine (9) respective stakeholders later this week to discuss what each of them perceive they can contribute to this campaign. The tentative goal for this initiative is a mid-August announcement and roll out. We expect that the number of key entities involved will build quickly with groups such as the SLP (St Landry Professionals).

The perception of a quality education within any given area is always a key consideration to not only existing and prospective families, but also to existing and prospective businesses. We have recently brought together key leaders from our education entities across the parish in a professionally facilitated strategic planning session with the following question to be answered: How can we create a core web tool as part of Opportunitystlandry.com/education that will be a continuous and value added source of information that promotes the "good" stories within St. Landry Education. As a result of our strategic we have the responsibilities assigned to move the initiative forward. As follow-on to this planning session all key stakeholders will reconvene on July 23<sup>rd</sup> to review the information provided in an agreed upon template structure. This information will form the core for the roll out planned in August 2015 and will be a core component of the new parish branding campaign.

After a solid planning session and due diligence conducted on using the GIS mapping tools provided by Fenstemaker throughout the region, we have identified basic mapping layers that we find will serve as the most valuable resources for the key entities of the Parish. In addition to the basic layers identified for the region will be working with our partners to develop additional features that are 'characteristic' specific to our area and will further highlight our unique infrastructure and attributes. Again, we anticipate that this will be another key initiative that the SLP and its leadership can become engaged in helping to move forward.

### **III - Property Development (**Large-scale)

We continue to dive deeper into our planning efforts along our major transportation corridors. Significant work continues to move forward on using taxing districts as a means to help communities upgrade infrastructure capacity along the major I-49 exits. We are also meeting with various communities on establishing capital outlay priorities that could be brought forward with upcoming legislative delegation and Cornerstone in the 2016 legislative session(s). Building our infrastructure capacity along our high growth capacity areas will be a critical area of focus over the near term and will be a direct support of projects such as Lot, Fountain, Expo, and Lid, just to name of few.

The newly formed team of One Acadiana has put a large push on supporting the development of certified sites in the regions. They now have a team designated specifically to this roll. This should help our parish and the region make significant progress on these sites by the end of the year.

#### **IV Projects Update**

Summary: 18 Active; 7 Announced; 4 Pending Announcement, (Bayou, Spin, Lid, Lot); 1 New (Press); 1 Parked (Shield); 1 Pending Park (Outpost B).

**Project Amber** – This project is continues to fall into the pending category of rail upgrades in the Opelousas Industrial Park. It is being considered as part of the picture of a rail master plan, which will include an EDA Grant Application being completed with the assistance of the APC and SCPDD. If successful this specific project could create up to 10 full time positions.

**Project Bayou –** This is a retail recruitment project targeted for Opelousas. The company is in the construction process now. The company anticipates being completed by the end of 2015 and hiring to start as early as Oct. We are currently working with company PR officials on a coordinated announcement within the next 2 weeks. This project is anticipated to create 85 to 100 direct employed positions.

**Project Code** – This is a new expansion project focused on light manufacturing looking to locate on the main transportation corridor in the center of the Parish. The challenges with this project continue to be suitable site location along the I-49 Corridor. The executive team is willing to move quickly if the right property can be acquired. If successful the project could create up to 20 full time positions.

**Project Lynx (Formally Cloak)** – There continues to be very positive developments and discussions with top level corporate officials representing this project. This is an extremely large project that would be done in phases. Although permitting has delayed the process to a degree, information on the initial phases could be available for release by the start of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter. This project could potentially create in excess of 60 direct

full time positions with a game changing economic impact in the parish through capital investment and follow-on jobs created in additional phases.

**Project Crude** –There were site location meetings with this project held at the early this summer. While the project is somewhat dependent on the crude oil market this corporate leadership is still looking for ways to move forward and SLP still has one possibly two potential sites for this recruitment. Direction on this project is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2015 at the soonest. This project could potentially create in excess of 12 direct full time positions

**Project Expo** – An update on some of the high level activities associate with this project will be provided for on the regular board meeting agenda.

**Project Focus –** This is a large scope project dealing with historic properties in the center and northern parts of the parish. This project is primarily event driven so the number of jobs created would vary and some of the positions would be good pay, but only part time by project. Although here has been some measurable success with this effort over the past 6 weeks or so, a large part of the future of this project hinges on recent legislative changes for targeted industry tax incentives. We anticipate seeing a more defined bias from this over the next 4 - 8 weeks.

**Project Fountain** – This is a large scale commercial development project that discussions have been ongoing for some time. A master plan for the project is conceptually in place and there is now a formal contract letter of intent in place with the key partners, which is a big step. This project, if successful, could have a legacy impact on the parish, as well as the region, through the capital expenditure and job creation resulting from the development. Engineering meetings will be ongoing this week on site plan development. This is potentially a legacy project, but exact job figures are not available.

**Project Lid –** This project is a manufacturer looking to locate along one of our key transportation corridors. The company has closed on their property and is working through the details of their building and site engineering. The CEO anticipated breaking ground in Nov 2015 with an approximate one year total build time. We will be working with company officials for a coordinated announcement over the next several weeks. This project would relocate up to 100 immediate jobs and the addition of an extra 75 full time direct positions to the parish for a total of 175 directly employed positions.

**Project Lot –** This project is the expansion of an existing parish company into construction at new location and the further modification and refit of their existing facility within the parish. The property for the new facility has been purchased and is scheduled to be in construction for September 2015. This project would create 45 new direct full time positions. The existing location now has approximately 25 full time positions, which are anticipated to soon be replaced by a new business in their existing facility.

**Project Mat** – This project directly ties back into Project Roto. The company is one of the suppliers in their system and is very interested in starting an additional location on

site. This is projected project that is going to rely heavily on the rail transportation plan for Opelousas Industrial Park. It is also important to note this project is impacted by drilling activities, which timing will bear out with the schedule of rail upgrades vs. the current oil/gas market. If successful, this project could potentially create in excess of 40 direct full time positions.

**Project Neighbor** – This is a medium size retail location project on the western side of the parish. The project continues to work through, contracting and due diligence, although there has been some key steps taken by the City as part of this process. This project would create in excess of 85 direct positions. Construction on this project is tentative for late 2015.

**Project Outpost (A) -** The national tenant has closed on the property for this site located on Hwy 190. All indications are that the project will move forward and a formal coordinated announcement should be pending within the next several weeks. If successful this project would create up to 25 - 30 direct full time positions.

**Project Outpost (B)** This national tenant was in a purchase contract agreement on the I-49 Corridor. After many months of due diligence and negotiations it was determined that the costs to mitigate the flood plain this area would ultimately be prohibitive to the business model. This project would have created up to 40 full time positions for the anchor, as well as many additional positions in outlying parcel developments. While this specific project will go to the parked status, we will continue to work with engineers and developers on solutions to make this high profile property realistic from a cost perspective to develop.

**Project Press** – This is an expansion project with an in state company based out of Baton Rouge looking to remodel and open a vacant production operation in the center of the parish. This project has the potential to move forward quickly and would create an initial 35 direct positions with the potential to expand to 55 direct positions.

**Project Slip –** This project deals with a major effort with a regional employer who is looking to further expand their transportation/distribution footprint in St Landry Parish. The project deals with multiple facilities in multiple communities so it has a lot of moving pieces. We expect be clarity on the final picture by the end of August. Exact job expansion and creation numbers are not solidified for this project.

**Project Spin –** This project is a light industrial application looking for relocation and support getting established in St Landry Parish with high demand labor force. We as parish economic development have offered support to this project through the lease of the warehouse area in the business center as a CNC Machining Operation. We will be doing a coordinated press release on this project in the next couple of weeks.

**Project Shield –** Company executives continue to work through options, both temporary and permanent, for their head-quarters relocation. We still have not been able to secure availability to the "right" piece of property with the required transportation access. Indications are that the company has been able to work towards an existing

multi story site that would well suite their long-term needs. Pending confirmation, this project could be parked by the next months report.

## **Announced Projects**

**Project Lift – Announced Recruitment -** This project was formally announced over the weekend. The company Air Evac Lifeteam will be basing rotary wing operations out of the St Landry Parish Airport. They are completing significant upgrades to one of the existing facilities and now have aircraft on the ground to assume operations. This successful project further highlights the huge upside for the SLP Airport, which tends to get overlooked as a key transportation asset of St Landry Parish. This project is anticipated to create 16 direct full time positions.

**Project Strip – Announced Expansion -** This is a large commercial project on a large multi-tenant commercial facility located on the I-49 Service road corridor, St Landry Plaza. The company, Rock Step Capital, made a formal announcement earlier this month through their President, My Andy Wiener. He pledged to bring as many as 8 new national tenants to the facility over the next 2 years. This project could allow for up to 75 direct full time and a greater number of part time employees.

**Project Essen** - **Announced Expansion** Crest Industries, based in Pineville, Louisiana, will invest \$5 million to develop a new cutting, machining and fabrication facility in Eunice and add new machining centers to existing PCS equipment. Crest will retain 18 PCS jobs, and the expansion project will create 20 new jobs averaging \$50,000 per year, plus benefits. LED estimates the investment will result in an additional 24 indirect jobs, for a total of 44 new jobs in the Acadiana Region.

**Project Rip** – **Announced Recruitment** - This Company, Top Timber, deals with the timber hardwood related processing. It is located to the rear of S&B Sawmill in the proximity of the Wal-Mart Distribution Center. The company had indicated that it could initially employ up to 12 full time positions with the potential to grow very quickly if certain international agreements can be established.

**Project Roto – Announced Expansion -** This is an existing company within the Parish, Noble Plastics that has acquired the Yahoo building to begin production of additional plastics components through a process call roto mold plastics production. There is a good potential that this project would bring in a partner supplier, Project Mat. This project will initially create 15 or less direct full time positions, but has a great potential for future expansion.

**Project Alon – Announced Expansion -** The Alon Refinery has recently completed an expansion at their facility to include the building of a rail transfer facility that will allow them more efficiently loading on and off load bulk rail materials to be utilized both in and out of their production facility. The project will create as many as 12 full time positions.

**Project Runway – Announced Recruitment:** A formal announcement was made for this project Thursday, February 20<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 PM at their new construction site just past

Beau Chene High School. We conducted a follow-up site visit last week. There is solid progress on the foundation structure, which is the most time consuming portion of their building process. The company expects operations to commence in a matter of weeks. This project will create as many as 25 direct full time positions.

**Project Martin – Announced Expansion:** Bayou State Lumber Company, LLC, formerly known as Acadiana Hardwood, LLC. This company will create 29 permanent new jobs and retain 21. This mill is the only viable employment opportunity for most individuals in the area.

#### V - Area and Regional Development Items:

With the assistance of some of our board members, we continue to make significant strides in finding ways to meaningfully engage the Ag Community of SLP. Recent meetings put together by one of our board members with USDA staff to look at agriculture grant funding and projects for future development is just another one of these examples.

Collaboration efforts with the St. Landry Chamber of Commerce board are moving forward. They will be a core partner for our upcoming Parish Branding Campaign.

Our work with SLP Tourism also continues to move forward. We try and provide direct attendance, or updates to their monthly board meetings on some of the latest updates in economic development. We also continue to regularly collaborate on regional and state priorities important to the cultural economy of SLP, both through our Cornerstone collaboration, as well as other areas, such as the Parish GIS Project and Parish Branding Campaign

Multiple BERG collaboration meetings have been held over the past fifteen weeks. We have met with the following companies:

- Wal-Mart Distribution Center
- Alon Refinery Krotz Springs
- Savoie's
- Tony Chachere's
- Bayou State Lumber
- Cal- Chlor
- Riceland Crawfish
- International Snubbing Services (ISS)
- Sunland Construction
- Ventura Foods
- Dominique Stock Yards
- Dixie Storage
- Noble Plastics

An application we submitted by SLED on behalf of Noble Plastics for the Governors Lantern Awards, which highlights statewide excellence in manufacturing, was a winning

selection. The company was presented the formal Lantern Award by the Governor on June 16<sup>th</sup> in a ceremony at the Governor's Mansion. This is a very notable and well-deserved honor for a great SLP Company! We plan to develop and issue a press release on this and their new facility in the Opelousas Industrial Park over the next several weeks.

Our partnership with SLCC and their TH Harris facilities continues to move forward on multiple levels. They have committed to being one of the core partners in the upcoming parish branding campaign. We have also recently committed a 2015 – 2016 scholarship for 1500.00 through GOEDIC on behalf of SLED for a student who is a resident of the parish who will be attending classes at the TH Harris Campus.

There are exciting times at LSU-E as they recently announced their new Chancellor, Dr. Kimberly Russell, who will formally be in place on Sept 1<sup>st</sup>. Dr. Renee Robichaux will be the interim Chancellor until that time. We expect that our already dynamic relations with LSU-E will continue to move forward with the new leadership. LSU-E is also a core partner for the branding campaign.

Through GOEIDC proceeds SLED will be supporting an Annual Economic Development scholarship for the 2015 – 2016 academic year to the LSU-E foundation. We are also continuing to actively support their leadership development program and have had solid discussion this month on moving this forward to a broader scope for next year.

We have agreed to participate on the advisory committee for a major United Way Effort called The ALICE Project. It is our hope this comprehensive research effort, which puts a heavy emphasis on the working poor, will help provide some critical answers on key workforce issues due to underlying societal issues that may not always be apparent. The kick meeting for the advisory committee in Baton Rouge, held in late June confirmed a group of dynamic professionals that should uncover a lot of data that will be important to St Landry Parish and Acadiana in future planning and prioritization efforts.

We continue to offer assistance and active participation in multiple areas to the Parish President in helping to support the Acadiana Planning Commission, APC. The strategic portion of this effort is being spearheaded by the South Central Planning and Development District (SCPDD). It is now official that the Metropolitan Planning Organization, MPO is combined into the APC Facility located off of Gloria Switch Road.

We also continue to collectively work on regional priorities through ARA (Acadiana Regional Alliance) which is an additional component of the 1 Acadiana effort to bring a collective voice together to enhance regional economic and community development efforts. Some of the key items of consideration are facilitating and promoting the following:

- Understanding the efforts on a regional transportation plan
- Acadiana Day at the Capitol
- Planning a Acadiana Building the Region Conference

#### Project Front Yard

AEDC (Acadiana Economic Development Council/OA, 1 Acadiana Update):

The AEDC staff has formally been incorporated into the business development structure of One Acadiana. While the AEDC board remains intact, it is likely that there will be a phased transition in entirety for its structure and assets to One Acadiana. The board structure of AEDC will still however remain intact for the near term in order to allow a total transformation of the organization.

We have had quality interaction with the senior OA staff this month working through the details of how the OA regional economic development role will be structured in the most efficient manner to compliment parish wide economic development activities.

As a regional economic development entity OA has been working on the following priorities in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter of 2015:

- Developing and communicating a set of region-wide priorities to advance in the upcoming elections entitled "Priorities for a Better Acadiana." Meeting with all Acadiana-based candidates for State Legislature and the four major gubernatorial candidates to seek their support.
- Developed three Lafayette-specific priorities to advance in the LCG elections, entitled "Priorities for a Better Lafayette" and will aim to meet with all Parish President and Council candidates.
- Established a project pipeline of companies exploring the option of relocating or expanding in our nine-parish region.
- Ongoing visits with existing businesses throughout the nine-parish region are taking place to identify expansion and retention opportunities
- The site development program is ramping up with a 38 percent increase on regional site activity
- The initial groundwork is being laid to conduct a target industry analysis to identify the industry sectors that match well with Acadiana's competitive advantages (to be completed by Q4)
- The planning phase for the talent development program is complete. Although we are still refining the process, the recruiting / relocation service is available to all investors at no cost
- The inaugural Leadership Exchange to Charleston, South Carolina is scheduled for October 12-14.

## VI – Community Development in St Landry Parish

As part of the steering committee for this effort, we are pleased to see that Ardyn Co has completed the French Immersion Center Business plan that focuses on alternative usage of St Luke's Hospital for French Immersion. In a broader perspective this report

highlight the potential for the Cultural Economy of Arnaudville and surrounding areas. As expected, the report uncovers some exciting opportunities for the cultural corridor of our parish. Please let us know if any of you would like a copy of this report.

We have had productive discussions this month with facility heads and the St Landry Parish Airport, Ahart Field, Parish Leadership, and key leaders from the regional planning districts on the potential for getting a future growth plan for the airport funded in the upcoming capital outlay program. It is apparent to all that the airport has tremendous growth potential if we can help come together collectively with this kind of an effort.

We are continuing to prioritize the work with our Mayor's throughout the parish in order to identify their priorities and how we can provide support on these priorities. Over this past month we have had meetings with Mayors from the following communities:

- Washington
- Sunset
- Eunice
- Melville
- Grand Coteau

We continue to work with SLED board members and the local leadership in Eunice about moving forward with a comprehensive plan and a follow up action plan to move strategic priorities forward. These efforts over the past month have culminated in the formal approval by the Eunice City Council to establish a 10 person planning steering committee to help move this effort forward.

Along with the APC, SCPDD and Parish Government we have made big strides with Melville in helping to analyze and prioritize some of the communities many needs. This includes efforts to look at specific and broad grant options to address some of the community's urgent needs.

We have also made significant strides with the leadership in Grand Coteau on identifying and educating the community on the value of establishing a taxing district on their high potential commercial corridors. We anticipate a public workshop and a subsequent formal introduction to this concept in August.

We continue to provide attendance and support to the Steamboat City Association in Washington to work on various community development initiatives. The Dejean Church, located near the corner of Veterans Memorial and Church Street now serves as the Historic Washington Art Gallery providing a venue for local artist to showcase their works. The operating hours are Friday, 10 am – 4pm, Saturday, 10 am – 5 pm and Sunday 12 pm – 4 pm. There are currently eight (8) artists located within the gallery with a waiting list comprised of a host of others seeking rental space for art display. Efforts continue to progress as Washington is approaching the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its

settlement which will be in year 2020. "Come Home to Washington" will provide an unparalleled opportunity to bring you, your family, and friends to commemorate the past, celebrate the present, and define the future. With a wide range of events currently in the implementation stages, there will be something to do for all ages.

The St. Landry Professionals will host its third Membership Meeting the evening of July 22<sup>nd</sup> at 5:30 p.m. at the Silver Slipper, located in Leonville, La. This Membership Meeting is a no agenda event, to provide our fellow young professionals to discuss the future of the region and get some networking in in a relaxing environment. In our best efforts to attract prospective members throughout the parish, events will held at targeted 'hot spots' on a rotating monthly basis in each of twelve (12) municipalities. Lastly, it is important to note that the SLP has formed a partnership with Java Square, who will provide free access to their 2<sup>nd</sup> floor meeting room where SLP monthly seminars and trainings will be conducted in exchange for members in attendance to purchase lunch from a discounted, specialized menu exclusive to the SLP. In closing, SLP membership continues to grow by the day attracting the up and coming leaders for our parish.

Downtown Opelousas continues to move forward with infill development. We mentioned last month the new traffic signals and road painting upgrade for ten intersections in the City of Opelousas.

Additional upcoming projects include downtown curb and sidewalk enhancement work though a Louisiana Transportation Alternative Program grant, way-finding signage work for the historic district area, historic plaques for some of the buildings located in the city's National Historic District, which is the two block area around the Courthouse Square and proposed new street signs for the city's historic district areas. Various considerations for these aesthetic improvements are being evaluated by city engineers at this time.

Opelousas was recently identified by a pilot program through LED and the State Main Street Office titled "Outreach and small business development In Main Street communities. This activity is a collaboration between Louisiana Economic Development (LED) and Louisiana Main Street with the goal of assisting small businesses in rural communities with sustainability and growth by strengthening awareness of and access to small business support services. They are one of only four communities in Louisiana that have been asked to be a part of this program.

Their Opelousas Tourism Department is now actively working with business owners now for new upcoming rounds of grant opportunities.

Our team continues to work with the City of Opelousas through the planning stages necessary to launch a citywide youth soccer program as envisioned within the City of Opelousas Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The committee chair anticipates the first season to begin in spring of 2016.

We also recently participated this month in a pilot project work group with the City of Opelousas exploring options on enhancing the quality of life through increased recreation opportunities.

## **Grants Update:**

The \$25,000.00 LBIA Grant for the Business Center have been expensed prior to the June 20, 2015 submission deadline for the grant. All supporting documentation, including project status reposts, as well as reimbursement verification invoices will be provided within the close out deadlines. We are optimistic in receiving funding for the 2015-2016 grant funding cycle.

USDA RBEG Grant; by the Delta Regional Authority was approved and funded by USDA Rural Development, National Office, Washington, D.C. We found out just last week that the facility has some ADA compliance upgrades that are relatively minor that will need to be completed prior to the funds being released by the USDA for this award. We anticipate this list being finalized and work being completed by the late July, early August.

We continue to work closely with the SCPDD/ARA on the potential for grant funding for rail upgrades designed to support Project Roto, Project Mat, Project Crude, and Project Amber. The key with this grant is going to be the rail master plan for the Opelousas Industrial Park, which Morgan Godeau and Associates is currently working on. It is important that any upgrades meet the long term needs of the park and the area rather than just being reactive to situations as they arise.

We anticipate using the new Increment Finance Policy over the near term to help potentially move at least three projects forward in communities along the I-49 Corridor. The use of these funds to enhance transportation infrastructure along the corridor will be strong area of near term focus as we look to capitalize on the I-49 potential.

## **VII – Training Opportunities**

Brandy will be attending the Real Estate Development and Reuse Course at LSU August 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>. This will serve as her second course under LSU's Certified Economic Developer Program.

Bill will be attending the inaugural One Acadiana Leadership Conference, Oct 12<sup>th</sup> thru 14<sup>th</sup> in Charleston S.C.

The following are the closest proximity basic economic development training courses remaining for 2015.

True South Basic Economic Development Course, Sept 21 - 24, 2015 Location: Hattiesburg, MS

#### VIII - Conclusion

There are significant current economic factors that could cause concern for the Acadiana Economy in the minds of many people over the near term. Not the least of which is the current downturn in the oil industry and its potential impact on this area, as well as the impact on the state budget in a broad scope. Retail sales last month were down 9 percent over last year in Lafayette, we have heard about service companies cutting back staff and a lot of people are concerned. Our legislators just finished dealing with one of the most challenging state budget scenarios present in recent memory with many challenges still to come with our new Governor and Congressional Delegation.

It is so important for SLED to continue to be the "Can Do" voice for the Parish. We cannot control all of the things that are going on around us, but we can control how we respond to them. A lot of people will be watching us through these times and it is important that we all stay focused and stay positive. I personally want to thank all of you for being such an integral part of making good things happen for other people! With your support we will dramatically expand opportunities, growth, and positive impact across St Landry Parish throughout this year and beyond!!