

**MINUTES OF  
LAKEFRONT MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY  
RECREATION/SUBDIVISION SPECIAL COMMITTEE MEETING  
HELD ON TUESDAY, MAY 18, 2021**

PRESENT: Chair Bob Romero  
Vice Chair Esmond Carr  
Commissioner Stan Brien  
Commissioner Dawn Hebert  
Commissioner Eugene Green (\*entered at 4:38 PM)

STAFF: Louis Capo – Executive Director  
Madison Bonaventure – Assistant to the Executive Director/Board Secretary  
Daniel Hill – Director of Engineering & Operations

PUBLIC: Kerry Najolia – OLDPD Supt. Of Police  
Jay Baudier–LVPOA  
Tom Long–Lake Vista Resident  
Melissa Sylvester– Lake Oaks Resident

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The Recreation/Subdivision Committee of the Lakefront Management Authority met on Tuesday, May 18, 2021, in the Lakefront Airport Terminal Building, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Center, 6001 Stars and Stripes Blvd., New Orleans, Louisiana.

Chair Romero called the meeting to order at 4:35 p.m. and Commissioner Hebert led in the pledge of allegiance. Louis Capo, Executive Director, called the roll. A quorum was present.

**Opening Comments:**

Commissioner Romero commented on the heavy traffic on Lakeshore Drive and expressed concern about traffic flow once the Lakeshore Drive Roadway Reconfiguration project on the west end was completed.

Commissioner Green entered the meeting.

**Motion to Adopt Agenda:**

Commissioner Hebert made a motion to amend the agenda to add a discussion regarding the Lakeshore Drive roadway closures to the agenda. Commissioner Romero offered that roadway closures could be discussed under Director Capo’s report if he was planning on discussing Lakeshore Drive. Commissioner Romero asked if Commissioner Hebert was confident that discussing the item under the Director’s Report would satisfy her request. She agreed.

A motion was offered by Commissioner Green, seconded by Commissioner Carr, and was unanimously approved to adopt the agenda.

**Motion to Approve Minutes:**

A motion was offered by Commissioner Brien, seconded by Commissioner Carr, and unanimously adopted to approve the minutes from the April 13, 2021 meeting.

**Public Comments:**

Melissa Sylvester introduced herself to the Committee as a representative of Miss Megan Pavageau. She said it was her understanding that the Lake Oaks Civic Association had authorization to use a 20 x 20 plot near the Orleans Levee District Police Department near the police station. Director Capo advised her that only preliminary discussions had taken place about the possibility of a community garden. Commissioner Romero offered that the community garden could possibly be approved in the future. Director Capo advised that a board resolution was required for use of the land after thorough vetting.

Commissioner Romero asked where they would obtain water for watering the garden. Ms. Sylvester did not know. Commissioner Green requested that more specific details be provided before any approval or access could be considered by the Committee and/or the Board.

She made a request on behalf of the Lake Oaks Civic Association for the LMA to till the area, assuming that the request for the community garden would be approved, so the community could plant in the space. Director Capo and Commissioner Green expressed concern about the various needs the community garden would have and how it would be managed. Commissioner Carr suggested that more specific plans be presented. The Committee requested that Ms. Sylvester provide more information to consider the community garden request. The Committee invited her to make a presentation at the next meeting to provide additional information to them.

**Director's Report:**

Director Capo advised the Committee that excavation had begun for water connection service for Shelter No. 4. Commissioner Carr inquired about the sewerage line. Daniel Hill, Director of Engineering and Operations, advised that it was already in place.

Director Capo informed the Committee that the City of New Orleans Health Department had set up an area along the lakefront to administer COVID-19 vaccinations, and about 80 members of the public received a vaccine.

Director Capo advised that Supt. Kerry Najolia was available to discuss Lakeshore Drive and was in attendance to do so during Old Business.

Commissioner Hebert said it was her understanding, based on the emailed press release Director Capo had provided, that all lanes of Lakeshore Drive would be open for Mother's Day, and she had received some calls and photos showing that traffic flows were closed east to west and heavy traffic flow.

She said she understood that her city councilwoman thought the LMA managed the opening and closing of lanes on Lakeshore Drive and wanted to clarify with the councilwoman that the Flood Protection Authority (FPA) manages the roadway.

Chair Romero added that the press release that was administered by the FPA on behalf of OLDPD did not match the traffic plan that was implemented on Mother's Day. He said he was sympathetic to the idea that preventing left-hand turns could enhance safety, but he was uncomfortable that the traffic plan did not match the press release. He asked if the call was made by OLDPD to modify the plan.

Supt. Najolia said OLDPD had modified the plan because they were trying to take a measured approach to managing traffic on the lakefront. He did not want to lead the public to believe that the event traffic plan, such as the one they institute for Easter weekend, would be the norm. He advised that if there was not a large traffic build up, then they would allow all four lanes to remain open. He said plans are subject to change based on events, weather, or other factors. They felt the event traffic program was the safest way to move traffic along the lakefront. He further explained that the watch commanders are authorized to modify the traffic plan based on the volume Lakeshore Drive was experiencing to keep visitors safe. He said the purpose of lane closures was to allow emergency vehicles to bypass traffic to get to locations along the lakefront.

Commissioner Hebert said there were access issues on the Easter holiday weekend and believed the west end construction was causing a problem. She felt as if the LMA was spending \$8,000 to \$10,000 on security, then maybe those officers could direct traffic.

Supt. Najolia said it is important to get the framework of barricades and other infrastructure in place early to establish the flow of traffic, and sometimes this must be done in advance of the day they expect a large volume of visitors.

She said that she heard some of the parking bays were closed on select weekends. Commissioner Carr said he noticed some parking lots were closed as well near Rail Street for most of the day. Supt. Najolia thought the parking lot was closed only for a short period of time. Commissioner Romero asked why the parking bay would be closed. He explained that there were issues with crowds in that area, and the Committee asked if congregation was an issue.

Jay Baudier, Lake Vista resident, informed the Committee that there were issues with urination and defecation near homes, despite port-o-lets being available.

Chair Romero said that the port-o-lets were still in place. Director Capo advised that as soon as reports about public urination and defecation came about, staff ordered port-o-lets to relieve the issue.

Chair Romero understood that there were some drivers recorded going as fast as 80 miles per hour in the vicinity of the west end of Lakeshore Drive. He wondered if traffic could be better managed by traffic lights along Lakeshore Drive to keep traffic moving and keep pedestrians safe. He asked about the procedure for exploring that as an option.

Supt. Najolia said it was his understanding that AECOM had only studied the west end area near the restaurants, so he assumed further study would be necessitated to learn if that would be a viable option. He said the police would be supportive of plans to slow traffic for enhanced public safety.

Commissioner Romero asked if there were any incidents along Lakeshore Drive during Easter weekend. Supt. Najolia advised that an individual on a dirt bike fleeing from the police injured himself. He said there were traffic accidents around the area but not directly on Lakeshore Drive.

Commissioner Hebert questioned why a driver could not take a continuous ride down the drive from east to west. Supt. Najolia compared the traffic program to similar programs for public

events such as the large Mardi Gras parade Endymion. He recalled his first year of service with OLDPD in 2017 when they opted not to close any lanes of Lakeshore Drive on the weekend of Easter. At first, he said he did not understand the benefit of closing the lanes. He then understood after learning from experience that closing the lanes allow emergency vehicles to respond.

Commissioner Hebert thought that the closures were exacerbating the traffic issues. Supt. Najolia explained that the closed lanes can be used by emergency vehicles to respond to events. He gave an example of a shooting on Mother's Day weekend in 2018. He credited the traffic plan with the expedient response time to apprehend the suspect and get medical care to the victims.

Commissioner Hebert asked who had collaborated to develop the closures. Chair Romero advised that the roadway reconfiguration project was developed by the Flood Protection Authority (FPA) and their hired consultants. He advised that the LMA was made aware of the project when it was presented to the Recreation-Subdivision Committee in the fall of 2020. Chair Romero said that slower traffic may be more beneficial for public safety. Commissioner Hebert said she had only witnessed speeders when people were trying to get to work in the morning hours, and she does not see OLDPD officers patrolling the area.

Chair Romero said he had witnessed a drag race on Lakeshore Drive recently. Commissioner Hebert asked where the police were.

Commissioner Carr asked if anyone with the LMA had consulted with the FPA about lane closures on Lakeshore Drive. Supt. Najolia advised that he had consulted with neighborhood leaders in the area. Chair Romero reminded the Committee that the LMA had no authority over Lakeshore Drive but appreciated Supt. Najolia answering questions regarding the management of Lakeshore Drive.

Commissioner Carr asserted that there were conflicting accounts regarding speeding and traffic jams resulting as issues for safety on Lakeshore Drive. Supt. Najolia said that when volume begins to grow or if several cars are speeding, OLDPD could implement a traffic plan to mitigate the issues. He said that the most important element of a traffic flow program is access for emergency vehicles for responding to incidents.

Supt. Najolia advised that there were shots fired on Easter. The Committee and Director Capo expressed that they thought the reports of shots fired was a rumor. He advised that shots were fired during a fight near Shelter No. 3, but no one was injured. Chair Romero and Supt. Najolia discussed additional traffic concerns.

Supt. Najolia said that about 50 officers are scheduled to work during holiday weekends in addition to mounted units and other emergency response personnel.

Chair Romero asked if Commissioner Hebert's questioned were fully answered. She confirmed they had, but she expressed that those who live in New Orleans East were impacted negatively by the traffic program.

Commissioner Carr asked about the signs that had been erected stating that no parking was allowed in the subdivisions. Supt. Najolia advised that OLDPD was approached by Councilman

Brossett's office regarding about parking issues, so posted signs allowed OLDPD to issue citations for violations. Commissioner Carr asked what the violation would be. Supt. Najolia replied that it could be for parking on the grass or on the street in some areas. Commissioner Green asked about the location of the signs. Supt. Najolia said a bike lane was recently constructed on Canal Blvd. through a City of New Orleans Department of Public Works project, and they wanted to prevent motorists from parking in the bike lane.

Commissioner Green remarked that on Easter Sunday that traffic was stopped at Elysian Fields, at Paris Avenue, and at Marconi Ave. He said that traffic went towards Robert E. Lee Boulevard, and traffic was also blocked at Tern Street. He was unsure how that would aid in public safety. He said he did not understand how an emergency vehicle could, for example, get from Paris Avenue to the other side of the Bayou St. John bridge, which had barricades across it, with the current traffic program in place. He expressed concern about the efficacy of the plan.

Supt. Najolia said that he would follow up on the issues he identified. Commissioner Green said his intention was to demonstrate how the barricades would impede an emergency vehicle from traversing to the site of an incident. Commissioner Green asked who had authorization to close off city streets, such as Canal Boulevard. Supt. Najolia explained that there was a city ordinance in place. He committed to getting the statute to the Committee. Commissioner Green said the street was closed at 11:00 AM with no heavy traffic conditions.

The Committee discussed traffic issues with parking lots. Commissioner Green said he wished the FPA would have engaged the LMA Board for feedback regarding the roadway reconfiguration project and traffic plans.

Commissioner Carr asked if it was the Committee's intention to learn if OLDPD was lawfully closing streets. Chair Romero said he understood that police departments could close streets for public safety reasons. Commissioner Green offered that blocking traffic to certain subdivision inlet streets, such as Topaz, simply serve as a barrier for members of the public to park in the neighborhood.

Commissioner Green explained that there used to be a patrol on busy weekends to slow traffic near the west end restaurants so pedestrians could safely cross. He said it was a successful way of managing traffic and pedestrians.

The Committee discussed various events that brought citizens to the lakefront area.

Supt. Najolia thanked Director Capo for contracting with Acadian Ambulance. Supt. Najolia left the meeting.

Commissioners Hebert and Carr asked about the planning process for Lakeshore Drive access closures and traffic plan. Director Capo advised that OLDPD designed the traffic plan and notified the LMA via press release.

**Old Business:**

- 1) **Update on lakefront parkways and recreation facilities.**

The topic was sufficiently covered during the Director's Report.

**Announcement of next Regular Recreation/Subdivision Committee Meeting:**

- 1) **Tuesday, June 15, 2021– 4:30 P.M.**

**Adjourn:**

A motion was offered by Commissioner Green, seconded by Commissioner Carr, and unanimously adopted, to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 6:13 P.M.