



Minutes

September 9, 2024

4:30 p.m.

A meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Southside Economic Development District was held on Monday, September 9, 2024, at 4:30 p.m.

Present were Tony Little, Otis Jones, Roosevelt Wright, Jr, Anna Reed, Atty Sarah Smith
Absent were Karl Dhaliwal and Tyrone Goodin. (Mr. Dhaliwal notified the secretary ahead of the meeting to note that this was not a scheduled meeting date and that he was out of the city. Apologies were offered)

Also present were Councilman Doug Harvey, Cliff Thomas, and Mondrian Douglas of the NAACP, and Mrs. Kenya Roberson of the Northeast Louisiana Black Chamber of Commerce Foundation. There were several others present.

There was a quorum.

Mr. Wright gave an invocation.

Upon motion of Mr. Wright and seconded by Mr. Jones, the board unanimously approved the July 15, 2024, SEDD meeting minutes.

President's Report

The President reported that he has been trying to make some headway on securing additional funding. He said he and city councilman Verbon Muhammad met with Mayor Ellis, and "we are making some headway on that." He said it is a priority of the Southside Councilman and Mr. Harvey that SEDD gets the TIF from the city.

Mr. Little also noted that the Arizona Street Dream Center was expected to be completed by August, but unforeseen problems delayed it. He hopes the October meeting will be held in the Dream Center.

He said he planned to "line out" the various committee functions, but it will be done differently. He said he wants to ensure SEDD priorities align with the mayor's priorities and

those of the city council rather than SEDD pursuing an approach different from that of the city. He said that whatever we do at SEDD should sync with what the city is doing.

He welcomed Attorney Smith, a new board member appointed to represent District 4, appointed by Bishop Rodney McFarland. Mrs. Smith introduced herself and pledged. The President has appointed her to the DBE committee with leadership hopes.

Treasurer's Report

Mr. Wright, treasurer, said the firm of Rosie Harper CPA has been contracted to conduct the 2023-24 Audit.

He reported that as of July 31, 2024, had received \$32,198.47 from Hotel/Motel recipients. In July, the income from the hotels was 4,924.34. Its expenses this fiscal year have been \$112,564.77. Of the costs, \$21,240 was for TBA Architects for the Dream Plan visuals and format, \$5,484.79 was for insurance on the Dream Center, and \$ 77,339.98 for the Dream Center renovations. He said no funds were spent on salaries, travel, or other expenses unrelated to the SEDD plan.

The treasurer's report, including authorization to pay outstanding bills, was unanimously approved.

Funding Report

The president introduced Mrs. Roberson, president of the Northeast Louisiana Black Chamber of Commerce Foundation, who appealed to the SEDD to support an upcoming Black Chamber session on helping the public understand the legal system. The President said he wanted SEDD to renew its attempt to collaborate with activities of other organizations with similar goals.

Mrs. Roberson said the Chamber is sponsoring a criminal law seminar at the Monroe Civic Center to acquaint the public with the changes in state criminal laws and other essential information related to courts, attorneys, and laws. She asked SEDD to partner and assist the Chamber in sponsoring the criminal law seminar. The assistance will be about \$500 to help cover the venue and the marketing. She said SEDD does not have to cut a check to the Chamber but to help with the expenses.

Mr. Wright said he personally would promote the event in his newspaper at no cost and would personally donate, but he would be opposed to SEDD donations to programs not properly vetted in committee and without a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement.

President Little asked the board to deviate from its regular rules and endorse his recommendation.

The item was not decided and passed over until the next meeting.

Housing Committee

The board unanimously confirmed the President's appointment of Mrs. Reed as chairperson of the Housing Committee.

Infrastructure Committee

The board heard the report of the infrastructure committee chairman, Otis Jones, who said his committee met on August 23 and reported an update on the renovations to the Dream Center, noting that it was 98 percent complete.

The committee recommended that the \$100,000 allocated for the Dream Center be amended by a maximum of \$30,000 to provide for furnishings, purchase, and installation of digital technology, architectural plans, and removal of trees.

The committee's recommendation was unanimously approved.

The committee also recommended RCH Engineering to prepare a plan that maps out the infrastructure improvements needed to develop residential and commercial properties with a plan to phase in the implementation of the projects. The plan should be complete by December 1 at the latest. The company's estimated cost is \$50,000.

The committee's recommendation was unanimously approved.

Mr. Jones noted that the Dream Center was assigned to his committee by the President, and its expenses should not be charged to his committee's budget.

Safe Neighborhood and Crime Reduction Report

The board heard the report of the Safe Neighborhood and Crime Reduction Committee, chaired by Mr. Wright. He said the committee met on August 23 and considered three proposals for Mini-Grants. After discussion and review, two of the three were recommended to the District for approval: United Minds of Joint Action (L. Marie Brown) and the Life Changers of Northeast Louisiana (Damian Coleman) as the final two mini-grant award recipients.

The committee's recommendation was unanimously approved.

Councilman Doug Harvey gave his thoughts on various subjects during citizens' participation. Other speakers included Mondrian Douglas, Damian Coleman, and Rev. Cliff Thomas.

After one hour and seven minutes of deliberation, the meeting adjourned.

Tony Little, President

Roosevelt Wright Jr., secretary treasurer