

Planning Begins for the New Orleans Dialogue on Race Recommended by Councilmember Hedge-Morrell

News Release

April 6, 2009

Contact:

Lena Stewart
Office of
Councilmember
Cynthia Hedge-Morrell
Ph: 504-658-1040
lestewart@cityofno.com

[New Orleans
City Council](#)

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)



New Orleans, LA - April 6, 2009 - Representatives from *AmericaSpeaks*, the Washington D.C. based non-partisan citizen advocacy organization, will be in New Orleans next week to conduct the first phase of interviews for The New Orleans Dialogue on Race, which Councilmember Cynthia Hedge-Morrell recommended in February 2009, as an important educational effort to help create new solutions to address New Orleans' racial tension. Hedge-Morrell chairs the City Council's Education Committee.

"The issues surrounding race relations in New Orleans have been highly charged for centuries," said Hedge-Morrell. Hurricane Katrina only made matters worse, she said, because it highlighted the disparities between race and class in New Orleans.

"*AmericaSpeaks*, in conjunction with our local consultant Barbara Major, will conduct a series of interviews with key leaders and stakeholders to gain a deeper understanding regarding current dynamics, possibilities and impediments," said Steve Brigham, *AmericaSpeaks*' Chief Operating Officer. The interviews will be followed by the building of a steering committee which will be a key force in reaching out to constituencies and networks to promote dialogue and understanding.

In late spring or early summer, a much larger group of leaders will come together for one or more dialogues,

followed by broad-based community meetings and ideally a large town meeting that allows for honest, open, respectful and collaborate dialogue and understanding, explained Brigham.

"The end result is not dialogue for dialogue sake - but a robust, sustainable action agenda, embraced by leaders and citizens alike, and in which all involved feel empowered to bridge our divides and move toward creating a great and inclusive city that New Orleans has the potential to become," said Hedge-Morrell.

"We will open up this initiative to all our city's citizens, churches, neighborhood, business and community organizations," Hedge-Morrell explained. "We want to involve everyone who would like to be a part of the solutions to this problem."

New Orleans City Council

The New Orleans City Council is the legislative branch of New Orleans city government. The Council considers and enacts all local laws that govern the City of New Orleans. The Council also approves the operating and capital budgets for the City, as recommended by the mayor, and continually monitors revenues and expenditures for local government operations. The City Council is also the regulatory body for public utilities. It also reviews and has final say on many land use and zoning matters, as well as considers major economic development projects for the City. As a Board of Review for Orleans Parish, the Council examines appeals of property tax assessments for real estate taxes, and certifies tax rolls to the Louisiana Tax Commission. Other responsibilities of the Council include overseeing the operation of the public access television in Orleans Parish.

The City Council is comprised of five districts and two councilmembers-at-large. Council President and Councilmember-at-Large Jacquelyn Brechtel Clarkson; Council Vice-President and Councilmember-at-Large Arnie Fielkow; District "A" Councilmember Shelley Midura; District "B" Councilmember Stacy S. Head; District "C" Councilmember James Carter; District "D" Councilmember Cynthia Hedge-Morrell; and District "E" Councilmember Cynthia Willard-Lewis.