

## City Council February 19, 2009 Regular Meeting Summary

News Release

February 19, 2009

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**New Orleans, LA - February 19, 2009** - Today, the New Orleans City Council unsuccessfully tried to override the Mayor's veto of Ordinance Calendar Number 27,069, which was adopted by the Council on February 5, 2009 and sought to require that the executive branch's competitive selection process regarding professional services contracts be subject to Louisiana Open Meetings Law.

The Council also honored leadership of the Sugar Bowl and the Greater New Orleans Sports Foundation, and addressed a Mardi Gras presentation featuring the Mardi Gras Indians.

Additionally, a special presentation was given in the Council Chamber before the Council meeting on the 1896 landmark U.S. Supreme Court case *Plessy vs. Ferguson*.

### ***Addressed Ordinance Regarding Transparent Competitive Selection Process***

With only five Councilmembers present when the matter was addressed, the City Council was unsuccessful in its effort to override the Mayor's veto of Ordinance Calendar Number 27,069, which was originally adopted by the Council on February 5, 2009.

The veto override vote was four to override (Councilmembers Fielkow, Clarkson, Midura and Head), one recusal (Councilmember Hedge-Morrell) and two absent (Councilmembers Carter and Willard-Lewis).

The ordinance sought to mandate compliance with the state's Open

Meetings Law relative to the executive branch's competitive selection process for professional services contracts. Two weeks ago, the Council imposed the same requirement upon itself and the limited number of professional services contracts under its jurisdiction by amending the Council's Rules to impose the same requirement it sought to impose upon the executive branch.

In a related matter, the Administration placed an official notice in the back pages of Monday's Times Picayune Sports section outlining a proposed new Executive Order to suspend panel review of professional services contracts.

***Honored Sugar Bowl and Greater New Orleans Sports Foundation Leadership***

The Council honored Ronnie Burns, former President of the Sugar Bowl, for his dedication and service to the City of New Orleans.



***Richard Smith and Ronnie Burns***

Mr. Burns appeared before the Council along with Richard Smith, the current President of the Sugar Bowl.

Burns expressed his sincere gratitude to the Council for their support throughout the years and discussed the Sugar Bowl's upcoming 75th Anniversary, outlined the economic benefits that the Sugar Bowl brings to the City and highlighted some of the organizations community outreach activities.

The Council also honored Civil Sheriff Paul Valteau for his recent efforts on the Executive Committee of the Greater New Orleans Sports Foundation (GNOSF) and for his service to the City throughout the years.



*Ron Gardner, Paul Valteau and Jay Cicero*

Sheriff Valteau appeared before the Council with GNOSF President Jay Cicero and GNOSF Board Chair Ron Gardner.

Sheriff Valteau has served for the past three years as the Chairman of the R +L Carriers New Orleans Bowl, and his leadership has been instrumental in the growth of the event in the hospitality community.

Sheriff Valteau thanked the Council for taking the opportunity to honor him and the Sports Foundation, and acknowledged Cicero and Gardner for their dedication and hard work with the GNOSF.

#### *Supported Mardi Gras Indians*



*Representatives of the Mardi Gras Indians*

Family members of Big Chief Tootie Montana and representatives of the Mardi Gras Indians came before the Council today to be recognized for their historical and cultural significance.

Big Chief Allison "Tootie" Montana was the oldest continuously masking Mardi Gras Indian in the City of New Orleans, masking for forty years.

The group spoke about the history and traditions of the Mardi Gras Indians and noted the importance of remembering and honoring that history.

The Council issued a proclamation declaring that the first day of Carnival Season 2009 and every year thereafter be designated as "Big Chief Tootie Montana Day."

The representatives thanked the Council for recognizing Tootie Montana and

his dedication to the Mardi Gras Indians and the City of New Orleans.

*Received Special Presentation on  
Historic Supreme Court Case Plessy vs. Ferguson*



*Students from Frederick Douglass, McDonogh 35  
and NOCCA schools with Professor Medley*

In a special presentation in the Council Chamber before the Council meeting, Professor Keith Weldon Medley, author of *We As Freeman*, led a program with narrative and visual presentations that explored Homer Plessy's life and the Plessy v. Ferguson 1896 Supreme Court case.

The case is customarily cited as the beginning of the modern civil rights movement in the United States.

The presentation, co-sponsored by Councilmembers Fielkow and Clarkson and timed to coincide with Black History Month, was attended by students from Frederick Douglass, New Orleans Center for Creative Arts (NOCCA) and McDonogh 35 schools.

Council Vice President Fielkow said, "The Plessy v. Ferguson court case is one of the most important events in our nation's history and drastically affected civil rights in our country for years. New Orleans played a central role in this history and I feel strongly that we must share this rich history with all New Orleans citizens, especially our youth."

"I hope our remembrance of this landmark civil rights case, which originated in New Orleans, will foster a renewed commitment to equal rights and opportunity for all people in our City," commented Council President Clarkson, who since 1992 has been involved in the effort to have the site of Homer Plessy's planned arrest on a New Orleans railcar commemorated.

Descendents of Mr. Plessy and Mr. Ferguson, Keith Plessy and Phoebe Ferguson, came together and formed the Plessy and Ferguson Foundation for Education and Outreach, with a mission to use public programs and the arts to teach the history of civil rights and the role of this particular case in American and New Orleans history.

## 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.

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