

City Council June 18, 2009  
Regular Meeting Summary

News Release

June 18, 2009

Contact:  
Ronald J. Pursell  
Council Chief of Staff  
Ph: (504) 658-1082  
[rjpursell@cityofno.com](mailto:rjpursell@cityofno.com)

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**New Orleans, LA - June 18, 2009** - Today the New Orleans City Council addressed an Ordinance and a Motion, regarding funding allocations for NOPD summer overtime; and passed Resolutions urging the Legislature to pass bills dedicated to improving Louisiana's ports, and opposing House Bill No. 517.

Additionally, the Council adopted a Motion requesting information regarding the acquisition of the Chevron Building; passed Ordinances strengthening opportunities for small businesses and Disadvantaged Business Enterprises, providing for various rate increases for taxicabs and Disabled Friendly Taxis, and expanding the scope of purposes for TIF funding; and addressed a Zoning Docket establishing the "Gert Town Mixed Use Interim Zoning District."

The Council also addressed a presentation on New Orleans public schools and held an Executive Session to address pending litigation.

## *Requested Details on Acquisition of Chevron Building*



The Council passed Motion M-09-290, authored by Councilmember Clarkson, requesting that the Administration answer questions regarding the acquisition of the Chevron Building, located at 935 Gravier Street, before action is taken by the Council on the purchase of the property, to be developed as a new City Hall.

The information requested from the Administration includes:

- Details on the funding gap between the FEMA money for current City Hall renovations and the cost of the Chevron Building
- Costs to retrofit/build out the Chevron Building and to move office equipment to the building
- Length of current office leases, money in rent that will be saved by this consolidation, and plans for current City Hall property
- The Chevron Building's hurricane rating
- Timelines for moving date and completion of the gain/loss balance sheet, and number matrix for the project

"It is necessary for the Council to be fully aware of all details concerning land deals involving City Hall. I would like to see every financial detail spelled out before I cast my vote for this project - we owe this to the taxpayers," said Council Vice President Jacquelyn Brechtel Clarkson.

## *Addressed Allocation of Funds for NOPD Overtime*



*Councilmember Midura*

The Council deferred action on and referred to the Budget Committee:

- Ordinance Calendar No. 27,519 to transfer funds from the Chief Administrative Office to the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) for summer overtime
- Motion M-09-285, authored by Councilmember Midura, recommending that the Council fund the NOPD's request of one-million dollars for summer overtime at a level of half (\$500,000), and reconsider extending the final allotment when the Superintendent of Police has prepared and presented to the Council a full report on how the funds will be used and the additional value that the use of the funds has brought to the City.

District "A" Councilmember Shelley Midura said, "New Orleans needs a

carefully crafted plan to combat violent crime. We can only have that if we have the big discussion that identifies goals, timelines, tactics, deliverables, indicators and measures of success in our fight against crime. Small politics cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the real work of smarter crime fighting."

Today the Times Picayune published an Opinion Editorial by Councilmember Midura on this legislation, click [here](#) to read the Opinion Editorial.

### *Supported Small Businesses and Disadvantaged Business Enterprises*



*Malcolm Suber, Member of  
New Orleans' business  
community*

The Council passed Ordinance Calendar No. 27,520, co-authored by Councilmembers Fielkow and Hedge-Morrell, strengthening opportunities for small businesses and Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBEs) to participate in city contracts or city funded transactions.

Members from the City's business community appeared before the Council to express their support for the Ordinance and to thank the Council for their leadership on this matter.

Specifically the Ordinance:

- Establishes an overall goal of 50% utilization of locally owned businesses and 35% utilization of socially and economically disadvantaged businesses for all public spending or private projects that utilize public funding and/or incentives
- Provides for the identification of the inventory of local businesses and services available post-Katrina
- Designates the Chief Administrative Officer as responsible for the determination of project goals re: local and disadvantaged business participation and for monitoring and reporting overall goal attainment on a quarterly basis

Council President Arnie Fielkow said, "Small businesses are the backbone of any strong economy, especially socially and economically disadvantaged small businesses. If this city is to reach its full potential, we have to lift up all communities, all cultures, all races." He continued, "To make this work we must strengthen the city's compliance measures regarding actual enforcement. I applaud my colleagues and the Administration for taking this necessary first step."

District "D" Councilmember Cynthia Hedge-Morrell said, "This measure is long overdue. Supporting our local and disadvantaged businesses will

allow taxpayer dollars to remain in the community, where it can circulate and maximize the positive economic impact," said Councilmember Cynthia Hedge-Morrell. "By ensuring our public dollars go to our neighbors, we can continue to foster growth in our strong local economy."

### ***Approved Rate Increases for Taxicabs***



***Pat Murphy,  
President of United Cabs***

The Council passed Ordinance Calendar Nos. 27,497, 27,498, 27,499 and 27,500, authored by Councilmember Willard-Lewis, providing for rate increases for meter fare, hourly rate, special events fare and airport rates, for taxicabs and Disabled Friendly Taxis (DFTs).

Specifically, the Ordinances increase rates for meter fare for taxicabs and DFTs from \$2.50 to \$3.50 for the first 1/8 mile; increase the taxicab hourly rate from \$30.00 to \$32.00; increase the rate for special events fare from \$4.00 to \$5.00 per person or meter; and increase taxicab rates for airports.

Representatives of United Cab and other taxicab drivers were present in the Council Chamber to support the passage of the Ordinances.

Ground Transportation & Parking Committee Chair Councilmember Cynthia Willard-Lewis said, "We understand the challenges that both our taxicab drivers and our citizens face in today's economic environment. With these modest rate increases, we aim to strike a balance between assisting our drivers and ensuring that taxicabs remain an affordable method of transportation."

### ***Supported Louisiana's Ports and International Trade***



***Councilmember-at-Large  
Fielkow***

The Council passed Resolution R-09-288, authored by Councilmember Fielkow, urging the Legislature to pass three Louisiana House Bills (No. 215, 744 and 779) dedicated to increasing the State's international trade and improving Louisiana's ports.

Louisiana House Bill (HB) No. 779 would assist the Port of New Orleans in achieving a unified, regional approach to governance by adding an extra representative from St. Bernard Parish and two Plaquemines Parish representatives to the independent board that oversees the harbor.

Louisiana House Bills Nos. 215 and 744 would

stimulate development and activity in South Louisiana's maritime industry by incentivizing investment in local ports by businesses that will develop infrastructure (HB 215) and trade internationally (HB 744).

Council President Arnie Fielkow said, "Regional governance, a cohesive marketing strategy, and infrastructure improvements are the keys to reaching the seemingly limitless potential of the ports of the Southeast Louisiana. We are supportive of these House Bills and their efforts to achieve the economic development and trade goals of the Greater New Orleans area. We urge our representatives in Baton Rouge to overwhelmingly pass these legislative items."

### *Expanded Scope of Purposes for TIF Funds Allocations*



*Councilmember Carter*

The Council passed Ordinance Calendar No. 27,501, co-authored by Councilmembers Clarkson and Carter, to expand the scope of purposes for which Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) money can be allocated.

Specifically, the expansion of scope includes the addition of the following purposes:

- Federal City general needs
- 20% Match for road work
- Transportation Projects
- Blight in Algiers
- State/City Urban Systems Capital Projects

associated with Federal City and the 15th Ward

- Brechtel Park Tennis Courts
- 20% Match for Algiers schools and playground infrastructure improvements



*Councilmember-at-Large  
Clarkson*

Councilmember-at-Large Jacquelyn Brechtel Clarkson said, "Today we are expanding the scope of uses for the Federal City TIF money to keep pace with the continued growth and success of this vital project."

## *Supported Industrial Down Zoning in Gert Town*



*Councilmember Head*

The Council approved Zoning Docket No. 40/09, requesting the establishment of an Interim Zoning District (IZD) to be named the "Gert Town Mixed Use Interim Zoning District," which will down zone the industrial areas in residential parts of Gert Town to improve the current residents' quality of life by preventing further industrial uses from expanding into their community.

The establishment of this IZD comes after Motion M-09-124, passed by the Council in March 2009, which directed the City Planning Commission to conduct a public hearing to consider the down zoning of Gert Town.

District "B" Councilmember Stacy Head said, "This new Zoning District will ensure that residential areas of Gert Town are preserved and that the residents of Gert Town can enjoy their neighborhood without concern about further industrialization."

## *Opposed House Bill on Healthcare Provider's Refusal of Service*



The Council passed Resolution R-09-284, authored by Councilmember Fielkow, opposing Louisiana House Bill No. 517 and urging all members of the Louisiana State Senate to vote against passage of this legislation.

House Bill No. 517 seeks to protect from legal and job repercussions public healthcare providers who refuse to treat patients due to their "medical conscience," potentially depriving many patients of legitimate, legal treatments due to physicians' predisposed standards of good and bad.

Council President Arnie Fielkow said, "This legislation potentially limits the number of doctors and pharmacists to whom a patient can turn, posing a threat to populations that have few medical service options, and therefore negatively affecting those most in need. House Bill 517 clearly prioritizes religious and moral beliefs over the medical needs of patients."

## *Addressed Presentation on New Orleans Public Schools*



*Leslie Jacobs,  
Founder of Educate Now!*

Leslie Jacobs, Founder of Educate Now!, appeared before the Council today to give a presentation on New Orleans public schools.

Jacobs provided Councilmembers with demographic data relative to the racial composition and overall size of New Orleans' public schools today as compared to pre-Hurricane Katrina. She also discussed pass rates and classifications for the LEAP test for both 4th graders and 8th graders, as well as graduation rates for high school seniors. Jacobs highlighted the improvements indicated by the data presented, including the continuing growth of New Orleans public schools as well as the great strides being made by students, teachers and administrators.

Councilmembers expressed the need to develop a plan to ensure that students stay in school and invest in their future through hard work, and thanked Ms. Jacobs for her ongoing dedication to the New Orleans public school system.

### *Executive Session*



The Council held an Executive Session to address pending litigation. Due to the confidentiality of the issues, they were taken up in Executive Session closed to the public.

Special Counsel informed the City Council as to the current status of the following pending litigation:

- Case #09-2279 "D", Civil District Court for the Parish of Orleans, Case #2009-C-0389, 4th Circuit Court of Appeal, Case #09-1067, Louisiana Supreme Court, City Council versus Tracie Washington, Tionne Simon and the Louisiana Justice Institute;

- Case #09-4050, Civil District Court for the Parish of Orleans, City Council versus Penya Moses-Fields.

## **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 Arnie Fielkow; Council Vice President and Councilmember-at-Large Jacquelyn Brechtel Clarkson; 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.