

New Orleans City Council Helps Prepare for New Cuban-New Orleans Commercial Strategy

Cultivating Relationships with Cuban Officials and Businesses is Seen as Key

News Release

May 12, 2009

Contact:
Kate Schneiderman
Office of
Councilmember-at-Large
Arnie Fielkow
Ph: 504-658-1063
Cell: 504-905-9893
krschneiderman@cityofno.com

New Orleans
City Council

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)



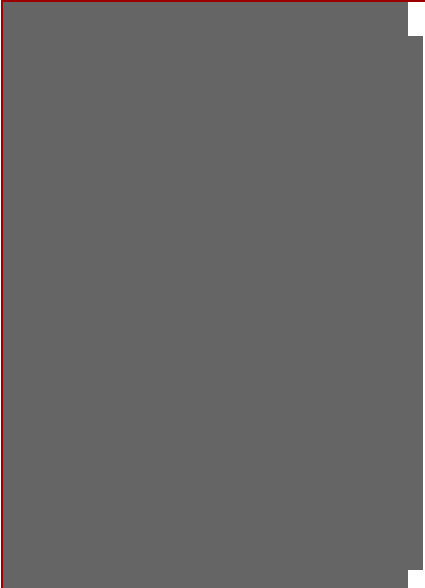
New Orleans, LA - May 12, 2009 -

At today's Special Development Projects & Economic Development Committee meeting, City Council Vice President Arnie Fielkow convened an expert panel to jumpstart New Orleans' preparation to renew and strengthen cultural and economic ties with Cuba. The committee meeting was organized in response to the Obama Administration's recently revised U.S. travel policy to Cuba and the feeling that the decades-old trade embargo on Cuba may be loosened or lifted at some future point.

"New Orleans needs to do everything within our powers and abilities to take advantage of bi-lateral trade opportunities around the world to grow our local economy," said Fielkow. "Other cities have aggressively established and cultivated relationships with Cuba to prepare themselves for future changes in U.S. policy. The panel hearing today is the first in what will be many steps towards getting New Orleans ready to reap the benefits of increased relations with Cuba and the rest of Latin America."

The meeting today reached a general consensus over two main points:

- New Orleans must immediately begin to establish personal relationships with key Cuban officials, businesses and cultural entities. To that end, a tentative trip to Cuba to cultivate these relationships was discussed, with the possibility of joining with Tulane University's fall semester program in Havana, Cuba.
- The City of New Orleans International Economic Development Department will provide the Council with a



white paper regarding the legalities under federal law of finalizing a sister city relationship between New Orleans and Mariel, Cuba. This step will help facilitate vital relationships between the two cities, and is traditionally a first step towards greater formalized relations.

Panelists included Lisa Ponce De Leon, Director of International Affairs for the City of New Orleans; Eugene Schreiber, Managing Director of the World Trade Center of New Orleans; Bobby Landry from the Port of New Orleans; Dr. Ana Lopez, Director of the Cuban & Caribbean Studies Institute of Tulane University; Randy Poindexter of the ForNorm Foundation; and Buffy Donlon, businesswoman and founder of AlaCaribe Initiative, Inc. headquartered in Mobile.

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.