

City Council May 7, 2009
Regular Meeting Summary

News Release

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New Orleans, LA - May 7, 2009 - Today, the New Orleans City Council passed Resolutions supporting University of New Orleans (UNO) athletic programs, continuing operations at Southern University at New Orleans (SUNO) and addressing House Bill No. 60 on the state adoption process.

Additionally, the Council supported the involvement of the Office of Inspector General relative to an independent assessment of the Council's utility regulatory function, and passed Motions electing the new Council President and Vice President.

The Council also addressed presentations on emergency shelters and the anniversary of the Fall of Saigon, and honored Boh Brothers Construction for its 100 year anniversary and Quint Davis and the Jazz Fest Foundation for the event's 40 year anniversary.

Supported Preservation of UNO Athletic Programs



Jim Miller (left) and Ron Maestri

The Council passed Resolution R-09-219, authored by Councilmember Fielkow, which calls on the local business community to join with government and citizens to work with the University of New Orleans (UNO) to preserve the educational and athletic programs currently set to be cut under the proposed State budget.

Jim Miller, UNO Director of Intercollegiate Athletics, and Ron

Maestri, Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer of the New Orleans Zephyrs and former UNO Athletic Director, appeared before the Council to thank Councilmembers for their continuous support of UNO and their dedication to preserving the university's athletics programs.

Council Vice President Fielkow said, "The University of New Orleans is one of the primary institutions providing college educational opportunities to students in the metropolitan New Orleans area, and it has served as a major economic development catalyst in the region since Hurricane Katrina. The current budget proposed by the Governor calls for deep cuts in higher education that will be extremely harmful to local institutions of higher learning."

Intercollegiate athletics play an integral role in post-secondary education and often provide the financial and motivational means by which many students, particularly low income students, are able to gain a college education.

Click [here](#) to view a News Release on this legislation.

Encouraged Continuing Operations at SUNO



Gloria Moultrie of SUNO

The Council passed Resolution R-09-225, authored by Councilmember Fielkow, encouraging the State Legislature to search for new funding streams in order to continue the operations of Southern University at New Orleans (SUNO).

The Resolution acknowledges the financial shortfall faced by Louisiana's institutions of higher education, and further states the City Council's opposition to any proposed plan to close SUNO and/or merge it with the University of New Orleans (UNO).

Gloria Moultrie, Vice Chancellor for Community Outreach/University Advancement of SUNO, appeared before the Council to express her gratitude for the Council's commitment to continuing the operations of the university.

State Representative Elect Jared Brossett also appeared before the Council to offer his support to SUNO and UNO. Brossett said, "SUNO and UNO are not only beacons of higher education, but are two important economic institutions valuable to the City's progress. I oppose any closure or merger of UNO/SUNO. Our city cannot afford to see continued cuts to higher education."

Councilmember-at-Large Arnie Fielkow said, "Since its founding, SUNO has

consistently educated and trained productive members of our community. The foundation of a strong local economy rests on its educational institutions, and we would be taking a giant step backwards as a state and a city if SUNO and UNO are consolidated and funding is cut."

SUNO's critical role in New Orleans stems from its prestigious School of Social Work and recently re-certified College of Education - both turn out trained professionals and critical research in two areas that are of utmost importance in New Orleans.

Click [here](#) to view a News Release on this legislation.

Supported Independent Evaluation of Council's Utility Regulatory Function



Councilmember Midura

Utility Committee Chair Councilmember Shelley Midura withdrew Motion M-09-223, which she authored, which would have retained the RAND Corporation, in partnership with the National Regulatory Research Institute (NRRI), to conduct an assessment of the Council's utility regulatory function.

Councilmember Midura stated that after much consideration of the voiced concerns of her Council colleagues leading up to today's vote, she decided to withdraw the Motion. It became clear that the Council was not prepared to support moving forward with the Motion in time to have a report ready in advance of the next contract period for the Council's expert team of advisers.

Councilmember Midura said, "The Council, to its credit, has championed reform, particularly with the way this City handles city contracts, and we have held ourselves to a higher standard than we ask of the administration by voluntarily banning campaign contributions from our utility consultants with campaign finance legislation passed two years ago. As much as 30 million public dollars are at stake, and I have an obligation to act in the best interest of New Orleanians. We must make every effort not only to spend public dollars wisely and efficiently, but to instill public confidence through accountability measures such as periodic independent review."

Midura informed the Council that she made a formal request to the Office of Inspector General (OIG) to perform a management review of the City Council's regulatory function, and that Interim Inspector General Odom indicated that his office is on board for this review and, in his words, should be able to comfortably fit it into their work schedule so that a report may be completed in time for the next round of Requests For Qualifications.

Councilmembers thanked Councilmember Midura for taking the lead on this issue and offered their support to the OIG. They also expressed the importance of examining and considering the incorporation of best practices and national standards into the Council's regulatory framework.

The City Council, in accordance with the New Orleans Home Rule Charter and the Louisiana Constitution, acts as retail regulator for electric and gas utility service in the City.

Click [here](#) to view a News Release on this legislation.

Addressed House Bill on State Adoption Process



Randy Evans, Forum for Equality

The Council passed Resolution R-09-221, authored by Councilmember Fielkow, which states the Council's opposition to Louisiana House Bill No. 60 and urges all members of the Louisiana House of Representatives to vote against the passage of House Bill No. 60.

House Bill No. 60 calls for changing the criteria under which the State of Louisiana issues a new birth certificate for an adopted child. Specifically, the proposed bill calls for a birth certificate to be issued for an adopted child only to a married couple or single parent.

Randy Evans, Co-Political Director of Forum For Equality; Mary Griggs, Managing Director of Forum For Equality; Marjorie Esman, Executive Director of Louisiana American Civil Liberties Union; and Jennifer Smiley, Political Co-Chair of Human Rights Campaign - New Orleans Steering Committee appeared before the Council to discuss the potential negative effects of House Bill No. 60 and express their gratitude for the Council's opposition to the legislation.

Council Vice President Arnie Fielkow said, "So many children in both Louisiana and throughout the world need good homes and caring parents, and enacting legislation which penalizes potential gay adopting parents is both mean-spirited and not in the best interest of our children. House Bill No. 60 adds another layer to an already exhaustive process and potentially harms children in the future from receiving much-needed healthcare and social services."

Critics of House Bill No. 60 also point out that by denying some adoptive parents the right to be on their child's birth certificate, that family may face difficulties in registering their child for school, medical benefits or insurance.

Click [here](#) to view a News Release on this legislation.

Elected New Council President and Vice President



The Council passed Motions M-09-193 and M-09-194 providing for the election of Councilmember-at-Large Arnie Fielkow as Council President and Councilmember-at-Large Jacquelyn Brechtel Clarkson as Council Vice President.

In accordance with the Rules and Regulations of the Council, both the Council President and Vice President will serve terms beginning June 1, 2009 and ending May 3, 2010.

Current Council President Jacquelyn Brechtel Clarkson said, "I have truly enjoyed my term as President of the Council, and I look forward to continuing our work as a City Council, leading our citizens in the recovery and rebuilding of New Orleans."

Councilmember-at-Large Arnie Fielkow said, "Councilmember Clarkson has done a great job leading this Council as President, and I am honored to begin my term as Council President this June."

Addressed Presentation on Emergency Services



Left to Right: Lieutenant Colonel Jerry Sneed, Kristy Nichols, Colonel Cliff Oliver & Mark Cooper

Lieutenant Colonel Jerry Sneed, Director of Homeland Security for the City of New Orleans; Kristy Nichols, Secretary of the Department of Social Services (DSS); Colonel Cliff Oliver of the Louisiana National Guard; and Mark Cooper of the Governor's Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Preparedness appeared before the Council to give a report on emergency shelters and hurricane preparedness.

The representatives discussed the state preparations for hurricane season, including the establishment of an urban search and rescue program, as well as public education programs on hurricane preparedness for children and their parents.

Kristy Nichols of the DSS highlighted the need to give citizens the confidence to evacuate if necessary, by ensuring them that they will have a place to go and that the process will be as efficient and streamlined as possible.

Due to the importance and complexity of the matter, Council Vice President Fielkow asked that a special public information hearing relative to hurricane preparedness and emergency shelters be convened in the next 30 days, with the participation of the City and State representatives at today's meeting, to give the public the opportunity to hear the details of the report and provide their comments and feedback.

Honored Boh Brothers' 100 Year Anniversary



Robert S. Boh (left) & Stephen Boh with Councilmembers Clarkson, Hedge-Morrell & Willard-Lewis

Robert S. Boh and Steven Boh of Boh Brothers Construction appeared before the Council to be honored by the Council and receive a proclamation recognizing the company's 100 year anniversary.

Former City Councilmember Johnny Jackson, on behalf of the Zulu Diamond Cutters Krewe and in recognition of the Boh Brothers Construction company's dedication to community outreach, presented the Boh brothers with the second of two specially made Zulu coconuts, the first was presented to President Barack Obama this past March.

District "D" Councilmember Cynthia Hedge-Morrell said, "We congratulate you on his momentous occasion - your 100 year anniversary, and we thank you for your continued commitment to the City and dedication to rebuilding New Orleans.

Celebrated Jazz Fest's 40th Anniversary



Quint Davis, Festival Productions Inc.

The Council congratulated Quint Davis, producer and director of the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, and the Jazz Fest Foundation on the event's 40th anniversary and the largest Jazz Fest since 2001.

Quint Davis discussed the history of the Jazz Fest and how it has grown throughout the years. He also highlighted the festival's great economic impact on the City and thanked everyone who helped to make this year's festival a success.

Councilmembers offered their congratulations and honored Mr. Davis for his contribution to the City of New Orleans. They highlighted the importance of Jazz Fest as an annual reminder of the diversity of cultures that brings the City together.

Remembered the Fall of Saigon



Representatives of the New Orleans Vietnamese community

Representatives of the Vietnamese community in New Orleans appeared before the Council today to give a presentation on the anniversary of the Fall of Saigon. The Vietnamese representatives also coordinated the Presentation of the Colors as the Vietnamese National Anthem was played.

Verbal and video presentations offered background information on the 1975 Fall of Saigon and its effects on the Vietnamese community, and highlighted New Orleans' large Vietnamese American population.

Councilmembers thanked the representatives for the presentation and for their tenacity and determination to uphold their community in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina.

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.