



## City Council Addresses Homeless Population Challenges, Pledges Support of Ethics Reform, Authorizes Retention of Legal Counsel & Launches Program To Promote Local Music Industry

News Release

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**New Orleans, LA - December 6, 2007** - Today, the New Orleans City Council passed resolutions addressing the challenges facing the homeless population and pledging support of ethics reform. The Council also authorized the retention of legal counsel and launched a program to promote the local music industry.

### *Addressing Challenges of Homeless Population*

The City Council passed a resolution asking the State of Louisiana to postpone demolition of the State Annex Building to allow time to find permanent, affordable housing for individuals living in Duncan Plaza.

District "E" Councilmember Cynthia Willard-Lewis, Co-Chairman of the Housing Committee, said, "We need more time to be able to find adequate housing for the citizens currently residing in Duncan Plaza before any demolition can begin."

The Council, the Mayor's Office and various other agencies and organizations are working in tandem on this issue. In addition to the Council's request to the State of Louisiana for additional time to identify permanent housing, several Council committees are looking at a variety of options to assist the homeless population.

District "B" Councilmember Stacy Head, Co-Chairman of the Housing Committee, acknowledges that this is a monumental task that will not be accomplished overnight.

"Together with my Council colleagues and other organizations and agencies of government, we are working diligently to help find permanent housing for our citizens living in Duncan Plaza. Unfortunately, this is the reality we are living post-Katrina - but this is a reality that we as a Council will vigilantly continue to address," said Councilmember Head.

### ***Pledging Support of Ethics Reform***

In anticipation of the possibility that the new Governor will call a special legislative session early next year, the City Council pledged its support of a special session to address comprehensive ethics reforms. The Council will also seek the advice of the Inspector General, the City Ethics Review Board, and the local community to develop recommendations for ethics reform at the local and state level, and forward those to the Legislature and Governor.

Council President Arnie Fielkow assured the commitment of the entire Council to work cooperatively with the new Governor and the new Legislature on behalf of ethics reform.

Council President Arnie Fielkow said, "The New Orleans City Council is unanimous in its support of ethics reform policies that protect our future. For too long the state of Louisiana has had a poor reputation relative to corruption, but Governor-elect Jindal's call for a special ethics session is a positive and encouraging step in the right direction."

He continued, "Louisiana is poised to become a center of economic activity and strong ethics policies will reinforce this effort. The City of New Orleans stands in full support of these efforts and pledges to work with the state to enhance and enforce ethics reform at all levels."

The Council has already gone on record supporting comprehensive measures to improve ethics laws and provide greater transparency in government operations. The Council created an independent Office of Inspector General and funded that office and the City's Ethics Review Board with an initial appropriation of \$3.43 million.

### ***Authorizing Retention of Special Counsel***

The City Council unanimously passed a motion determining that it requires the services of special counsel to provide assistance in legal and policy matters in situations in which the advice and guidance of special counsel serve the Council's best interests and/or there exist or are potential conflicts between the City Council and the executive branch.

The motion authorizes the council staff to issue a Request for Qualifications to begin the competitive selection process to choose the special counsel.

The Council emphasized that the City Attorney's Office routinely provides excellent legal services to the City Council and that the special counsel will in no way or at anytime serve as the chief legal officer of the City.

### ***Promoting Local Music Industry at City Council Meetings***

The City Council launched a program which will showcase local musical talent. The Treme Brass Band kicked-off the series, designed to market and promote local entertainers through the use of NOA-TV and the Council Chamber venue.

During today's meeting, the Treme Brass Band played an original song, via taped broadcast. Beginning in January, entertainers will perform the National Anthem, substituting the current music and video that is played prior to council meetings.

NOA-TV will produce the monthly music video that will be shown prior to the start of the first Council meeting of each month. Following the taped performance, the featured group or performer will be live in the chamber to take a bow. In addition to the exposure on government access television, a professional DVD of the performance will be presented to each group.

Throughout the year, Councilmembers will make recommendations regarding the appearances of performers. The program was initiated by Faubog St. John resident Vivian Cahn who approached Council President Arnie Fielkow with the proposal to showcase the great musical talent of New Orleans.

### **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; Council District "A" Shelley Midura; Council District "B" Stacy S. Head; Council District "C" James Carter; Council District "D" Cynthia Hedge-Morrell; and Council District "E" Cynthia Willard-Lewis.