

City Council December 18, 2008
Regular Meeting Summary

News Release

December 18, 2008

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New Orleans, LA - December 18, 2008 - Today the New Orleans City Council passed Resolutions supporting the restoration of Medicare-Medicaid crossover payments and the submission of a proposal by the City of New Orleans in conjunction with the Police Jury Association of Louisiana and the New Orleans Metropolitan Convention and Visitors Bureau to host the 2013, 2014 and/or 2015 National Association of Counties (NACo) Annual Conference and Exposition.

Additionally, the Council adopted a Motion requesting that the Inspector General review best practices of budgetary processes and perform an analysis of the City's current budget processes, and an Ordinance supporting the allocation of the 2007 Economic Development Fund millage.

The Council received a presentation introducing Congressman-Elect Cao to the Council and congratulating him on his election, as well as a presentation from NOPD Superintendent Warren Riley updating the Council on the crime situation in the City.

Congratulates Congressman-Elect Cao



*Congressman-Elect
Anh "Joseph" Cao*

Congressman-Elect Anh "Joseph" Cao came before the Council today to introduce himself and receive the congratulations of the Council on his recent election.

Councilmembers congratulated Cao and expressed some of their individual priorities for the City's recovery, including coastal restoration and flood protection, criminal justice reform, and economic development.

Cao expressed his gratitude to the Council for their support and their comments and stated that he is looking forward to working closely with each Councilmember to address issues of importance to the City of New Orleans.

Addresses NOPD Crime Report



Superintendent Riley

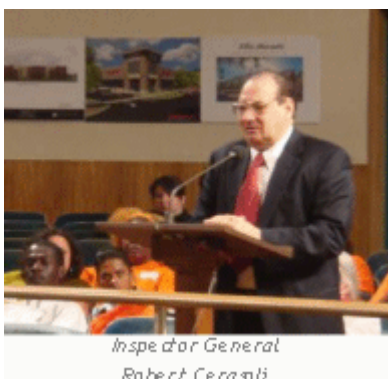
New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) Superintendent Warren Riley came before the Council today to give an update on the crime situation in the City and the progress made by the NOPD.

Chief Riley presented information and data regarding:

- City-wide crime rates
- Number of NOPD officers and the success of NOPD recruitment programs
- Status of police department units and districts relocation into permanent facilities
- Updates on equipment and technology programs
- Details on the Crime Lab facility
- Details on Youth Educational Community Programs

Criminal Justice Committee Chair Councilmember James Carter said, "This Council is dedicated to public safety and criminal justice, and we understand the importance of all parties- police, citizens, judges and public officials- working together to address the root causes of the City's crime problem. We have to continue to work to instill confidence in our citizenry that we are working every day to address these issues and immediate violent crime reduction."

Chief Riley expressed his gratitude to the Council for their continuous support and stated the department's intent to work with District Attorney Leon Cannizzaro in the future.



*Inspector General
Robert Cerretti*

Requests Inspector General Review of Budgetary Processes

The Council passed Motion M-08-688, co-authored by Councilmembers Fielkow, Hedge-Morrell, Clarkson, Head, Carter and Willard-Lewis, requesting that the Inspector General conduct a thorough national review of best practices in budgetary processes in mayor-council municipalities.

The Motion also requests that the Inspector General perform an analysis of the City's current annual operating budget adoption and ongoing budget oversight processes.

Council Vice-President Arnie Fielkow said, "As many of us have stated during the 2009 Budget review process, there is often not enough time or information which permits us the opportunity for as thorough a vetting of the budget as we would like, or that the public deserves. Through this report, it is my hope that we can better determine what improvements should be made to the current budget review process."

The Office of Inspector General is expected to present these findings to a joint meeting of Budget/Governmental Affairs Committees for review and consideration.

Inspector General Robert Cerasoli was present at the meeting and welcomed the opportunity to work with the Council on this very important item.

Supports Allocation of Economic Development Fund Millage



Councilmember Hedge-Morrell

The Council passed Ordinance Calendar No. 27,150, co-authored by Councilmembers Hedge-Morrell and Head, to allocate the 2007 Economic Development Fund (EDF) millage to those projects reflected in Mayor Nagin's recommendations.

The Ordinance reflects the goal of the EDF to expedite the economic development of the City of New Orleans through the financing of various projects and/or activities.

Recovery Director Dr. Ed Blakely was present to give recommendations and relevant background information on the Economic Development Fund grants including: cost benefit analyses and return on investment analyses, costs, and jobs created by each of the projects.

The Council emphasized the necessity of these objective analyses in order to fairly review each project.

District "D" Councilmember Cynthia Hedge-Morrell said, "We must focus on the big picture of economic development while also focusing on the fact that this is a City of small businesses. Through these grants we demonstrate our support for businesses that contributed greatly to our redevelopment and that we believe will continue to contribute to communities and to the City as a whole."

Supports Proposal to Host NACo Conference & Exposition



Councilmember Willard-Lewis

The Council passed Resolution R-08-724, co-authored by Councilmember Willard-Lewis, Midura and Hedge-Morrell, authorizing the submission of a proposal by the City of New Orleans, in conjunction with the Police Jury Association of Louisiana and the New Orleans Metropolitan Convention and Visitors Bureau, to host the 2013, 2014 and/or 2015 National Association of Counties (NACo) Annual Conference and Exposition.

NACo is a prominent and influential national organization comprised of county commissioners, city or parish councilmembers, police jury members and members of other local legislative bodies in all fifty states.

Each NACo annual conference brings upward of 4,000 elected officials, spouses and other dignitaries to the conference site during the month of July.

District "E" Councilmember Cynthia Willard-Lewis said, "This event represents a tremendous opportunity for economic development during a summer month when tourism is traditionally slow in New Orleans. NACo is a prestigious national association, and we would be honored to host their Annual Conference and Exposition in our unique international City."

Raquel Dufauchard of the New Orleans Metropolitan Convention and Visitors Bureau was present to detail the economic benefits of the conference, as well as emphasize the national attention that an event of this nature would bring to the City.

Supports Medicare-Medicaid Crossover Payments



Councilmember-at-Large
Clarkson

The Council passed Resolution R-08-604, authored by Councilmember-at-Large Clarkson, requesting that the State of Louisiana restore Medicare-Medicaid crossover payments so that all Medicare beneficiaries in New Orleans have equal access to their Medicare benefits.

Low-income Medicare beneficiaries also have Medicaid, and in 2000 Louisiana decreased payments for low-income Medicare beneficiaries which "crossed-over" from Medicare to Louisiana Medicaid for payment.

Council President Jacquelyn Brechtel Clarkson said, "Louisiana's policy of decreasing reimbursement only for low-income Medicare beneficiaries disproportionately harms poor people with Medicaid. As a Council we are dedicated to ensuring that all Medicare beneficiaries in New Orleans have equal access to Medicare benefits."

The Resolution cites the fact that it is now illegal for low-income Medicare beneficiaries to receive the same benefits which wealthy beneficiaries receive, therefore creating a financial incentive for physicians to move into wealthy neighborhoods.

The Resolution reflects the Council's belief that this situation decreases psychiatric access and heightens New Orleans' mental health crisis.

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.