



City Council March 19, 2009
Regular Meeting Summary

News Release

March 19, 2009

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New Orleans, LA - March 19, 2009 - Today, the New Orleans City Council passed Resolutions supporting the restoration of Louisiana's coastline and the expedited allocation of Housing and Urban Development grant money, and a Motion supporting the prevention of further expansion of industrial uses in the Gert Town community.

The Council also addressed presentations on the Total Sentencing Alternative Program, the CeaseFire program to reduce violence in communities and a crime update from NOPD Police Chief Warren Riley.

Supported Louisiana Coastal Restoration



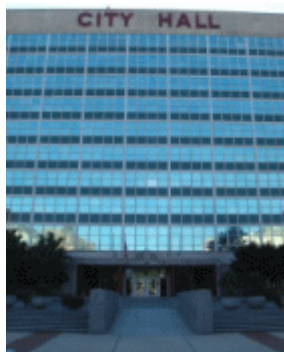
*Councilmember-at-Large
Clarkson*

The Council passed Resolution R-09-101, authored by Councilmember Clarkson, supporting efforts to investigate the benefits of large-scale land diversions as a means of restoring Louisiana's coastline.

Large-scale diversions would redirect the Mississippi River to flow through parts of South Louisiana, carrying sediment and fresh water with it - both of which sustain and rebuild wetlands. Such diversions are widely seen by experts across the country as key to restoring Louisiana's coastline.

Councilmember-at-Large Jacquelyn Brechtel Clarkson said, "Rebuilding coastal wetlands is the most important means we have of saving our City from catastrophic hurricanes. As elected officials, we need to take the lead and make rebuilding our coast a priority."

Two weeks ago, Council President Clarkson represented the City of New Orleans at the Mississippi River Fresh Water Diversion Summit in New Orleans, where she publicly urged the Corps of Engineers to consider using large scale diversions to restore Louisiana's coastline. She also urged the Corps not to proceed without including the interests of Louisiana's navigation industry.



Supported Allocation of Housing and Urban Development Grant Funds

The Council passed Resolution R-09-126, authored by Councilmember Clarkson, calling on the Mayor's Office to expedite the allocation of the \$11 million in Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grant money.

HUD has issued three extensions of the deadline to commit the money to New Orleans. The City of New Orleans is in danger of losing the funds if it does not allocate this funding to specific affordable housing initiatives.

Councilmember Clarkson said, "There is a severe shortage of affordable housing in New Orleans and these grants represent an excellent opportunity to assist the many initiatives dedicated to providing affordable housing in the City. The allocation of these funds to affordable housing programs will assist in the revitalization of neighborhoods and the overall recovery of the City."

Senator Mary Landrieu has offered her support in finding areas of affordable housing to which this funding can be dedicated.

Supported Down Zoning in Gert Town



Councilmember Head

The Council passed Motion M-09-124, authored by Councilmember Head, directing the City Planning Commission to conduct a public hearing to consider an amendment to the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance aimed at down zoning the industrial areas in the residential parts of Gert Town.

This Motion will prohibit any new industrial uses from establishing in the neighborhood, bounded by S. Carrollton Avenue, Walmsley Ave., S. Jefferson Davis, and the Pontchartrain Expressway.

Councilmember Head said, "Currently, Gert Town is experiencing industrial uses in their community which inhibit neighborhood development and growth. It is important that we respond to the needs of the City's individual communities and neighborhoods - public hearings will give the residents of Gert Town the opportunity to participate in discussions relative to industrial uses in their neighborhood and potential improvements in their quality of life."

Addressed Total Sentencing Alternative Program



Dwight Richards

Dwight Richards came before the Council to give a presentation on the Total Sentencing Alternative Program (TSAP) Ankle Bracelets.

Richards, Vice President of Operations for TSAP, discussed the benefits of TSAP Ankle Bracelets and the purpose of the program, along with ideas for potential program improvements.

The TSAP ankle bracelets are recommended for offenders of non-violent crimes and have been proved to be effective when appropriate parameters are set for each individual offender.



District Attorney Cannizzaro

New Orleans District Attorney Leon Cannizzaro was also present and expressed his opinions about the TSAP program.

Cannizzaro emphasized the importance of TSAP and law enforcement working closely together to ensure that if an offender commits a violation, that offender is apprehended in a timely fashion.



Lt. Col. Jerry Sneed

Lieutenant Colonel Jerry Sneed, Director of Homeland Security for the City of New Orleans, also commented on the TSAP ankle bracelet program, stating that cooperation among all parties is a necessity and that police officers, judges and TSAP monitors must work together to make the program safe and effective.

Richards, Cannizzaro, Sneed and Councilmembers discussed at length the potential benefits of using the TSAP ankle bracelets

in combination with drug testing, job counseling, and mentoring programs.

Councilmembers thanked all the representatives and officials for appearing at the Council meeting and for their discussions of the TSAP program.

Received City-Wide Crime Update



Superintendent Riley

New Orleans Police Chief Superintendent Warren Riley came before the Council to provide a city-wide update on crime and comment on the TSAP program.

Riley expressed his gratitude to TSAP for their cooperation in coordinating efforts to create a more productive program with enhanced monitoring and quicker response times.

Riley informed the Council that the overall crime rate is down, and that specifically crime rates are down in double digits in every crime category so far this year, with the exception of automobile burglaries.

Councilmembers thanked Superintendent Riley for his testimony on the TSAP program and his update on crime rates city-wide.

Addressed CeaseFire Program Presentation



Gary Slutkin, M.D.

Gary Slutkin, M.D., Founding Director of the CeaseFire program came before the Council to give background information on the program and detailed its efforts to reduce crime.

CeaseFire is an evidence-based public health approach to reducing violence. The program's methods use highly trained street violence interrupters and outreach staff, public education campaigns, and community mobilization.

Dr. Slutkin presented the Councilmembers with results from studies that show a 41-73% reduction in shootings and killings in communities using the CeaseFire program - these results have been replicated 18 times. CeaseFire looks at violent behavior, from a group, neighborhood and city level, and examines how violent behavior is formed and why it continues.

Councilmember Carter said, "As Criminal Justice Committee Chair, I am dedicated to exploring methods, tactics and strategies of reducing violence in communities. The CeaseFire program focuses on implementing a structured approach and encouraging coordination between the community and law enforcement officials to reduce violence. CeaseFire is an innovative program with proven results and we look forward to continuing our discussions on the potential benefits of implementing the CeaseFire program here in 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 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.