

House Committee on Municipal, Parochial and Cultural Affairs

Minutes of Meeting
2016 First Extraordinary Session
March 2, 2016

I. CALL TO ORDER

Representative John A. Berthelot, chairman of the House Committee on Municipal, Parochial and Cultural Affairs, called the meeting to order at 9:32 a.m. in Room 6, in the State Capitol in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The secretary called the roll.

II. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Representative John A. Berthelot, chairman
Representative Robert E. Billiot
Representative Joseph Bouie Jr.
Representative Paula P. Davis
Representative Rick Edmonds
Representative Cedric B. Glover
Representative Stephanie Hilferty
Representative Sam L. Jenkins Jr.
Representative Rodney Lyons
Representative C. Denise Marcelle
Representative Barbara M. Norton
Representative Stephen E. Pugh
Representative Malinda B. White

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Representative Stephen F. Carter
Representative Mike Huval, vice chairman
Representative Jerome Richard
Representative Patricia Haynes Smith
Representative Thomas P. Willmott

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Tina Righteous, attorney
Valarie Banks, secretary

ADDITIONAL ATTENDEES PRESENT:

Vivian Hurst, sergeant at arms
Danny Leming, sergeant at arms
Faye Talbot, sergeant at arms

III. REMARKS

Representative John A. "Johnny" Berthelot, chairman, opened the meeting with greetings to committee members and guests. He stated that member introductions would be postponed until the 2016 Regular Session due to the absence of several committee members from today's meeting.

IV. ORIENTATION ITEMS

Consideration and adoption of 2015 Regular Session committee meeting minutes

Discussion on this topic was delayed to allow presenters with other obligations to address the committee prior to leaving the meeting.

Consideration and adoption of 2015-2016 Interim committee meeting minutes

Discussion on this topic was delayed to allow presenters with other obligations to address the committee prior to leaving the meeting.

Consideration and adoption of committee rules: Valarie Banks, committee secretary

Discussion on this topic was delayed to allow presenters with other obligations to address the committee prior to leaving the meeting.

Committee jurisdiction: Tina Righteous, committee attorney

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V. PRESENTATIONS

Office of the Lieutenant Governor

Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser presented information in a PowerPoint (Exhibit A) on the function of his office and the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism (DCRT). He said

DCRT has three missions: 1) to generate revenue; 2) to preserve Louisiana's treasures and heritage; and 3) to foster relationships, support diversity and bring communities together.

Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism (DCRT)

Robert Barham, assistant secretary of DCRT and director of state parks, Capitol Annex, (225) 342-8186, stated that 1.9 million visitors traveled to Louisiana's 22 state parks and 17 historic sites, creating a multi-million dollar revenue impact to each park. He urged members to visit the Poverty Point World Heritage Site, noting that it ranks among such world-renowned cultural artifacts as the Pyramids.

Phil Boggan, representing the office of the lieutenant governor and DCRT, noted that the division of the arts distributed almost \$2 million in grants, leveraged more than \$105 million in project and organizational revenues, created 603 new businesses in cultural districts, and supported 34,390 jobs.

Diane Brown, representing office of the state library, 701 North 4th Street, Baton Rouge, LA, (225) 342-4923, replied affirmatively to a question from Representative Jenkins on whether people were using libraries' fax services for mail-in ballots. Representative Jenkins encouraged the office of the state library to publicize this service.

Representative Pugh asked if the state library was over all libraries in Louisiana. Ms. Brown replied that the office of the state library provided training and support to all libraries in the state but had no governing or administrative power.

Mark Tullos, representing DCRT's office of state museums, Capitol Annex, (337) 852-7690, stated that more than 500,000 artifacts were contained in Louisiana museums, and a \$6 million budget operated the nine museums, six of which were certified as National Historic Landmarks. He noted that there were 280,000 visitors to Louisiana's state museums in fiscal year 2014-2015.

Representative Norton asked how did the current budget crisis affect the office of state museums? Mr. Tullos replied that the office was at its lowest budget level since 14 years ago, yet was operating four additional museums. He added that budget cuts were being countered by revenue streams generated through facility planning, which included rental of facilities to film companies or for events such as weddings. He said the revenue went through a museum foundation and the museums could request money as needed. Mr. Tullos noted that there were only 73 employees operating the DCRT's nine state museums, and those employees remained despite no pay raises in years.

Representative Norton questioned whether north Louisiana was being shorted in its state museum operation due to excess attention on New Orleans's state museum facilities. Lieutenant Governor Nungesser stated that the Shreveport museum which was the subject of Representative Norton's line of questioning was under the secretary of state, not the office of the lieutenant governor. He stated that he would meet with Secretary of State Tom Schedler to discuss the issue.

Judd Jeansonne, representing Volunteer Louisiana, state library (no address given), (225) 342-3125, was present to provide information, if requested.

Representative White noted the growth of the Bogalusa heritage and blues festivals, which she attributed to operating funds from DCRT grants. Lieutenant Governor Nungesser stated that such festivals seeded initially with state funds now operate on their own, and there were more than 400 festivals yearly in Louisiana.

Representative Lyons asked if there were data on the number of schools that tour state museums. Mr. Tullos stated that all museums are free to children. He said Capital Park has more than 50,000 student tourists annually.

Lieutenant Governor Nungesser noted that many schools lack funds for field trips, and that he has challenged his staff to find local sponsors to provide trips to museums and historic sites for children in their areas.

Representative Marcelle stated that when she served on the Baton Rouge Metro Council and Visit BR, which approved parish funds for the Bayou Country Super Fest, the council was derided for using public funds but was vindicated when a substantial return on investment was realized in the form of increased hotel and restaurant revenues, and increased local shopping traffic. Representative Marcelle suggested that seniors be viewed as a viable client base, to which the lieutenant governor agreed.

Karen Profita, representing DCRT's Louisiana Seafood Promotion and Marketing Board, Capitol Annex, (225) 342-0552, said the board exists to aid the commercial fishing community in product promotion and marketing development to maximize the economic viability of the industry. She stated that the office uses advertising, promotion, and publicity to expand demand for Louisiana seafood at viable prices.

Representative Davis noted that Breaux Bridge is the crawfish capital of the world and thanked the board for its "buy local" campaign. Representative Davis asked Ms. Brown with the state library to return to the witness table to discuss the Homework, LA, program. Ms. Brown said the service was available to citizens at www.homeworkla.org.

Representative Glover asked Mr. Tullos how the state museums would resolve the issue of separated management between DCRT and the secretary of state, and if certain museums were accredited. Mr. Tullos replied that the museums in question were accreditable.

Representative Norton said she would present a bill in the 2016 Regular Session that would move certain museums from the office of the secretary of state to DCRT.

Representative Glover asked for an exhibit dedicated to Huddie William "Leadbelly" Ledbetter, a Louisiana native who has been heralded in England and New York City, and would be feted by the Grand Old Opry in Nashville. He said it was appropriate for Louisiana to follow suit.

Representative Bouie recalled Ms. Profita to the witness table with a request for an update on the BP oil spill impact. Ms. Profita said all fisheries in Louisiana have reopened and business was going well. Lieutenant Governor Nungesser said Plaquemines Parish anticipated a drop-off in eggs that were trapped in the spill and he was making inquiries about money for hatcheries to replenish the Gulf.

Louisiana Municipal Association (LMA)

Ronnie Harris, executive director of the Louisiana Municipal Association, 700 North 10th Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 344-5001, presented pamphlets (Exhibit B) about the purpose of the LMA.

Karen Day White, LMA assistant director of Governmental Affairs, 700 North 10th Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (800) 234-8274, discussed the history of the LMA and said it currently served 303 municipalities and two parishes with unincorporated municipalities. Ms. White said 2016 was the year of education for LMA.

Ms. White introduced Mayor Carroll Breaux of Springhill, LMA president, 107 Ashley Circle, Springhill, LA 71075, (318) 539-5681.

Representative White asked how LMA was addressing blighted/adjudicated properties. Ms. White replied that the Louisiana Municipal Advisory and Technical Services (LaMATS) Bureau was piloting a program in Baker for overgrown lots, cutting grass after proper notifications had been made to delinquent owners. She said the program would expand to include condemned vehicles, junk, and other debris.

Representative White inquired about the burden of retirement funding on the financing of cities. Ms. White said LMA would develop and disseminate its positions on municipal retirement systems legislation.

Representative Billiot asked about the status of the person formerly in charge of pension plans at LMA. Ms. White asked Representative Billiot to discuss his questions with the board of the Municipal Employees Retirement System (MERS). She stated that Warren Ponder was the interim director for MERS.

Mayor Breaux commented that LMA has no state funding.

John Gallagher, representing LMA, 700 North 10th Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 344-5001, was present to provide information, if requested.

Chairman Berthelot asked the members and visitors to observe a moment of silence in memory of Representative Ronnie Edwards, who passed on February 24, 2016.

Chairman Berthelot suspended presentations to conduct committee business while there remained a quorum of members.

Representative Billiot stated that the committee acknowledged that minutes presented for adoption by the committee, which had been emailed to members prior to the meeting, had been prepared in accordance with the rules and procedures of the House of Representatives.

Consideration and adoption of 2015 Regular Session committee meeting minutes: April 22, April 30, May 14, and May 28, 2015

Representative Pugh offered a motion to adopt 2015 Regular Session committee meeting minutes dated April 22, 2015; April 30, 2015; May 14, 2015; and May 28, 2015. Without objection, the motion to adopt the 2015 Regular Session committee meeting minutes passed by a vote of 11 yeas and 0 nays. Representatives Berthelot, Billiot, Bouie, Davis, Glover, Hilferty, Jenkins, Lyons, Norton, Pugh, and White voted yea.

Consideration and adoption of 2015-2016 Interim committee meeting minutes: December 17, 2015

Representative Lyons offered a motion to adopt the 2015-2016 interim committee meeting minutes dated December 17, 2015. Without objection, the motion to adopt the 2015-2016 interim committee meeting minutes passed by a vote of 11 yeas and 0 nays. Representatives Berthelot, Billiot, Bouie, Davis, Glover, Hilferty, Jenkins, Lyons, Norton, Pugh, and White voted yea.

Consideration and adoption of committee rules: Valarie Banks, committee secretary

Representative Pugh offered a motion to adopt changes to committee rules (Exhibit C) that were as follows: change meeting convene time to 8:30 a.m. from 9:30 a.m.; and implement a three-minute rule per member for comments and questions to witnesses, with the option at the chairman's discretion or a favorable motion to increase beyond three minutes. Without objection, the motion to adopt changes to committee rules passed by a vote of 11 yeas and 0 nays. Representatives Berthelot, Billiot, Bouie, Davis, Glover, Hilferty, Jenkins, Lyons, Norton, Pugh, and White voted yea.

Committee jurisdiction: Tina Righteous, committee attorney

Ms. Righteous gave a brief presentation of the subject matter assigned to the House Committee on Municipal, Parochial and Cultural Affairs (Exhibit D).

Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism (DCRT)

Kyle Edmiston, representing the Louisiana office of tourism, 13855 Oakley Lane, St. Francisville, LA 70775, (225) 342-8125, used slides in Exhibit A to highlight the mission of the office as marketing, promoting, and showcasing Louisiana as a travel destination, to increase tourism revenues, to create employment for Louisiana citizens through tourism development, and to conduct advertising to create and sustain a positive image of Louisiana. Mr. Edmiston showed four commercials used by the office of tourism to promote Louisiana.

Representative Hilferty asked about competition between sharing ventures, like Air BnB, with the hotel/motel industry. Mr. Edmiston said his office worked toward sharing the economy.

Guy Luigest, representing the office of the lieutenant governor, chief of staff (no address given), was present to provide information, if requested.

Police Jury Association of Louisiana

Roland Dartez, president of the Police Jury Association of Louisiana, 707 North 7th Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 343-2835, presented informational material to members (Exhibit E). He stated that the Police Jury Association's annual conference would be in Shreveport this year.

Representative Norton thanked Mr. Dartez for choosing Shreveport as the conference city and invited the association to return.

Chairman Berthelot advanced the idea of members paying the state \$100 each time they promoted their communities at committee meetings. He surmised such a policy could solve the state's financial problems.

Office of State Examiner - Municipal Fire and Police Civil Service

Robert S. Lawrence, state examiner, representing Municipal Fire & Police Civil Service, office of state examiner, 8330 United Plaza Boulevard, Suite 901, Baton Rouge, LA 70809, (225) 925-4416, explained that his office monitored and regulated the appointment and promotion of state personnel by examinations, job performance, and departmental seniority (Exhibit F). Mr. Lawrence said his office endeavored to ensure that politics were removed from employment and promotional decisions.

Representatives of other local government entities

Kevin Hayes, representing the Louisiana Association of Chiefs of Police, 412 North 4th Street, #328, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 268-2221, gave a brief statement on the association and introduced Fabian Blache, executive director of the Louisiana Association of Chiefs of Police, 700 North 10th Street, Suite 250, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 387-3261.

Mr. Hayes, representing the Louisiana Landowners Association, 412 North 4th Street, #328, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 268-2221, said the association monitored expropriation issues.

Mr. Hayes, representing the Louisiana Press Association, 412 North 4th Street, #328, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 268-2221, noted that Representative Pugh had introduce legislation on the official journal of a municipality in the 2016 Regular Session, and the Louisiana Press Association would work with Representative Pugh toward a mutually satisfying solution on the issue.

Chad Major, representing Professional Fire Fighters of Louisiana, 8011 Merle Gustafson Drive, Baton Rouge, LA, (225) 572-8483, noted that the people he represented were the ones who ran into buildings when the occupants were running out.

Ryan Haynie, representing the Louisiana Travel Promotion Association and Convention and Visitors Bureaus, P.O. Box 44032, Baton Rouge, LA 70801, (225) 336-4143, was present in support of tourism but declined to speak.

Laura Cating, representing the Louisiana Travel Promotion Association, 1165 South Foster Drive, Baton Rouge, LA 70806, (225) 408-4027, was present in support of the office of tourism but declined to speak.

VI. ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Representative Pugh offered a motion to adjourn. Without objection, the motion passed by a vote of 11 yeas and 0 nays. Representatives Berthelot, Billiot, Bouie, Davis, Glover, Hilferty, Jenkins, Lyons, Norton, Pugh, and White voted yea.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chairman John A. Berthelot
House Committee on Municipal, Parochial and Cultural Affairs

Date adopted: May 24, 2017