

Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of the Bayou Vermilion District  
Held by ZOOM at Vermilionville, 300 Fisher Road Lafayette Louisiana  
4:30 pm, July 28, 2021

**Call to Order** was given by President Michot. The meeting was called at 4:31 pm. The BVD meeting is on ZOOM due to COVID-19. Adhering to Governor's Proclamation, following mandate and guidance.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Roll Call:** Given by the Secretary: Commissioners Thomas Michot, Mark Wiltz, Calvin Leger, Phyllis Mouton, Jason Sullivan, David Eaton, Holden Hoggatt, and Claire Darby were present on ZOOM. There was a quorum.

**Guest(s):** Guests: Ryan Goude Locke, BVD attorney, Vicky Bowers, 013840, S, C, RPF. Staff: Charissa Helluin, Kim Fournet, Brady McKellar, Chris Benoit, Brenda Lalonde, and Melanie Harrington were present on ZOOM.

Commissioner Don McConnell joined on ZOOM at 4:39.

**Approval of Minutes:** President Michot asked if there were any questions, changes, or issues with the minutes as written, there were none. **MOTION:** (P. Mouton/D. Eaton) to accept the minutes from June 23, 2021, meeting as written. All were in favor. Minutes were accepted.

**Public Comment(s):** There were no public comments at this time.

**President's Report:**

A. Introduction of new commissioner Claire Darby.

Ms. Darby is filling the unexpired term of Kristie Cornell, a city council appointee.

**CEO Report:**

Copies of CEO Cheramie's report and coordinators reports (on file) were e-mailed to the commissioners. CEO Cheramie was not on the meeting.

**Committee Reports**

**Curatorial/Acquisitions:** The committee did not meet. Commissioner Mouton will address other agenda items later.

**Education/Programming/Grants:** The committee did not meet. Commissioner Hoggatt reminded the board and staff to make sure BVD is applying for any and all grants available. Commissioner Hoggatt told the board it needs to be more involved with applying and asking for grants/money. Having unity and asking for funding is more powerful than one person asking.

**Finance/Capital:** The committee did not meet. Commissioner Eaton is working with Deidre Stock on budgets and reports. The committee will meet in August.

**Marketing/Public Relations:** The committee met. Commissioner Leger scheduled the meeting on a Monday. Millicent Norbert nor Chris Benoit work on Mondays and did not make the meeting. Brady McKellar and Charissa Helluin discussed upcoming events, IT needs and issues, marketing strategies.

**Environmental/Bayou Ops/Maintenance:** The committee did not meet. They will plan to meet before the August meeting and introduce the new commissioner.

## **Discussion Items**

A. Maintenance in the village, including the PC and other buildings  
Curtis Willingham's board report pointed out that many buildings in the village and festive area had rot. Trees in the village needed trimming. The PC roof and dance floor need work. The list Curtis made needs to be prioritized.

B. Completion of new Water Quality Lab and use of the old watershed building  
The use of the old watershed building for artifacts storage and repair may not be the best use for the building. The artifacts are currently being stored and displayed in the houses in the village. This could continue to be the short-term situation, while other options are studied. Brady McKellar suggested using the old building be used for Louisiana History Music Museum. There is an area that could be used for a listening lab, early recordings of Cajun and Creole artist. The hallway could display posters and show films. This project could start now. There are many music grants available to help pay for renovations, supplies, etc. Commissioner Leger ask Brady to return next month with a presentation.

C. Consideration of combining the curatorial department with the museum operations  
CEO Cheramie sent out an email to the board suggesting that the curatorial department become part of museum operations since the curator resigned. The Curatorial Committee would still be in charge of the curatorial department. Commissioner Eaton re-sent the original email to the board members, Commissioner Eaton supports CEO's suggestion. Ryan Goudelocke wants the motion to be clear to the general public.

**MOTION:** (D. Eaton/C. Leger) move to support letter from CEO Cheramie to the board putting the Curatorial Department under Museum Operations. David Eaton read the letter.

"Annie Mahoney Fontenot's resignation will save us approximately \$28,955 in salary and benefits.

Kayla Guidry's resignation will save us approximately \$24,740 in salary and benefits.

Deborah Smith is a part-time employee who cleans the historic houses. We can furlough her, and Maintenance could take over the houses. The salary savings to the end of the year would be less than \$5K since she only works about 10 hours a week.

Elizabeth Daspit is the Collections Manager. She would oversee the interns working with her cataloguing the artefacts. If we want this work to continue, and I think we all do, I think she should stay on.

Since there will only be Elizabeth Daspit left in curatorial, I am proposing that it be folded into the Museum Operations department."

Amendment to motion (C. Leger/D. Eaton) to remove the reference to Deborah Smith from the motion. All were in favor. Motion accepted.

D. Executive Session: Report by outside counsel Vicky Bowers on "[i]nvestigate proceedings regarding allegations of misconduct," LSR.S. 42:17(A)(4)

**MOTION:** (P. Mouton/D. Eaton) to move into executive session to receive report from Vicky Bowers on investigation proceedings regarding allegations of misconduct.

Commissioner D. McConnell left the meeting at 5:43pm.

All present commissioners were in favor. Motion carried.

Returned to public meeting at 7:42pm.

President Michot asked if there was any discussion or motions in response to the executive session.

Commissioner Holden made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Eaton. The motion was amended by Commissioner Eaton and seconded by Commissioner Holden. The motion was then suspended by Commissioner Holden and seconded by Commissioner Eaton for Ms. Vicky Bowers' statement. In regard to the allegations that were the subject of the investigation, Ms. Bowers recommended 1) Move forward with having the Employee Handbook amended. 2) Move forward with engaging and talking with a company to discuss harassment and discrimination training. 3) Authorize several written reports to be prepared relative to allegations that were made involving specific employees. 4) Recommend that BVD By-Laws revisions be made. In regard to the disciplinary actions to David Cheramie based on the allegations Ms. Bowers recommended 1) PIP Plan for the CEO. 2) Engage in the process of determining whether termination is the most appropriate decision. If #2 was the choice, the BVD board should immediately form a committee of 2-3 board members to further explore what the best option is moving forward, making sure it minimizes any BVD exposure to any type of litigation.

**MOTION:** (D. Eaton/H. Hoggatt) to have the executive committee explore BVD's risk for termination within two weeks, and to come back to the board with the recommendation.

Commissioner Holden expressed how important it is to form this committee, for the record. All were in favor. Motion carried.

**MOTION:** (D. Eaton/C. Leger) Adopt and instruct the attorneys to have the BVD Employee Handbook amended, to have the four allegations reported as prepared by Ms. Vicky Bowers, have harassment and discrimination training, and revise the BVD By Laws. Commissioner Sullivan confirmed that the list of recommendations would also be sent to the commissioners. All were in favor. Motion carried. Commissioner Mouton confirmed that the executive committee meetings would be public.

**Adjournment:** **MOTION:** (D. Eaton/P. Mouton) Motion to adjourn. All were in favor. Motion carried.

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Thomas Michot, President

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Calvin Leger, Secretary