

Neighbors First Bywater general meeting
Oct. 5th 2016

New Board Member introduction: Steve Haedicke.

From the Port of New Orleans, represented by Michelle Ganon (Vice President of Public Affairs), Fred Tharp (Director of Engineering) and Amelia Pellegrin (Director, Sustainable Development)

"Our connections run deep" Deep water draft gives a competitive advantage, and a strong connection reaching 34 states by water / rail. Historically ports have not really paid much attention to the neighborhood at large.

New Leadership at the Port – Randy Christian??? will assume CEO duties of the Port when Gary LaGrange retires.

" They don't have funding for the cruise terminal or a cruise ship lined up"

" This has been a ten-year project"

"Goal tonight: the beginning of the conversation"

"What are your concerns?"

Status of the Poland Ave wharf:

People have questions about cruises, traffic impact, facility usage –

"We have answers to none-of-those questions."

"The fact is – we don't have funding for a cruise-ship terminal, or community input. We will not submit permit applications without community-background."

Rhonda: Welcomes Port representative, Michelle Ganon. Announces the Port-Cruise Ship Terminal committee - - - to form group that regularly engages with the Port of New Orleans and will involve Brian Lockett.

Question: "Was the Port not granted 15 million?" "No?"

"We have no announcements that we have been given this money, but we do have funding for repairs and levee-bank-work.

What is happening:

levee stabilization

Fred Tharpe – professional engineer – started 9 months ago with the Port after 30 years in Washington. Port was thinking narrowly in the past – they would just go forward with projects. Now if we propose a job, we consider what are the impacts?

Poland Street Wharf – belonged to MARAD, they gave it to the Port. The levee here is unstable and MARAD would have had to put 20 or 30 million dollars to fix it up. Blighted property. Port had developed this idea on cruise-ship terminals going back to 2004 or so. First, the foundation needs to be fixed. That is what they have been working on.

The levees were built with silt and sand; they can become unstable. Some parts of the levee are 80 years old. When we stabilize it, then that gives us a canvas to work with.

Questions:

Every piece of communication we have seen in the news – has mentioned “cruise terminal” - when was this switched?

Answer: we have capital outlay funds and port improvement funds. We have 21 million in funds. The costs of repairs are estimated at 15 to 21 million.

Question: Section 106? Will this be done?

Answer: yes. For the repairs and another one for any future work.

Question: does that include looking at alternate sites for a cruise terminal?

Answer: “As an engineer, you can’t go past the bridge (Crescent City Connection). Then we have only a few options. Canal St., Gov. Nichols?, Poland? We don’t want to go beyond the Industrial Canal, because that leaves the problem of traffic on the canal bridges.”

Question: When will the levee repairs begin? End?

Answer: We hope by the first of the year. Once we start, a year or less. Cruise ship terminal – probably would not begin before 3 years.

Question: “My neighbor put her house on the market because this was ‘the final nail in the coffin’” - is this never going to happen or definitely going to happen?”

Answer: “Somewhere in the middle . . . Reality is – if it is not a cruise ship terminal – it’s still a wharf [Fred Tharp is still speaking.] Poland avenue is the best spot for a cruise ship – in terms of deepwater and bend in the river. Not sure if this would be a ‘primary’ cruise ship terminal.”

Question: my concerns are port-of-call . . .

Answer: once we have a cruise ship company signed up, then we would be able to say whether it is a port-of-call or of embarkation.

Question: Will Poland Avenue be used for heavy vehicles for construction?

Answer: The contractor will determine that. Majority of work – contractor will probably want to work from the water, because it is the cheapest. Poland is a truck route – so it will be used as well.

Question: Back in December, we were told on cruise ship days – 18 to 20 service trucks would go through Poland Ave - - - impacting trees, houses, traffic, ect. ..

Answer: From the engineering perspective – we're not there yet.

Question: If this is a big-project . . . I'm uncomfortable that these issues are not being discussed – cruise ship lines?

Question: The website and earlier presentations made it seem like this project was so far along

Answer: The port has backed off . . . the message that was communicated has changed. It has to do with the fact that we don't have funding. We have started a new "master plan".

"Shore power" is not an option if the cruise-ships don't have ships that use that form of energy. [Still Fred talking.]

"We don't have air-quality issues (federally) in New Orleans. We have grants for truck-drivers on diesel."

Question: would ya'll put this money into the infrastructure into this project if the cruise ship project was not a go?

Answer: this project impacts the levees – so the infrastructure project needs to go forward to protect the rest of the river system.

Question: In the 20 or so years that we have talked about this – no one mentioned the instability of the levee ... is the whole levee bad?

Answer: it's just this area of the levee.

The design we have now – will use sheet piles in. they drive down well below the water-level.

Question: has this process occurred because of proximity to the industrial canal?

Answer: I can't answer that. It's just how the building of levees progressed. We are not sure what is causing this – but we know we have moving ground.

Question: if the stabilization occurs and the wharf is built . . . and it's not a cruise ship terminal . . . it's important for our neighborhoods to come together . . .

I was reading the master plan amendments – and I noticed that there were three distinct PDFs from the Port of New Orleans. And Nadine Ramsey submitted something about parks near the batture – are there any Master Plan amendments that were submitted that impact the downriver neighborhoods . . . ?

Answer: Not by the Port. Two properties in the East, one in Algiers – submitted by the Port.

Question: when will you start the engagement process?

Answer: today it is starting.

Question: just to clarify – about river heights . . are you saying that because the sheet piling – does that mean there are no limitations on when these piles can be driven?

Answer: no piling at stage 11.

Clarification ; in the news about 40 or 50 million in bond money – my understanding was that a bond issued for 45 million – on paper it was written “to support the Poland Avenue cruise wharf” . . . but since then . . . the board became unsure about committing all of our money to a project we were uncertain about– timeline, neighborhood engagement. . . it was approved by the state, but the money has not been committed by the board. We also have to consider bringing Avondale back into commerce in some capacity.

Question: if not a cruise ship . . what could it be . . ?

Answer: this is not an area that can handle containers. ??? the roads don't support heavy truck traffic. ??? rail or water (barges) transfer of cargo would make the most sense . . . Ports are dynamic and cargo changes. . . might be different in 20 or 30 or 40 years.

Brief summary on the status of the hostel

CPC shut down the hostel. It went to HDLC, then went to city council who approved it with exception of Jason Williams. WHO??? filed a judgement – appealing the decision on June 17th – our main reason for doing that, the developer told the city it was a hostel – but it is more than that – it is mixed-up, 3 bars a restaurant, a

swimming pool, a huge parking lot . . . they said they were going to build a hostel, but not really what they were going to build. There was one firm, got shot down. They fired them. Our attorney is saying that the first firm did the work, not the second.

We go to court shortly. We'll see what happens.

There is a proviso – about decibel system – that will automatically monitor – a perimeter monitor that the hostel will pay for. This is a way to make sure the decibels don't harm you.

Brian: there is one master-plan amendment that changes the future-land use of that HANO lot. The amendment would make the entire block commercial. Who put in that amendment? Nadine and HANO.

End at 8:03 pm with the port discussion.