Minutes of November 21st, 2025
ODDD Board Meeting

Board Meeting
Date and Time: November 21, 2025, at 9:00 a.m.
Meeting Place: 5367 I-49 S. Service Road
Opelousas, LA 70570

AGENDA

1. Welcome
2. Pledge and Opening Prayer
3. Roll Call
4. ODDD Business Recognition Program: Chicken King
   219 E. Prudhomme Street, Opelousas LA
5. Public Comments – Limit to 3 Minutes
6. Approval of October 24, 2025, Meeting Minutes
7. Monthly Financial Report
8. Executive Report
9. **Old Business:**
   a) Vacant Structures Ordinance Update- Lance Ned
   b) M&M Associates – Purvis Morrison, ConnectLA/South Park Community Center Update
   c) Catalyst Committee Update
   d) South Park Project
      - Donald Gardner Stadium Renovation Update – Chris Rideau, EB Brooks
10. **New Business**
    a) APC's Brownfield Coalition Grant
    b) City of Opelousas OPD Presentation
    c) Stephen Ortego Presentation
11. Board Member Comments
12. Adjourn

The following members were present in person: Lena Charles, Keith Broussard, Don D'Avy, Pat Fontenot, Ogden Pitre

The following members were absent: Rob Hillard, Sarah Branton

The following SLED members were present: Brittany Cretchain, Janece Riser

The following guests were present: Leslie J. Schiff, Grasshopper Mendoza, Steven Picou,

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Julius Alsandor, Stephen Ortego, Amber Sylvester, Todd Mouton, Joshua B.

The following guests were present virtually: Purvis Morris, EB Brooks

Chairwoman Lena Charles welcomed the board and guests, opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance, and prayer at 9:08 AM.

It was determined that a quorum was present.

ODDD Business Recognition Program: Chairwoman Lena recognized Chicken King as the ODDD Business of the Month for October 2025. Located at 219 E. Prudhomme Street in Opelousas, LA, was honored for its impact within the district.

Public Comments:

- Leslie J. Schiff, a longtime Opelousas resident and former attorney, addressed the board regarding a recent article that was critical of the board, expressing concern about its accuracy and tone. He offered to draft a response on behalf of the board and the community, requesting input from board members to ensure factual accuracy prior to submission. The board expressed appreciation for his offer and affirmed its support for a response that emphasizes positivity while correcting any misinformation.

Approval of October 24, 2025, Meeting Minutes: Don D'Avy made a clarification regarding the motion made to amend the agenda was just one item, not two. Sarah Branton clarified that she was not in attendance, although the minutes reflected that she was. Ogden Pitre made a motion to accept the October 24th, 2025, meeting minutes with the necessary corrections. Don D'Avy seconded the motion, and it carried without objection.

Monthly Financial Report: Keith Broussard presented the financial update, including a review of the balance sheet and revenues and expenditures through October 31. He reported that the organization holds more than $5 million in current assets and outlined the allocation of funds, sources of income, and outstanding liabilities. Net income and year-to-date results were discussed, with explanations provided for certain operating losses, along with comparisons to the prior year's budget. Pat Fontenot made a motion to approve the financial report as presented. Ogden Pitre seconded the motion, and it carried without objection.

Executive Director Report: In Bill Rodier's absence, Lena Charles delivered the executive report, noting progress on several lighting projects. She reported that work was underway on the installation of LED lighting along a city median, with plans to extend the project further.

OLD BUSINESS

Vacant Structure Ordinance Update: Lance Ned provided an update on code enforcement related to vacant buildings, outlining the issuance of fines and the procedures for placing liens on noncompliant properties. The board discussed the escalation of fines, the number of properties impacted, and the next steps in the enforcement process, including the relationship between property registration, inspection requirements, and penalty protocols.

M&M Associates: Brittany Cretchain read the update provided by M&M Associates, the consulting firm supporting the South Park Community Center project in Opelousas. The report noted that M&M Associates continues to work closely with the City of Opelousas, Connect LA, and the project's architectural firm to advance the project through its various phases.

Recent efforts include guiding the project through the Request for Proposals (RFP) process, which resulted in the selection of Manual Builders as the project contractor. M&M Associates also drafted six federal policy documents required for the project, all of which have been approved by the City Council. The firm is currently coordinating with Connect LA on contract reviews and is developing a payment tracking system to manage invoices, receipts, payments, and reimbursements associated with the grant-funded project.

M&M Associates participates in regular weekly coordination calls with Connect LA and remains a key resource for compliance and administrative oversight. Their role also includes facilitating communication between the city and federal and state agencies and managing the documentation necessary to keep the project moving forward.

Catalyst Committee: Lena Charles informed the board of an update from the Catalyst Committee, reporting that the committee has completed formalized criteria for identifying and selecting "catalyst" projects. Chateau Maison de Chateau was retroactively designated as a catalyst project. The committee also discussed the need for a more robust and objective scoring framework, and volunteers were assigned to develop the necessary evaluation tools, with particular emphasis on job creation metrics and alignment with applicable grant requirements.

South Park Project:

Donald Garnder Stadium Renovation Update: Mayor Julius Alsandor provided a progress report on the stadium renovations, outlining the anticipated timeline for installation of the track's topcoat and striping, the recent completion of seating improvements, and efforts to implement additional safety measures, including stair railings. He emphasized the importance of community cooperation and respect for the facility, offering special recognition to community members and fans for their support. The mayor also briefly discussed plans for future foundation fundraising, noting that several preparatory steps remain pending.

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<u>NEW BUSINESS</u>

<u>APC's Brownfield Coalition Grant:</u> Lena Charles acknowledged recent recognition from the Acadiana Planning Commission, noting the award of a Brownfield Identification and Assessment Grant. She reported that several city-owned sites have been identified for potential investigation and future abatement funding. The importance of the grant in expanding redevelopment opportunities and fostering multi-jurisdictional partnerships was emphasized.

<u>City of Opelousas OPD Presentation:</u> Assistant Chief Mark Guidry presented a proposal to fund additional crime surveillance and license plate recognition (LPR) cameras. He outlined the phased rollout of the camera network and its impact on crime reduction, highlighting measurable improvements in specific neighborhoods. He also addressed board questions regarding the technology, ongoing maintenance, and privacy considerations. The presentation included a detailed cost analysis, proposed funding levels, and data demonstrating significant reductions in both overall crime and violent incidents in areas where the cameras have been deployed. Pat Fontenot made a motion to accept the Opelousas Police Department LPR Camera proposal. Sarah Branton seconded the motion, and it carried without objection.

<u>Stephen Ortego Presentation:</u> Stephen Ortego presented a comprehensive proposal to redevelop Opelousas's historic Federal Courthouse into a boutique hotel and event venue. The project envisions adaptive reuse of the existing structure into a 22-room hotel, featuring a grand ballroom in the former courtroom, a restaurant, and a bar located in the basement, which historically served as a fallout shelter. Unique design elements include guest rooms created within former jail cells that retain the original bars, basement-level suites, a small cocktail "champagne pool," and carefully planned layouts that balance historic character with modern functionality. The plans emphasize restoring original terrazzo flooring, preserving period woodwork, and maintaining defining architectural features throughout the building.

The total project cost is estimated at approximately \$6.4 million and would be financed through a layered capital structure. This includes a primary construction loan, potentially sourced locally; historic tax credit bridge financing; equity contributions from a tax credit investor; and a requested \$1.5 million gap-financing loan from the Opelousas Downtown Development District (ODDD). The ODDD loan would be structured at a low interest rate, with consideration given to an interest-only period during initial project stabilization. Approximately \$2 million, about one-third of the total project budget—is expected to be generated through the monetization of state and federal historic tax credits, made possible by the building's location within a designated preservation district and compliance with applicable preservation standards. Discussions also addressed structuring ODDD's loan in a second-lien position behind the construction lender and deferring certain developer and architectural fees to support the overall financing stack. Final loan terms, collateral structure, repayment schedule, and additional legal review were identified as prerequisites to any disbursement.

The project is expected to generate meaningful economic and workforce impacts, including an estimated 12 to 20 full-time equivalent jobs in hotel management, food and beverage service, housekeeping, event coordination, and building maintenance. Additional indirect benefits are anticipated for nearby restaurants, retailers, and service providers due to increased visitor activity. The developer emphasized that rehabilitating this landmark property would catalyze further downtown investment, enhance tourism, increase local tax revenues, and elevate Opelousas's profile for future development.

A significant component of the proposal is strict adherence to historic preservation requirements necessary to qualify for state and federal historic tax credits. The rehabilitation will comply with National Park Service standards for qualified rehabilitation expenditures, including preservation of the original façade, terrazzo and wood flooring, courtroom spaces, decorative elements, and vestibules. Original features will be repaired rather than replaced whenever possible, and any modern upgrades—such as accessibility improvements—will be implemented in a manner that preserves the building's historic integrity. Compliance with these standards is critical to securing the tax credits that underpin the project's financial feasibility.

Following the presentation and a detailed discussion of the legal, financial, and preservation considerations, the ODDD board voted to preliminarily commit to the $1.5 million investment, contingent upon the execution of final legal documentation and agreement on all material terms, including collateral and reporting requirements. The board also expressed interest in designating the project as its first formal "catalyst project," subject to finalization of district criteria. The developer agreed to provide all required documentation and to coordinate closely with ODDD's legal counsel, with the board noting that this project establishes an important framework for future large-scale public-private partnerships requiring thorough due diligence and ongoing oversight.

Board Member Comments:

- Keith Broussard addressed the board regarding next steps and encouraged that any future proposals be presented in written summary form and distributed to board members in advance of meetings, allowing the board to make fully informed and well-considered decisions.
- Keith Broussard also noted that he has made three attempts to contact the Mayor of Opelousas to request a meeting regarding minority participation and related matters. He emphasized the need, moving forward, for a clear plan to ensure meaningful minority participation.

Adjournment: With no further business to bring before the board, a motion to adjourn was made by Pat Fontenot and seconded by Rob Hillard. The motion carried without objection

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and the meeting adjourned at 11:02 AM.

Secretary Keith Broussard

Chairperson Lena Charles