# Minutes of February 20th, 2026
# ODDD Board Meeting

**<u>Board Meeting</u>**
**Date and Time: February 20, 2026, 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: Mae Ann's Taste of Soul
5. Public Comments – Limit to 3 Minutes
6. Approval of January 23, 2026, Meeting Minutes
7. Monthly Financial Report
   a) American Bank CD Renewal
   b) St Landry Bank CD Renewal
8. Welcome New Board Member – Stephen Daste
9. Executive Report
10. **Old Business:**
    a) ODDD Election of Officers
       - Chairperson-
       - Vice Chairperson-
       - Secretary/Treasurer-

    b) Vacant Structures Ordinance Update- Lance Ned
    c) M&M Associates – Marcus Bruno, ConnecLA/South Park Community Center Update
    d) Catalyst Committee Update
    e) South Park Project Update- Chris Rideau and Mayor Julius Alsandor
    f) ODDD Goals and Objectives for Year 2026
    g) Brownfield Coalition Update

11. Board Member Comments
12. Adjourn

The following members were present in person: Lena Charles, Don D'Avy, Pat Fontenot, Ogden Pitre, Sarah Branton, Stephen Daste, Rob Hillard

The following members were absent:

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

The following guests were present: Grasshopper Mendoza, Julius Alsandor,

Chairwoman Lena Charles welcomed the board and guests, opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance, and prayer at 9:10 AM.

It was determined that a quorum was present.

***ODDD Business Recognition Program:*** Chairwoman Lena recognized Mae Ann's taste of Soul as the ODDD Business of the Month for February 2026.

***Public Comments:***

***Approval of January 23, 2026, Meeting Minutes:*** Sarah Branton noted that the attendance was not listed. Sarah Branton made a motion to accept the January 23rd, 2026, meeting minutes with the necessary corrections. Rob Hillard seconded the motion, and it carried without objection.

***Monthly Financial Report:*** Janece Riser presented the financial update, including a review of the balance sheet and revenues and expenditures through January. Pat Fontenot made a motion to approve the financial report as presented. Rob Hillard seconded the motion, and it carried without objection.

American Bank CD Renewal: Sarah Branton made a motion to authorize Lena Charles and Don D'Avy to renew the CD at American Bank at a rate of 4% or better. Pat Fontenot seconded the motion, and it carried without objection.

***Acknowledge New Board Members***: Lena Charles informed the board that she has been reappointed to the ODDD Board. There will be another appointment from Senator Boudreaux but it is not yet official.

***Executive Director Report:*** Bill Rodier informed the board of the federal government's plans to implement a new round of the Opportunity Zone program, commonly referred to as "Opportunity Zone 2.0." This initiative represents the next phase of the original Opportunity Zone program introduced around 2019–2020, which was designed to attract private investment into low-income or economically distressed areas through targeted tax incentives.

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Mr. Bill Rodier noted that the Acadiana Planning Commission met on February 12 with parish presidents and regional stakeholders to present proposed Opportunity Zone designations for the region. During this meeting, the Commission outlined the areas under consideration for inclusion in the next round of Opportunity Zone designations.

Mr. Rodier explained that Opportunity Zones are determined based on economic data within specific census tracts, particularly poverty levels, rather than solely by zip code boundaries. While census tracts are often associated with zip codes, the designation process is based on socioeconomic data within those tracts.

Mr. Rodier also noted that during the initial Opportunity Zone designation process, there were fewer eligible census tracts in St. Landry Parish than anticipated. Under the proposed designations for this second round, additional areas have become eligible, including portions of Washington and Sunset. He further noted that Eunice previously had one eligible tract, while Opelousas had several eligible tracts and continues to be a focal area.

Board members were advised that the proposed Opportunity Zone maps and detailed tract designations are available on the Acadiana Planning Commission's website for review.

***OLD BUSINESS***

***Election of Officers:*** Current Chair, Lena Charles, handed the meeting over to Pat Fontenot to run the Election of Officers.

***Chairperson:*** Ogden Pitre nominated Lena Charles for Chairwoman. Stephen Daste seconded the nomination. Don D'Avy made a motion to close nominations. Sarah Branton seconded the motion, and it carried without objection.

Lena Charles will remain Chairwoman.

***Vice Chairperson:*** Lena Charles nominated Don D'Avy for Vice Chairman. Ogden Pitre seconded the motion. Stephen Daste made a motion to close the nominations, to which Sarah Branton seconded. The motion carried.

Don D'Avy will remain Vice Chairman.

***Secretary/ Treasurer:*** Don D'Avy nominated Stephen Daste for Secretary/Treasurer. Rob Hillard seconded the motion. Sarah Branton made a motion to close the nominations, to which Rob Hillard seconded. The motion carried.

Stephen Daste will serve as Secretary and Treasurer.

***Vacant Structure Ordinance Update:*** **Ms. Deandra** reported that the district has begun implementing fines and liens on vacant properties within the downtown area. She explained that these enforcement tools are intended to encourage property owners to take responsibility for buildings that have remained unused or in poor condition. The purpose of the fines and liens is to discourage long-term vacancy and neglect while promoting repairs, occupancy, or other productive uses for properties in the downtown district, consistent with the broader goal of downtown revitalization.

Ms. Deandra noted that some property owners have begun responding to these enforcement efforts by making repairs and taking steps to utilize their buildings rather than leaving them vacant. However, she stated that while some compliance has been observed through improvements and increased use, relatively few property owners have paid the liens to date.

During the discussion, it was also clarified that liens and fines remain attached to the property even if ownership changes. As such, any outstanding obligations must be satisfied regardless of whether the property is sold, donated, or otherwise transferred to a new owner. This ensures that enforcement actions remain effective and encourages responsible property transfers and due diligence by prospective buyers.

***Community Center Update- M&M Associates:*** Marcus Bruno thanked those in attendance for participating in the recent groundbreaking ceremony and reported that the event received very positive feedback from the community. He noted that residents and stakeholders expressed excitement regarding the investment in the area, and that the ceremony helped build momentum and increase visibility for the project.

Mr. Bruno also provided an update on progress at the project site. He reported that the existing pool on the property has been demolished, marking an early milestone as the project moves from the planning phase into active implementation. Additionally, a path has been established on the site to assist with access and site connectivity.

Mr. Bruno informed the board that all required project documents have been uploaded and approved, indicating that the necessary administrative and compliance requirements have been satisfied to allow the project to proceed.

An update was also provided regarding the Vine Street project. Mr. Bruno stated that the project is currently moving forward with environmental studies, which are required for final design decisions, funding considerations, and regulatory approvals. He noted that the project is anticipated to be completed in October 2027.

***Catalyst Committee Update:*** Lena Charles reported that work on the catalyst initiative is continuing; however, the project has experienced some delays due to miscommunication with legal counsel. She noted that the delays are procedural in nature and related to coordination on legal and contractual matters rather than any concerns about the viability of the project. Ms. Charles emphasized that the initiative remains active and that the board continues to move forward while addressing the communication issues.

Ms. Charles also expressed enthusiasm regarding the development of a corporate loan program associated with the ODDD and the catalyst initiative. She explained that the program could provide an additional financing tool to support development and redevelopment projects within the district and potentially increase access to capital for initiatives that align with the district's goals.

***South Park Project:*** Chris Rideau provided an update on the South Park project, reporting that the development is well underway and beginning to enter an activation and usage phase. He noted that the work at South Park is closely connected to the stadium project and recent capital investments associated with the improvements previously discussed in the financial report.

Mr. Rideau highlighted the installation of new pickleball courts at the park, noting that the courts have already been completed and are now available as a recreational amenity for the community. He explained that the addition of these courts enhances the park's multi-use recreational offerings and supports ongoing efforts to strengthen South Park as a regional attraction and quality-of-life asset.

Mr. Rideau also reported that preparations are underway for the first track meet to be hosted at the updated facilities. He noted that the track and stadium infrastructure have progressed to the point that the venue can now accommodate organized athletic events, marking a significant milestone as the project transitions from construction into active community use.

For the upcoming track meet, Mr. Rideau stated that the City will oversee concessions and gate operations. This arrangement reflects an operational plan for the facility and demonstrates coordination between the City and the district as the venue begins hosting public events.

***ODDD Goals and Objective 2026:*** Lena Charles informed the board that the board was afforded a copy of the working document at the last meeting.

**Brownfield Coalition Update:** Brittany Cretchain provided an update on the recent Brownfield Coalition meeting and the purpose of the coalition's work. She explained that the coalition focuses on Brownfield sites, which are properties where real or perceived environmental contamination may complicate redevelopment. This issue is particularly relevant for older or underutilized properties, where environmental concerns can delay or discourage private investment. Through the Brownfield program, local governments and districts can access grant funding, environmental assessments, and potential cleanup assistance, making redevelopment more feasible.

Ms. Cretchain noted that the recent coalition meeting primarily served as an orientation session. Participants reviewed the structure of the Brownfield program, including how it supports local governments in addressing properties with environmental concerns. The meeting also included discussion of Memoranda of Agreement (MOAs), which outline how participating entities such as the parish, municipalities, and organizations like ODDD formally collaborate. These agreements help clarify roles, responsibilities, and procedures for identifying potential sites, coordinating with consultants and regulators, and determining how projects are prioritized. At this stage, the coalition is establishing its operational framework rather than focusing on specific redevelopment sites.

During the discussion, Lena Charles added that ODDD has received recognition from other municipalities in the region for its work and participation in collaborative initiatives such as the Brownfield Coalition. She noted that the district’s involvement helps position it as a strong regional partner in redevelopment efforts.

Ms. Charles also emphasized the importance of maintaining visibility and engagement in regional initiatives such as the coalition. Continued collaboration with parish governments, municipalities, and regional partners can help expand access to resources, technical expertise, and funding opportunities.

***Board Member Comments:***

- Sarah Branton discussed the Carbon Capture demonstration. Discussion ensued.
- Rob Hillard introduced the discussion of participating in the Love Fest for 2026. To which it was decided that the board will participate.
- Brittany Cretchain invited the all to the upcoming SLED and CSLED board meetings on February 24th and March 12th, respectively.
- Lena Charles informed the board of the Pardoning of the Crawfish at the Tony Chachere’s Country Store, where the Lieutenant Governor will be in attendance.

***Adjournment:*** With no further business to bring before the board, a motion to adjourn was made by Pat Fontenot and seconded by Ogden Pitre. The motion carried without objection and the meeting adjourned at 10:23 AM.

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| Interim Secretary | Chairperson Lena Charles |