

FRIENDS of the MANCHAC GREENWAY (FMG) BOARD MEETING MINUTES, Wednesday, April 20, 2022 @ Sunset Stop/Gator's Den, Galva, LA

ATTENDANCE: George Coxen (Chief, Manchac VFD), Lisa Williams, Za Maurin, Tara Lambeth (St. John Parish Office of Permits and Planning), Frank Neelis (FMG Contractor), Eva Hillman, Ben Taylor, Dr. James Nelson (South Tangipahoa Parish Port Commission), Sam Buckley (Transportation Planner, New Orleans Regional Planning Commission), Warren "Bosco" Torres, Jr. (St.JtBP Councilman Dist. 11), Greta Cappelmann and Allene La Spinna (Bike Easy), Rev. Barry Chance (First Presbyterian Ch.) and Grady Geiger, Sr. (USCE Ret.)

MEETING MINUTES of 3/23/22: Approved

FINANCIAL REPORT: Treasurer Galen Schum was absent but forwarded his report noting a current bank balance of \$10,742.95 and future funding obligations of \$3,000.00.

CONTRACTOR REPORT:

Ben and Frank recently met with Jennifer Ruley of the City of New Orleans Dept. of Public Works to discuss the concept of a Ring Around the Lake Bike Trail Committee and possible avenues for funding such a project. As an avid cyclist with many connections to the local cycling community, Ms. Ruley offered many valuable insights.

Frank Neelis related his recent visit to LA Dept. Transportation and Development District 62 on Hammond to clarify their property boundaries on the Greenway. These were represented on a color-coded map showing how LA DOTD property extends a short distance from I-55's "drip-line." Much of the west side of I-55 are the wetlands in Louisiana Wildlife & Fisheries Wildlife Management Areas. On the east side of I-55 is a narrow band of property that is optionally owned by private interest. Beyond that is a 150 ft. right-of-way centered on the old US 51. This is bound on the east by the unused Hammond Hwy. (old Louisiana 33). Further clarification is being sought from StJtBP Assessor Lucien Gauff.

Frank and Mr. Buckley discussed an application for the Greenway for a grant offered by the National Scenic Byways Program. A previously prepared cost estimate for a widened road shoulder with striping and vibration strips will be used. Ways to eventually "phase-in" the integration of sections of the old Hammond Hwy. alongside this pedestrian/bicycle thoroughfare were also discussed. Frank proposed a committee be formed to determine specific uses for the Scenic Byways grant.

Mr. Buckley, Transportation Planner from NORPC, Ms. Lambeth of St. John Planning & Permits and Bridgett Bailey of Tangipahoa Planning are currently working together on many of the details involved with bringing the Manchac Greenway from the Mississippi River levee-top bike trail at Laplace to Ponchatoula. A feasibility study for the portion of the Greenway in St. John Parish is attached. A single Master Plan for the Greenway within the two parishes instead of two separate parish plans is being considered. Ms. Lambeth conveyed the regretful news that St. John Parish Planner Rene Pastorek is no longer with the parish. The FMG owes him thanks for his efforts in pushing our project forward.

Other details from this conversation:

Grady Geiger, Sr. pointed out that the concept of a paved bike path occupying the maintenance road atop the new storm surge protection levee from the Greenway to St. James Parish might not work because parts of the levee may only be 4' high and wouldn't be wide enough.

Ben described a recent meeting with the Tangipahoa Parish Planning Dept., Frank Neelis, Sam Buckley and others to discuss how to deal with "The Squeeze," the area at the north end of the Greenway where I-55/DOT and Canadian National Railroad property lines meet and where there is no room for bicycles to legally pass through. A path on the east side of the railroad that squeezes between the railroad and Ponchatoula's wastewater treatment pond levees is being considered.

The cost of just the boardwalk from Selsers Canal (a.k.a. South Slough) to Southeast Railroad Ave. in Ponchatoula is estimated to be \$1.5 - 2 million with a 20% cost share.

INFRASTRUCTURE:

Cypress planting - Eva reported that some 97% of the trees the Pontchartrain Conservancy and others have recently planted in the vicinity of North Pass and Main Pass Manchac are surviving. Plantings have been done on Cecils Canal east of Galva during the past month and are also being done today in the Labranche wetlands in St. Charles Parish.

Sunset Park - Mr. Torres, who along with Robert Arcuri represents St. John Parish Council districts on the Greenway, made note that Parish President Hotard has made the restoration of the park a priority. Marsh grass and mud-balls that were deposited in the parking area by Hurricane Ida have been removed and the five picnic shelters and fencing that were swept away will be replaced. Additionally, the Pontchartrain Conservancy is donating twenty trees for a planting at the park Saturday (4/20/22).

Shell Bank Bayou - The use of this popular canoe and boat launch by local fishermen and eco-tourists is in full swing. A video crew from WDSU was recently spotted here.

Louisiana National Estuary Research Reserve - LA NERR - The three candidate basins nominated for this facility (Pontchartrain, Barataria and Atchafalaya) are in the final review process and the selected basin will be named in a week or so.

Port Manchac - A contract with Air Products for the use of half of this facility's twenty acres is being signed. The plans are to stockpile pipe, drilling mud and other equipment and supplies needed for transporting and storing hydrogen under southwest Lake Maurepas. Transportation from the port to this location will be complicated by North Pass's 7.5 mile length past point bar shoals and recreational camps. The possibility of digging a controversial shortcut canal between the two passes is being considered. Plans for reorienting the port for ecotourism, education and public use have been de-emphasized.

OUTREACH:

A **FMG Adopt-A-Road** litter pick-up is scheduled for 9:30, 5/21/22. Many thanks to Hammond's First Presbyterian Church, charter organizer of Boy Scout Troop 270, for adopting a mile of the Greenway south of the Pass Manchac Bridge.

Ben announced that the **FMG website** will be populated with all meeting minutes from 2015 onward.

Allene La Spinna and Greta Cappleman of the New Orleans-based cycling advocacy and action group Bike Easy discussed the **Louisiana Bootlace Trail Network** and how it will incorporate the Manchac Greenway. A beneficial networking session with them was held after the meeting.

Lisa's daughter Nikki Clanton of **Gnarly Barley Brewing** has once again facilitated a donation to FMG from an outdoor yoga meeting on 4/21/22 taking place on their grassy lawn. The \$10.00 entry fee for the event will be passed on to our group and everyone is always welcome to enjoy a Gnarly beer.

Za announced FMG will donate and plant a Southern Live Oak tree and place a commemorative plaque in the honor of FMG Board Member **Rev. Donald August** in recognition of his years of selfless civic work for his community.

NEXT MEETING:

2:00, Wednesday, May, 25, 2022 @ Frenier Landing Restaurant, Frenier, LA