

DANA General Meeting – March 2024

March 9, 2024

Attending: Jake LeBeau (DANA President), Hannah Ligon, Eraina Jessie, Wayne Benjamin, Jeanette Lawrence, Gladys Stevenson, Celia Turner, Colin Ash, Marielle Pichon, Richard Heifner, Yvonne Gibson, Debbie Stewart, Mindy Milam, Heather Mattingly, Anne Maurin, Lorraine Bible, Doroles Collins, Clay Latimer, Emerson Collins, Anne Zoller Kiefer (District D City Council office), Vallarie Burris, Em Schiller, Sandra Castenell, Cathy Boutte, Marthiel H. Celestin, Gregory Jacks, Cm. Joe Giarrusso/Aimee McCarron/Amanda Rizzo(District A City Council office), State Rep. Matthew Willard (District 97), several more neighbors via Zoom

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Councilmember Joe Giarrusso, District A

Contact:

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Constituent Services Director	LeeAnn Moss	LeeAnn.Moss@nola.gov	504-658-1010
Policy Director	Aimee McCarron	aimee.mccarron@nola.gov	504-658-1010
Councilmember	Joe Giarrusso	Joseph.Giarrusso@nola.gov	504-658-1010

Updates:

Wants to thank Captain Contreras for her exceptional service leading NOPD's Third District, since she just told us today it's her last day.

Short term rentals are now under the council's passed legislation since a federal judge recently upheld it – if you are interested in getting a license, the next lottery will be held June 1.

SWBNO billing meetings in Lakefront, Midcity, uptown, and if you can't make one of those, on April 29 at Jesuit, from 6-8pm there will be a number of departments coming to you. SWBNO, DPW, NOPD, Safety and Permits, Code Enforcement, to answer whatever questions you may have about issues that affect you in your neighborhood.

Cm. Harris has proposed a charter change, would have allowed 2% of the city's general funds originally to go to affordable housing. Cm. Giarrusso has an issue because once we start sequestering funds, it limits their ability to address other things. But they revised so it can come from any funds.

Q&A Session:

- **Question:** JazzFest – concern is that with the construction, this area is blocked in, and we are trapped in here in case there are emergencies. Asking for an emergency lane to be set aside to let us in and out.
 - **Answer:** Will check with JazzFest organizers to ensure that there is a lane dedicated to allowing emergency traffic in and out.
 - **Per Ms. Eraina:** we asked that question when Roadworks Nola was here to talk about the bridge, and they gave us a non-answer. Need a better one.
 - **Per Wayne:** The passes are meant to allow folks to come back in, but also might need to show your license with your address in the neighborhood.
 - **Captain Contreras** will talk to special events coordinator and ensure they know that neighbors will have the passes.
- **Question:** Traffic detour, when people take a left from DeSaix onto Moss, they are treating it like it's the autobahn. Coming the other way from Esplanade to DeSaix, she lives in a blind curve and people are going so fast that it is dangerous for her to come out.
 - **Answer:** Captain Contreras mentioned that she has requested traffic units to monitor the detour. Signage is outside of her purview and would need to come from a city department.

- **Question:** what is the feasibility for getting 2-hour parking on Trafalgar?
 - **Answer:** The city does charge a fee for that, because enforcement is handled by people reporting the issue and then they send out a tow truck.
- **Question:** LSU Dental School is Mindy's neighbor to the back, and she's been requesting that they come do a sound check for ages, and nobody has ever come. The sound of their generators is loud and can be heard inside her house. They won't allow you to put up any barriers along their chain-link fence, so options for mitigating it are limited.
 - **Answer:** Captain Contreras will follow up with public health to find out why noise hasn't come out yet.
 - **Answer from Cm. Giarrusso:** It's the Health Department that regulates it, but it's also sometimes a jurisdictional issue because the dental school is state property, not city property. If we need assistance with escalating at the state level, contact State Rep. Willard for assistance. hse097@legis.la.gov 504.283.4261

State Rep. Matthew Willard – District 97

Contact:

hse097@legis.la.gov

504.283.4261

Survey link:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Willard24>

Updates:

Started regular session on Monday. About a week ago, they ended the special session dedicated to "crime and public safety" – 8 bills were passed in 20 days. When you run a bill that has a financial impact, has to have a fiscal note attached explaining how it will impact budget, but the majority of these bills didn't even have a determinable cost. When the Justice Reinvestment Act was passed in 2017 to restructure sentences, parole system to let older, nonviolent offenders out of prison before their term was set to expire, state saved \$150million. The state was supposed to use that to invest in workforce dev, victim support/survivor services. The bills that just passed, all of that money will go away to pay for them. The savings from the Justice Reinvestment Act provided the first time dedicated source of funding to victims of domestic violence, only about \$7M/year. But since that goes away, the dedicated funding source goes away. So now, unless we come up with another way to dedicate funding for that and other programs, it will be at the mercy of the legislature to fund it or not.

Parole bill – requires violent and nonviolent offenders to serve 80% of their time. Before that bill, nonviolent offenders were eligible for parole after serving 35% of their time, so it's a huge jump just before eligibility, and still had to go before parole board. This will have the effect of exploding the prison population. But we don't have enough space in our prisons and jails for this, so in addition to the cost to the state, in a short time period, we will start hearing about new prisons being constructed.

Probation bill – increases the time that someone can get probation from 3 to 5 years. But all the studies say that if someone will violate probation, it happens in the first year. And we also made it super easy for people to violate probation due to technical issues, like having a flat tire to miss probation appointment, substance abuse disorder without treatment places available and came up with dirty urine. Makes it easier for probation to be revoked.

Concealed carry bill – “constitutional carry” – he made an argument that the 2nd amendment grants them the right to carry without a permit, so why do we need this bill? But this means that people can conceal carry without a permit on parade routes, etc. The only exceptions that apply are not going into a hospital or school without a gun. If you conceal carry and you have a permit, you have immunity from being sued.

Death penalty bill. Brought back the electric chair which is cruel and unusual punishment. Also said anyone involved in drugs and distribution will be enshrouded so the companies aren’t open to public scrutiny and criticism. They think the pharmaceutical companies will provide the drugs to the state with this cover, but we are hoping that isn’t the case.

Public defenders office model in New Orleans has been recognized as a solid model, except they don’t get enough funding. But the governor took away the public defenders board and put it under an appointed person by the governor. This presents a potential conflict of interest since the state prosecutes cases and is then controlling the defenders of those same cases.

The governor is also talking about appointing supreme court judges.

Constitutional convention likely to happen in early summer, requires the selection of delegates, will make the delegates every member of the legislature, and during a constitutional convention, could essentially rewrite the state constitution. It needs to be re-written but having that done with this leadership is terrifying. Talking about wrapping up regular session after 2 months instead of 3, so they can spend the remaining time on this constitutional convention.

Rep. Willard is telling us all of this because we need folks to **vote**, because change is coming, and it’s not good. So while folks who don’t vote feel that it doesn’t improve their lives, not voting can definitely make it worse. Mindy noted a quote: “Evil can progress if good people do nothing.”

Gov. Landry also wants to move the Coastal Protection Authority that helps mitigate erosion under the new department of Energy and Natural Resources being run by an oil exec, which is another conflict of interest.

The reality is there are 32 democrats and 73 republicans in the legislature. There are a number of moderate republicans who have gone against the governor on some things, but when you only need to hit 70 to get anything done, and you have 73, you have a supermajority, and it’s even worse in the senate.

One of the biggest issues impacting folks in Louisiana as a whole is property insurance, and we still haven’t done anything about it. The new commissioner is proposing things like eliminating the 3-year rule that says if you’ve been with your insurance company with 3 years, they can’t raise your deductible. He also wants to do some things around tort laws to make it harder for you to pursue a claim against

insurance company when they acted in bad faith, denied claim, took forever to pay you and make things right.

Rep Willard's bills for this session include:

- A bill to prevent SWBNO from providing estimated bills. Have only seen this get worse, and he has a lot of support for New Orleans delegation on that.
- Citizens Insurance currently costs 10% above market value, though it is lagged by one year which has the effect most of the time of making it temporarily lower. He has a bill that would suspend that requirement for 2 years, and hopefully within two years we can do something to get more companies writing policies in Louisiana.
- Another bill to provide for doula coverage for people with Medicaid. Passed the bill last year for private insurance that provided up to \$1,500 for reimbursements. Doing the same bill, only applied to Medicaid this year.
- Bringing back housing bill to ensure that folks coming home from prison have housing so they won't re-offend. They often struggle to find housing and are excluded because applications have a question that gets their application thrown in the trash. This can be very costly when they're paying application fees of \$50-100 and have to put in dozens of applications. This makes it very difficult for them to avoid re-offending.
- IVF issue in Alabama, he has a fear that this will happen in Louisiana. He has a bill drafted, has until April 1st to file a bill, but if he sees someone proposing this restriction on IVF, he will file it.

Q&A Session:

- **Question:** How does the concealed carry work with the school zone 1000 feet? This neighborhood is almost all within 1000 feet of the school.
 - **Answer:** It still applies. However, before, if NOPD saw a bulge, they used to be able to stop and check for guns. But now, it's unclear whether they can do that.
- **Question:** Does it lift the restrictions from bringing guns into a bar?
 - **Answer:** No, don't think so. Also still restrictions that you can't be consuming alcohol but it's unclear how much latitude police have to enforce any of that now.
- **Question:** If someone were to be shot, an innocent bystander, the person shooting can't be sued under this law? Are they going to sue the government, the state? Because innocent bystanders will be shot. This is just costing us more money.
 - **Answer:** Even the authors of the bill agreed to some of these points and were willing individually to change the bill, they wouldn't change it because it was the governor's package, and moderate Republicans are afraid to fall out of his favor.
- **Question:** Since a lot of these bills are clearly unconstitutional, do you see lawsuits already being filed to stop them from being enforced?

- **Answer:** Already working with folks to try to challenge and restrain them such as the ACLU. We expect the most egregious ones to be challenged for sure.
 - **Answer:** Per Cm. Giarrusso, the anti-abortion law is being challenged by Jewish organizations, because under Jewish law the fetus is not considered a person.
- **Question:** Are any guns covered, like an AR-15?
 - **Answer:** No, handguns only.
- **Question:** What about proposed raises for cabinet officials?
 - **Answer:** Sometimes in the past we can work across the aisle, but right now the governor is pressuring the Republicans. John Bel Edwards also raised cabinet member pay, but he was also pushing for pay raises for teachers and state employees. One of the cabinet members is a former oil and gas exec. He took a job at the Dept of Energy and Natural Resources for \$140K and the governor wants to give him \$200k. That additional \$60k is more than what most people in the state make. That's just one example, and he'll probably get it.
 - As far as teacher pay, last year they wanted to free up money to use for other purposes, so instead of passing concurrent senate resolution that would pass a permanent teacher pay raise, they funded it as a one-time increase. The house passed a resolution that in 2024 the legislature would fund a permanent pay raise, and it was unanimously supported, but when governor created his budget this year, he did another one-time pay raise, and it's doubtful it will be around next year. The speaker of the house shut down any discussion on it.
- **Question:** What can we do to unite and help stop some of this?
 - **Answer:**
 - Get involved with an organization that aligns to your values
 - Come up to the legislature and testify on bills, although during the crime session they really limited the ability for the public to testify
 - If you see a bill that you like/hate or have a personal connection with, email his office, and sometimes he can use your experience when speaking about a bill.
 - Contact your legislature's office year round
 - **Question:** SWBNO billed a resident \$2k, he won the case but keeps getting conflicting information about credits and the amount of the bill. His bills were traditionally \$120, and last month he had a bill for \$300, and this month \$250. Another resident had a \$1500 bill and they wiped it out, she encouraged him to continue fighting.
 - **Answer:** Cm. Giarrusso's office can help, please contact Aimee McCarron with Cm. Giarrusso's office for assistance: Aimee.McCarron@nola.gov 504-658-1010
- **Question:** An issue with the tree company on N. Salcedo not coming out from Parks and Parkway to cut the roots, so the driveway can't be paved properly following the recent paving of the street. Her driveway still floods and had to put sandbags out.
 - **Answer:** Cm. Giarrusso's office can help, please contact Aimee McCarron with Cm. Giarrusso's office for assistance: Aimee.McCarron@nola.gov 504-658-1010
- **Question:** Will you do something with Fortified Roofing this year?

- **Answer:** There's \$5M now and he thinks \$15M will get added, but the \$5M is left from \$30M last year that was all supposed to get used. And last year was supposed to be a pilot, and now they're giving even less funding, which is not expanding a pilot. He will be advocating for more than that \$15M. There was an attachment to make it temporary. But this is the one program related to insurance that we can all agree on, so why sunset it? So he has a bill to sunset it. The \$20M is not enough to even do all of the 97th district alone. He will try again to put some kind of prioritization process in it. He doesn't think \$10k grants from the state should be going to millionaires.
- **Follow-up question:** There is a concern that the approved vendors are just increasing their prices. Please contact him 1:1 to discuss specific vendors and issues.
- **Early voting starts today!** DSCC identifies democrats to run, and elections for them are in this cycle. Election information [quick-facts](#) and [sample ballot](#).

Captain Sandra Contreras NOPD Third District

Contact:

NOPD Third District	Captain	Sandra Contreras	srcontreras@nola.gov	504-658-6030
NOPD Third District	Officer	Marylou Agustin	mcagustin@nola.gov	504-658-6030

Updates:

Today is her last day in the third district, as she's being transferred to the policy academy.

No crime at all has been recorded in the boundaries of the DeSaix Area Neighborhood Association since the start of the year! The Fairgrounds patrol and LSU Dental School patrol are largely credited with this lack of crime.

A civilian social worker is assigned to the district in addition to officers. Her responsibility is to look up every day, any "gone on arrivals" from the day before to provide proper resources to victim. Also calls back any time there are robberies and shootings, contacts victims to offer resources.

Crimes are down, and the Third District had the highest reduction in crime last year. There are 60 people in the district, was 90 five years ago. But even with reduction in officers they're seeing reductions in crime.

Each week at HQ have to attend a max meeting to talk about clearance rates, but her answer is that she'd rather not have a victim in the first place.

Twenty-five percent increases in aggravated assault – with a known person, not strangers, with exception of road rage.

Eleven percent increase in sexual assault – with a known person, not with strangers majority of the time.

Property crimes are down 26%. Auto burglaries are down because Kias and Hyundais are getting fixed but now other cars are being targeted again. Don't leave your car running, keep your keys secured, so many auto thefts are crimes of convenience.

They let off most shopliftings because there's video. They were down to 3 property crime detectives for a while, but she added another person. Did a sting last week and arrested five of habitual shoplifters.

Response times about 11 minutes for emergency calls. If police aren't there within 25 minutes, call back and let them know.

28% solve rate – know who did it, have a warrant out, haven't picked them up yet

52% clearance rate – the perp has been arrested

Homicides, 3 year to date, 1 has been cleared, 1 solved, 1 open.

Quality of life issues – she's been taking notes on

- following up on JazzFest re-entering neighborhood
- traffic enforcement and signage on Moss/DeSaix
- LSU sound check
- what her officers can do on concealed carry. They're meeting this week with executive staff to get answers from legal team to cover this.

How to unite the people?

- Algiers had a president's council and she wanted to start working on that, and she will leave it with our community liaison officer to do that
- Different from PCAB which only has 8 members, and there are 30-something neighborhoods in the district so they aren't represented. She can ask our community liaison officer send us notices of PCAB meetings.
- Do have NOPD Online Reporting for certain types of crimes, and you get a number after you fill it out correctly, and it helps you if you need it for your insurance or something.

Q&A Session

- **Question:** Do you have any insight into who your replacement will be, values alignment, and how we can ensure to continue along the same trajectory that you have achieved? Will Officer Marylou Agustin continue to be our liaison at the Third District?
 - **Answer:** Captain Merlin Bush has been with NOPD for 24 years, and he comes to us with Special Operations division experience, was in SWAT and K9, was in homicide as assistant commander in homicide, has investigative experience, proactivity experience, assistant commander in the first district, aligns with her and she came from taskforce rather than special ops.
 - **Answer:** Officer Marylou Agustin has been doing a great job, so hopefully she will stay on as Liaison but it's up to Captain Bush to confirm that
- **Question:** Can you talk about Crimestoppers?
 - **Answer:** If you know of a crime or have info about it, or even something that hasn't been reported yet, call and give them info, and it will be totally anonymous, so you don't have to go to court or testify, can even get a reward if there's an arrest based on your info
 - Crimestoppers number: 822-1111

- **Question:** A resident lives on Trafalgar, and traffic from the school and the schoolbuses, and they don't care about the speed limit or signs. She had her signal on to turn left into her driveway and someone passed her on the left. Are there any traffic officers in the city? The school is not able to be contacted because you get a voicemail and it's full.
 - **Answer:** Yes, in addition to the traffic officers she can request, she can also get with school resource officer Alysha Smith know so she can pass back through here and establish a presence. There's another school resource office returning soon from a medical absence as well.
- **Question:** Could there be a widespread public service announcement in advance of JazzFest to let them know that DeSaix bridge is closed so they know not to try to use that route?
 - **Answer:** She can get with Nola Ready and special events to discuss how that can be publicized and can also talk to public information officers to talk about how to get word out.

Anne Zoller-Keifer, District D Cm. Green's office

Contact:

Councilmember	Eugene Green	eugene.green@nola.gov	(504) 658-1040
Constituent Services Aide	Pierce Huff	pierce.huff@nola.gov	504-658-1040
Chief of Staff	Sandra G. Thomas	Sandra.Thomas@nola.gov	
Constituent Services Liaison	Anne Zoller Kiefer	anne.kiefer@nola.gov	504-658-1041 (o), 504-931-4293 (c)

Updates:

- Cm. Green said he's hoping to see the project for the bridge finished in 6 months.
- If you have issues related to lights that are out, potholes, etc., please report them to Pierce Huff in their office

Q&A Session:

- DeSaix was under construction for several years but there are several large holes on Trafalgar. Saltus from Derby to Trafalgar had a tiny patch paved but none of that has been touched. Now they have a bridge out and she doesn't understand what her property taxes are being used for.
 - Why did they fix this one little patch and not the others?
 - Please email hannahligon@gmail.com so we can get all the addresses and photos organized for Roadworks Nola to address at our May 11th meeting
- Ms. Eraina noted that Trafalgar has been repeatedly dug up and patched since Katrina, and they are obviously not doing the right job. They put a bandaid on, then it happens again.

Other business

DeSaix Bridge Roadworks Contact

- If anyone would like contact information for Roadworks Mobility and Safety Outreach specialist for DeSaix Bridge construction, his name is Brandon Caples and his contact information is:
 - **Brandon Caples**
Mobility and Safety Outreach Specialist
Department of Public Works “RoadworkNOLA”
City of New Orleans | 1300 Perdido Street | 2W87 | New Orleans 70112
Tel: 504-658-7623 | Cell: 504-874-5272 | Email: Brandon.caples@nola.gov

Ms. Dawn Fowler memorial information

- Ms. Dawn Fowler who lived in the raise blue house at the corner of DeSaix and Yupon passed away recently. A memorial for her will be held on Saturday, April 13th at 621 N. Rendon St. at the Dharma Center of the Louisiana Himalaya Association. There will be fried chicken and brownies served, which were two of her favorite foods.

City Park Master Plan Meeting #3 3/21 5:30-7:30

- City Park Master Plan meeting#3 is to be held at Dillard Professional School and Sciences Building on March 21st from 5:30-7:30pm

Volunteers needed to do JazzFest parking and pass triangles

- Wayne – need some volunteers to help pass out triangles for JazzFest. If there are enough folks we can spread it out a lot more evenly. That’s coming up within a month. Reply to this email to volunteer or contact Wayne directly at wayneben06@yahoo.com
- Cathy—our major fundraiser for DANA is selling tickets to folks parking cars for JazzFest at the school. Please contact Cathy if you would like to volunteer. We typically are given one of the Fridays. Reply to this email to volunteer.

DeSaix construction issue remaining

- Question from Jason on Zoom – the construction on DeSaix tore up his driveway and it still hasn’t been repaired. Who should he contact about that?
 - Aimee McCarron at Cm. Giarrusso’s office volunteered to help if he contacts her (aimee.mccarron@nola.gov or 504-658-1010). He can also contact Nakeila Polk from Roadworks (npolk@nola.gov 504-658-8718 (office) | 504-941-0012 (mobile))

New building being constructed on DeSaix

- **Question:** The structure that’s being constructed between school and DeSaix across the street from 3245 DeSaix – what is it?
 - **Per Cathy and Aimee McCarron,** it’s something to do with Langston Hughes Academy pre-school.

