

MINUTES
FRENCH MARKET CORPORATION
REAL ESTATE COMMITTEE MEETING
Thursday, March 20, 2025, 12:00 PM
National Park Service
912 N. Peters Street
New Orleans, LA 70116

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by the Chairperson, Mr. DeLong at 12:06 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Ms. Burns, Mr. DeLong, and Ms. McClendon

Staff Present: Ms. Guidry, Mr. Gurtner, and Ms. Robison

A. REVIEW AND ADOPTION OF MINUTES – December 6, 2024

Ms. Burns moved and Ms. McClendon seconded a motion to accept the minutes of the December 6, 2024 Real Estate Committee meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

B. REPORTS

1. Strategic Leasing Consultant Introduction - Corporate Realty

Ms. Guidry introduced Corporate Realty who was chosen when the Staff put out an RFP for a Strategic Leasing Consultant that the Board approved at its July, 2024 meeting. Corporate Realty was the single respondent, but we were very happy with the response we received from them. There were several leases that were up and there were several vacancies.

In the last RFP process, the FMC did not receive good or strong enough responses. In order to access a bigger market, the Staff decided that bringing in a consultant would allow the FMC to also have access to Broker networks.

We wanted Corporate Realty to have a good idea of the FMC's history beyond COVID-19; so we inundated them with data, such as the McEnery report and some precedence. They also did a "deep dive" on the Quarter, itself, and similar properties throughout the country for their research.

Corporate Realty representatives presented their efforts, goals, and ideas to the Committee. They also allowed for questions from the Committee. The Committee shared its thoughts and concerns with the Corporate Realty representatives.

2. Security Report

Captain Tracie Savala (FMC Grounds Patrol Commander) reported that from January, 2025 through the present, there had been very low to no problems throughout the FMC's District; attributing the decline in incidences to the additional security resources brought in for the Super Bowl, Mardi Gras, and other events. With the implementation of the homeless shelter located on France Rd., there has been a lot of clearance in the area.

Unfortunately, it is now Spring and the weather is getting warmer, which will bring in a lot of travelers to the District. This usually creates an uptick in the panhandlers and the unhoused population. The Security Team is now looking at enforcement as it relates to traffic, bringing in more narcotics detectives, and to have more enforcement on one end of the District. Captain Savala stated that the current plan that they have in place is working, allowing them to scale back on NOPD's presence.

Panhandling is an issue that they are working on dealing with along with the French Quarter Task Force,

which will allow for an immediate response. The Security Team will also work with the 8th District, SPCA, and IV Waste as a task force, for cleaning, animal control for the unhoused population, and doing sweeps, which will possibly happen regularly.

3. Real Estate Update

Ms. Guidry reported that the State is following the FMC's lead on items such as RFP's, Security, etc., which suggest that the FMC is headed in the right direction. The Staff had a tenant town hall, which was held set up in a circle to have an informal, "conversational" style meeting. Super Bowl press, security, and reworking the way the FMC does its programming were some of the topics of discussion.

The Staff is also looking at leasing plans, considering that UPB is coming online and there are infrastructure issues happening. Soffit and fascia repairs will be made along the Colonnade, which will be done in the Summer months when the District is slower so that it is minimally invasive. There are three (3) columns along the Colonnade that will undergo stabilization work performed by Avery Brothers.

The Staff has notified the City that the FMC will relinquish Crescent Park. The City is negotiating the takeover of the park with Audubon. The relinquishing of Crescent Park will bring the FMC's security staff back into the District and it will relieve FMC revenue that can be returned to the District.

Audubon is also looking at taking over the Moonwalk. The FMC will do this agreement as a CEA, which mimics the 1992 lease agreement between Audubon and the FMC so that Audubon's takeover creates a full Riverfront District. There will be a short three (3) to five (5) year lease term to see if it works, but Audubon has the ability to do a lot of things as a political subdivision of the State. They still have some of the public constraints that FMC has, but they have a lot more freedom to do things.

With Audubon's activation and what they are doing on the Gov. Nichols wharf, the FMC will get the pedestrian flow into the District. Because Audubon will not include concessions or tenant spaces in the area, pedestrians who are hungry or want to shop can drop into the French Market District.

C. OLD BUSINESS

1. UPB Project Update

Ms. Guidry reported that there was a big pre-bid construction meeting. There were fifteen (15) great prime contractors who attended the meeting. Because there was so much interest, the Staff was asked to schedule a follow-up meeting for subcontractors.

After bringing the final plans, updated estimates, and risk assessors to the Committee at its December 6, 2024 meeting, the Committee decided that vacating the building was the safest way to handle the project. The matter was brought before the Board at its December 10, 2024 meeting and was approved. On January 13, 2025 the Staff held a tenant meeting that included a Zoom option for attending to field questions. On February 20, 2025 letters were sent out and door hangtags were placed at each unit. Two weeks ago the Staff reached out to any non-responsive tenants to make sure they could ask the questions they needed to. A Right of First Refusal form was sent to all tenants and most responded stating they would like to return. The deadline for the response is March 31, 2025 and the move out deadline is April 30, 2025.

Public Comment

Justin Schmidt (Attorney, representing undisclosed tenants) requested that the move out date be extended one (1) month to May 30, 2025, since the NTP date is May 12, 2025 and given all the events and the holiday that will occur around that time. He stated this would mean a world of difference to the tenants.

Ms. Guidry explained that the goal is to begin construction by mid-May and there is a lot that needs to happen. The FMC needs that period to go into the units to navigate everything, transfer services, and to document existing conditions, etc. Once these things are finalized the Staff is turning the units over to the contractors. When the Staff receives that NTP the commencement date of the project will be defined.

D. NEW BUSINESS

1. Consideration - CEA with New Orleans and Company for temporary placement of New Orleans statue on Oscar Dunn Park

Ms. Guidry reported that New Orleans and Company (“NO&C”) reached out to the French Market Corporation (“FMC”) to place a “New Orleans” branded statue on the Oscar Dunn Park from February 1st, 2025- August 31st, 2025 to promote local tourism.

She stated that the CEA is retroactive and it is the same condition the FMC had with the “NOLA 300” statue. There was no formal agreement with the “NOLA 300” statue, but given the weather events, etc., the Staff feels more comfortable with a formal CEA and COI so that any damages incurred would be the responsibility of NO&C.

FMC Staff recommends that the FMC Board and its Committees approve executing a CEA with New Orleans and Company for the temporary placement of a New Orleans branded statue on Oscar Dunn Park.

Ms. McClendon moved and Ms. Burns seconded a motion to approve executing a CEA with New Orleans and Company for the temporary placement of a New Orleans branded statue on Oscar Dunn Park. The motion carried unanimously.

2. Consideration – Request by Rhonda Findley, tenant, to speak to Real Estate Committee about her desire to set up outside of the leased premises at 940 Decatur St. for French Quarter Festival

Ms. Guidry reported that Ms. Findley, the tenant at 940 Decatur St., has requested to set up outside of the leased premises for French Quarter Festival. The Staff reviewed the Clean Zone Ordinance (“CZO”), which states:

“The construction, placement occupation or use of any temporary structure or enclosure of any kind shall be prohibited, including but not limited to tents, canopies, and air supported, air-inflated, and tensioned membranes except for those sanctioned or authorized by the City or as set forth in Sponsor’s special event permit.”

FMC reached out to FQFI to determine if there was an avenue for vendors to apply for tented space under the special event permit. FQFI stated that they prohibit all tents and that FQF merchandise are the only sales, other than food, that happens during the festival. Additionally, if there is a big wind event, erecting a tent could potentially lead to a public safety hazard.

1. FMC Staff recommends to the FMC Board and its Committees that the request to allow infrastructure outside of the leased premises is respectfully denied in support of upholding the approved Special Event Clean Zone Ordinance.

2. FMC Staff recommends that the FMC Board and its Committees encourage tenants to utilize Decatur and Dutch Alley facing doorways to promote ease of pedestrian flow through their shops and the district.

Public Comment

Rhonda Findley (Pop City) stated that she has been communicating with the Staff via email about setting up a tent and this is the first time the Clean Zone Ordinance topic has come up. She researched the Clean Zone Ordinance and her understanding is that the Clean Zone Ordinance applies to events like “Essence Fest,” etc., but she wanted to know how it applies to events like French Quarter Fest and Creole Tomato Fest.

Ms. Guidry explained that the Clean Zone Ordinance prohibits all tenting in any public right of way or spaces. The CZO also states that “the sale or distribution of merchandise and commercial goods or wares on public property in proximity to an event will exacerbate congestion, potentially lead to a public safety hazard, and hinder security operations.”

Ms. Findley stated that she would like to use Section G of her lease as it applies to not only FQF, but Creole Tomato Fest. Since 2015 the FMC and its administration approached the Colonnade tenants to ask them to open their back doors and celebrate what they have to offer in Dutch Alley, the Colonnade and the French Market District, itself. It has been a slight burden, however, they spent the money to accommodate the request. Pop City was the only tenant to accommodate the request.

Setting up the tent is necessary because the store is a tiny footprint, and the lease allows them to put things outside in a moveable display. They had done so for nine (9) years, which makes it an issue of estoppel and sets a precedence.

Ms. Guidry explained that the CZO supersedes Section G of the lease. Further, the Clean Zone Ordinance was adopted by the New Orleans City Council on December 19, 2024 (introduced on December 5th, 2024). The clean zone extends from 6:00 am, Monday April 7, 2025 through 6:00 pm, Monday April 14, 2025.

Justin Schmidt (Attorney) stated that the City Council does not have the authority to pass an ordinance that changes a contract. Miss Findley is entitled to set up displays outside of her business. Ms. Findley’s lease pre-dates the ordinance by at least ten (10) years. The CZO was passed to deter new vendors from selling goods in right of ways, and does not apply to brick and mortar businesses.

Mr. DeLong moved and Ms. McClendon seconded a motion that the Committee denies any activities in violation of the special event Clean Zone Ordinance and any commercial lease in place. The motion carried unanimously.

E. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. DeLong moved and Ms. Burns seconded a motion to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 1:36 p.m.