

**MINUTES OF THE
LOUISIANA FOLKLIFE COMMISSION MEETING
Louisiana State Library
Baton Rouge, LA
Thursday, January 5, 2024
1 PM**

Folklife Commission members present: Sharon Calcote, Brian Davis, Herman Fuselier, Karen Leathem, Nicole Hobson Morris, Rachel Ornelas, Meg Placke, Shane Rasmussen, Miranda Restovic, Susan Roach, John Sharp, Kim Walden.

Folklife Commission members absent: Ray Berthelot, Conni Castille, Susannah Johannsen, Tommy Ike Hailey, Jim Hogg, Teresa Parker, Mona Lisa Saloy, John Silver, Maegen Smith.

Guests and Louisiana Office of Cultural Development (OCD) staff present: Maida Owens, Louisiana Division of the Arts; Alora Thompson, Louisiana Division of the Arts.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Susan Roach opened the meeting of the Louisiana Folklife Commission at 1:06 pm. Roach invited commissioners to introduce themselves. Owens announced two changes in commissioners. Nicole Hobson-Morris is representing the Division of Historic Preservation. Meg Placke is new State Librarian.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the June 29, 2023 meeting were approved with a motion from Sharon Calcote and a second by Nicole Hobson Morris.

III. REPORTS

A. LDOA Budget Report – Susannah Johannsen

Owens reported that Susannah Johannsen submitted a report that the LDOA budget will be similar to the past year and will remain around \$3 million. In March 2023, Alora Thompson was hired as the Folklife Archivist in a temporary position which ends February 26, 2024.

C. Director's Report – Maida Owens

Owens directed commissioners to her written report attached to the agenda and noted that more Passing It On workshops are being offered through June 30. Owens encouraged commissioners to recommend tradition bearers or cultural groups to reach out about this funding. Brian Davis suggested building trades such as plastering.

Owens pointed out that the Statewide Resilience Report includes the importance of culture. See details in the attached Director's Report.

Owens asked commissioners to let her know if they would like to continue serving with the new administration. All commissions' terms run concurrently with the Governor's. Since this year is not a fiscal-only legislative session, she is also requesting the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism to submit legislation to update and revise the way commissioners are chosen to broaden the potential pool of commissioners. Brian Davis clarified that Louisiana Preservation Alliance is still the official name of the organization and is doing business as the Louisiana Trust for Historic Preservation.

Planning for a traveling crafts exhibit is on hold. Sharon Calcote shared that the Office of Tourism is planning interpretative exhibits for the Welcome Centers and while artifacts will not be part of these exhibits, there may be an opportunity to collaborate. The Office of Tourism would welcome photographs for these interpretative exhibits and other presentation about Louisiana culture.

Alora Thompson shared that she completed the Passing It On microsite to feature the tradition bearers and prepared all the related materials for archiving. She also prepared other projects, including the New Populations Project and the Louisiana Folklife Festival in Monroe.

The Sense of Place—and Loss workshops continued to focus on helping local efforts in addition to addressing climate migration issues at national meetings. Owens' presentations include the American Folklore Society, Louisiana Arts Summit, Gulf Center for Equitable Climate Resilience, and LSU Landscape Architecture / Architecture class on designing for receiving communities. This work was also featured on two podcasts, in Country Roads Magazine, and in the Journal of American Folklore.

IV. BUSINESS

A. Folklife Month 2024 – Susan Roach

Roach referred to the Folklife Month report in the Director's report for the 2023 events. Ambassadors for 2023 shared their experiences. Owens thanked Miranda Restovic for LEH's support, which includes an increase of the honoraria for tradition bearers and coverage in *64 Parishes*.

Planning for the 2024 Folklife Month began with several Commissioners considering serving. Mona Lisa Saloy would like to recognize Darrell Reeves. Rachel Ornelas, John Sharp/Herman Fusilier, Brian Davis, and Shane Rasmussen/Susan Roach would like to consider participating. Owens will ask the commissioners not attending the meeting. Jonathan Foret would like to serve even if there are six commissioners.

Miranda Restovic proposed creating an award piece to give the tradition bearers in addition to the Lt Governor's certificate. She said that LEH could fund them in addition LEH could create a short video to document the ceremonies. Sharon Calcote said that the Office of Tourism could use the video in international tourism promotions.

B. Louisiana Folklore Society / Bayou Culture Collaborative – Maida Owens

Owens reported that the Bayou Culture Gatherings continue to be well attended. Protecting Collections, a fifth working group was started and the Community Voices Project is helping to include marginalized voices in the working groups. Five of six Culture and Climate Conversations occurred in the Fall. Susan Roach asked about the position statement and Owens explained that few new organizations and individuals are signing onto the statement. Currently 26 organizations and 108 individuals have signed on. But in two years, over 900 people have signed up for the BCC email list.

C. Special Meetings Committee – Susan Roach

Roach reported that the Special Meeting Committee (Ray Berthelot, Brian Davis, and Teresa Parker) did not meet because there was no need.

D. Set date for next Commission meeting – Teresa Parker

The next full meeting is scheduled for Friday June 7, 2024 at 1 pm in person at the State Library unless the Special Meetings Committee makes other arrangements.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sharon Calcote reported that the Office of Tourism's Civil Rights Trail has been launched and a Civil Rights exhibit has opened in the New Orleans Convention Center.

Shane Rasmussen shared that Don Hatley, who worked with H.F. Pete Gregory to start the NSU/Natchitoches Folk Festival and the Louisiana Folklife Center, passed away on December 18 as well as Bessie Jones, who was a key person in producing the festival. Greg Lloid, a long time presenter at the festival also passed away in December. The commissioners discussed passing a memorial resolution for Don Hatley since he was also instrumental created in the Louisiana Folklife Program. Since the commission has not passed such resolutions in the past, they considered other means of recognizing Hatley such as a proclamation from the Governor's Office. Rasmussen also reported that the theme for the Louisiana Studies Conference in September is Lyrical Louisiana and that the NSU/Natchitoches Folklife Festival will be July 20, 2024.

Nicole Hobson Morris noted that the National Trust for Historic Preservation will be meeting in New Orleans in October. Brian Davis encouraged commissioners to submit proposals.

Nicole Hobson Morris shared that Ray Scriber, who directs the Louisiana Main Street Program, will receive a Charles Dunbar Award Career Civil Service Award from the Civil Service League for local, state, and municipal civil service employees for service to the citizens of Louisiana.

Brian Davis shared that Louisiana Trust for Historic Preservation is receiving nominations for preservation awards and Most Endangered Places list. The Spring Ramble will be March 2. The Louisiana Preservation Conference will be April 4 and 5 in Shreveport. They continue to look for Rosenwald Schools for nomination to the National Register for Historic Places. And in collaboration with the Division of Historic Preservation, they are starting a historic cemeteries project and are looking for nominations.

Karen Leathem reported that the State Museum's Botanica exhibit will be opening in the Cabildo on April 25.

John Sharp reminded commissioners that he continues to seek nominations for the Legends and Lore Markers Program. He also reported that research published this year will be able to influence the next Coastal Protection and Restoration Agency's next master plan.

Rachel Ornelas shared that she continues to develop plans for Folklife Village at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival. She reported that some long time demonstrators are having health issues that may prevent them from participating.

Susan Roach reminded commissioners that the Louisiana Folklore Society's annual meeting will be in Hammond on March 15 and 16 and encouraged commissioners to participate. The call for submissions is available now. Easter Rock will be happening in Winnsboro on Easter Eve and she invited commissioners to attend.

VI. ADJOURN

There being no further business to discuss, the Commission adjourned 2:30 pm. Brian Davis moved, and John Sharp seconded.

Folklife Program Director's Report – January 5, 2024. Maida Owens

Folklife Commission Changes

- Nicole Hobson-Morris will replace Krystal Cox for the Division of Historic Preservation, but needs to be confirmed by the Senate.
- Meg Placke is the new State Librarian.

Because this is not a legislative fiscal year, we anticipate submitting changes to the Folklife Commission legislation this year.

Folklife Archivist

Alora Thompson continued working on preparing the Folklife program materials for depositing at LSU Library Special Collections. She created the online database of tradition bearers who have offered Passing It On workshop and is currently working on materials from the Louisiana Folklife Festival in Monroe.

Folklife Month 2023: Six Folklife Ambassadors participated in 2023.

- Tommy Ike Hailey honored Ray Chauvin, singer/songwriter, Houma
- Mona Lisa Saloy honored Darryl Montana, Black Masking Indian, New Orleans
- Conni Castille honored Jan Collette Webre and Jill Collette Zimmerman, Crawfish Bisque makers, Breaux Bridge
- Susan Roach honored Laymon Godwin, Pedal Steel/Dobro musician, West Monroe
- Jonathan Foret honored Brunella Luke, Cornshuck Crafts, Chauvin
- Shane Rasmussen will honor F.J. and Nicol Delphin, Creole Traditions, Cane River

Details are posted online at http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/Articles_Essays/FM2023.html

The Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities featured Folklife Month by funding the artist honoraria and included it in *64 Parishes* in Fall 2023. Commissioners are encouraged to suggest traditions or tradition bearers to be recognized here: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1TCnE_U7XsT9yF1P-9wKKnFrplc8oLK2jI5pX24a4_hY/edit?usp=sharing

Bayou Culture Collaborative / Folklife Program

Passing It On Workshops grants have totaled \$85,370 since 2019. Information about workshops funded since 2019 is available here: <https://www.crt.state.la.us/cultural-development/arts/folklife/bayou-culture-collaborative/passing-it-on-workshops/index>. We will be offering additional grants in 2024.

Speaking Engagements, Interviews, Publications

The following presentations, interviews and publications happened from June 2023 to January 2024.

- Richardson, Grant, Jon Kay, Maida Owens, and Tim Frandy. 2023. Urgencies in the Field: Three Perspectives. "Climate Change Needs Folklorists." *Journal of American Folklore*. 136 (54): 181-198.
- *The Louisiana Folklore Society Responds to Louisiana's Environmental Changes*, Presentation. Gulf Center for Equitable Climate Resilience, Avondale, Louisiana, November 8, 2023.
- *Climate Migration for Folklorists*. Workshop, American Folklore Society, November, 2023, Portland, OR.
- *Folkways of the Lost Lands: Maida Owens leads the way in preserving Louisiana culture in the age of the climate crisis*. Article in *Country Roads Magazine*, September 2023. By Chris Turner-Neal. Podcast of the interview, *Detours* Season 2, Episode 6, *Louisiana Folklife Lady*. November 1, 2023.
- *The Arts Role in Climate Migration and Welcoming Newcomers*. Workshop. Louisiana Arts Summit, October, 2023, Baton Rouge, LA [Part 1: Introduction to Climate Adaptation and Migration](#)
- *Interviewing Basics*, October 18, 2023. Bayou Ya Ya Project / Restore the Mississippi River Delta. New Orleans, LA.
- *Bayou Culture Collaborative Responds to Louisiana's Environmental Changes*. September 13, 2023. Presentation to LSU Landscape Architecture / Architecture class on designing for receiving communities.
- *Bayou Culture Collaborative Responds to Louisiana's Environmental Changes*. August 25, 2023. American Society of Landscape Architects, Louisiana Chapter, New Orleans.
- *Traditions Changing with the Coast*, July 15, 2023. Coastal Erosion Art Exhibit, Jean Lafitte National Park and Preserve, Thibodaux, La.
- Fabric of Folklore podcast, Episode 20. [Sustaining Louisiana Folk Traditions amidst Climate Migration](#), July 18, 2023.

Bayou Culture Collaborative / Louisiana Folklore Society

The monthly Bayou Culture Gatherings continued through January 2024. 106 individuals and 25 organizations have signed-on to the position statement. See the position statement at http://www.louisianafolklore.org/?page_id=1215. The BCC Management Team includes Jonathan Foret, Gary LaFleur, Rachel Doherty, and Maida Owens. Commissioners interested in participating are encouraged to join LFS and/or participate in the Bayou Culture Collaborative.

Five BCC working groups are active. See details, how to join, and upcoming meetings at www.louisianafolklore.org.

- Louisiana French Curriculum and/or Preservation
- Culture and Coastal Planning
- Artists, Tradition Bearers, and Coastal Issues
- Preparing Receiving Communities
- Protecting Collections

Culture included in the first Statewide Resilience Report

Charles Sutcliffe, the state Chief Resilience Officer released a draft of the first Statewide Resilience Report for comments. One of the four elements of resilience is "Health, well-being, culture and safety." One of the Pillars of Resilience is to "Strengthen Natural and Built Infrastructure to Improve Health,

Safety, and Well-being in the face of climate change" and "conserve, restore, and utilize the natural environment to improve health, quality of life, and culture." Priorities for 2024 include "Migration, Receiving Communities, Adapting in Place, and Cultural Preservation." The Bayou Culture Collaborative submitted comments. The final report was as part of the Climate Initiatives Task Force's Louisiana Climate Action Plan released on January 5, 2024.

Crafts Exhibit Planning

Planning for a traveling exhibit on traditional crafts is on hold. Carolyn Ware has asked me to help place her collection of 71 artifacts. They are described and inventoried. Two other collectors are not ready to donate their collections, but both are interested in providing items if a traveling exhibit does happen.

Annual Ethics Training

Commissioners are reminded that they must take the one-hour Louisiana ethics training each year by Dec 31. If you have not registered, start at this page: <https://eap.ethics.la.gov/SeminarRegistration/> If you have registered previously, go to this page. <https://laethics.net/EthicsTraining/login.aspx>. Folklife Commissioners are not required to submit the financial disclosure form.