

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL JOINT MEETING OF THE
CADDO PARISH COMMISSION and the
CITY OF SHREVEPORT COUNCIL
HELD ON THE 31ST DAY OF AUGUST, 2009

The Caddo Parish Commission and the Council of the City of Shreveport met jointly in legal and special session on the above date at 1:00 p.m. in the Government Chamber with Ms. Stephanie Lynch, Commission President, and Mr. Ron Webb, Council Chairman, presiding, and the following Commissioners in attendance, constituting a quorum: Commissioners Baker, Cox, Dominick,, Escude, Jenkins, Linn, Lynch, Pierson, Smith and Thibodeaux (10). ABSENT: Epperson and McCulloch (2).

City Council members present were Mrs. Joyce Bowman, Mr. Calvin Lester, Mr. Michael Long, Mr. Joe Shyne, Mr. Monty Walford and Mr. Ron Webb (6). ABSENT: Councilman Bryan Wooley (1).

The invocation was given by Mr. Webb, and Mr. Cox led the Commission in the Pledge of Allegiance.

At this time Council Chairman Webb said that this meeting of the two bodies was called after he had heard that the Parish Commission had requested a joint meeting to discuss the progress of the Greater Shreveport Metropolitan Planning Commission Master Plan. He said that a Master Plan Visionary Meeting was held recently at the Convention Center. There were some glitches and flaws, he said, but in total it was a productive session, he said. There was a good turnout, but it would have been good had there been more people present.

It is important that the citizens have input into something of this magnitude and significance, Mr. Webb said. However, some people feel that the planning process is not proceeding as effectively as it should. It is a learning process, he said, and all involved need to contribute whatever they can to make it a better process.

Then Commission President Lynch stated that this meeting is a historic occasion in that it is the first time the two bodies have convened in a joint session. She said that the City and the Parish have one accord and one purpose, that being to work for the betterment of Shreveport and Caddo Parish. She pointed out that Shreveport residents comprise 75 percent of the population of the Parish and the majority of tax revenues are paid by Shreveport citizens. Of the 12 elected Commissioners, all but one are elected primarily by the citizens of Shreveport, she said, so it is apparent that the City of Shreveport and the Parish of Caddo are inextricably joined.

She pointed out that this year the Caddo Parish Commission celebrates its 25th anniversary as a public body. It has evolved into one of the leading governing bodies in the State, and its members are leaders on a state and national level. Consequently, she said, the Commission is a credible governing body and as such has no need for political posturing. This meeting is to serve a constructive purpose, she said.

The Commission, which has the only AA-plus bond rating in the state, takes its fiduciary responsibilities very seriously. In this vein the Commission is meeting with the City Council to ensure that the investment of taxpayer resources entrusted to the two bodies are used in a manner that is open, transparent and accountable. The Master Plan initiative was launched by the elected appointed officials of the City of Shreveport and the Caddo Parish Commission. This cooperative endeavor was unprecedented and has the potential to signal a paradigm shift in planning for the growth, development and economic vitality of Shreveport and Caddo Parish. Both entities committed \$1.2 million in funding for the project, \$800,000 from the City and \$400,000 from the Parish.

This plan was an ambitious undertaking that would require full participation and cooperation to be successful. However, she said, success does not happen by accident; any successful endeavor must have clearly identifiable goals and objectives and a plan to achieve them. The plan should have measurable benchmarks to ensure that objectives are being met as well as to obtain constructive input and assessment.

Ms. Lynch said that the MPC is statutorily charged with oversight of the Master Plan process. Somehow this process almost immediately got off to a faltering start, and that has been compounded by a continuing calamity of errors, leading up to the August 22nd visioning forum. These events have lessened our ability to create and maintain the public's trust and confidence in the Master Plan process, as well as to question whether the current process will result in a quality Master Plan.

Few opportunities have been afforded to address the flawed processes of the Master Plan, she continued, and what input has been received has largely been ignored, circumvented and dismissed. This unresponsiveness, not only to members of these governing bodies, but also to their constituents, by Master Plan consultants and by MPC staff is unacceptable, she said. More so, it is unacceptable that the current Master Plan process is geographically, ethnically, racially and sociologically

inequitable.

At this time Councilman Walford strenuously objected to Ms. Lynch's remarks, saying that the manner in which they were being delivered implied that they were the sentiments of the whole of both political bodies. Ms. Lynch responded that her remarks were an expression of her opinion only.

Mr. Lester said that Ms. Lynch should be unrestricted in expressing her comments. He said that there would remain adequate time for other members of both bodies to state their own opinions.

Mr. Walford said that he was in no way attempting to curtail public comment; he was merely trying to make the point that it was wrong for the chairwoman to use the opening statement of the meeting to make an attack on the process as though she were speaking for the entirety of both bodies. For her to repeatedly use the word "we", and then say that her comments were her opinion, was wrong, and it offended him, Mr. Walford continued.

This inequity, Ms. Lynch continued, has resulted in gross under-representation of key stakeholders in the Master Plan process: the education community, the health care community, neighborhood association, under-served communities and Generation-Xers. While the two governing bodies have no internal authority over the Master Plan process, they do have external funding authority as well as fiduciary oversight and responsibility. That authority will be exercised to the fullest extent necessary to ensure that taxpayer money is not wasted on a flawed Master Plan process, she said.

This was to have been an inclusive, citizen-driven process, Ms. Lynch said, but decisions have been made that have politicized the plan rather than citizen-ize the plan. This specially-called joint meeting has as its purpose to try to re-integrate the citizen into what is supposed to be a citizen-driven Master Plan process. This meeting is for the public, the citizens of Shreveport and Caddo Parish, to express their concerns with an eye toward improving the Master Plan process. Honest and constructive feedback and assessment is needed in order to move forward, she concluded.

At this time the floor was opened for discussion from members of the public.

First there came Ms. April Dahm, 711 Rutherford, Shreveport, who stated that while she does have some issues with the planning process she is pleased overall with the point to which it has progressed. She said that the fact of having 400 citizens present at the meeting on the previous Saturday was a powerful event. She said that there is skepticism among many people who feel that this is just another in a succession of plans that never came to fruition. This is a valid concern, she said. The Community Action Groups are a good idea, she said, but it is difficult to know if, and to what extent, the CAGs are hearing the real voice of the people.

Ms. Dahm said she wonders why, if there is a need for more citizen involvement, that it is so difficult for citizens to get information about meetings such as this one. If more citizen action is desired, why is it so difficult for citizens to get information about meetings, she asked. Meetings should be held at times most convenient to most citizens. She said she also wonders why this meeting of the City and the Parish happened on this day, rather than before 400 people had assembled at the Convention Center on August 22.

Next came Dr. Philip Rozeman, 510 Longleaf, Shreveport. He said that he is the co-chair of the Community Advisory Group. Members of this group have the same goal as the City Council and the Parish Commission, he said, that being to build a better present and future for the City and Parish.

Dr. Rozeman said he would like to comment on how to "citizenize" the process more. The CAG members do not consider themselves experts on master plans, or that the CAG is the lead entity in the process. Its primary goal is to facilitate community involvement, he said.

The CAG proposed even before August 22 to expand and reach out to the community further on the visioning aspects of the Master Plan. This is not a part of the consultant's plan, or the plan of the MPC, but rather one driven by the group itself with the members' own time and resources. CAG will hold nine visioning sessions during the week of September 14 - 17 in each neighborhood high school.

Dr. Rozeman said that he believes that the "Great Expectations" forum on August 22 was the event which precipitated this meeting of the Commission and the City Council. He said that he has heard and acknowledged the concerns that have been expressed about that meeting. He said he has heard much more positive than negative from people who were there, even some who tend to be cynical. The results of the survey were 93 percent "good" or "excellent" overall. Almost no one left the seven-hour event before it was over, he said, and that itself is a positive evaluation.

He said that when he had first heard that there was an expectation of 800 people attending a full-day event on Saturday in Shreveport, he was incredulous. When 600 people registered to come, and nearly 500 did come, he was amazed, he said. In recent years he attended a city-wide event at Byrd High School to get community input on a school superintendent search—something very important to the

community. The school board committee was on the front row—about 20 people, he said. There were fewer citizens than that in the audience.

The turn-out on August 22 was phenomenal, Dr. Rozeman continued. The technology was a disappointment, but it did not diminish the quality of the meeting. He said that CAG wants to join with City and Parish government to build a better community in the future. For the Master Plan initiative to be successful, everyone will have to come together and move in the same direction. It cannot be successful with continual starts and stops; it can never develop any momentum or gain public confidence if the entire time of the process is spent finger-pointing and playing the blame game, he said.

Next came Mr. Loren Demerath, 115 Atkins, Shreveport, who said that he is part of a group of citizens called “A Better Shreveport.Org”. This group has met and discussed for the past two years about ideas for improving the City. Some of these ideas are easy in inexpensive, others are costly and complex, but they can be achieved with a determination to make them happen, he said.

He said he and his group appreciate this opportunity for public input, but they were surprised by the short notice for the meeting. A lot of people in his group feel that there are two things that need to be done with good master planning. Obtaining citizen input is an obvious democratic objective, he said, but that process can result in a chaotic mass of likes and dislikes with no real guidance—people talking about things they want without necessarily knowing what is good for them. The people who do know are the professional urban planners, he said, and he would urge that they be closely listened to. Some of these people are associated with Goody-Clancy, but there are other capable planners who reside and work in Shreveport.

Mr. Demerath said that these planners can determine which ideas can correlate with the quality of life in the City and Parish, and which correlate with economic development. They can see such things as density, not sprawl—locating businesses and residences in close proximity to one another so that they come into contact with each other, and a synergy/energy happens that is good for economic development.

Walkability and bikeability are other considerations, he continued. They put people together in public spaces in a way that is healthy and enjoyable. That is now difficult in Shreveport, but it can be made easy by such inexpensive means as painting bike lanes.

Green space is correlated with quality of life, Mr. Demerath continued, and there may be miles and miles of green space ready to open up as linear parks for the City in the form of its bayous and drainage ditch rights-of-way that have been closed off to the public because of very occasional flooding. Professional planners can make these kinds of recommendation based on just research.

Ms. Joyce Lawrence, 4107 Scenic Drive, Shreveport, came forward. She said that she sits as a member of a neighborhood association’s representative on the Community Advisory Group, but she is speaking as an individual based on her observations of the planning process long before the official process began.

As a citizen, Ms. Lawrence said, she is concerned about the cost of the Master Plan. She said she had called Tyler, Texas, and spoke to a planner there and she has talked with planners in New Orleans. In those cities the final planning product was more than is proposed for Shreveport-Caddo. For \$615,000 Tyler got not just a comprehensive master plan but a revision of its zoning ordinances as well. For \$2 million, which is just a relatively small amount more than the \$1.7 million the Shreveport plan will cost, New Orleans got a comprehensive master plan and a comprehensive zoning ordinance.

Ms. Lawrence said that she would not suggest that the City does not need a master plan; she has had a zoning issue in her neighborhood that has been the source of much frustration. There has to be some strengthening of the zoning code, and there has to be strengthening of the enforcement of that code. However, she said, the “us versus them” paradigm does not serve anyone well. She said she cannot understand how this City believes it will grow if it attempts to isolate people with divergent views from the process.

She said that the CAG is not a separate entity; as constituted, it is a public body and is therefore subject to the laws of the State applicable to public bodies. Meetings have been held, surveys conducted and data circulated that have not enjoyed the knowledge and participation of citizens and neighborhood associations. Only six neighborhood associations are represented on the CAG. More accountability and transparency is needed, beyond statements and rhetoric, she said.

Then came Mr. Rogers Gueory, 6051 Roma Drive, Shreveport. He said he left Shreveport in 1955 and moved back nearly two years ago to retire. He said he learned to his disappointment that the old Shreveport of 54 years ago is no longer here. He said he supports a master plan, and he intends to be active in its formulation in order to see Shreveport improve and be what it used to be.

At this time Councilman Long said that he has been amazed that within the scope of the Goody-Clancy contract the City is not getting any comprehensive zoning ordinances. He said he wonders "why bother" with a master plan if it does not provide coordinated ordinances that be used to help implement the plan. He asked if the City will have to spend another \$500,000 to get ordinances.

Commissioner Escude said that hopefully all the issues that individuals are expressing can be resolved. He said that he has heard very few complaints. There are some 250,000 people in the Parish, he said, and complaints are coming from only a handful. He said he believes the consensus of the citizens is to finish the plan and implement it.

If a problem exists, Mr. Escude said, it is the fault of the City and the Parish, which provided the funds to the MPC and charged it to carry out the project. It would appear that the two bodies perhaps did not give MPC sufficient vision or direction of how the plan should progress and develop. He said he believes that whatever concerns are expressed can be voiced to MPC director Charles Kirkland and he will respond accordingly. The process needs to be completed, not stalled.

Councilman Shyne said that for so long in Shreveport there has not been the kind of diversity in Shreveport that has been needed. It is good to have a public meeting where there are a lot of people with different ideas, but no meeting should be called where different ideas are not welcomed. The City Council and the Commission, and these concerned citizens, should be skilled enough to work through the confusion and put together a consensus. This is necessary to get everybody to buy in to what is being proposed, he said.

Mr. Shyne said he has long been part of a community whose ideas were not heard. If Shreveport and Caddo Parish are going to be the kind of community it needs to be, there will have to experience some confusion and uncertainty, then harness all the ideas and shape them into a compromise.

He said that of the 400 people who showed up at the visioning forum, he has been told that about half were City or Parish employees, or otherwise officially involved in the master plan process. Larger participation cannot be expected unless the citizens are convinced that their ideas, though different, will be welcomed.

Commissioner Cox, using the analogy of a National Aeronautics and Space Administration rocket launch, said that if at any time in the countdown to launch NASA detects a problem, it immediately halts the countdown and stays the launch until the problem is found and fixed. The same premise should be in play with the master plan process, he said.

He pointed out that all of northwest Louisiana is in competition with other surrounding cities in the region. Shreveport is in competition with not just Bossier City but east Texas and southern Arkansas, and the middle of Louisiana. He asked if the City and the Parish are going to allow some pockets of dissension and dissatisfaction distract them from an opportunity to shape the next thirty to fifty years.

Mr. Cox said that to have a plan that works, it must be done correctly from the start. A master plan must contemplate three things, he said—family life, jobs and quality of life. People from every neighborhood should be participating in the process; every voice needs to be heard.

He said that he attended the visioning session all day. At first, he said, he felt that the meeting was failing, but as the day progressed, and as he got the opportunity to talk to others, he changed his mind and saw that people were actually exchanging ideas. More was accomplished that afternoon than in all the other meetings combined.

This process should not be allowed to die just because some opinions get in the way, Mr. Cox continued. The citizens in this room are the ones who are going to mastermind this plan, not the City Council or the Commission.

Commissioner Linn thanked the citizens who had spoken.. He said he found it interesting that at the visioning session he was acquainted with some 85 percent of the people there, but he certainly does not know 85 percent of the population of the City or Parish. He said he would like to know what the Master Plan is going to do draw in the people who have not so far been drawn in to the process.

His concerns with the Master Plan, Mr. Linn continued, have been from the very beginning. The Parish Commission did ask for the MPC and the consultant to look at the overlay of zoning to determine, for instance, why it costs the same to develop 10 acres of land on Youree Drive as it does to develop a 1,000 square-foot storefront in Allendale or Highland. This issue was relegated to the planning consultant, but there has been no resultant discussion of such zoning issues.

Northwest Louisiana needs a master plan, Mr. Linn continued. The success of the visioning session was based solely on the 200-300 citizens who showed up and sat down at the table and wrote out their views, working their way through the technical glitches in the program that were obviously the failure of the consultant.

He said he believes that the planning process should now go into the neighborhoods and “drag people from their homes” to get them to participate and share their ideas on what they would like for northwest Louisiana to become. Goody-Clancy should be collaborating with every other master planning session in all other surrounding communities in this area in order to grow. He pointed out that there are numerous people who work in Caddo Parish or Bossier Parish but live in other parishes or even in Arkansas or Texas. This should be an Ark-La-Tex plan, he said.

Mr. Linn said that Shreveport has been designed around the concept of automobile availability. The Better Shreveport organization is focused on a future community where automobiles are not used: people can walk or bike to the grocery stores, restaurants and merchandise stores. The simple fact that a person cannot now walk from Kroger’s Supermarket on the corner of Youree Drive and 70th Street to the Target store on the other side of Youree, or to any other corner, is a clear sign that planning has not been in the forefront of development in northwest Louisiana, and principally in the Shreveport area, he said.

A master plan is very much needed, he said, and he would like to see this process go forward. However, he said, at this time he believes all involved should step back and see what has been done to this date, since the change was made from Nellison Associates to Goody-Clancy. This retrospective view should include what has been done, how much has been spent, who has received the money, and where are the next steps.

Councilwoman Bowman said that her concern is to make sure that this is an open and fair process, and that the citizens she represents are a part of the planning. There are areas in her district, she said, that had no one at the meeting. There were perhaps presidents of neighborhood associations present, but how can the masses be reached. She said she wants to make sure these people are not left out of the process. They have ideas and hopes for the areas where they live, but these areas are not progressing and improving.

Someone has to bring it to the people, Mrs. Bowman continued, and it is well that Dr. Rozeman and his Citizens Advisory Group are taking a leadership role. CAG does need to be willing to accept constructive criticism or suggestions from others, she said. Many of the people attending the visioning session were not from her area of the City, she said.

She said that she is aware that Dr. Rozeman was placed in his position, as was Mr. David Aubrey, and she still has unanswered questions as to how that came about. She said she would remind everyone that a contract exists with Goody-Clancy which contains a provision that either party can withdraw from the contract with 30 days notice. If this process proves to be unfair or ineffective, she will be the first to begin demanding that the contract be withdrawn and the process start over, she said. It has to be fair to every citizen so that they have the opportunity to participate.

Councilman Lester said that anytime a community has citizens who are willing to take on the responsibilities of engaging a process, participating at inconvenient times, the community interest is served. Master plans, like budgets, are about values, he said. If a better product is to be obtained, the values have to be set at the beginning of the process and move forward toward those values.

However, he said, it is difficult to determine what a community’s values are without getting maximum input from the community. The process, of necessity, has to be complex, he said—there has to be talk, there has to be dialog. That is not to say that there has not been, there just needs to be a higher level of it.

He said that some of the elected officials in the room represent parts of town that generally are not heard from. Consequently, these constituents are perhaps more apathetic and less trusting—often for good reason. For instance, he said, the City’s zoning laws prohibit sales of alcohol within a certain distance of churches, day care centers and a number of other uses. However, in his district, in the Pierre Avenue neighborhood, two liquor stores are across from a school, and near a church. He said he would imagine many more examples could be found in neighborhoods such as Queensboro, Hollywood, Mooretown or Cedar Grove.

Scenarios such as this have codified over a period of time, Mr. Lester said, so when a

project such as a master plan is proposed, there is an entire population that is predictably suspect of the process. He said one of his constituents made the statement "That plan ain't for us", and this constituent was someone who came to the visioning forum.

Mr. Lester said he was somewhat disappointed that he did not see at the forum many of the people from the neighborhoods he previously mentioned, so he asked this particular constituent why there was so little turnout. The constituent said that his neighborhood had determined that this master plan effort was not really serious, so they chose him to come and make an evaluation. The fact that not a lot of people were there should not be construed as an indication that people are not interested, he said. There is a tremendous amount of distrust, however, and perhaps with good reason, he said.

The elected officials in this room would be derelict in their duties if they did not continue to urge the process to be more inclusive, Mr. Lester said. How to do that, he said, is the question, just as it is for how to get parents to come to PTA meetings. But just because it is difficult, or seemingly impossible, does not mean that efforts should stop, he said. Just as it is important for parents to become involved in the activities of the schools, it is also important that the neighborhood component is reflected in the Master Plan, he said. Otherwise, current problems will just be carried forward.

Mr. Lester said that what he would like to see to come from the master plan process is that the City and the Parish be broken down into planning districts, with someone placed in charge of each of these planning areas and made accountable for what happens in that area. The concepts that are applicable to neighborhoods such as Highland and Broadmoor can have broader applicability to Queensboro, Mooretown, Cedar Grove, etc., but those people must be at the table in the planning process, he said.

Mr. Lester said that he is not opposed to the planning process now underway, but he does believe it to be vitally important to have more conversation, more dialogue. Whatever efforts have been made so far should be doubled, or tripled, he said. Hopefully meetings such as this one will help to get the public to really understand that the leaders are serious about this plan, and that the process is inclusive. If not it will be just another plan for some people and not all people, he said.

Mr. Walford said that since the beginning of the process he has been adamant that it not be politically influenced. He said he has made that point in numerous conversations with City officials and staffers and citizens, including the CAG group. For too long, plans in Shreveport were done in a back room by a few individuals who would decide what the results should be, and then they would find a consultant who would be paid to produce this result.

He said he is not sure the current process is not being politicized by the fact of this very meeting. The MPC created an MPC subcommittee; the Commission and Council each have two members, and the City and Parish administrations are represented. This subcommittee meets monthly, but not everyone attends. It is however, a mechanism by which each party can get their points known to the MPC---the body responsible for the Master Plan. The Council cannot cancel a contract, nor can the Parish Commission. The Goody-Clancy contract is with the Metropolitan Planning Commission, he said.

Mr. Walford said that Mr. Shyne and Mr. Lester have made excellent points about public input. He said that he does not know how to get people involved, and Mr. Lester made an honest statement when he said that he does not know how either. The plan is important to all citizens, but despite newspaper articles and editorials, statements from the Mayor and other information, it is still not known how to make everyone to think like those citizens sitting in this meeting. But if the input from the people is not obtained, the process is flawed and the plan will not fully achieve its objective, he said.

There was a fairly unanimous sentiment that the process was moving too slowly at the beginning, he said. There are still some stumbling blocks, but the process now seems to be on track. He said he would hope that the two political bodies, the MPC and the affiliated staffs and organizations, can keep driving the process to the public and letting them know how important it is, in order to get the public input that is needed. He said that like Mr. Lester, he does not know what else to do, but this is where the elected officials must depend on those interested citizens who are represented at this meeting.

Commissioner Smith said that while some concerns about the process have been expressed, he has not heard any comments in opposition to the concept of planning itself. He said he served on the MPC for some 10 years, so he is familiar with zoning and planning problems. Even with a master plan, there will be some problems. This master plan is not for the people in this room; it is for their children and grandchildren.

Most in the room are aware that Shreveport and Caddo Parish have not experienced growth for more than ten years, Mr. Smith said. This might not be a result of poor planning or no planning, he said, but it would certainly help to have some good planning and some good foresight.

The City and Parish are being presented a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to not just do a master plan, but to utilize such God-bestowed blessings as the natural gas formation that sits beneath Caddo Parish, and which will change the entire City and Parish. Some of this change will be for the worst, he said, but mostly it will be for the better. It is already bringing a lot of money to the Parish and it will bring much more.

Good things are also happening at Barksdale Air Force Base, Mr. Smith continued. The location of the Global Strike Command there is a big deal, and it will be bigger in years to come. Also, he said, it is almost unimaginable how the future construction of I-69 is going to change the City and the Parish, as well as the completion of I-49 north.

These and other factors pose a one-time-only opportunity to correctly plan this area's future, Mr. Smith said. All need to come together and make it happen.

Commissioner Dominick said it appears he is the only elected official in the room who is ostensibly not affected by the master plan project, as his district comprises only rural area and small municipalities. He said that everyone is speaking about how to get citizens more involved in the planning process, and that has been his concern when the discussion turns to rural planning. He said he believes that the City and the Parish are going to have to rely on the professionals to guide the process.

He said there also may be an issue of miscommunication or lack of communication—lack of communication between the Commissioners and their administrator; a lack of communication of the Parish with MPC or the City. All concerned need to make sure that all necessary communication is done in order to facilitate the planning process.

The things that have been mentioned—family, jobs, quality of life, water resources, economic growth, Interstate Highways 49 and 69, Barksdale Air Force Base—are all so important that they demand the best efforts of every citizen, he said. Big, major, complicated undertakings will always face problems, he said. It is up to everyone to work through them and forge ahead.

Mr. Thibodeaux said that he too believes that strategic planning is good and necessary, but one factor that has to part of planning is honesty. A degree of honesty has been missing in this process, he said, as it is essentially the “nature of the beast” to not be honest when mistakes are made in planning.

He said someone earlier had referred to the Saturday visioning session as a “powerful moment”. He said he too found it to be a powerful moment, but for a different reason. When he entered the room, he, like Mr. Linn, found that he recognized most of the people there and knew that in some way they were affiliated with the City or the Parish or had some other special connection with the Master Plan effort. Had all those people left the room, he said, it would be a generous estimate to say that 200 people would have remained.

Some earlier speakers had lamented that there were not many people from their neighborhoods in attendance, Mr. Thibodeaux continued. There weren't many people present from any neighborhood. There just weren't many citizens there, he said, which was why for him it was a powerful moment. That fact said that for whatever reason, the visioning session was not important to the citizens of the City and Parish.

Regarding the issue of honesty, Mr. Thibodeaux said that whenever planning is done for anything among large groups of people with diverse ideas, there will be people who will be offended and get angry and alienated. That too is in the nature of the beast, he said, but without it the process would be pointless.

Another issue is that of trust, Mr. Thibodeaux said, and he believes that is one reason the attendance of ordinary citizens was limited at the visioning session. In general—local, state, national—citizens do not trust government, he said. Goody-Clancy, the professional consultant leading the process, utilizes a “cookie-cutter” approach to planning—of necessity, in order to have a starting place and to define parameters. Sometimes the cookie-cutter template does not fit the template of local reality, and it becomes the responsibility of the citizens to say that a certain approach will not work, and to give the reasons why.

He said that the comment was made earlier that the consultant contract was awarded by, and controlled by, the MPC. In reality, he said, the MPC is funded by the City and the Parish, and as such, those entities do have significant input into the status of the contract.

Mr. Thibodeaux said that he taught school for 25 years and served on the School Board for 16 years. He said his experiences in education have convinced him that if people don't care about

their own children, they certainly do not care about planning. A large number of people are not interested in participating in anything, so any common effort must rely on the knowledge and abilities of those who are willing to participate.

He said he believes that the average person who does care about planning for the future would likely ask for just five minutes to express his or her feelings about planning issues. There are any number of sources that could be used—radio stations, churches, other interest groups—that could help facilitate making that five minutes available to every citizen. That information could be collected, digested and utilized in the eventual plan. No matter how great the planning initiative is, unless it finds a way to get into the neighborhoods, and utilize representatives from the neighborhoods, and have meetings taking place in the neighborhoods, he is not convinced that any better participation can be possible.

Mr. Thibodeaux said that the \$1.5 million or so cost for this Master Plan is mind-boggling. He added that he does not want his name on a fifty-pound book that sits on a shelf somewhere collecting dust, as is the case with so many other studies done in the past. If the Master Plan is going to be done, he said, the participants have to be honest and admit when something is not working, and move on to a different course that perhaps will work. If honesty and trust can be made an integral part of the process, Shreveport and Caddo Parish will have gone a long way toward a successful Master Plan. That does not appear to be the case at this time, he said.

Mr. Thibodeaux said that it appears that a lot of time, energy and money are being spent on ways to coax participation from people who do not want to participate. They have a right to not participate if they so choose.

Councilman Long said he agrees with Mr. Thibodeaux: the process should make every effort to gain the involvement of every citizen who wishes to be involved, but also to acknowledge that some people do not want to be involved.

Commissioner Jenkins said that he has heard numerous comments from elected officials, but he would like to hear more from citizens. He said he is concerned when he hears that a process is taking place and a lot of money being spent, but that there might be some questions of inclusiveness. He said he would like to hear from the citizens who are involved if they believe the master plan process is at a point where it needs to be halted and reassessed, and if they know why there is a problem with participation.

Mr. Jenkins said he would never delegate his responsibility as an elected official to any appointed committee. He said he is hearing about lack of participation and people being left out of the process; now he wants to hear from people who are already involved, to determine if they know the answers to the perceived problems. He said he would also like to see some consensus on where the process goes from this point forward.

Ms. Lynch agreed that more input from the citizens in the audience would be welcomed.

Ms. Mona Conrad, 406 Regency Boulevard, Shreveport, came forward. She said she attended the August 22 visioning session. She said she was seated at a table with people from every part of Shreveport, and it was a great experience. She left the meeting with the feeling that everyone else shares the same vision she has—they want this to be a better place. Because of that meeting those people were able to share their thoughts. The technical problems did not diminish the experience, and there needs to be more like it. She said she is now somewhat confused as to why this meeting is being held.

Commissioner Escude said that he has a suggestion: that the two elected bodies do what they know they are going to do in 2010 when the Census process begins—“beat the bushes” and find the people so that to the greatest extent possible every person is counted. There are enough neighborhood associations and community groups, and if they do not have the time to come to the Master Plan process, then the Master Plan process should go to them on their terms—when they are having their own meetings.

There is plenty of time, and there are plenty of volunteers, he said. At least the attempt will have been made. The message that needs to be sent is that their input is needed, and they need to be involved, because they are going to have to live with the results of whatever the Master Plan produces.

Then came Mr. James Mohr, 6025 Buncombe Road, Shreveport. He said that in 1958 he attended some of the first meetings with the developer of the Southern Hills neighborhood. The zoning book then was only about one-eighth of an inch thick. It now exceeds an inch, he said.

The Urban Land Use Institute conducted a study here several years earlier, he said.

Their study concluded that the zoning process in Shreveport is too political. He said that that point is in evidence repeatedly: in many instances where zoning cases come before the Metropolitan Planning Commission a City Council member or Parish Commission appears as a citizen to speak for or against a case. In many of these instances, the elected officials have no personal stake in the project or even a real concern for or against—they are actually wooing votes from constituents who do have personal concern in the outcome of the case. Elected officials should stay home and allow the MPC to do its job, he said. They will have their opportunity to vote on the case when it comes before their body, he said.

Mr. Mohr said that the issue of trust was expressed earlier. The reason he does not trust elected officials is because of the way they interfere with the role of the Planning Commission and its staff by inserting themselves into the process.

Next came Ms. Barbara Jarrell, 101 Napoleon Drive, Shreveport. In response to the call for suggestions, she said ok, she has observed as the acting pastor of a church that in any group or undertaking there will always be a small percentage of the people who do most of the work. However, she said, the leaders of the Master Plan effort would be negligent if they did not continue to invite people to become more involved and to stay engaged.

She said she had not heard anything about the process being bogged down or stopped until she came to this meeting and heard that such was the case. She said she attended the meeting on August 22, and her experiences were absolutely positive. The people at her tables represented concentrations of areas of the City.

Ms. Jarrell said her suggestion is that it must be understood and accepted that the process is going to be limited to those who are willing to engage. Mr. Escude's recommendation is a good way to contact more people, she said, but she questions whether the current process should be stopped in order to pursue that approach.

Mr. Walford said that Ms. Jarrell's comments made him recognize that churches may have been overlooked as being a part of the planning process. Church newsletters would be an effective way of getting word out to the public, he said.

Then came Ms. Bessie Smith, a member of the Citizens Advisory Group. She said that she had not intended to speak but was compelled to do so after hearing the discussion presented at this meeting. She said she only heard of this meeting on Friday, and she determined to attend in order to learn what it was about.

Ms. Smith said that from the very beginning the CAG has tried diligently to involve everyone in the Master Plan work. It is disturbing, she said, to hear disparaging comments about how many people were in attendance at the August 22 visioning session. If a meeting contains only 20 people who are committed and prepared, the work can get done, she said.

She asked that the CAG be given a chance; all the objectives discussed at this meeting are what they have already planned to do. She said that Mr. Thibodeaux made an excellent point that people cannot be forced to participate in this process. The people in this room should concentrate on doing their jobs, and begin talking to people one on one, she said. If that happens, the Master Plan will be a success, she said.

Ms. Lynch asked Mayor Cedric Glover for his comments.

Mayor Glover said he had hoped that the meeting on August 22 would have "hit a home run". There was not a home run, he said, but it did hit a solid double. The process has begun, and the game continues. The participants need to press forward, self-correcting when necessary, but he is happy with where the project stands at this time.

Dr. Rozeman again came forward. He said that he is somewhat perplexed at some of the comments, but he agrees that the process must go as far and as deep into the community as possible. He has tried to accomplish that, he said.

He said he would like to remind the elected bodies what the Citizens Advisory Group has stated that it is going to do, beyond what Goody-Clancy will do, and beyond what the MPC is going to do. The CAG, a group of 34 or so citizens, recognizes that it did not get into all the neighborhoods, and that the process must be taken closer in to the neighborhoods. That is why the same kind of visioning forums are being held in every area high schools in coming days. People are being paid to do neighborhood canvassing in order to obtain attendance and participation. Neighborhood stores are being targeted. The volunteer efforts of the CAG go far beyond what the City and Parish are paying for, he said.

Dr. Rozeman said that the CAG has already been talking about how to go deeper into the

neighborhoods, but instead of just talking, they are actually trying to do something about it. He said he appreciates the concern that prompted this meeting, and the opportunity to clear the air. He said he and CAG are open to any suggestions as to what else can be done—the elected officials need to determine what that might be, and issue a directive to that effect. CAG will try to do it.

This is not an antagonistic relationship, but a symbiotic one, Dr. Rozeman concluded. In order for the citizen partners to have confidence in the community, they have to think that their political leadership has confidence as well.

There being no other speakers, the meeting was then adjourned.

Stephanie Lynch, President
Caddo Parish Commission

Jerry C. Spears
Commission Clerk