

**MINUTES OF THE
LOUISIANA FOLKLIFE COMMISSION MEETING
Capitol Park Welcome Center
Baton Rouge, LA
Friday, June 14, 2019**

Folklife Commission members present: Ray Berthelot, Cheryl Castille, Brian Davis, Teresa Parker Farris, Herman Fuselier, Jennifer Ritter Guidry, Karen Leathem, Charles McGimsey, Susan Roach, John Sharp, Kimberly Walden, Melissa Yarborough.

Folklife Commission members absent: Cynthia Bryant, Steven Fullen, Tommy Ike Hailey, Rebecca Hamilton, Rodneya Hart, Jim Hogg, Erik Kreusch, Miranda Restovic, Ray Scriber, John Silver.

Guests and Louisiana Office of Cultural Development (OCD) staff present: Maida Owens, Louisiana Division of the Arts; Erin Greenwald, Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities.

I. CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME NEW COMMISSIONER

Teresa Parker Farris opened the meeting of the Louisiana Folklife Commission at 1:07 pm at the Capitol Park Welcome Center in Baton Rouge.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approval of the minutes for the meetings of January 11, 2018 were accepted. Brian Davis moved, and John Sharp seconded.

III. REPORTS

A. Chair Report – Teresa Parker Farris

Parker Farris reported that Sharon Coogle, editor of *Watermark*, the publication of CWPPRA (Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act) contacted her about Louisiana's celebratory spirit for an article in that will focus on the cultural impact of land loss.

Parker Farris is exploring strategies to communicate news at the commission meetings to commissioners and the general public. She created a closed Facebook group for commissioners. Commissioners discussed whether using the Louisiana Folklore Society Facebook page would be more effective. Parker Farris encouraged commissioners to follow or join both sites in addition to the Office of Cultural Development Facebook page. In six months she and John Sharp, who administers the Folklore Society Facebook page, will evaluate strategies. She also requested that a short bio be added online for each commissioner.

B. LDOA Budget Report – Cheryl Castille

Castille reported that LDOA has a continuing budget from the legislature. State funds in addition to the National Endowment for the Arts funds will support folklife initiatives in FY20. Redesign of the grants process was completed in time for the DAF deadline on July 12 with changes to the guidelines to be implemented in FY21.

Castille shared that the Louisiana Arts Summit, hosted by the Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge in partnership with the Louisiana Division of the Arts, will be July 15 and 16 in Baton Rouge with a keynote address by Xavier Cortada, a Miami-based artist whose public art focuses on environmental issues and social engagement. Artists, arts organizations, and community members are invited.

C. Director's Report – Maida Owens

Owens directed Commissioners to her written report attached to the agenda and highlighted the Folklife Program banner, the Bayou Culture Collaborative banner, and the new essays posted online. Cheryl Castille pointed out that the Folklife Program banner is part of the re-branding of the Office of Cultural Development.

Owens reported that the Bayou Culture Collaborative supported 19 workshops and events from February to June and that the initiative has garnered attention from both the regional and national press. Planning for next year has started with outreach to all coastal parishes. Jennifer Ritter Guidry shared that she attended a Writing on the Bayou workshop by Michael Martin and that the sense of place essays produced through these four workshops will be shared through her CWPRA blog.

Susan Roach suggested that documentation of tradition bearers be part of the next year of the Bayou Culture Collaborative. Owens explained that the priority is to help tradition bearers pass on a tradition rather than document them, which will support reintroduction of the apprenticeship program by identifying tradition bearers. Possibly they could be documented in future years.

IV. BUSINESS

A. Folklife Month 2019 – Teresa Parker Farris

Parker Farris referred to the Folklife Month report in the Director's report. Brian Davis offered to create short videos about the tradition bearers being honored so that commissioners can promote the initiative via social media.

B. LA Safe Plan – Teresa Parker Farris

Commissioners discussed the LA Safe Plan published in April by LA SAFE (Louisiana's Strategic Adaptation for Future Environments), which acknowledges the human dimension in Louisiana's land loss and proposes a role for Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism agencies. As no funding has yet been allocated to any of the report's recommendations, no action from the Commission is currently warranted.

C. Special Meetings Committee - Teresa Parker-Farris

Parker Farris reported that the Special Meeting Committee (Jennifer Ritter Guidry, Ray Berthelot, Steven Fullen, Brian Davis, and Teresa Parker Farris) did not meet because there was no need.

D. Legends and Lore Marker Program – Teresa Parker Farris, John Sharp

Sharp shared that the ULL Center for Louisiana Studies (CLS) is partnering with the William G. Pomeroy Foundation of Syracuse, New York to place roadside markers about local legends and lore. CLS will help identify non-profit organizations, including academic institutions and municipalities, to nominate sites for this national program. If selected, CLS will work with the organization on the marker content, which is limited to 150 characters, and on marker placement. CLS plans to develop an online component. Commissioners discussed if there is a role for the commission in the program, the challenges of placing markers on private versus public land, and eligibility of partnering organizations. Sharp encouraged commissioners to suggest partnering organizations and will investigate whether entities such as the Folklife Commission can serve as such. He will share the press release with commissioners to share with their networks.

E. LEH – Coastal Impacts & Documenting Hurricane Harvey Impact – Erin Greenwald

Greenwald shared information about two Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities projects related to the coast. *Coastal Impacts* is a three-year initiative to bring a new version of its PRIME TIME family literacy program to southeast Louisiana, in particular Plaquemines, Terrebonne, and Lafourche Parishes. Starting in fall of 2019, PRIME TIME Sustain will focus on environmental humanities and include screenings of the 2018 "Water Ways" documentaries. As part of this initiative, LEH quarterly magazine

64 Parishes will highlight coastal traditions and cultures. This program is funded by BHP Billiton, a mining and petroleum company that supports projects focused on climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Greenwald also reported that LEH received funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities to document the impact of Hurricane Harvey. Liz Skilton, of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette Guilbeau Center for Public History, will collect oral histories in the twelve parishes affected. She thanked Shane Rasmussen, Keagan LeJeune, Susan Roach, John Sharp, and Maida Owens for their assistance in designing the project.

F. Set date for next Commission meeting – Teresa Parker Farris

The next full meeting is scheduled for Friday, January 17, 2020 at 1 pm at Capitol Park Welcome Center unless the Special Meetings Committee makes other arrangements.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Cheryl Castille announced that the 2020 conference of Folk Alliance International will meet in New Orleans on January 22-26, 2020 in New Orleans. This professional showcase and networking event is an opportunity for Louisiana musicians. The Division of the Arts is proposing showcasing the Folklife Program research on musical instrument makers at the event.

Brian Davis announced that the Fall Ramble of the Louisiana Trust for Historic Preservation (LTHP) on October 5 will feature historic sites in Franklin and St. Mary Parishes. LTHP will soon be announcing 10 more sites for the State's Most Endangered Properties list.

Kim Walden announced that the Linguistic Society of America and the Society for the Study of Indigenous Languages of the Americas will meet in New Orleans on January 2-5. She and representatives from other Louisiana Native American tribes will be on a panel about best practices for linguistic fieldwork. She also announced that two Chitimacha rattles are included in the Historic New Orleans Collection exhibit, *New Orleans Medley: Sounds of the City*, on view through August 4, 2019.

Ray Berthelot announced that Poverty Point will host activities on June 22, 2019 in recognition of its 5th anniversary as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Karen Leathem announced that the Louisiana State Museum's exhibit at the Presbytère in Jackson Square, *Grand Illusions: The History and Artistry of Gay Carnival in New Orleans*, is the first-of-its-kind comprehensive exhibition on the history of gay carnival.

Herman Fuselier announced that the Zydeco Capital Jam, the state's only zydeco music jam, continues monthly on the second Saturday at the St. Landry Parish Visitor Center just north of Opelousas on I-49.

VI. ADJOURN

There being no further business to discuss, the Commissioners agreed to adjourn at 2:49 p.m. Jennifer Ritter Guidry moved, Melissa Yarborough seconded.

Folklife Program Director's Report – June 14, 2019, Maida Owens

Folklife Month 2018: Six Folklife Ambassadors will participate in 2019 and are currently working out details. Steven Fullen will honor boat builder/basket weaver Tom Colvin. Tommy Ike Hailey will honor songwriter James "Buzz" Jackson. Gary LaFleur and Jonathan Foret will honor Houma Indian basket weaver Janie Luster. Jim Hogg will honor Gospel quartet Zion Travelers. Ray Brassieur will honor brown cotton weaver Elaine Bourque. Rebecca Hamilton will honor artist/author Mariana Titus. The Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities will again support Folklife Month by funding the artist honoraria. Folklife Month will be featured in the LEH Fall issue of *64 Parishes* and the *Preservation in Print* October issue.

Baton Rouge Folklife Survey: The Baton Rouge Traditions traveling exhibit was displayed at Calcasieu Parish Library from Feb 28 to March 29 and at the Pointe Coupee Parish Historical Society from April 1 to April 15. Upcoming exhibits scheduled include EBR Library-Goodwood in September 2019.

Folklife Website: Articles from the 2018 Louisiana Folklore Miscellany are online. Katheryn Laborde added photos to the online articles.

[Reminiscences of a Cajun Accordion Builder](#) by Marc Savoy

[Trucks Under Water](#) by John Laudun

[Vernacular Medicine and the Creation of Locality: Understanding Holistic Healing Processes in Creolized Cultures](#) by Carter Louis Pesson

[The History of the Balkan Fais Do Do \(Or, How I was a Witness to the Birth of the Big Easy Balkan Music Movement\)](#) by Katheryn Laborde

[Becoming the Tradition Bearer: Community History and Community Representation in *The Tragedy of Brady Sims*](#) by Jeanna Mason

[Book Review: *Spiritualism in Nineteenth-Century New Orleans: The Life and Times of Henry Louis Rey*](#) by Samantha Castleman

Bayou Culture Collaborative: This project provided funding and publicity for 19 events from February 17 through June 30, 2019 in Lafourche and Terrebonne parishes including the following:

- Mardi Gras costume designing workshop (Krewes of Tradition, Houma)
- presentations at the Louisiana Folklore Society (Lanor Curol/Houma herbal medicine, Summer Skarke/sense of place poetry project, Billie Babin/foodways, Cajun Music Preservation Society, and Jonathan Foret/Trunk of Traditions)
- Cajun music workshop (Cajun Music Preservation Society/Nicholls Center for Bayou Studies, Thibodaux)
- two Collecting Stories workshops (Lafourche Library/Jean Lafitte National Park, Thibodaux and Cut Off)
- 3 sense of place writing workshops (Michael Martin, Thibodaux, Gray, Golden Meadow)
- a gumbo making presentation (Janie Luster and Robin White/Nicholls Center for Bayou Studies)
- a two-part wood carving workshop Terrebonne Folklife Culture Center)
- a four-part folklife documentation workshop series produced by the Louisiana Folklife Program in Gray with 20 attending and 15 presenters.

Additional events in June include a tribal culture camp (Point au Chien Indian Tribe), Plant and Water Color Workshop (Point au Chien Indian Tribe, Writing on the Bayou (Destrehan), and palmetto weaving (United Houma Nation).

Next year, the project expands to all coastal parishes with the priority being workshops and mini-apprenticeships by tradition bearers to pass on a tradition. Details about the program are online: www.louisianafolklife.org/bayouculture or <https://www.crt.state.la.us/cultural-development/arts/folklife/bayou-culture-collaborative/>. The project is supported by funds from the NEA Folk Arts Partnership, Atchafalaya National Heritage Area, and Division of the Arts. We are looking into seeking additional funds from a SouthArts Cross Sector Impact grant.

The Plaquemines Parish Historical Society has invited me to speak about the Bayou Culture Collaborative at their meeting on July 2 in Belle Chasse. They are inviting other cultural organizations to attend. Folklorist Carolyn Ware has also reached out to community members that she has worked with over the course of her years of research there.

The project has attracted the attention of other state and federal agencies. The Governor's Office of Coastal Affairs wants to start a dialog with the Office of Cultural Development and has invited staff to tour The Water Institute's river exhibit. WWNO wants to feature the project and NPR wants the story for national broadcast. PBS will re-air their series, *Sinking Cities*, which features Miami, London, Tokyo and New York. LPB and WWNO collaborated to provide *Sinking Louisiana*, a response on the Louisiana situation as part of their Louisiana Public Square program, in which I participated. *Sinking Louisiana* is available online: <https://www.lpb.org/programs/louisiana-public-square/louisiana-public-square-2019/sinking-louisiana-may-2019-louisiana-public-square-1>. WWNO is planning a radio program and interviewed me and Houma Indian palmetto basket weaver Janie Luster for this project. The consultant researching the National Park Service's Climate Change Response Program contacted me about this NPS program, which "will help NPS managers bring community engagement and an anthropological perspective into their climate planning processes." The 2020 Smithsonian Folklife Festival will focus on culture and environment and will include Louisiana. Jennifer Ritter Guidry with the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act (CWPPRA) program would like to help publicize workshops through the Louisiana Unified Coastal Community Calendar (LUCC).