

**MINUTES OF THE  
LOUISIANA FOLKLIFE COMMISSION MEETING  
Via Zoom  
Baton Rouge, LA  
Friday, June 12, 2020**

**Folklife Commission members present:** Ray Berthelot, Cheryl Castille, Brian Davis, Teresa Parker Farris, Jennifer Ritter Guidry, Tommy Ike Hailey, Rebecca Hamilton, Karen Leathem, Miranda Restovic, Susan Roach, Ray Scriber, John Sharp.

**Folklife Commission members absent:** Herman Fuselier, Jim Hogg, John Silver, Kim Walden.

**Guests and Louisiana Office of Cultural Development (OCD) staff present:** Maida Owens, Louisiana Division of the Arts; Valerie Feathers, Division of Archaeology, Sharon Calcote, Office of Tourism; Guy Hughes, Jean Lafitte National Park and Preserve.

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Teresa Parker Farris opened the meeting of the Louisiana Folklife Commission at 1:05 pm via Zoom.

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Approval of the minutes for the meetings of January 17, 2020 was accepted. Brian Davis moved, and Susan Roach seconded as amended: the amount that the National Park Service gave to the Division of Historic Preservation being \$600,000, and not \$60,000.

**III. REPORTS**

**A. Chair Report – Teresa Parker Farris**

Parker Farris asked if and how the Commission should formally recognize the impact of COVID 19 on Louisiana’s traditional communities and the systemic racism negatively affecting communities of color. Considering the former, Commissioners discussed acknowledgments in online and/or print media such as the Folklife Program website, the *Louisiana Folklore Miscellany*, and Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities’ *64 Parishes*. They decided to revisit the topic for the January 2021 meeting when the virus’s trajectory would be better known.

Commissioners also considered ways to acknowledge racial inequities, including signing the June 5 statement of the American Folklore Society (“The American Folklore Society and Partners Take a Stand against Race-Based Violence and Injustice”). John “Pudd” Sharp reported that the Louisiana Folklore Society board is considering signing the statement in addition to issuing a special edition of the *Louisiana Folklore Miscellany*. Commissioners discussed whether it was in the Commission’s purview to issue any such statement as it could be deemed political, an inappropriate stance for a state board. They decided to wait for a ruling by the Lt Governor’s Office.

**B. LDOA Budget Report – Cheryl Castille**

Castille reported that the arts budget, programs, and staff are expected to continue as last year. The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) partnership funds increased slightly. NEA also provided CARES relief funds to LDOA. Part of it will go to general operating support (GOS) applicants and the Regional Arts Councils. Some will go to arts organizations that are not GOS applicants. FY21 Louisiana Arts Projects grants will be converted into artist relief funds to be administered through the Regional Arts Councils. SouthArts, a regional arts organization based in Atlanta, will direct its CARES funds to rural arts organizations and culture-specific organizations as relief funds. Castille noted that some arts

organizations are finding unexpected benefits from moving their programming online by increasing accessibility and broadening their audiences.

**C. Director's Report – Maida Owens**

Owens directed Commissioners to her written report attached to the agenda and added that she is discussing with Jennifer Ritter Guidry the possibility of featuring Bayou Culture Collaborators on CWPPRA's podcast, *Coastal Connection*. Noting that each podcast includes a call to action, Guidry is planning podcasts on Houma herbal traditions, brown cotton, rougarou stories, wooden boat building, and Indigenous youth activism. Brian Davis suggested looking at coastal Native American prehistoric sites that are being lost due to coastal erosion. Guidry reported that the podcasts are available on Spotify, Apple, and Google Play.

**IV. BUSINESS**

**A. Folklife Month 2020 – Teresa Parker Farris**

Parker Farris referred to the Folklife Month report in the Director's report for the 2020 events. Brian Davis offered to make another montage video of the six tradition bearers.

**B. 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.

**C. Set date for next Commission meeting – Teresa Parker Farris**

The next full meeting is scheduled for Friday, January 15, 2021 at 1 pm at Capitol Park Welcome Center or Zoom unless the Special Meetings Committee makes other arrangements.

**V. PUBLIC COMMENT AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Karen Leathem announced that the Louisiana State Museum will open a new exhibit at Capitol Park Museum on July 14 presenting the work of South Louisiana photographer Fonville Winans. John "Pudd" Sharp shared that he knows the family of the oysterman featured in one of Winans's images and would share that information with the museum.

Brian Davis shared that the Trust has announced 2020's Louisiana's Most Endangered Places, and the sites are listed on their website. This year's Statewide Preservation Conference will be a series of Zoom meetings featuring speakers and informational workshops.

John "Pudd" Sharp shared that Herman Fuselier could not attend today due to the death of his sister.

Maida Owens shared that Kim Walden was not able to attend because her organization does not permit the use of Zoom due to privacy concerns.

**VI. ADJOURN**

There being no further business to discuss, the Commissioners adjourned at 2:06 pm. Brian Davis moved, and Jennifer Ritter Guidry seconded.

## Program Director's Report – June 12, 2020. Maida Owens

**Folklife Month 2020:** Six Folklife Ambassadors will participate in 2020. Whether the tradition bearers will be recognized at a public event will be determined later, but otherwise, plans are proceeding: Tommy Ike Hailey will honor Rick Adams, singer/songwriter in Alexandria; Brian Davis will honor Bogalusa Italian-American Club, St. Joseph's Day Altar Tradition; John Pudd Sharp and Herman Fuselier will honor Goldman Thibodeaux, Creole musician in Mallet, St Landry Parish; Teresa Parker Farris will honor Grayhawk Perkins, Choctaw/Houma Nation Storyteller, Educator, and Musician from Mandeville; Shane Rasmussen will honor Katrice LaCour, Zydeco musician in Natchitoches; and Jennifer Ritter Guidry will honor Lawrence "Black" Ardoin, Traditional Creole accordion musician in Lake Charles. The Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities will support Folklife Month by funding the artist honoraria. Folklife Month will be featured in the LEH Fall issue of *64 Parishes*, which is focused on folklife. It is not certain whether Folklife Month will be featured in the *Preservation in Print* October issue.

**Bayou Culture Collaborative:** Several events were scheduled to happen as the coronavirus pandemic started. All plans have been suspended. The Division of the Arts has extended the activity period until December 31, 2020, so we hope that some events will be able to happen. We have told all of those planning *Passing It On* workshops and mini-apprenticeships that their funding is still dedicated, and, as they are able, we will support them with their revised plans. The possibility of resuming *Sense of Place* workshops has yet to be determined.

**Musical Instruments Project:** The exhibit based on Holly Hobbs' essay, *Innovation, Tradition, and Change in Louisiana Musical Instrument Making and Repair* and designed by Megan Barra was completed and displayed at Folk Alliance International conference in New Orleans on January 22-26. The exhibit consists of three pull-up banners and will be made available to organizations throughout the state when appropriate. [http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/Articles\\_Essays/instruments1.html](http://www.louisianafolklife.org/LT/Articles_Essays/instruments1.html).

**House Dance Songs: The Willie and Irma Durisseau Project:** Louis Michot was able to document 101-year-old fiddler Willie Durisseau and his wife Irma through Louisiana Folk Roots before he passed away. The final product will be an essay to be added to the Folklife in Louisiana website.

**Archiving Photo Collection:** Pausing Folklife Program projects due to the pandemic lockdown allowed for time to focus on preparing the Program's extensive digital photo collection for archiving with the analog photos. Files not appropriate for archiving have been culled (duplicates or images scanned from the analog collection) and placed in folders. A list of all photographers represented in the collection with photo rights detailed has been drafted. Remaining work includes adding photo logs and renaming files as needed. The images had been organized by projects and then photographers, but the LSU library system is based on photo content, so extensive renaming of folders is also needed to retain project and photographer data once folders are reorganized.