

**MINUTES OF THE
LOUISIANA FOLKLIFE COMMISSION MEETING
Via Zoom
Baton Rouge, LA
Friday, January 15, 2021**

Folklife Commission members present: Ray Berthelot, Brian Davis, Teresa Parker Farris, Herman Fuselier, Tommy Ike Hailey, Rebecca Hamilton, Jim Hogg, Karen Leathem, Miranda Restovic, Susan Roach, Ray Scriber, John Sharp, Kim Walden.

Folklife Commission members absent: John Silver, Sharon Calcote

Guests and Louisiana Office of Cultural Development (OCD) staff present: Carrie Broussard, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of Cultural Development; Maida Owens, Louisiana Division of the Arts; Kelsea McCrary, Louisiana Division of the Arts

I. CALL TO ORDER

Teresa Parker Farris opened the meeting of the Louisiana Folklife Commission at 1:10 pm via Zoom.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approval of the minutes for the meetings of June 12, 2020 was accepted. Susan Roach moved, and John Sharp seconded.

III. REPORTS

A. Chair Report – Teresa Parker Farris

Parker Farris acknowledged the deaths of Commissioners Jennifer Ritter Guidry and Cheryl Castille, noting her gratitude for the opportunity to work with them. After a moment of silence to pause and reflect, Commissioners commented that their deaths represented great losses to the state and the folklife network. Rebecca Hamilton said that the State Library will purchase books in memory of Cheryl Castille with input from the Division.

Parker Farris acknowledged the attendance of Carrie Broussard as interim LDOA director and Kelsea McCrary as LDOA cultural districts director. She noted that Sharon Calcote could not attend due to traveling. She reported on the status of the commission vacancies, which fall into three categories: 1) names submitted, awaiting appointment (Tourism, Historic Preservation, and State Arts Council); 2) waiting for positions to be filled (LDOA, Archaeology, Jean Lafitte National Park; and 3) awaiting CRT nominations (2 university-faculty and 1 ethnic/regional rep positions).

Parker Farris led a discussion about ways to assess and/or acknowledge the pandemic's impact on tradition bearers. Commissioners considered surveying tradition bearers and posting the results on the folklife website or various Facebook pages. Considering that the LDOA strategic plan survey included questions about the pandemic's impact and that people are often reluctant to participate in surveys, they decided to table this and asked Owens to look for other opportunities for collecting this information. Parker Farris asked Commissioners who may want to pursue this further to contact her.

Parker Farris next revisited the discussion from June's commission meeting discussion about ways to acknowledge systemic racism and the reaction to George Floyd and Breonna Taylor's deaths. The commission concluded it would not make a formal statement on the issue.

B. LDOA Budget Report – Carrie Broussard

Broussard reported that the arts budget, programs, and staff are expected to continue as last year. In FY21, the Office of Cultural Development received a cut of \$50,000 from staff travel. Given that professional development opportunities had all occurred online due to the pandemic, the cut was negligible. In FY22, OCD expects a cut of \$125,000 that will similarly have minimal impact, but the Division of the Arts will not receive a cut. Interviews for the Division of the Arts director will start the next week.

C. Director's Report – Maida Owens

Owens directed Commissioners to her written report attached to the agenda and added that the collaboration with CWPPRA's podcast is uncertain due to Guidry's unexpected death. She will be a juror for the program's student writing contest this spring. LDOA will offer two Sense of Place workshops for the arts network this spring. Additional Passing It On workshops have been confirmed and two others are in development. Owens will participate in a webinar by LSU Sea Grant about cultural issues and land loss January 28 and in a virtual roundtable at Society for Applied Anthropologists on March 22. Owens reported that the Governor's office is working to fill 9 commission vacancies.

Owens reported that she is requesting changes to the Folklife Commission legislation to help enable more diversity among commission members. Since the current legislative session is limited to fiscal matters, the changes will not be considered until FY22. Parker Farris asked whether there is a way to mentor or involve younger folklorists. Roach and Owens commented this occurs through the Louisiana Folklore Society and noted young scholars are welcome to attend Commission meetings given they are open to the public.

Parker Farris applauded Owens' efforts to focus on climate change's impact on our cultures.

IV. BUSINESS

A. Folklife Month 2020, 2021 – Teresa Parker Farris

Parker Farris referred to the Folklife Month report in the Director's report for the 2020 events. She thanked Brian Davis for creating this year's promotional video and Miranda Restovic for LEH's support, including coverage in *64 Parishes*. Commissioners who served as ambassadors shared their experiences holding recognition events amid COVID-19. Goldman Thibodeaux's video by John Sharp and Herman Fuselier, which was part of the virtual Festivals Acadiens et Creoles, was commended as exceptional. Tommy Ike Hailey shared how Rick Adams took part in a front porch concert series that had started with the pandemic.

Teresa Parker Farris, John Sharp/Herman Fuselier, Jim Hogg, and Tommy Ike Hailey, and Susan Roach will consider serving as ambassadors in 2021. Owens will follow up and ask past ambassadors and Louisiana Folklore Society board members to participate so that, as in years' past, there are six honorees. Jim Hogg said he can help promote folklife events on his Sunday morning radio show that airs on stations throughout the state.

B. Special Meetings Committee - Teresa Parker Farris

Parker Farris reported that the Special Meeting Committee (Ray Berthelot, 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, June 11, 2021 at 1 pm at Capitol Park Welcome Center or via Zoom unless the Special Meetings Committee makes other arrangements.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioners shared that tradition bearers and friends of folklife had passed away, some due to COVID and others not: Hilton Lytle, Sarah Albritton, Jessie Smith, Wayne Foret, Jim Oertling and his wife, Georgie and Allen Manuel, Curtis Joubert, and Frank de Caro.

Brian Davis reported that the Louisiana Trust for Historic Preservation is adapting to the pandemic by moving its conference to August or September and hosting their Rambles in smaller towns. Preservation awards will still happen. He noted that the Cultural Districts Program applications are due August 1. He is working with Kelsea McCrary to focus on areas of the state that don't have cultural districts because this designation is needed to secure historic preservation tax credits.

Karen Leathem reported that the State Museum exhibit *Mystery in Motion: African American Masking and Spirituality* opens in February and will include virtual programming.

Teresa Parker Farris reported that the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival is moving to October and Sylvester Francis, a past Folklife Month tradition bearer and regular Jazz Fest demonstrator had passed away.

Rebecca Hamilton reminded Commissioners that the State Library would like ephemera on any Louisiana topic to be added to the Louisiana Room.

VI. ADJOURN

There being no further business to discuss, the Commissioners adjourned at 2:49 pm. Jim Hogg moved, and Karen Leathem seconded.

Folklife Program Director's Report – January 15, 2021. Maida Owens

Folklife Month 2020: Six Folklife Ambassadors participated in 2020. Some locations were able to have an event and others did not. Brian Davis again provided a video of all tradition bearers.

- Tommy Ike Hailey honored Rick Adams, singer/songwriter in Alexandria. It was presented at a front porch event by DC Sills that she live-streamed on Facebook and covered by the Alexandria Town Talk, <https://www.thetowntalk.com/story/news/2020/11/17/cenla-musician-honored-2020-la-tradition-bearer-award/6274411002/>
- Brian Davis honored Bogalusa Italian-American Club, St. Joseph's Day Altar Tradition without an event.
- John Pudd Sharp and Herman Fuselier honored Goldman Thibodeaux, Creole musician in Mallet, St Landry Parish. It was presented virtually as part of Festivals Acadiens et Creole on October 17, 2020.
- Teresa Parker Farris honored Grayhawk Perkins, Choctaw/Houma Nation Storyteller, Educator, and Musician from Mandeville without an event.
- Shane Rasmussen honored Katrice LaCour, Zydeco musician in Natchitoches. He was spotlighted on Red River Radio with a zoom call.
- Jennifer Ritter Guidry honored Lawrence "Black" Ardoin, Traditional Creole accordion musician in Lake Charles.

The Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities supported Folklife Month by funding the artist honoraria. Folklife Month was featured in the LEH Fall issue of *64 Parishes*, which focused on folklife. And Folklife Month was featured in the *Preservation in Print* October issue. LEH would like to feature Folklife Month again in 2021. They will need bios and hi res images by June 1.

The following 2021 Folklife Month schedule is proposed:

March 1 – Commissioners commit to being an ambassador. If less than six volunteer, I will ask LFS members.

April 1 – Ambassadors submit their plans – tradition bearer and tentative plans for the event and date.

May 15 – Ambassadors submit bio and hi res image for use by LEH. LEH refers readers to website for details on events. Maida creates webpage.

July 15 – Ambassadors submit date, place, event details for website.

August 2 – Maida requests proclamation and certificates, drafts press release.

Sept 1 – *Preservation in Print* deadline for Maida to submit

Late September – Lt Governor's office sends press release.

Bayou Culture Collaborative: Because the Division of the Arts extended the activity period for FY20 grants until December 31, 2020, most events were able to happen in Fall 2020. Passing It On workshops and events funded in FY21 also started in the fall. The following were supported or will be in the Spring.

Foodways workshop, Grand Bayou Indian Village

Paddle making and boatbuilding workshops, Center for Traditional Boat Building

Botanica: A Series of Conversations, Neighborhood Story Project

Cloth doll making, Jessica Brown

Brown cotton weaving, Elaine Larcade Bourque

Traiteuse Tradition Marlene Toups (French and English)

Palmetto weaving, Janie Luster, Ann Robichaux, Zoeanna B Verret

The day-long *Sense of Place* workshops remain suspended, but we offered a two-hour version via zoom at the Arts Summit on September 29, which featured Houma artist Monica Verdin and explored migration due to land loss. I presented about BCC to several groups this fall.

- Environmental Defense Council asked me present on Hispanics in Louisiana and BCC
- Delta Dispatches podcast
- Restore Or Retreat's COAST program network on December 10
- American Folklore Society

I also was asked to participate in planning to establish a National Estuarine Research Reserve (LaNEER) in Louisiana since they want to address the human dimension.

LDOA will present two Sense of Place and Loss workshops for the arts network. The first will be *Sense of Place and Loss – Arts Role in Responding to Land Loss*, and offered to arts leaders (Regional Arts Councils staff, Cultural Districts staff, State Arts Council members, and Folklife Commissioners) Thursday, Feb 25, 2021. 3 pm – 4:30 pm. It will explore the role of the arts in responding to Louisiana's land loss and its impact on our cultures. Artist Monique Verdin and arts administrator Sharbreon Plummer will share their perspectives along with LDOA staff. The second will be in April or May, will be open to other arts organizations and will explore arts programming that addresses land loss.

Rolonda Teal documented dominos in the African American community for the Neutral Strip.

LEH – Frank de Caro received 2020 Lifetime Contributions to the Humanities award posthumously from the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities. Bright Lights Online conversation with 2020 Lifetime Contributions to the Humanities awardees Linda and Bertney Langley and historian Denise Bates

Preserve Louisiana has been featuring cultural topics in their online zoom events, including Gary LaFleur's work at Nicholls and tribal issues.

Musical Instruments Project: Pending the status of the virus, we received a request to exhibit the *Innovation, Tradition, and Change in Louisiana Musical Instrument Making and Repair* exhibit for Fall 2021 in Beauregard Parish.

Archiving Photo Collection: Work continued on archiving. Laura Westbrook worked on the UNO Regional Folklife Program files. Dayna Lee submitted the NSU Regional Folklife Program photo files with photo and folder logs.