



Executive Summary

March 12, 2009

Neighborhoods Partnership Network (NPN) convened a group of residents representing over 30 neighborhood associations and non-profits in the city to discuss legislative priorities in advance of April 27, when state legislators will go into session in Baton Rouge.

NPN is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization that consists of a citywide network of neighborhoods; the organization was established after Katrina to facilitate collaboration, increase access to government and information, and strengthen the voices of individuals and communities across New Orleans.

The original purpose of the breakfast meeting was to allow NPN members, as representatives of diverse geographical and socioeconomic sectors, to air their concerns to state legislators themselves. However, with scheduling conflicts and other concerns preventing all but three legislative aides from attending, the meeting took shape instead as an opportunity for these citizen leaders to address and discuss issues of particular concern to New Orleanians. The topics covered included crime and safety; streets and roads; education; and general city recovery. Importantly, beyond merely discussing these issues, the breakfast provided attendees a space to collaborate and join forces as they prepare to advocate solutions to these problems to state legislators

NPN has compiled a full report of the notes from the meeting. As a call to action we will hold a follow-up meeting with all interested members of the NPN network and legislators, in which we will present a formal document outlining the network's concerns and priorities for the legislators.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Timolynn Sams'.

Timolynn Sams
Executive Director

Neighborhoods Represented

Broadmoor
Bunny Friends Neighborhood Association
Bywater Neighborhood Association
Carrollton Riverbend Association
Central Carrollton Association
Central City Renaissance Alliance
Esplanade Ridge
Garden District –Baronne Street
Gentilly Terrace and Gardens
Lower Garden District
Mid-City Neighborhood Association
Melia Subdivision
Milneburg
Oak Park Neighborhood Association
Real Timbers
Pensiontown
Rosedale
Pontilly Neighborhood Association

Agencies Represented

Rebuilding Together
Juvenile Justice Project of LA (JJPL)
Levees.org
Beacon of Hope Resource Center
Louisiana Public Health Institute
CBNO/MAC
Worker Resource Center
Global Green

1. Loose transcript

Meeting started at about 7:35 a.m. Tilman Hardy, Advocacy Task force Chair, began by remarking that although no legislators had made it, he hoped they would “trickle in.” Claire Stockton, an aid for Representative Neil C. Abramson, introduced herself. NPN Board chair Julius Lee made a point of defining NPN as a “strong advocate for all” and apologized for not having the legislators.

Timolynn Sams: “Everyone here is part of a neighborhood group or community that did a survey on neighborhood priorities. We wanted to add to that agenda. Everything you’re saying is being documented – we want action to take place. What were your neighborhoods’ top priorities? We wanted to look at them ‘holistically.’

“Based on our survey, Crime, quality of life, safety and police are the big priorities. Now, talking in specifics, what are the things affecting the city of New Orleans?”

Question: “How does NPN weigh the responses? In a neighborhood of 500 with ten people responding, how does that compare to a neighborhood of half as many people with just as many responses?” Timolynn explained that survey data was based on 1 person from each neighborhood, usually in a leadership role. Julius Lee took this moment to ask members of NPN’s board to stand and be recognized for their work, before the discussion moved to:



Crime and Safety

As the National Guard has left New Orleans, focus of discussion moved to how to keep neighborhoods safe from crime. Algiers was one of the more concerned areas. It was agreed that the National Guard should be "transitioning" out of these areas, instead of leaving so quickly. New Orleans East in particular is worried about its low population of police officers.

Representatives from Broadmoor took this opportunity to emphasize their priority of finding funding for the Public Defender's office. They maintain that "the state is not funding that office at a level that it should – they need to step up to the plate [and] New Orleans legislature need to bring it home" if they're to appear "serious about public safety."

Another community member said that people needed to consider housing as part of this, and work to remove squatters and fix blight. Although City Hall is saying that there is "a sufficient number of police per capita, we need to measure if it is enough of a footprint."

Carrollton neighborhood representatives voiced concerns about "juvenile justice reform," and proper attention to funds distributed to sheriffs. They explained that "most sheriffs have resources dating back as far as ten years" and are now holding back on providing funds that local residents need.



A small discussion about the "broken windows theory" of combating crime also broke out, with some neighborhoods maintaining that cleaning up neighborhoods was an effective deterrent against crime, as it forced criminals to consider that their actions were being observed. A woman speaking about the 9th Ward took the opposite approach that people knew there were not enough police watching the area and that they could be easily tricked.

Streets and Roads

"You get to Baton Rouge, the streets and roads are not what we have here," one neighborhood member commented, to which Timolynn added, "New Orleans killed my car."

"We're facing licensed contractors who don't pay attention work overnight on all states and municipalities. We need to hold state builders accountable," was the general consensus, which was broadened to include "hospitals and healthcare."

A similar, general concern for safety was "hurricane relief," and the possibility of Orleans Parish not being involved in the discussions for effective post-hurricane recovery. Regarding these repairs with concerns about streets and roads, one woman commented that, as many of the roads are linked to the state, such as the "deplorably [kept] I-10," we need to consider if there are "funds for beautification that we're not seeing," such as "FEMA dollars." The idea of reaching out to Jefferson Parish to discuss their recovery funds was briefly touched on. Additionally, the stimulus package does include transportation money.



Stimulus

"Bobby Jindal is not taking stimulus dollars" was a common complaint. People disagreed over the reasons for this, verbalizing that the Governor's major concern was that after two years, Louisiana residents would be taxed on the stimulus. Participants maintained that, were there a "little more creativity," there were more things that could be done with the funds. As the funds themselves represent more money than "may ever be available for the city again," citizens need to express their anxieties. Even if it requires "a detailed overview of how we benefit," it may mean "many dollars for the community." An additional concern was money being channeled toward non-profits, with the hope that pressure could be put on the Governor to produce new funds.

"Hospitals are suffering" without money or insurance and need to look beyond the "Charity Hospital system" (and consider the turn-around affecting that hospital.

The stimulus may be our "last-chance ever" to set up a rail system connecting downtown to the airport or Baton Rouge. We need a stable, institutionalized method for reaching out to the Government if we expect them to hear our concerns.



"There is currently no funding in place for a single Orleans Parish Project."

"While we are renovating homes, we are not doing anything with energy efficiency." Resources "have been cut and legislators need to stand up for funding Road Home and giving people adequate care."

A spokesperson from NPN reminded people of the value of writing comments down, and asked that participants who belonged to programs that lost funds make note of it.

Education

Although we did not discuss education to the length we hoped to, we made sure to note that by 2010, schools will have to return to the school board. Not all may be city-run at that point.

Meeting wrapped by 9:00 with thanks to attendees.

2. Indexed Comments

Crime and Safety

- Increased state funding for DAs and Public Defenders
- Support of further Juvenile Justice Reform in the state, funding of evidence-based alternatives incarceration, detention and efforts to incorporate "Missouri Model"

- Greater accountability to police officers, not just increased funding and officer presence
- Support of Office for Independent Monitor
- Can legislators bring contractors who steal Road Home monies to justice?
- Need after-school programs coordinated with faith-based communities
- Housing/work with Entergy to bring in energy efficient homes
- Additional funds for training juvenile offenders upon release. Give these young people ways to make a decent living!
- Extend ICC funds
- Good education is imperative to reducing crime.
- Do not increase homestead exemption!
- The sentencing of juveniles to life without parole is bad public policy; it fails to deter crime and structures justice and correctional systems as punitive, rather than rehabilitative. A juvenile sentenced to life without parole must also have the option of parole following his/her 31st birthday.

Streets and Roads

- Public Works may not be using state transportation funds efficiently
- New Orleans' roads and streets are the worst in the state – we need to influence those responsible
- Money for transportation should be used to build a "light rail" or fast train to Baton Rouge and extend the existing streetcar

Health and Hospitals

- Renovate Charity Hospital
- Put a community health center in place
- Review School board health clinics

-Do not tear down and replace Charity Hospital!



Education

-Property taxes largely fund public education and Louisiana has the worst public education system in the US

-We need to back statewide education fund

-Need a law that reduces the number of years before houses with code enforcement liens can be foreclosed and seized for sale

Stimulus

-Energy Smart Proposal passed by City Council last summer – use stimulus to fund

-Why was Global Green's 10k appropriation vetoed by Gov. Jindal last year?

-need to communicate to citizens and neighborhood groups the steps they need to take to access stimulus funds for issues such as weatherization

-Need to better define who is eligible for funds in non-profit sector and avoid vetoes.



Groups that had funding cut

-Pontilly Disaster Recovery Center

Other

- State Legislature must re-confirm support for the 8/29 Investigation Act, an analysis of the levee failure at both state and federal levels.
- How can we make New Orleans less isolated from the whole of Louisiana?
- Do not cut funds for Senior Citizens
- Need a meeting with the Governor ASAP!