

At the August meeting of the Fairgrounds Citizens Advisory Committee, we were asked to consider and get neighborhood input on some proposals by the Fairgrounds. That is the purpose of this e-mail. At this stage, I am just conveying information for your response.

You can respond by attending a special meeting of the three area neighborhood associations (DeSaix, Fairgrounds Triangle, and Fauborg St. John) on Sept. 10 (details below), attending the general meeting of the DeSaix Area Neighborhood Assn on Sept 12 at 10:00 a.m. at Langston Hughes school, and/or sending me and the other members of the Fairgrounds Citizens Advisory Committee your e-mails (addresses below) or e-mailing your city council members. We need your responses before the next FGCAC special meeting on September 16.

**1. Fourth of July celebration:** the Fairgrounds proposes to host a family oriented, carnival type celebration, with fireworks of some sort, on or around the 4th of July to provide an alternative to the French Quarter fireworks. A one day event, approximately 11 a.m. to 9 p.m., is suggested. There are no definite plans; it is just an idea so far. Here are some of the related ideas:

- a. The Fairgrounds would allow the neighborhood associations to man the concession stands for the event as a money making project (like the drink booths for the Jazz Fest)
- b. While it would be marketed as a family, neighborhood event, it may draw people from all over the New Orleans area. parking and security would be issues;
- c. Because the Essence festival already has NOPD stretched thin on the 4th, the exact date may have to be adjusted or other security sources, like the sheriff's office, may have to be considered.
- d. One neighbor reports that several years ago, the Fairgrounds had some family events in the parking lot with face painting and pony rides.
- e. Some neighbors have proposed that, if this idea is approved and moves into planning stages, that each of the three adjoining neighborhood associations have two members on a steering committee to assist and oversee the planning for this event in 2010, and, if it is successful, for future years.

**2. Proposal for EXPANDED HOURS OF CASINO OPERATION:** Currently the Fairgrounds Casino operates from 9 am to midnight, Monday to Saturday and 10 am to midnight on Sundays, under strict statues and hard fought provisos. The Fairgrounds wants to expand the hours of operation, staying open past midnight, until 1, 2, 3, or 4 a.m. They would consider a later starting time. Here are some of the factors proposed by the Fairgrounds, committee members, and neighbors at some preliminary meetings:

- a. The Fairgrounds says that crime statistics have not shown a rise in crime in the area since the casino opened, so the fears about having a casino in a neighborhood, should be eased.
- b. It is difficult for the Fairgrounds to get their customers to leave at midnight. It causes a lot of traffic through the area at midnight (as opposed to everyone leaving at different times and spreading out the traffic.)
- c. A test period of a few months or up to a year with some expanded could be considered. d. The current provisos require the Fairgrounds to provide 2 patrol cars for the enhanced neighborhood patrols, every 4 years. NOPD and the Fairgrounds state that the current cars that were purchased will not last for the 4 years, due to mileage and wear and tear. If the expanded hours were allowed, the Fairgrounds would agree to replace the cars every 3 years.

- e. If the expanded hours were allowed, the Fairgrounds would establish a fund to be used by the 3 adjoining neighborhood groups for neighborhood projects, like parks, beautification, etc.
- f. The expanded hours would provide or create more jobs at the Fairgrounds. Many believe that is just a step in the ultimate plan for a 24 hour casino.
- g. The current clientele at the Fairgrounds is mainly local and neighborhood people. That demographic could change if hours were expanded. But, as others pointed out, the Fairgrounds casino is not a "high roller" place and is less likely to attract a threatening element. The Fairgrounds is limited by statute as to the number of machines they can operate. They are not at capacity at the present time. If hours expand, the number of machines (and # of customers) might expand as well.
- h. If the provisos were opened to allow the hours to be expanded, it potentially could open all of the provisos to amendment, including whether there are any enhanced patrols at all.
- i. The Fairgrounds has not been responsible or kept promises made to DeSaix about complaints that arise during racing season with traffic, noise, the dormitory, the back gate, semi trucks, etc. Fulfillment of those promises should come first to re-establish trust.
- j. Everyone wanted more details. We are scheduling a meeting of the 3 area neighborhood associations (DeSaix, Fairground Triangle, and Fauborg St.John) on **Thursday, September 10 at 6:30 p.m. The location of the meeting is not firm yet, so we will send out that information soon.** Here are some questions and answers that have been provided so far:

1. Does the Fairgrounds have a "Casino" license? **Fairgrounds ads for their off-track betting parlors, says "Fairgrounds Race Course and Casinos" and someone wondered "Since there are a finite number of Casino licenses in the state, I wonder how they came to be able to advertise their OTB parlors as casinos? Fairgrounds' answer: The logo / signage below is actually what we use at our OTB's which contain video poker machines. It has nothing to do with the slot facility.**
2. What is the tax revenue the City has been receiving (\$ figure) from the Fairgrounds monthly/quarterly and how much more - at the possible 10% increase in revenue - will it produce? **Fairgrounds' answer: I will put together some numbers for the tax revenue. Should you get asked about taxes in advance of the meeting we pay an 18% horseman's tax on gross gaming revenue, then apply an 18.5% State tax and 4% local tax (the maximum allowable under State law).**
3. Staffing, # of f/t, p/t employees at the slots now, # of f/t, p/t you would add and # you employ during racing season. **Fairgrounds' answer: Staffing, of course, will be more difficult to pin down because it is variable based on what adjustments may be made to the hours.**
- 4.. An official breakdown of the Patrol costs: "around \$650,000?" Officers, cars, other. **Fairgrounds' answer: No problem (to get this info by 9/16 meeting) on the FG patrol costs**

**Please attend the DeSaix Area Neighborhood Assn's general meeting on Saturday, September 12 at 10 at Langston Hughes school to discuss these proposals. Or attend the meeting of the 3 associations on Sept. 10- stay tuned for the location. Or e-mail me or any of the other FGAC members at:**

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