

VCPORA's Weekly Vieux Friday, January 8, 2021

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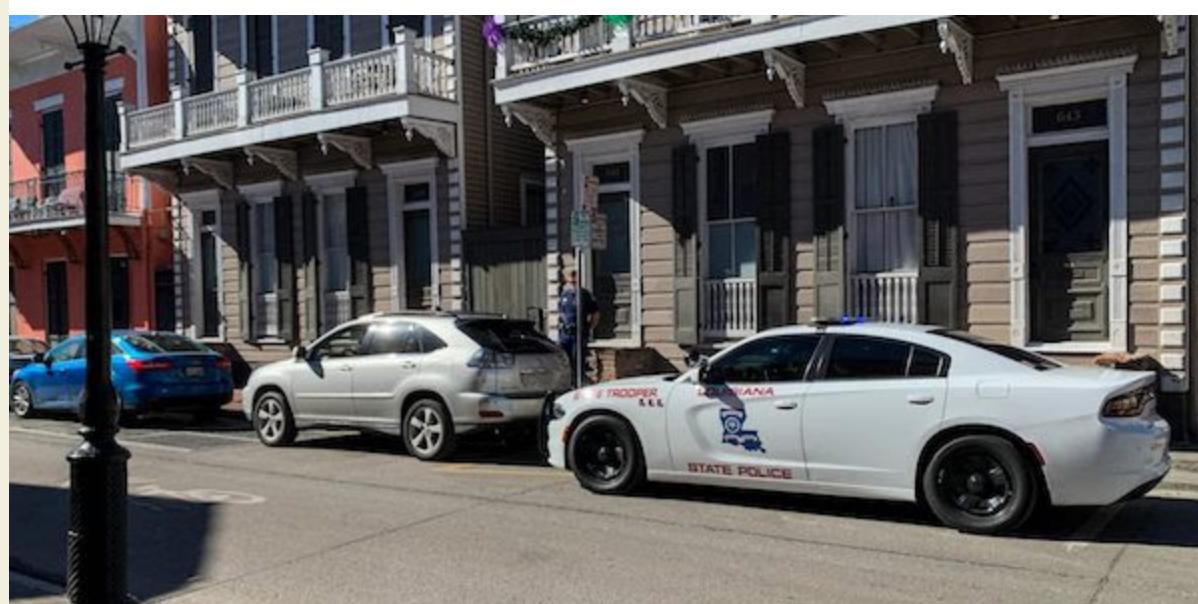


Photo by Marta Jewson via The Lens

Economic Development District Security Tax Update

On December 5th, voters within the French Quarter Economic Development District (FQEDD) rejected the renewal of the “Quarter for the Quarter” a .2495% sales tax established in 2016 that was previously used to partially fund the Louisiana State Troopers’ “Troop N” in the French Quarter. Given the [additional cuts to public safety](#) services due to the economic fallout of the COVID pandemic, it was clear by mid-2020 that there would not be sufficient supplemental funds to continue supporting this unit.

Instead, French Quarter stakeholders worked to prioritize these scarce resources for public safety through the existing [Supplemental Police Patrol Program](#), aka the French Quarter Task Force, administered by the [French Quarter Management District \(FQMD\)](#) since 2015. The Administration endeavored to introduce a new Grounds Patrol unit under the Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Preparedness using deputized civilian security patrols with the authority to issue municipal citations and detain subjects until the 8th District NOPD could arrive.

Residents, employees, and business owners raised concerns about spending the

only supplemental public safety funds available on non POST-certified police officers, particularly as the French Quarter Task Force was a proven and accountable patrol unit. After months of negotiations, a compromise between the [competing visions](#) of the Administration, the FQEDD Governing Authority (City Council) and the FQMD could not be met.

VCPORA, along with [many stakeholder organizations](#), opposed the renewal of the sales tax in efforts to prioritize all supplemental revenues to be spent on POST Certified NOPD patrols. With no binding Cooperative Endeavor Agreement (CEA) in place directing how the funds would be utilized, the tax renewal ballot measure failed with 67% in opposition.

Efforts to craft a new security measure began immediately. The City Council passed a [Notice of Intent](#) for an April 24, 2021 ballot that would recreate the quarter-cent sales tax to maximize [POST-certified](#) proactive patrols in the French Quarter. Discussions around a new proposal stipulate that the first \$2 million of yearly collections will be devoted solely to the administration and programming for patrols. Once that floor is met, additional tax revenues would be split between increasing patrols and providing funding to programs to address quality-of-life and homeless services in the district, which include the [LEAD program](#) and the Homeless Assistance Unit. The patrol would include Bourbon Street, traffic/oversized vehicles, and quality of life enforcement.

The Task Force will continue to patrol the streets in the interim. On December 31st, the FQMD Board voted to approve a motion to enter into a CEA with the City of New Orleans to allow the FQMD to continue to fund and operate the Task Force for up to six months.

As these efforts move forward, it is vital that voters will be able to see a final plan for the expenditure of the proposed sales tax well before the election. VCPORA will continue to provide updates but we also want to hear from you, our members, on your priorities for supplemental security in the neighborhood.



Outdoor Live Entertainment Study

In January of 2020, the City Council [formally requested](#) the City Planning Commission to study Outdoor Live Entertainment regulations in the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance (CZO) and City Code to determine if modifications are warranted. This motion followed a [controversial ban](#) on outdoor entertainment that arose during a 2019 Safety & Permits interpretation of live entertainment in the CZO.

The [Outdoor Live Entertainment study](#), released in December 2020, analyzes New Orleans' existing infrastructure – including permitted venues, zoning and overlay districts, temporary permitting structures, both citywide and by neighborhood along with similarly situated cities' regulations for comparison and best practices.

Some of the [temporary](#) recommendations from the study include:

- An easing of special event permits in response to COVID restrictions on indoor live entertainment for a suggested one year period of time. The study recommends increasing the number of special event permits per venue from 12 per year to 2-3 per week, which would be available through issuance of a single permit for up to all days of the year when entertainment would be planned
- Including standardized hours of operation: **12:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. Monday - Thursday, 12:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. Friday, 11:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. Saturday, and 11:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m. Sunday.**
- Require a rear yard buffer equivalent to the required rear yard, or a minimum of 15 ft. whichever is greater
- Documentation of repeated violations may result in revocation of a temporary permit. Complaints of violations must be verified by City officials.

However, the study does go further in considering long-term or [permanent](#) changes to the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance including amendments to the governing definitions of *Outdoor Amusement Facilities, Reception Facilities, Public Markets, Cultural Facilities, and Live Entertainment - Secondary Use*.

VCPORA is working with other neighborhood organizations and City departments to develop recommendations based on the study for sound management in the French Quarter and other residential areas. It is vital to support our local economy during these difficult and restricted times but outdoor live entertainment must be effectively regulated to assure peaceful cohabitation with all neighbors. Further, the City needs to approach any temporary easing of restrictions with a sunset date and a process for evaluation.

It must be noted, and is underscored in the study, that without an enforceable sound ordinance in place, any permanent expansion of outdoor live entertainment is premature. The Department of Health was charged with that task approximately two years ago yet has been understandably preoccupied by the COVID-19 Pandemic for the better part of a year.

The French Quarter currently does not allow for live entertainment in courtyards or other outdoor spaces unless a special events permit is obtained. Other indoor live entertainment venues are granted this privilege through their underlying zoning (VCE and VCE-1), Conditional Uses, or Mayoralty permits. Those venues are also governed by additional restrictions, such as the requirement that all doors and windows must be closed during performances. These restrictions have rarely been enforced, particularly on Bourbon Street, and sound related issues have consistently threatened residential quality of life for decades.

Next Steps

The CPC will hold a [public hearing](#) on January 26 at 1:30 pm to consider the study. The Commission may choose specific recommendations to endorse, defer the agenda item to a later date for additional consideration, or forward to the City Council with or without modifications. Once the City Council receives the study, they may take as long as needed to read and consider their options as they are under no legal obligation or timeline to act upon it. If the Council passes a motion to implement any text changes to the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance based on the study, an additional round of public hearings, both with the City Planning Commission and City Council, would be triggered.

Public comments may be submitted via email to CPCinfo@nola.gov; the deadline for written comments is January 18, 2021 at 5:00 p.m. Be on the lookout for suggested language from VCPORA, to be included in next week's Weekly Vieux and please share your thoughts with us.



Flood Resilience Lecture

Wednesday, January 20

5:30 - 6:30 p.m.

Zoom

Join VCPORA and VCC Foundation on January 20 for the first of two lectures exploring flood resilience lead by Dominique M. Hawkins. In our first session, learn about Louisiana's flood types, the National Flood Insurance Program, Flood Insurance Rate Maps, the increasing threat of flooding, and historic preservation as part of the Emergency Management Cycle. See our [Facebook event](#) for more details.

A current membership and RSVP are required for admission. Call VCPORA at (504) 581-7200 or email us at info@vcpora.org to check in on your membership status and reserve your spot! Newcomers can also become 2021 members on the [VCPORA website](#).



Quarterly Lunch & Learn Series Paused

As Louisiana moves into a modified Phase One (see below for details) and gatherings are restricted to households, VCPORA has put a temporary pause on our Quarterly Lunch & Learn series. We wish to thank the Windsor Court for their flexibility and to you, our supporters, for your patience. We hope to resume this series when it is safe to do so again.

Effective Friday, Jan. 8, 2021

Modified Phase One Overview

PHASE 1

	No gatherings or events except for a single household
	Indoor activities reduced to 25% capacity

New Orleans Moves into Modified Phase One

The City of New Orleans moves into a [Modified Phase One](#) today due to COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations reaching a statewide record high. The guidelines, which will last for at least three weeks, prevent gatherings and special events except for people who live together in a single household. All indoor activities will be reduced to 25% of permitted occupancy. Indoor and outdoor sporting events will be reduced to 4% of permitted occupancy. Restaurant tables indoors and outdoors will be limited to 6 people and everyone must be from the same household.

In addition to these further restrictions, the City of New Orleans has announced the extension of [the Parklet Pilot program](#) which promotes outdoor drinking and dining options for residents as part of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The [New Orleans Regional Transit Authority](#) also encourages all riders to use transit for essential travel only, such as travel to and from work, to medical appointments, pharmacies, and grocery stores. This change is meant to mitigate further spread of COVID-19.



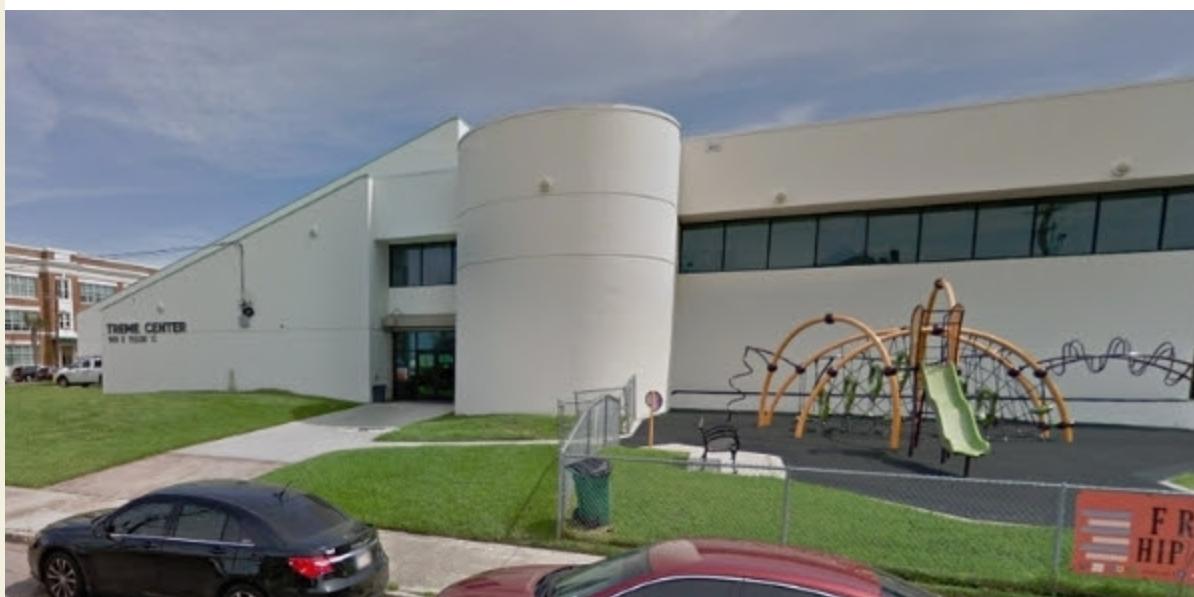
COVID-19 Vaccines Available Now

Louisiana received limited doses of Moderna's COVID-19 vaccines this week for distribution to persons aged 70 years or older, medical personnel, and students, residents, faculty and staff of health schools. Patients must [contact a participating pharmacy](#) and make an appointment. Walk-ups will not be accepted. See [NOLA Ready](#) for the list of participating pharmacies in Orleans Parish.



City Activates Freeze Plan

In anticipation of cold weather, the City of New Orleans will activate the [Citywide Freeze Plan](#) tonight and tomorrow night to provide shelter to homeless residents. If someone is in need of shelter, please call the NOPD non-emergency number at (504) 821-2222. Covenant House at [611 N. Rampart Street](#) will accept individuals age 22 and under, their dependent children, and any women with dependent minor children. Additional shelters and tips for enduring the cold weather can be found in [this press release from the City](#).



Community Office Hours Resume

The Mayor's Neighborhood Engagement Office is bringing back Community Office Hours so that residents can meet with neighborhood liaisons and city personnel in-person or by virtual appointment. Due to COVID-19, Community Office Hours will be by appointment only to be scheduled via phone at (504) 658-4933 or online on [the City's website](#). District C Eastbank residents can visit the Treme Rec Center, [900 N Villere Street](#), on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays from 10:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. For more information, see [the Community Office Hours page](#).



FROM THE CAPTAIN'S DESK

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM THE NOPD'S EIGHTH DISTRICT

NOPD 8th District Update

Commander Anthony Caprera has released his January edition of "From the Captain's Desk", an 8th District NOPD Newsletter. Read it for December crime statistics, COVID-19 updates, community news, and more. Questions or feedback

for the Commander can be directed by email to ajcaprera@nola.gov or by phone to (504) 658-6724.



#FQThenandNow

VCPORA and the [Vieux Carré Commission Foundation](#) continue our #FQThenAndNow series this week with a post on [622 Dauphine Street](#). Head over to [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) to check it out. This weekly series showcases historic pictures, current pictures, and fun facts about our favorite French Quarter locales. Follow #FQThenAndNow the [Vieux Carré Commission Foundation](#) so you don't miss any upcoming posts from this series.

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