

**THE LOUISIANA CIVIL RIGHTS MUSEUM ADVISORY BOARD
MINUTES FROM THE MEETING HELD AT
THE BLAKE HOTEL
500 ST CHARLES AVE. NEW ORLEANS, LA. 70130
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2025
1:00 PM**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Sidney Barthelemy, Karl Connor, Wanda Davis, Priscilla Edwards, Blake Jones, Ernest Jones, Paula Peer, Harry Rosenthal, Ed Ward, Brenda Williams, Dr. Terrance Vinson.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Madlyn Bagneris, Roland Belsome, Tyler Bruno, Senator Royce Duplessis, Thelma French, Reginald Owens, Loyce Wright, Emmanuel Smith.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Wendy Lodrig.

LSM STAFF PRESENT: Rebecca Mackie, Blaze D'Amico, Chris Cook, Cody Scallions, Jeff Anding, Nicole Coleman.

ALSO PRESENT: Darleen Peters

A quorum was present.

1. **Call to Order** – Sidney Barthelemy called the meeting to order at 1:28 p.m. facilitated introductions among attendees and guests. Board members were thanked for their participation, noting the contributions of those who traveled from a distance.
2. **Adoption of the Agenda** – Brenda Williams motioned to adopt the agenda. The motion was seconded by Ernest Jones, and it was unanimously approved.
3. **Public Comments** – There were no comments from the public.
4. **Adoption of minutes** – Karl Connor motioned to adopt the meeting notes from October 14, 2025. The motion was seconded by Dr. Terence Vinson, and it was unanimously approved. Karl Connor motioned to adopt the minutes from August 12, 2025. The motion was seconded by Paula Peer, and it was unanimously approved.
5. **Chairman's Report** – Sidney Barthelemy reported that Chris Cook and Cody Scallions have been collaborating with the Jefferson Parish School Arts Program for a display of student artwork in January and February 2026. Educational programming was discussed. Chris Cook reported on the Jefferson Parish Public Schools collaboration, noting that last year marked their first partnership with student artwork displayed from 15 schools.

Karl Connor encouraged board members to participate in speaking engagements at local schools in advance of the Jefferson Parish student artwork submissions. Karl also invited members outside New Orleans to explore opportunities in their local communities.

Sidney Barthelemy invited discussion on potential participation in Martin Luther King Jr. Day events in New Orleans, noting that the SCLC had historically sponsored a march. Board members discussed exploring opportunities to participate, both in the march and in related activities that could drive attendance to the museum exhibits. A question was raised regarding free admission to the Civil

Rights Museum on MLK Day, and it was decided by Becky Mackie that the museum would be open to the public free of charge on that day.

6. **Director's Report** – Becky Mackie introduced Blaze D'Amico as the new Director of Development and invited her to share her background. Fundraising, events, and training were discussed.

Members were encouraged to RSVP for Caroling in the Square on December 21st. She also announced the upcoming exhibit on the Illinois Clubs (both Young Men and original), scheduled to open January 29th at the Presbytere, noting that most installation costs have been successfully covered through community sponsorships.

The Director's Report concluded with a training update, reminding members that the state board required training for 2025 must be completed by December 31st. Nicole Coleman has provided a tracking schedule indicating outstanding modules. Board members experiencing issues with accessing training links were advised to contact Nicole for assistance or to schedule time at the Presbytere to use a computer with support.

7. **Bylaws/Committee/Members/Officers** – Ernest Jones reported that the board's bylaws, adopted in 2021, require updates due to developments and questions arising since their adoption. He noted that the Bylaws Committee, which includes himself and board attorneys Wanda Davis and Blake Jones, plans to meet in January to discuss the necessary changes. He also acknowledged another committee member, Loyce Wright, who has not yet participated in prior meetings.

8. **Content Committee Report** - No committee content report was provided as Loyce Wright was unable to attend the meeting due to a family emergency.

9. **Friends of the Louisiana Civil Rights Museum Report**- Karl Connor reported for the Friends, highlighting efforts to reconnect with the LeBlanc Collection, which could enhance the museum's credibility and partnerships if suitable space is secured. He also updated on the Charles Page exhibit, including a 4–6-minute educational film with animated segments and interviews, scheduled for completion in January.

Docent training is being rescheduled for January to prepare for 2026 tours and convention-related high-attendance days. He encouraged statewide outreach, including satellite exhibits and local school partnerships, to expand the museum's impact.

Darlene Peters provided an update on the wellness initiative. She shared that visiting the museum with a group of seniors last summer offered valuable insights into visitor experiences. Attending recent docent training helped her understand both visitor and staff perspectives, particularly regarding recognizing and responding to trauma. She is developing internal support ideas for museum staff and considering signage or small takeaways to enhance visitor engagement.

A question was raised regarding the museum's fundamental goals and legislative needs. The speaker emphasized the importance of clearly defining what the museum seeks—both in terms of space and content—so that efforts are focused and effective. They highlighted the desire for a contemporary, dynamic museum that tells the full story of civil rights in Louisiana, engages visitors with thought-provoking exhibits, and encourages feedback and participation. Clear articulation of the vision was noted as essential to avoid repeating past challenges and to ensure the museum grows with purpose.

Ernest Jones referenced the August capital outlay update and requested a status update on Priority One place planning funds, including any action items needed to move the funding forward.

Becky Mackie reported the capital outlay request for the Civil Rights Museum has been resubmitted. Facility Planning and Control has requested clarification on plans to expend the funds, noting that unspent funds may be subject to reallocation or may roll into the next fiscal year.

Discussion also addressed the \$25 million allocation in Priority Five. Members were encouraged to continue legislative advocacy while also considering alternative locations due to delays with the current site.

Karl Connor explained that discussions with Facility Planning and Control required legal clarification, after which it was confirmed that the project is permissible under existing law, provided certain conditions are met, including long-term commitments from the private property owner. While alternatives have not been ruled out, no new alternative locations have been proposed since earlier in the year. He reiterated that the Market Street site remains attractive due to its revenue-generating potential, historical significance, and ability to tell a comprehensive story tied to the wharf and surrounding areas. He added that achieving a forward-looking, immersive museum experience will require significant funding.

Sidney Barthelemy emphasized the importance of securing support from the Lieutenant Governor and Governor, noting that without their backing, funding prospects are limited.

Dr. Terence Vinson inquired about displaying artifacts at the Southern University System Museum. It was clarified that artifacts would be held by the Friends organization, allowing flexibility for display at other institutions. Dr. Vinson suggested exhibiting artifacts at Southern University of Shreveport during Black History Month and coordinating related programming, marketing, and speakers. He also noted ongoing efforts to potentially bring Colin Kaepernick to Shreveport in February as part of a civil rights-focused outreach initiative in North Louisiana.

10. Old Business – There was no old business.

11. New Business – There was no new business.

12. Adjourn – **Sidney Barthelemy** expressed confidence in the group's ability to move forward. He also thanked attendees for their participation and hospitality, noting appreciation to Blake Jones for the meeting space and refreshments. **The meeting was adjourned at 3:01 p.m.**

Minutes Accepted

Wanda Davis, Secretary