

Agenda Memorandum

Natchez-Adams county Economic Development Committee (NAEDC)

Prepared by: Riccardo Giani, City Planner

Date: January 14, 2019

Location: 124 S. Pearl Street, City Hall, Mayor's Conference Room.

Darryl Grennell welcomed the members of the Council, and wished everyone a Happy New Year. He thanked Alderwoman Smith for presiding over the meeting for him in his absence.

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, Mayor Grennell introduced a visitor to Natchez who happen to be standing in the hall delivering a letter to the Mayor's Office. Dave Redebeck, is a new visitor to Natchez and had a great experience, however he was disappointed to see some of the historic slave quarters being used as accessory buildings, not as assets to the tour. The following is Mr. Redebeck's letter:

"Hi Natchez! I have been on the road traveling, I am pulling a camper, and I got on the road in December of 2018. I traveled down Natchez Trace Parkway around 400 miles. I stopped and camped a few nights at the campsites along the Trace. I also enjoyed stopping and reading the signs at the historic sites. I found the information very interesting about the history of the Trace.

Once I reached Natchez, I toured the African American history and culture museum [NAPAC]. I also toured several of the antebellum homes. All of them are beautiful placed and each one has their own stories about the homes and the wealth, and very little about the servants and slaves. Except at Concord Quarters which is only the servant quarters. And the only one that gives a guided tour of the servant's quarters that I am aware of. I wish there would have been more talk about the slave and servants, and their role in helping build, and care for the antebellum homes and how the servants/slaves lived.

We all want our stories told and I believe most visiting want to hear the entire story. If I could change one thing, it would be removing the restroom from the slave/servant quarters at Longwood, and make those quarters part of the tour, telling their stories. Sometimes we have to look in the rear view mirror to see where we once were, to get a clearer view of where we should be.

I really like Natchez, the people, and the weather this time of year. I hope to return to Natchez again someday soon. Thank you for your time and kindness.”

Mayor Grennell agrees with the comments and concerns of the visitor by stating that the full story should be told, to view history’s events from multiple perspectives. Jennifer Combs added that the CVB is working with the private owners of homes that offer tours, to provide the resources so the right message can be told to visitors. Chesney Doyle added that this is really the first time in history that there is a platform to talk about controversial, yet important history. Mrs. Doyle continued by stating that Jeremy Houston is doing great things on this exact topic. On a tangent, she mentioned that Jeremy’s and his grandfather’s house caught fire this past weekend and sustained heavy damage. Mrs. Doyle provided donation information in regards to clothe and shoe sizes.

Mayor Grennell stated that bring this kind of message on a City level, through a downtown development director, could evolve into revenue and/or funding mechanisms for some of the projects in the Downtown Revitalization Plan, such as the Proud to Take a Stand Monument, expanding family activities, and others. Kathleen Bond, NPS, confirmed that the City, Community Alliance, and a Facebook page are avenues in which donations can be received for the Proud to Take a Stand monument. Mayor Grennell concluded with the statement that people will travel to see this monuments to the Civil Rights movement, as he traveled to Selma, AL, not knowing the treasure trove of civil rights history existing in Natchez.

Alderman Sarah Carter-Smith stated there are other states capitalizing on the development of cultural districts to trigger downtown revitalization. Jennifer Combs added by stating that there is still a lot to be learned and collected from our local population that are a part of living history. In addition, she stated that to get an idea of what a successful example is, she is planning a tour for local officials and tourism leaders to tour Whitney Plantation.