

1 HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

2
3 "WE BELIEVE IN NEW ORLEANS"

4
5 VOLUME IX

6
7 THE GERMAN & GREEK COMMUNITY

8 LISTENING SESSION

9
10 TUESDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2007

11
12 6:00 P.M.

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16 DR. MONTGOMERY-RICHARD AND FR. WALTER BAER,

17 CO-CHAIRS

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21 REPORTED BY:

22 DIANE W. MATHEWS, CCR

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JANE PARKER

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PATRICIA BIVINS

- 0 -

1 LISTENING SESSION

2 DR. COWAN:

3 Ladies and Gentlemen, good evening.
4 I'm Michael Cowan from Loyola University and I'm the
5 Chair of the Human Relations Commission. I want to
6 welcome you on behalf of the Commission to our listening
7 session this evening. I want to have the other members
8 of the Commission who are here and also, our executive
9 director, Larry Bagneris, if you would please stand and
10 introduce yourselves.

11 MR. ABDUL-SALAAM:

12 Aqeel Abdul Salaam, I'm a member of the
13 Human Relations Commission.

14 MR. STEWART:

15 Craig Stewart.

16 MR. HORNBOCK:

17 Tim Hornbock, member of the Human
18 Relations Commission.

19 DR. MONTGOMERY-RICHARD:

20 Margaret Montgomery-Richard, member of
21 the Human Relations Commission.

22 FR. BAER:

23 Walter Baer.

24 DR. COWAN:

25 And our executive director.

1 MR. BAGNERIS:

2 Larry Bagneris.

3 MR. COWAN:

4 This is the --

5 DR. MONTGOMERY-RICHARD:

6 Tenth.

7 DR. COWAN:

8 Tenth, thank you.

9 MR. BAGNERIS:

10 The ninth.

11 DR. COWAN:

12 The ninth in a series of, we're calling
13 these listening sessions, which has taken us almost a
14 year now, in which we're trying to listen to all of the
15 different groups that make up the diversity of the city.
16 With each group or session we have a particular theme or
17 concern in mind and that is: How do people feel either
18 included or not included in the life of New Orleans?
19 Respected or not respected, in the life of New Orleans?
20 And then related to that, we'd like to know what
21 thoughts do people have about how these problems about
22 inclusion or respect can be addressed.

23 Just so you know who has preceded you,
24 we have heard from the African American professional
25 community, the white professional community. We have

1 heard from people of Italian, Irish, English and French
2 influence, African American activists and organizers,
3 the Hispanic community, the gay and lesbian community,
4 residents of public housing. Then at the last session
5 which was in September we heard from the Asian
6 community.

7 At this time I'm going to turn the
8 microphone over to our two co-chairs for the session
9 this evening to explain the structure for this evening.
10 It's actually pretty simple, but really all I want to
11 add is that our purpose in doing this is that it will be
12 a year from beginning to end, when we complete these
13 sessions. The intention of the Human Relations
14 Commission is to listen deliberately to all of the
15 different groups that make up this city and to hear what
16 their concerns are here and what their contributions
17 are. Then when all of these sessions are completed, we
18 are going to report back to the city with a set of
19 recommendations to the Mayor and the City Council about
20 how we can do better on including all of the diverse
21 groups more fully into the life of the city in every way
22 that we can.

23 So I will turn it over to Margaret at
24 this point and we'll go forward with tonight's session.

25 Thank you for coming.

1 DR. MONTGOMERY-RICHARD:

2 Good evening.

3 Thank you, Mike. And thank you for
4 coming this evening. This is actually our ninth
5 session, our ninth listening session, and it's been very
6 enlightening for us to talk about how different groups
7 or segments of our community feel they made a
8 contribution to New Orleans, how they feel included or
9 disrespected in some arenas in New Orleans. And then
10 from hearing from the group, what kind of suggestions
11 they have in how they can feel more included, how they
12 can be more inclusive, how they can make a greater
13 impact in our community.

14 It's just been really enlightening to
15 hear from each group. As Mike said, our goal is to get
16 this done and get this information to the City Council
17 and to the Mayor. And really, as a member of the
18 Commission, this has probably been one of the most
19 exciting and informative experiences that I have had and
20 it enables us, because it has given us an opportunity to
21 hear from the different cultures and get an appreciation
22 and understanding of these cultures.

23 At this time I will turn it over to
24 Walter because he is going to facilitate the session and
25 get us started.

1 Thank you.

2 FR. BAER:

3 I think I am. I appreciate everyone
4 coming. The two groups that we are focusing on this
5 evening are the contributions of the German community
6 and of the Greek community to our city.

7 We're going to begin with the German
8 community and talk about their specific contributions.
9 Is there someone from the German-American Historical
10 group?

11 MS. FINLEY:

12 Yes, we have several of them here from
13 the German-American Cultural Center.

14 FR. BAER:

15 We will hear from them, we will also
16 hear from Deutsches Haus and then the Greek community as
17 well. And then anyone else can make comments from those
18 communities. I will then make some comments of my own
19 as well, being of Austrian and Swiss extraction.

20 Before we begin, I do want to let you
21 know that these comments are being recorded and are
22 going to be in written form as have each of the other
23 sessions and that is part of our presentation to the
24 City Council and to the Mayor which will take place.

25 So at this time we will begin with

1 Ms. Finley. Do you want to come forward or would you
2 prefer to speak from there?

3 MS. FINLEY:

4 I'll speak from here.

5 Thank you, it's a pleasure to be here
6 this evening. I think that this is really a wonderful
7 opportunity for us to all be here this evening and we
8 appreciate it.

9 My name is Sevilla Finley and I live in
10 Gretna. Gretna is a German community and we have a
11 German-American Cultural Center that was put together by
12 the National Park Services, certified by Congress. It's
13 a small little interpretive center that gives the
14 history and contributions of the German immigrants to
15 New Orleans and to the number of wider areas, actually,
16 it's not the whole state but it encompasses New Orleans
17 and surrounding parishes.

18 I'm just going to read from this
19 (indicating) because it's very brief and it gives the
20 historical background. I'm using a brochure, a
21 membership brochure, and so, "Germans have played a
22 major role in the development of Louisiana ever since
23 they settled the German Coast or La Cote des Allemands,
24 about 36 miles above New Orleans in 1721. They were
25 contracted by John Law to colonize Louisiana after the

1 Duc d'Orleans, the Regent of France, granted Law
2 permission to charter the Company of the West. The
3 German farmers endured many hardships. Their produce
4 fed the emerging City of New Orleans." They fed New
5 Orleans, they kept New Orleans fed and going at a time
6 when they didn't have food.

7 DR. HADLEY:

8 What is the date of that?

9 MS. FINLEY:

10 It was 1721 and they settled on the
11 German Coast which is the Saint's parishes, St. James,
12 St. John, St. Charles, and they came down.

13 "The original Germans were absorbed
14 into the French culture and their names were changed
15 from Heidel to Haydel, Himmel to Hymel, Zweig to
16 LaBranche and Zehringer to Zeringue, to name a few.
17 Descendants of the colonists still inhabit St. Charles,
18 St. James and St. John the Baptist parishes." Many of
19 the families still use the names, we talked about Sylvia
20 Haydel, well Haydel was from Heidel, that is a German
21 name. "Throughout the 1800s, New Orleans was a major
22 port of entry for German immigrants," where many of the
23 German immigrants came through. They, as well as many
24 other immigrants who then "went to Texas or to the
25 midwest." They went to Cincinnati, Missouri, however

1 many stayed here in New Orleans.

2 "By 1850, however, there were more
3 Germans than French in New Orleans. They were bakers,
4 blacksmiths, brewmasters, carpenters, dairymen, doctors,
5 engineers, farmers, florists, shoemakers and
6 shopkeepers." They were very skilled in brewing, and
7 you know New Orleans has a reputation of being second to
8 Milwaukee in its consumption of beer. We had many, many
9 German breweries in New Orleans such as, of course,
10 Jackson Brewery, that was owned by the Fabacher family,
11 which is a German name, family.

12 "Their cultural traditions included
13 love of family and religion. Their strong work ethic
14 helped to shape the destiny of Louisiana. Throughout
15 the 20th century, German immigrants have continued to
16 contribute to the Delta region of Louisiana."

17 We have some of our original German
18 people that came in, family members here today. These
19 (indicating) are some of the names, I'm going to just
20 leave this on the chair, but these are some of the
21 original Germans that came in the 1700s and they became
22 Gelason's, some of them are French. Many of the older,
23 the legend of Zweig, Z-W-E-I-G, I'll just provide a
24 little translation of LaBranche. The old story went
25 that Mr. Zweig married a French girl, and of course it

1 was the French priest who could read and write, not the
2 original pastor who came. And so the French had a hard
3 time with the hard sounding name, the German name, and
4 so he was having a struggle with Zweig and Mr. Zweig
5 picked up a little branch and broke it. And so then the
6 priest went, "Oh, Monsieur LaBranche." If you look in
7 the phone book today there are still quite a few
8 LaBranche's. In fact one of the most photographed
9 buildings in the French Quarter on Royal Street is the
10 three story LaBranche building with that beautiful lace
11 ironwork, that is the LaBranche building.

12 So that is about the overview of when
13 the German immigrants came. Actually we had more, at
14 one point we had more German people in New Orleans than
15 French during one of the immigration waves in the 1800s,
16 in the late 1800s. I would like to say that over
17 7,000,000 German immigrants came to America during the
18 1990 census. One fourth, actually more than one fourth
19 of the population of the United States was German
20 immigrants or claimed German ancestry. So there is a
21 very large factor from American that is of Germanic
22 background as well. As we know, the Germans are a very
23 family loving people and they are noted for their work
24 ethic as well.

25 Thank you; and we do have all of these

1 brochures and information about the German-American
2 Cultural Center which is located in Gretna. We are open
3 Wednesday through Saturday from 10:00 to 3:00 and we
4 would love to have you come and visit us.

5 DR. HADLEY:

6 What is the address in Gretna?

7 MS. FINLEY:

8 It's 537 - I'm sorry, it's 519 Huey P.
9 Long Avenue. It's in the heart of downtown historic
10 Gretna, which was a German settlement. It's very easy
11 to get to from New Orleans.

12 That's about it, unless someone would
13 like to add anything?

14 Thank you.

15 FR. BAER:

16 Thank you very much. At this point I
17 would like to ask if there is anybody here on behalf of
18 Keith Oldendorf.

19 MR. OLDENDORF:

20 Yes, here.

21 FR. BAER:

22 If you would like to say a few words on
23 the Deutsches Haus. And Rocky Troxler, your name was
24 mentioned, you must be of German heritage.

25 MR. TROXLER:

1 Twelve generations back, yes.

2 FR. BAER:

3 This is Keith Oldendorf, he is the
4 President of the Deutsches Haus center.

5 MR. OLDENDORF:

6 Yes, I'm the current president of the
7 Deutsches Haus. The Deutsches Haus represents all of
8 the immigrants as we've just discussed.

9 The Deutsches Haus was formed in 1928,
10 from the heart of which was from the different German
11 organizations that existed within the City of New
12 Orleans. One of the oldest ones being the Deutsche
13 Gesellschaft, which was a German benevolent association
14 that helped the immigrants settle and find places to
15 work, took care of families, orphans. Those roots go
16 back to 1847-48. Also the German community has
17 different singing societies that had different singing
18 groups, choral groups. In 1891 they had one of the
19 largest choral festivals held in the south at a
20 Saengerfest that was held by Lee Circle, where a special
21 building was built just for that purpose, which at that
22 time held more people in an indoor auditorium than any
23 place else throughout the south. Also there was a
24 German gymnastics group, the Turnverein, which was an
25 athletic club for Germans. All of these organizations

1 all came together in 1928 to form Deutsches Haus.

2 Deutsches Haus is located at 200 South
3 Galvez Street in New Orleans. It has been at that
4 location ever since 1928, the original building that was
5 purchased was the Cumberland Telephone and Telegraph
6 Exchange, which was built in 1910. The house still
7 operates as a Germanic club where different
8 organizations meet. The singing societies still have
9 monthly practices there. The Sangerchor, the Damenchor,
10 both practice there and continue the tradition of the
11 German festive music, as well as the large Saengerfest
12 that is held every three years. The Deutsches Haus has
13 representation at that event that is held every three
14 years throughout the United States where all of the
15 different German societies and German choral groups come
16 together as one. We also have a Schlaraffia, which is a
17 German speaking fraternity that meets there regularly.
18 We have German films which are shown at Deutsches Haus.
19 We try to preserve the culture by our annual
20 Oktoberfest, which this year was the largest we have
21 ever had, the event was attended by 17,000 people. So
22 this year Oktoberfest was our most successful ever.

23 Deutsches Haus represents a direct
24 lineage through these German organizations, they all
25 came together and Deutsches Haus represents those people

1 as well the continued immigration of Germans through
2 some other programs. The University of New Orleans,
3 where the Austrian students come at least once a year
4 when we have a Tirolnacht. We also have, just starting
5 this year, the University of New Orleans has an
6 agreement with the University of Hessian in Germany. And
7 from that relationship we hope to foster a relationship
8 with some of the German exchange students that are going
9 to be coming over.

10 We feel that Deutsches Haus has been a
11 part of New Orleans for a long time and we would like to
12 continue to stay in New Orleans.

13 MR. TROXLER:

14 Good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen. My
15 name is Rocky Troxler, twelve generations Louisiana, my
16 great great grandfather came to New Orleans from Bayou
17 Coulon and settled here and our family has been here
18 ever since. Johannes Bailer Troxler was our ancestor.

19 Keith asked me to take responsibility of
20 getting the word out about the concern we have about
21 saving the Deutsches Haus in the midst of the hospital
22 projects that is on its way to the city, and will be a
23 great benefit to the city. We learned about, something
24 about the project in June or July, and at that time
25 heard that we were on the edge of the LSU complex. We

1 assumed that since we were on the edge that we would not
2 have to worry because they certainly would carve out the
3 corner for us. However, in August we found a plan on
4 the LSU Health Sciences Center website which showed LSU
5 and the VA Hospitals adjoining each other, touching each
6 other and connected right across Galvez right above the
7 location of the Deutsches Haus. And that created a
8 significant amount of alarm on our part, so we felt that
9 it would be important for us to see if there is a way
10 that we could stay within the hospital complex. Not
11 only because of our historical, cultural significance,
12 but also because of the asset that we feel that this
13 organization and facility is to the city and what it
14 could be to the hospital complex.

15 With regard to the site itself, I don't
16 have a map to show you but I can describe the plan that
17 we've seen shows the hospital complex critical buildings
18 occupying maybe 35 or 40 percent of the property. In
19 looking over that, it suggests to us that it may be very
20 well possible to rearrange it in such a way that there
21 could be a commercial corridor from Canal, along Galvez
22 up to the Deutsches Haus and that would be an additional
23 asset to the city to provide something like this. This
24 would be accessible from Canal Street on the side with
25 what appears to be the back of the hospital complex that

1 would serve the needs of the various users of the
2 hospital facilities, doctors, students, patients and
3 families, as well as be an asset to the facility, a
4 compatible use. There are various ways that we feel
5 that we may be able to shift the footprint around to
6 accommodate us.

7 We have been asked if we could move the
8 house and some people suggest that. It's a solid brick
9 building built in 1910, and I'm sure there is a way, but
10 I don't think there is a practical way. But that is not
11 really our concern at this time. We are very anxious to
12 see a way to keep it the way it is because we're afraid
13 that if you attempt to move that it just wouldn't work.
14 Also the fact is that it's been there. We think this
15 plan may have been prepared for property acquisition; we
16 still have not had official contact from the project.
17 We are kind of reaching out and trying to be proactive
18 and see if we can get in early enough so that we can
19 work with these folks and come to a win/win situation.

20 I would like to just mention the way
21 that we feel that we are a value specifically to the
22 project. Dining, recreation, if you want to get a beer
23 after work, we are there. Some of the hospital people
24 have told us, some of the students in fact, former
25 students, went to a place called Joe's and said that

1 they need something like that, something like the
2 Deutsches Haus. We also have facilities for multimedia
3 meetings, if they want to get away from the campus and
4 do a seminar, we can have probably two meetings with a
5 hundred people each in different rooms and they can join
6 together to eat. They can have a prepared meal right in
7 our facility. Further, we have got a facility that can
8 accommodate a thousand, 1500 people once you use the
9 patio for things such as special holiday events.

10 Deutsches Haus is really an asset to
11 the hospitals. You can't build this. You know, they
12 can build meeting rooms and all of that and it would
13 serve the function, but not with the charm and character
14 that this building has. It's an asset that you can't
15 replace.

16 With regard to our organization, it's a
17 very strong environment. It's not something that I
18 would anticipate that if you left it there it would fall
19 apart into disrepair. We're going strong and I think
20 that the hospital complex would have no concern about us
21 maintaining that.

22 One real important thing to me with
23 regard to preservation, you know, we have historic
24 buildings and they were used for something at one time
25 and the people that inhabited it are gone, but they are

1 very significant still. We have a unique thing here,
2 since 1928. The building and the people that were using
3 it are still there. It's still being used for the same
4 purpose. We have to keep that.

5 With regard to our campaign, we are not
6 fighting anyone. We are doing an informational
7 campaign. Our hands are outstretched in an attempt to
8 find a positive way for us to coexist. The hospitals
9 will mean a tremendous economic benefit to the city.
10 It's not the place of an organization like the Haus to
11 stand in the way of that, in no way whatsoever. That is
12 going to do the city a lot of good. We just want to be
13 a part of it and also continue to benefit from the city.
14 If you would like more information, we have a press
15 release on the internet. The website is
16 www.savethehaus.org and that is spelled h-a-u-s. The
17 site is save the haus.org.

18 We would simply like to get the word
19 out, let everyone know that we care, and there are lots
20 of people that care. It's amazing when you total this,
21 how many people said, "What can I do to help save this
22 place?" And I think it's important simply for all of
23 the parties involved in the project to know that there
24 are a lot of people that care and it's something that is
25 worth saving.

1 Keith, any other comments on this
2 issue?

3 MR. OLDENDORF:

4 No, not at this time.

5 MR. TROXLER:

6 Thank you.

7 FR. BAER:

8 Before we get into anything more, we
9 want to get into the Greek community and then we can
10 open it up for everybody to discuss and add their
11 comments at that time.

12 DR. HADLEY:

13 Well first, I'm Dr. Charles Hadley. At
14 this point we're kind of jumping around because Sevilla
15 simply started with some of the history, but I wanted to
16 point out and it's several things as to the impact of
17 the German community in New Orleans, and you can start
18 with why New Orleans? We sometimes fail to realize
19 that before the Civil War it was not only the largest
20 city in the south, it was one of the largest cities in
21 the United States. It was second to New York City as a
22 port of immigration to this country. The Germans came
23 before the Civil War; the Germans came after the Civil
24 War.

25 Sevilla talked about the earlier

1 period. If we went back and looked at around the time
2 that Deutsches Haus was formed, and I am just going from
3 reading the chart of the stock records, that is how the
4 building was bought, people bought shares. A lot of
5 very prominent Germans to the city did that. You would
6 find that just like you had the Hibernia National Bank
7 that disappeared, you had Germania National Bank, which
8 was located somewhere in the CBD. And then if you went
9 up Magazine Street to what is now a Liberty Bank about
10 the 32, 3300 block; that was built as a branch of that
11 bank because there were a lot Germans there. Then up in
12 that area there was a huge lumberyard run by a guy by
13 the name of Wilkes, a German, and much of New Orleans in
14 that area was built out of this lumberyard by Wilkes.
15 In fact, Louisiana Avenue was named Grand Route Wilkes
16 and then, I'm not sure if it was during one of the war
17 years or another period, Wilkes' name was taken off and
18 it was named the generic Louisiana Avenue, whereas all
19 of the others in the surrounding area are named after
20 presidents, generals or something else.

21 The present history of the Germans
22 getting here, we have the records of 1,648 people who
23 bought shares, sometimes multiples, sometimes these days
24 only single shares, to maintain the facility called
25 Deutsches Haus. The German bank went under, by the way,

1 and crashed in 1929, that is why we don't realize that
2 there was a German bank here, in our generation.

3 I just would like to give you a
4 precedence to follow up on what Rocky was saying about
5 the Deutsches Haus. There is the exact same facility in
6 Austin, Texas. At one point the bulldozers were posed
7 to take it down and then all of the students at the
8 University of Texas lined up in front of the bulldozers
9 to prevent it from being taken down. The building was
10 put on the National Register of Historic Places and the
11 LBJ School surrounds it. Well this building is still
12 standing there, and that would be ample precedence, I
13 would think, if we move to put the Deutsches Haus
14 building on the National Registry of Historic Places
15 local register for additional protections. The Austin,
16 Texas case is one where you can see that things can work
17 together; you have that facility inside a very large
18 university.

19 I don't want to take up all of your
20 time here; I know that you want to move on to Greece.
21 We can have further discussion after we have our
22 presentation from the Greek community.

23 Thank you.

24 FR. BAER:

25 And now; the Greek community.

1 MS. PSILOS:

2 Good evening, my name is Gail Psilos.
3 In English and in Greek you say sea-lus, so our names
4 have several different pronunciations as well and many
5 have not been changed however, the people who have come
6 here. Other than Pappas' because the end of their names
7 are usually Pappadias, Pappagordio, or Pappa anything
8 based on what trade was, or what their profession was.
9 With that, I will give you a little bit about the Greek
10 community.

11 Many of the Greek settlers came here in
12 the mid 1800s, which like the good doctor said, that it
13 was because we had the second largest port in the
14 country. The other thing that I would like to add to
15 that is New Orleans was also the financial hub of the
16 south back then.

17 There was a gentleman named Nicholas
18 Benachi, businessman and consul, who came here to New
19 Orleans in the 1800s and he was a Greek Orthodox and he
20 came from Greece through the port and he started many
21 businesses and he bought many properties. Mr. Benachi
22 tried to open a Greek Orthodox Church, along with other
23 Serbian and Russian Orthodox immigrants that were here
24 as well. However to his avail, that didn't happen so he
25 offered up his own property in 1864, which is known

1 today as the Benachi House and it's on Esplanade Avenue.
2 He held church services and brought a priest from Greece
3 there to facilitate all of the sailors and other people
4 who had immigrated here through the port.

5 Many of the people whom came and
6 stayed, of course were captains of ships and sailors and
7 merchants. They made their homes here for what they
8 thought would be a better life. It was in the 1900s
9 when there was a lot of immigration from Europe, we saw
10 a large influx of Greece and Russian communities here
11 who were immigrating here, primarily Greek.

12 I would say that probably before
13 Katrina we had about 500 families, Chris?

14 MR. KANELLAKIS:

15 Yes.

16 MS. PSILOS:

17 We had about 500 Greek families that
18 were part of the community and would come to church.

19 To move on to the early 1900s, once Mr.
20 Benachi outgrew his home as a church and a meeting place
21 for Hellenics, he bought a property on North Dorgenois
22 and built a church there. He built the structure, it's
23 still there today, today however it's an Episcopal
24 church. In 1965 we outgrew the church on Dorgenois, we
25 had added a library and a cultural center, a small

1 cultural center and a library. We would have Greek
2 school there for the children and had community
3 gatherings and dances. So we outgrew that and then we
4 acquired the property where we are today on Bayou Saint
5 John. We stayed there until we had enough money to
6 start building on the St. John property, we remained on
7 the Dorgenois Street property, the Dorgenois church.

8 In 1974 we had our very first Greek
9 Festival. And here we are, out 37 years later and we
10 are gearing up for our very next Greek Festival in May,
11 which always takes place on Memorial Day weekend.

12 In addition to that, we also have A
13 Taste of Greece; this is our third one, Chris?

14 MR. KANELLAKIS:

15 Yes, the third one.

16 MS. PSILOS:

17 This will be our third one and actually
18 that is happening Thursday evening so Chris and I are
19 the only two here because so many people are back at the
20 cultural center cooking, along with many of the other
21 chefs in the city. We hope that you all will join us
22 Thursday evening. We also will have many other chefs
23 from some of the local restaurants here. We are
24 honoring, a memorial for Chris Kerageorgiou who was the
25 chef and owner of LaProvence Restaurant across the lake.

1 So if you get an opportunity, come out, the food is
2 wonderful, we'll have a band and camaraderie.

3 With that said, I would like to tell
4 you that we built our church in 1980. It was
5 consecrated only recently in 1995 where we actually
6 brought in the Patriarch and then the Archbishop and
7 then the reverence of modern day saints in the, just a
8 small area of the altar that they are embedded in and
9 sealed over in wax.

10 We did have almost four feet of water
11 during Katrina. By the grace of God, he was certainly
12 watching over us, it just happens that the Chaplain on
13 the USS IWO JIMA, the boat that was docked here during
14 Katrina happened to have a Greek Orthodox Chaplain. Our
15 Archbishop got a hold of him and said, "Do you know that
16 the first Greek Orthodox Church in all of North and
17 South America is in New Orleans?" And we were in fact
18 the first Greek Orthodox Church in all of America and we
19 are very, very proud of that. So he came over and he
20 brought some sailors and - Did he take off the door,
21 Chris, to get into the church?

22 MR. KANELLAKIS:

23 The door was open and they were able to
24 get in because the water had receded by the time they
25 got to the church so they got in the prior week. We

1 went back to lock the church the next week and we
2 couldn't lock it because of the way the water had come
3 in and the door settled. When he came, he asked if he
4 could bring 50 sailors to assist. He went to Holy
5 Rosary first and they didn't need help so on his way
6 back he took a right on Wisner and ran into the church.
7 He was aware that the church was in New Orleans, but not
8 exactly where. That is what gave us our start and we
9 were able to get back in the church in three months and
10 services began by December.

11 As a matter of fact, two weeks after
12 Katrina, we had church services with Fr. Gianulis, Capt.
13 Callas, eight parishioners including myself and Dr. Nick
14 Moustoukis, a the few of the sailors and the people who
15 were able to assist him were there. The other service
16 in New Orleans was the one where the President spoke
17 that night; that was the only other church service here
18 in the city.

19 MS. PSILOS:

20 So we were very fortunate for that
21 opportunity. Our first service after that was for
22 Christmas after all of our community came back. Well
23 not all, we're 250 families, maybe 300 today post
24 Katrina. It was a great fortune for us that four months
25 later for epiphany in January, His All Holiness, the

1 Ecumenical Patriarch, Saint Bartholomew I, came and
2 visited the church and our community and blessed us all.
3 We were very fortunate to have a wonderful community
4 that participated and helped us out. We were like an
5 oasis in the desert out there after Katrina. We still
6 are to some degree, so one of our hopes is that rest of
7 the community will come back.

8 We did have our festivals in 2005, well
9 2006 actually because Katrina was after the 2005
10 festival. We had 25,000 people in 2006, we were
11 shocked, we figured 15,000; we were shocked. So I want
12 to thank the people of New Orleans for supporting us.
13 It's a great time at the festival, we are very known for
14 our food. Many of the restaurants around town are owned
15 by Greeks.

16 So we thank you for having us here for
17 having us here tonight. We thank you for being part of
18 New Orleans. We feel like the Greek community is a New
19 Orleans tradition.

20 Thank you.

21 FR. BAER:

22 Thank you for that presentation.

23 Larry, what should we do next?

24 MR. BAGNERIS:

25 Open up the floor for community

1 comments.

2 FR. BAER:

3 There are two things that are a part of
4 the process. The contributions of the communities to
5 New Orleans and then, specific ways in which the groups
6 have been perhaps excluded or disrespected for full
7 participation over the years and even maybe today, and
8 then concrete suggestions for change. So positive and
9 negative things, if there are any negative things to be
10 said on how the city relates to the communities.

11 Does anyone have any comments?

12 MR. ELMWOOD:

13 Yes.

14 FR. BAER:

15 Yes, sir.

16 MR. ELMWOOD:

17 I'm Robert Elmwood.

18 I would like to say that in viewing,
19 I've lived here 30 some years, almost 40 years, I came
20 here as it was my last station with the Marine Corps. I
21 married New Orleans.

22 I have become aware; I was in air
23 conditioning/refrigeration work and ran into the M&M
24 Repair, which was run by Greeks. I have observed both
25 the Germans and the Greeks have been tremendously,

1 tremendous contributors to the economic success of New
2 Orleans. And they did so by staying off the skyline.
3 Being in the Marine Corps, I realized that if you get up
4 in the skyline you are going to get shot at. Both the
5 Germans and the Greeks pretty much stayed off of the
6 skyline until John Georges came along and he has put
7 himself on the skyline.

8 That is my commentary on the Germans
9 and the Greeks.

10 FR. BAER:

11 Thank you.

12 MR. ZIMMERMAN:

13 I'm Irvin Zimmerman.

14 I'm very much in favor of saving
15 Deutsches Haus, of course, but there is one thing that I
16 did want to point out that may not have been said. The
17 person who is the main speaker for that, about what will
18 be done about that is not local or state. The person
19 for that is federal, that would be the Secretary of VA
20 Affairs. Mr. Nicholson was that until he resigned
21 effectively October 1st, did one good thing, he said that
22 he would build it here in New Orleans rather than
23 Florida. However they do not have a direct secretary
24 now, but one will be appointed by the President of the
25 United States. He will be the gentleman that those of

1 our group, the contact people, you are definitely going
2 to have to try to get on his good side as soon as the
3 appointment is made. I say "he" now whether it's a man
4 or a woman, he or she is the main speaker for what the
5 VA will do in terms of their building, where, how and
6 when.

7 So I just wanted to point out that
8 there will be an open way soon with the appointment of
9 the new secretary of the VA Affairs. We need to be able
10 to work with him to save the Deutsches Haus, which
11 should be done.

12 Thank you.

13 FR. BAER:

14 Rocky?

15 MR. TROXLER:

16 I would like to thank you for pointing
17 out that significant information. I would like to
18 further clarify how that impacts the Deutsches Haus. We
19 are actually on the LSU side of what appears to be the
20 property line, at least on the master plan that we've
21 seen. However, we do have to work with the VA, as
22 you've said because their security concerns may affect
23 our location. Depending upon what facilities they put
24 in the area of the Deutsches Haus that would impact
25 whether we stay or go. So that is a very significant

1 observation there, although the acquisition of the
2 property in and around the Haus would be the LSU side,
3 the State of Louisiana.

4 If I may go into another observation, I
5 would simply like to say how much I think this series
6 means to the city. I think that cultural diversity of
7 this city in all of various ethnic and social groups, it
8 is wonderfully valuable and we don't want to lose any of
9 it. The reception that I hear from you folks is very
10 impressive. I wasn't fully aware of what we coming to
11 say and do, but I'm very excited over this project and I
12 want to thank you very much.

13 MR. BAGNERIS:

14 Can you tell us which councilmatic
15 district the Deutsches Haus is in?

16 MR. TROXLER:

17 Stacy Head; it's Stacy Head's district.

18 MR. BAGNERIS:

19 That is Council District B.

20 MR. TROXLER:

21 Yes.

22 MR. BAGNERIS:

23 I just wanted to get that on the
24 record.

25 FR. BAER:

1 Is there anyone else that would like to
2 comment?

3 MS. FINLEY:

4 I would like to make an additional
5 comment, if I could.

6 FR. BAER:

7 Yes, please.

8 MS. FINLEY:

9 I just wanted to say that the history
10 and contributions of the Germans is so vast, that I was
11 just going over it very briefly. I want to add that
12 Chris Janke paved the streets of New Orleans, he was
13 German. And his grandson, David Janke just recently
14 built that marvelous new edition to that historic
15 Waterman collection on Chartres Street. I also wanted
16 to add that St. Mary's, Fr. Silios is up for sainthood,
17 so I wanted to mention that too.

18 FR. BAER:

19 Fr. Silios was at Redemptorist, which
20 was a German order that had schools here in New Orleans.
21 There was two churches across the street from each other
22 and one was Irish and the other was German. Obviously
23 the German one is the one that is still open.

24 I also wanted to say that the Greeks
25 still worship in Greek. I once had a friend who said

1 that if you worship in the language of the New
2 Testament, why would you change? But the Germans also
3 worship in German once in a while at St. Matthew's
4 United Church of Christ, which is a Lutheran service, I
5 believe, that they have there on the first Sunday of the
6 month.

7 SPEAKER:

8 What it actually was is a former German
9 ENR Church.

10 FR. BAER:

11 Exactly, it was a German ENR Church.

12 I do want to add for the record, one
13 group that was not mentioned, from whom I'm extracted
14 anyway, Swiss. The Swiss made a large contribution to
15 New Orleans as well. They were among the French guards
16 where Swiss mercenaries that helped secure New Orleans
17 when New Orleans was founded. Also, when they moved the
18 settlement from Biloxi and Mobile over to New Orleans,
19 it was the Swiss guards that cleared the land.

20 The Swiss have had an Embassy Consulate
21 in New Orleans since 1830; they just celebrated their
22 175th anniversary, as a matter of fact, in 2005. It was
23 the Beauregard Peace House was the first site of that
24 consulate. And they continue to have an honorary
25 consulate here in New Orleans and a Swiss American

1 Association.

2 There was also a Swiss guard that was a
3 ceremonial part of St. Louis Cathedral until the
4 beginning of World War I and he was called The Swiss and
5 had some fancy guard line, a lot like they do at the
6 Vatican.

7 Anyone else?

8 FEMALE SPEAKER:

9 There is an additional connection
10 between the Germans and the Greek, as well, I feel
11 compelled to bring this up.

12 Paul Anderson, who is the Honorary
13 German Consulate and Phil Lorio, who is also the
14 Honorary Austrian Consulate, are both married to Greek
15 women. And of course had the big fat Greek wedding at
16 the Greek Church; so I had to add that.

17 Thank you.

18 The Greeks are very involved as well in
19 the city, the port particularly, we have had several
20 Greeks involved in supplies for the port, restaurants of
21 course, as you all know. And John Georges has a
22 wonderful company called Imperial Trading; that has
23 contributed well to the city.

24 We have a lot of businesses in the
25 community, and doctors, we have quite a few doctors. We

1 fell like, as you mentioned, we are not way up here
2 (indicating). We contribute, we love the city,
3 certainly, that is very evident in our festivals and our
4 participation here in everything that goes on. We hope
5 to keep our children here.

6 This is a cultural, a wonderful
7 cultural melting pot, it has so much to offer. I think
8 at this point, after Katrina, we are struggling but we
9 are going to be a well kept secret. We have to get
10 ourselves back out there. So hopefully more families
11 will come back, we all need to be back.

12 Thank you.

13 MR. HENRY:

14 My name is Charles Henry.

15 I wanted to say that Kolb's was a very
16 well known German restaurant in the city. We have two
17 of the Maryland's in the Deutsches Haus when Kolb's was
18 dissolved, but Germans are making a come back with John
19 Besh. He has the restaurant Lukes and August, the Besh
20 Steak House. So we've with everything else in it, the
21 Germans are still here in the cuisine.

22 MR. BAGNERIS:

23 Like good New Orleanian's we're
24 reverting to food here.

25 Once again, my name is Larry Bagneris,

1 I'm here on behalf of the City Council and the Mayor. I
2 will give you a quick history. This evening has been
3 absolutely a delight. We did a TV show some three years
4 ago, I learned about not only the history of the Germans
5 and the Greek community, but we brought in several other
6 communities. As a foundation, you guys link to New
7 Orleans, was just a beginning of making this gumbo work.
8 What we at the Human Relations Commission noticed right
9 after the election when everybody was in an uproar, that
10 we needed to piece that gumbo.

11 These guys that are sitting here this
12 evening, all of these Human Relations Commission members
13 are volunteers. There are 18 of them, two appointed by
14 the Mayor, one from each City Council member; that makes
15 up nine. The other nine members are from
16 recommendations from teachers, chancellors and
17 presidents of the universities. So we balance it with
18 race, nationality, et cetera, in order to ensure that we
19 have a balanced Commission. I want to first of all
20 start by thanking my Commission members that have been
21 so diligent in showing up.

22 Michie, you weren't here when we first
23 introduced the group, could you stand and let them know
24 that you were here?

25 MS. BISSELL:

1 (Complies.)

2 MR. BAGNERIS:

3 Could you give them a hand, please?

4 (AUDIENCE APPLAUSE.)

5 MR. BAGNERIS:

6 I want to certainly thank each of you
7 for taking your time to come here this evening. It is
8 important that we as the City of New Orleans understand
9 that if we don't learn to appreciate each other, we
10 can't compete with any of the Miami's and the Houston's
11 and the Dallas. We don't want to be like them, we just
12 want to be able to appreciate each other and each of the
13 contributions that each of us brings to this City.

14 I am fortunate enough to know that I
15 don't have to leave the city every year. I look forward
16 to Oktoberfest. I watch the parades and then I go over
17 and have a couple of beers and enjoy myself. And every
18 Memorial Day weekend I wind up out on the Lakefront
19 sitting on the bayou with a family from there. During
20 the Irish celebration I'm out there begging for a
21 cabbage. I'm out there with the Italians getting the
22 lucky beans and celebrating St. Joseph's. I would say
23 that this is the only place in the world where the St.
24 Joseph's statute is going down on Bourbon Street going
25 back and forth with the little girls and the song

1 playing, shake your booty. Now that just really doesn't
2 connect, but that is New Orleans.

3 (AUDIENCE LAUGHTER.)

4 Because of that rich cultural history,
5 you have added to the fabric that we're going to weave
6 together to bring before the City Council, some
7 legislation, some changes in the way we address each
8 other. It's our hope that we can bring one New Orleans
9 to a focus that respects all of the groups that have
10 made a contribution. Tonight we have done that by
11 having both the Greek and the German community and we
12 are really ecstatic and really appreciative with what
13 you have done here this evening.

14 We want to invite you to visit with one
15 another; there are some refreshments in the back.
16 Before we leave this evening, are there any closing
17 comments that anyone would like to make?

18 MS. FINLEY:

19 Yes.

20 MR. BAGNERIS:

21 Let me say that this lady is
22 incredible. She called when the article went out in the
23 newspaper when they announced it in December of last
24 year. She said, "I want to tell you about the German
25 community." I said, "Well you're in October, so you can

1 come in October." She said, "I'll be there."

2 MS. FINLEY:

3 It's a pleasure to meet you.

4 I wanted to say that I live in Gretna,
5 that's in Jefferson Parish. I wanted to say that we
6 have to think regional as well. I grew up in Gretna and
7 I went to catholic schools in New Orleans. I went to
8 Ursuline Academy in elementary school. I went to
9 Dominican High School. I attended UNO, although I
10 didn't graduate from there.

11 We are regional and I think we need to
12 keep a regional perspective because the two communities
13 are very intertwined. I know the lady in my community
14 that handled the parade, we had the Easter Parade, there
15 was two Westbankers that handled the Easter Parade in
16 the French Quarter. I know that the Westbank is a heavy
17 contributor and I just wanted to mention the regional
18 aspect. We may be across the river, but we are still --

19 MR. BAGNERIS:

20 We are one region.

21 MS. FINLEY:

22 We consider ourselves New Orleanians.

23 MR. BAGNERIS:

24 That is correct.

25 FR. BAER:

1 Anybody else?

2 MR. BAGNERIS:

3 I want to make sure that everybody put
4 a dot on the map, because when this is over with, the
5 first visual that they want everybody to see is that
6 everybody's councilmatic district participated. Our
7 goal was; I know many of you all can remember when the
8 young man got killed in the Quarter, Levon Jones. There
9 was an incident there that the Human Relations
10 Commission handled that; there were 510 people at that
11 meeting. Our goal was to try and go over that amount.
12 So any criticism that comes about, that we had a
13 sampling with the whole community. You can look at that
14 map and you will see that we are getting a sampling of
15 the entire community when we make this report.

16 Yes, sir.

17 MR. TROXLER:

18 I just wanted to ask which group will
19 be addressed next month?

20 MR. BAGNERIS:

21 Oh, yes, I will be happy to. Next
22 month, and I want to say that we try to do this on the
23 same date, in the same place at the same time.

24 New month we will be doing the
25 religious communities in November, Jewish, Muslim,

1 Catholic, Christian, Buddhists and any religion not
2 included.

3 In December, I want to note that
4 because Christmas Eve for Christians is the last Tuesday
5 of the month, we will be doing it on December the 18th.
6 That meeting will be Mid Easterners, Lebanese, Saudi
7 Arabians, Iranians and Jordanians.

8 And then in January we are going to say
9 to the community, okay, if you didn't have a chance to
10 speak your piece or you think your numbers were low,
11 we're going to make a gumbo where everybody can come out
12 and participate in that last one. You have heard all
13 of the groups that were before tonight's and these are
14 the groups that will be coming before we complete 12
15 months of the Human Relations Commission. As I said,
16 those volunteers are here.

17 Any other comments? Yes, sir.

18 MR. KANELLAKIS:

19 My name is Chris Kanellakis.

20 One of the comments that you made to me
21 when we first spoke was, what has the City of New
22 Orleans done for the Greek community. The City of New
23 Orleans, downtown and City Hall have been very good to
24 us over the years. I'm 53, so Dutch Morial was involved
25 when we bought the property out by the lakefront and

1 helped us with the rezoning of it. Anything that we
2 have tried to do with the City of New Orleans, they have
3 always been there, we've just acquired two other pieces
4 of the subdivision next to us and incorporated all of
5 the property and we just finished that up about two
6 months ago and the city was great on incorporating that
7 property and helping us with it.

8 The people of New Orleans have been
9 very good and supportive of our Greek Festival and we
10 appreciate New Orleans.

11 Thank you.

12 MR. BAGNERIS:

13 And let me say that we are a small
14 community. I had no idea when we started these
15 conversations -- all of these guys volunteered and spent
16 a day in this room for almost nine hours trying to put
17 this program together. And then after a years worth of
18 work, we meet twice a month to sort of review it. I had
19 no idea until I talked to Chris that the church on
20 Dorgenois, because I'm Roman Catholic, was a Greek
21 Orthodox Church. As a kid, I remember thinking back and
22 the week after Easter you guys would be on the corner
23 with the candles. I asked my mom and dad about the
24 candles and they explained to me what the Greek Orthodox
25 were doing. At the same time I was able to connect the

1 dots with the German community, because I've been to
2 Greece and I've been to Germany. It's a great tie-in,
3 to see those cultures in my city. We wanted each of the
4 groups to be reflected in this report to the City
5 Council.

6 Again, we want to thank everyone for
7 being here and we hope that you have had a good evening
8 as we have had.

9 Good evening, have a pleasant evening
10 the rest of the evening.

11 Thank you again.

12 (END OF SESSION.)

13 - 0 -

CERTIFICATE

I, the undersigned reporter, do hereby certify that the above and foregoing is a true and correct transcription of the stenographic notes of the proceedings herein, taken down by me and transcribed under my supervision, at the time and place hereinbefore noted, in the above-entitled and numbered cause(s).

I further certify that I am not of counsel nor related to any of the counsel or any of the parties, nor in the employ of any of them, and that I have no interest in the outcome of this action(s).

Diane W. Mathews