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Greater Alexandria Economic Development Authority

2019 Annual Report

Submitted: August 18, 2020

The financial statistics reflecting the operations of the GAEDA organization are impressive. Our commitment of resources to our role, scope and mission has exceeded our expenses by an industry acceptable margin in 2019.

Through the guidance of our Board of Directors and staff, we are continuing to fine tune our granting policies and procedures. The work has increased the staff's ability to make grant commitments while only funding those expenses of the event that are permitted in our guidelines. The result has been a more accurate and responsible accounting of expenditures.

In 2019, GAEDA received \$887,500 (net) in occupancy taxes assessed to visitors to the City of Alexandria. This represented approximately four and six tenths of a percent (4.6%) increase over the \$848,703 (net) of taxes collected in 2018. GAEDA paid the Rapides Police Jury a collection fee of \$18,112. The occupancy taxes are collected by the hotels and motels located within the corporate limits of the City of Alexandria, although the economic impact of the expenditures extends beyond the City.

GAEDA expended \$561,637 toward the economic development of the City in 2019. Of this amount, \$200,000 was spent on tourism, conventions, festivals and other events that attract visitors to the City. The economic impact of these dollars is more than \$4,525,000 as compared to \$3,251,000 in the prior year. Not included in the economic impact dollars is the support for the performing and visual arts through the Arts Council, the Alexandria Museum of Arts, the Rapides Symphony Orchestra and River Oaks Square Arts Center.

The support of these organizations not only brings additional visitors to Alexandria, the organizations provide quality of life activities so important to attracting businesses to locate in the Alexandria area. Total support for these organizations was \$116,000. *(Economic Impact figures are provided by the Alexandria/Pineville Area Convention & Visitors Bureau and do not include the economic impact of all events that GAEDA contributes to.)* The City of Alexandria received \$50,000 from GAEDA in direct support for the 2019 River Fete and Winter Fete.

The source of the GAEDA revenue stream is a Hotel Motel tax. Our clients are the hotel motel industry in Greater Alexandria. As with any business it is essential that we care for our client's needs by assisting with contacting and attracting conferences and events to their venues. This past year, the staff has pursued potential attractions by attending seminars, joining associations that assist with recruiting attractions and receiving referrals from other event

officials about potential grantees who may benefit from the grant services GAEDA provides. We will strive to build upon that outreach process in the coming years.

Quality of life elements (venues, attractions and organizations) continue to be the largest beneficiaries of GAEDA resources. I contend if we are to get outside people to live, work, visit and revisit our City there must be a variety of activities in Alexandria that visitors are willing to participate in doing. The following venues, attractions and organizations are just a few of the abundant quality of life activities that fit into the equation:

1. Arts Council of Central Louisiana
2. Alexandria Museum of Arts
3. River Oaks Square Arts Center
4. Links on the Bayou Golf Course
5. Oak Wing Golf Course
6. Johnny Downs Recreational Area
7. Masonic Drive Recreational Area
8. Alexandria Zoological Park
9. Bringhurst Historical Golf Course and Park
10. Ward 9 Baseball Fields in Pineville
11. Lake Buhlow
12. Kisatchie Forrest and Trails System
13. Lake Kinkaid
14. Downtown Walking Trail along the Levy
15. Woodworth Recreational Area
16. Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries (LWLF) Firing Range

We must also include the newly renovated Rapides Coliseum and the Downtown Randolph Event Center in the equation of quality of life activities. The estimated statistics reveal that for every dollar GAEDA has granted; Twelve Dollars (\$12) has been returned to the community. In estimated dollars, the ratio equates to \$561,637 of GAEDA revenues spent: there has been \$4,525,000.00 of economic impact on the Alexandria Community.

During 2019, GAEDA continued its support of the GAEDA Revitalization Corporation (GRC), a non-profit corporation initiated and supported by GAEDA to provide affordable housing within the City of Alexandria and Rapides Parish. GAEDA expended \$150,000 in 2019 for the development and operations of GRC. The organization has experienced success under the leadership of Mr. Willie Spears and his board of directors.

Mr. Spears presented the GAEDA Board of Directors with an impressive progress report last month. GAEDA expenditures on economic development decreased in 2019 by \$55,695 from 2018 largely due to our finalizing our initial financial commitment to GRC. We invited GRC to request additional funding in the future at a lessor amount in 2019.

GAEDA supported the following major events in 2019:

- LA Association of Education Diagnostics,
- Dixie Softball Tournament,
- Steubenville South Youth Conference,
- Juneteenth Celebration,
- LA Boat Racing Association,
- Disabled Veterans,
- Le Tour de Bayou,

- Louisiana Future Farmers of America (FFA) State Convention
- Louisiana High School Athletic Association (LHSAA) Basketball Tournament,
- Louisiana High School Athletic Association (LHSAA) Powerlifting Championships,
- Alexandria Mardi Gras Parade,
- Alex River Fete,
- Alex Winter Fete, and
- Friends of Bringhurst Bayou Invitational

Alexandria was also host to the 2019 Southwest Athletic Conference Men's and Women's Golf Championship Tournaments (SWAC). GAEDA was instrumental in obtaining the SWAC championship tournaments in 2006; in cooperation with the City of Alexandria (COA) and the Alexandria/Pineville Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB), GAEDA has continued to provide financial support. Other significant endeavors in 2019 include continued monitoring of the completion of the Masonic Drive corridor and the enhancement of sidewalks and bus stops from Texas Avenue to the South Traffic Circle.

GAEDA staff will continue focusing on the following objectives:

1. Events & Attractions,
2. Commercial Corridor Revitalization,
3. Business incentives and collaborations with Kisatchie Delta, CVB, United Way and others,
4. Property acquisition; and
5. Implementation of the GAEDA Succession Plan to provide a stable plan for succession of the GAEDA business culture.

Respectfully,



Clifford J. Moller