

# Chamber opposed to parish-wide moratorium

*Al Johnson*

Editor,

The "whys" of our opposition by the St. Tammany Chamber to many moratoriums—And, what's next....

For many years, the St. Tammany Chamber of Commerce has advocated for, and taken a leadership interest in reforming the parish's building codes and ordinances regarding zoning, development processes, drainage, and infrastructure.

We have played an outsized role to revise and improve parish codes and ordinances through representation on the parish committee formed for that purpose in 2017, now spanning over five years and two administrations. There have been several studies and committees but little to no action! We have and will continue to more aggressively advocate for a growing and vibrant St. Tammany, involving all stakeholders to address the issues we now face due to our rapid population growth and development. All citizens will benefit from a collaborative, thoughtful, and targeted, but most importantly, fact-based approach to future growth.

Parish President Cooper brought the infrastructure issue, a concern of ours for many years, to the forefront with his recently proposed moratorium. We acknowledge and appreciate the renewed attention and emphasis recently expressed by the Parish Council. In the month of March, we organized two meetings inclusive of major citizens groups, home builders, four parish council members, and President Cooper to discuss mutual concerns of increasing traffic and flooding. There was and is no question that all citizens want infrastructure to keep ahead of, not behind, development.

The Chamber's Board, through input from the general membership and our Advocacy & Public Policy Committee, carefully evaluated and agreed to oppose the Parish President's proposed moratorium. Following last Thursday's over two-hour debate among the council and citizens presenting in favor of, and in opposition to, the proposed moratorium, it was amended.

We will remain in steadfast opposition to any parish-wide moratorium, based on its direct harm to local home builders, their employees, downstream small businesses, and its indirect harm to the parish's growing fiscal crisis. There is also the very important aspect of following due process. Additionally, there is, in fact, a long-standing shortage of affordable housing stock for retirees, young families, service providers, and those transitioning to plant roots here, all of whom make up vital components of our population's future health and prosperity.

The Chamber will remain a leading voice in addressing the issues of new development, both through its current involvement on the Building Codes and Ordinances Committee, and collaborative, proactive approaches as part of the council's new committee to review and make recommendations to solve our current and future issues.

Lacey Osborne  
St. Tammany  
Chamber CEO

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