



THE FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX

The Newsletter of the McNeill Street Pumping Station Preservation Society

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Summer 2017

News Flash: City Awards Grant

Each year the City of Shreveport awards Civic Appropriations Grants to qualified local nonprofit organizations from a fund set aside specifically for this purpose. The City Council reviews the applications and selects the winners who best meet the City's goals and objectives in areas such as arts and culture, community enhancement, human services, and economic development. It's pretty tough to get one of these grants since there are a lot more applications than available money.

The Preservation Society applied for a grant asking for enough money to operate the Shreveport Water Works Museum for a year and has recently been notified that \$40,000 was approved. The Preservation Society will be getting money which can be used to meet the various expenses we'll be incurring like payroll, gas and electricity, telephone, and other miscellaneous costs associated with keeping the museum in operation and open to the public.

This is great news and will cover most, or perhaps all, of our "must have" expenses for the year. But....there's another year coming after this one and we intend to be open then, too! Getting a grant like this one is tough, and we're not counting on it for next year, so we will be working on other fundraising like Give For Good (see story elsewhere). It's also important to remember that we don't want to just limp along at the bare minimum the State was spending; we want to improve the condition of the museum and the experience that visitors have when they come. Grants like this one plus other donations and fundraising events will be an ongoing need and will be used to keep the Shreveport Water Works Museum open and better than ever.

How Are Things Going?

March brought the news that the State was out and the City was in as the owner of the historic McNeill Street Pumping Station and home to the Shreveport Water Works Museum, which is now being operated by the McNeill Street Pumping Station Preservation Society. During recent months, the Preservation Society has begun to settle into its new role as operator. This has required moving from big concepts like who will be the owner to nitty gritty details like payroll taxes (and utility deposits). So far those details have come together well thanks to the efforts of various volunteers with the Preservation Society since there is no paid staff around to delegate to.

The board of directors has taken a couple of steps to improve the museum by adding a little bit of janitorial service to keep the place cleaner and adding one more day to the operating schedule. Open hours are now Wednesday through Saturday 10a to 4p and Sunday 12n to 4p, which will make it possible for people to come five days per week. We're also looking for a second part-time employee to supplement the excellent work by our other part-timer, Kevin Haines. The second employee will be used to add some more open time and provide some much needed flexibility since there is no one to relieve Kevin when he needs to be off work.

The "temporary property management and use" agreement between the City and the Preservation Society that was signed in March continues to be the governing understanding since work on the Cooperative Endeavor Agreement that will replace the deal hasn't yet begun. The new CEA is expected to be similar in concept to the temporary agreement with the City owning and maintaining the site and the Preservation Society operating the Shreveport Water Works Museum.

The Preservation Society has been pretty successful in the past at supporting the operation of the museum while it was owned by the state and at working on restoration projects needed to protect the physical condition of the historic water plant. Restoration projects will continue to be a priority no matter what, but working with the City as museum operator is a significantly more demanding task than simply supporting the state museum. Consequently, the Preservation Society's board of directors has formed three study committees to: (1) search out ideas for raising the money needed in the short-term future to carry our organization forward while a sustainable longer term plan is put in place; (2) develop a plan for raising the money needed for the longer term so we're not forced to live month-to-month or even year-to-year financially; and (3) develop ideas for alternative ownership/management structures in connection with partnering with the City, or collaborating with other organizations, or having someone besides the City as owner (perhaps even the Preservation Society if it is eventually successful in building up its financial resources).

This work will take some time, but as other stories in this edition mention, we currently have a little bit of a money cushion to carry forward on while a plan is developed and put in place. The historic water plant is such a historic jewel and great visitor attraction that it's hard to envision letting the work fail. As Paul Harvey would say, "stand by for news"!

You'll Look Good In This

Promoting and publicizing a unique National Historic Landmark to stimulate visitor interest seemingly would be easy and almost take care of itself, but not true. This is a never-ending challenge, but we've recently gotten help from a new friend: Gorilla Design Studio.



Gorilla Design Studio is a local graphic arts company that has created an online market called Parish Square to produce and curate unique designs available for sale in the marketplace. The marketplace offers professionally designed t-shirts that highlight local and regional identities around the Shreveport-Bossier area. The Gorilla team consists of locals who want to build up the identity of popular places of interest, nonprofit organizations, museums, and other highlights in the area.

So, at no cost to the Preservation Society, they have designed and offered for sale on Parish Square (www.parishsquare.com) a snazzy-looking t-shirt for the Shreveport Water Works Museum. The shirts cost \$20 each plus shipping, and Parish Square donates \$10 to the Preservation Society for each shirt sold.

Thank you to Gorilla Design Studio for your generous support of the museum!

It's a Small World

Check out the picture below. Nothing unusual about it, except the gentleman who is wearing the Shreveport Water Works Museum shirt is a resident of Austria and the photo was made in Austria. One of the Preservation Society's members and volunteers, Linda Tonnies, was recently vacationing in Austria and unexpectedly spotted a familiar logo in an unfamiliar place. The Austrian gentleman visited the museum about four years ago.

International visitors to the museum are not actually particularly unusual as people come from all over the world to see Shreveport's first water works. During just the past six months, there have been guests from Switzerland, Canada (multiple times), Italy, India, Australia, United Kingdom, Poland, Brazil, Russia, and Germany.

While on the subject of visitors, it is worth mentioning that visitor traffic to the museum during 2017 has been setting a record pace. Through the end of May, there have been 2009 visitors, which is on track to surpass the biggest-year record set in 2014. Our one and only on-site employee and tour guide, Kevin Haines, strives to give each and every visitor who wants it a personal guided tour of the (rather amazing) historic site, so he has been quite busy.

Many of the museum's out-of-town visitors find out about the site and schedule a visit after reading about it on Trip Advisor, which is said to be tourism's answer to Amazon. Trip Advisor is an independent online source that offers information about dining, lodging, and attractions plus reviews by visitors for almost anywhere you can think of. Just how popular is Trip Advisor? Well, on average, they get 390 million "visits" per month from users. In Shreveport, Trip Advisor lists the Shreveport Water Works Museum as #4 on the list of 61 Things To Do in Shreveport on the strength of almost unanimous 5 star reviews and comments like "hidden gem", "must see", and "surprising find". When they get here, visitors love us!



Give For Good WAS Good

Remember Give For Good? This is an online donate-a-thon fundraiser organized each year by the Community Foundation of North Louisiana to benefit local nonprofit organizations. They provide an online donation site, free publicity, and handle all the logistics so that supporters can give to the charity (or charities) of their choice during a specified day. After the event is over, they tally up the results and distribute to each charity the donations received for them plus a pro rata percentage of a “Lagniappe Fund” established by sponsors.

This year’s event was on May 2, and the McNeill Street Pumping Station Preservation Society received \$7,115 in donations, PLUS a \$500 random drawing prize from the Community Foundation, PLUS \$1,138 from the Lagniappe Fund for a grand total of \$8,753. Not bad at all!!!

The Preservation Society is very grateful to all of the dozens of friends who made the gifts that created this great result, sixteen of whom were new contributors. A big “thank you” also to the Community Foundation for making the whole thing possible.

This is enough money to operate the Shreveport Water Works Museum for a little over two months, so fundraising for only ten months to go and we’ll have money for another year in the bag!

Union Pacific Grant Delivered

The last edition of your newsletter shared the breaking news that Union Pacific Foundation awarded the Preservation Society a \$10,000 grant to be used for repairing bad mortar in the pumphouse exterior wall. Not too long afterwards, Drew Tessier with Union Pacific paid a personal visit to the Shreveport Water Works Museum and Railroad Museum to deliver the checks to the Preservation Society and to the Railroad Society, which was also awarded \$10,000.

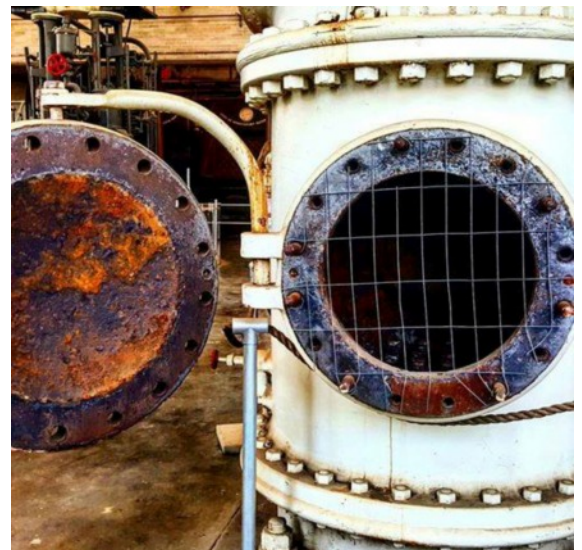
So, the money is in the bank, and we are getting started on locating a contractor to do the repointing work. Thank you very much to the Union Pacific, and to Mr. Tessier for taking a personal interest in the site to hand-deliver the money. It’s great to have a public spirited corporate citizen like Union Pacific in our community.



Drew Tessier (L) gives check to Society Pres. Conway Link

Some Nifty Photographs

Not only is the water plant very historic, it’s also very photogenic. Just ask any of the many photographers who make some really striking pictures on site. Here are a couple of favorite samples by Rubee Stew. You’ll have to come out and see if you can spot the scenes yourself, and maybe try your hand with your own camera.



McNeill Street Pumping Station Preservation Society
P.O. Box 957
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You Can Help.....Make A Donation!

The Preservation Society needs money for restoration and operation of the museum. Your donation can be put to good use!

Name _____

email _____
(If you provide your email address, we can send you occasional updates on activities)

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Mail to MSPSPS, P.O. Box 957, Shreveport, LA 71157. Checks payable to MSPSPS.