



CITY OF KENNER

News Release

E. "BEN" ZAHN III
MAYOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jan. 10, 2019

KENNER ANNOUNCES NEW FIRE STATION

Kenner, LA. – Mayor Ben Zahn and Fire Chief Ryan Bergeron are pleased to announce an agreement with the State Department of Transportation and Development paving the way for the construction of a new, state-of-the-art fire station for the Kenner Fire Department in the 300 block of Duke Drive. A combination of Federal Highway Administration and Louisiana DOTD funds will be used to construct this new station. "I am pleased to return some of our citizens' federal and state tax dollars to the City of Kenner," said Mayor Ben Zahn. "It is sometimes challenging to explain exactly where these taxes go. Now we will have a new fire station to show for it." The move was necessitated by the development of the new airport on the north side of the airfield.

The old fire station at the corner of Loyola Drive and Veterans Boulevard will be demolished by the State to make way for additional lanes on Loyola. These additional lanes will help with ground level traffic. Congestion is expected to persist until the State builds a flyover allowing traffic to directly access the airport via Interstate 10. Flyover completion is expected to take a minimum of five years.

City-owned property next to the Kenner Police headquarters on Veterans Boulevard was considered as a possible relocation site. However, studies show that ground level traffic flow in that area will be severely compromised until the flyover is complete. A portion of that property, as well as the adjoining Susan Park recreational complex, will be taken by DOTD to construct the on-ramp to I-10. Critical access to the existing service road will be lost. "I cannot in good conscience place a fire station in that location now as we would be placing a large number of citizens at risk," said Chief Bergeron.

"The new location will increase the coverage area and improve response time to a number of highly populated neighborhoods" said Heather Hilliard, Assistant Director of Emergency Management. "This, coupled with our \$2 million federal SAFER grant, enhances our overall emergency response capability." The Emergency Management Department considered more than 100 locations throughout the city.

Ultimately, this location was chosen and negotiations began with the seller, the DOTD and the city. The appraisals ranged from \$667,000 to \$2.3 million. "The purchase price of \$1.5 million was a negotiated

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middle range settlement, supported by the appraisals and the method by which courts resolve differences," said Deputy City Attorney Ed Rapier. "We had time restrictions from DOTD that prevented a full expropriation process; however, expropriation would likely have led to a higher cost as the seller had both a much higher appraisal and a claim for lost business opportunity."

"Fortunately, the purchase of the land and the construction of the new station are being paid out of Federal and State funds," said Mayor Zahn, "and we will maintain our asset next to the Police Station for future public use."

A local citizens' group had objected to the cost of the land and the location of the fire station. "Despite the fact that no Kenner dollars are going into this project, this particular group objected to investing this amount of money in a low-income area," said Mayor Zahn, "but that is precisely where we need to invest dollars to spur economic development."

The construction will be performed under a Construction Management At Risk Program (CMAR) approved by the Joint Transportation Committee of the State Legislature in July of 2018. "My sincere appreciation goes out to all of our partners in this process: Governor Edwards, our Kenner State Senators and State Representatives, DOTD, New Orleans Mayor Cantrell and her Council, the New Orleans Aviation Board and Administration and our Kenner council members," said Mayor Zahn.

"This Administration inherited a billion dollar construction project underway at the airport without adequate planning for vehicular access. We have worked with all of our partners to mitigate this problem and now have a \$5 million fire station development project beginning. I have enjoyed 100% support from all Kenner council members in attendance at all public meetings in which this project has been discussed," said Mayor Zahn. "I look forward to such continued support as the city acts AS ONE, from the River to the Lake. We are KENNER PROUD."

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