
DIGEST

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HB 622 Original

2017 Regular Session

Hilferty

Abstract: Restricts the power granted to the Ernest N. Morial-New Orleans Exhibition Hall Authority to levy hotel occupancy and food and beverage taxes and to issue bonds to fund a Phase IV expansion project.

Present law (uncodified) creates the Ernest N. Morial-New Orleans Exhibition Hall Authority (Authority). The purpose of the Authority is to acquire, construct, reconstruct, extend, improve, maintain, and operate projects within the city of New Orleans in order to promote the economic growth and development of the city and its neighboring parishes.

Proposed law retains present law.

Present law authorizes "expansion projects" including Phase III, IV, and V as follows:

- (1) Phase III Convention Center Expansion Project consisting of a building attached to the Convention Center containing additional exhibit space, meeting rooms, ballroom space, a food court, exhibit hall concession stands, food production facilities, and other structures and facilities functionally related to the Convention Center and completed in April of 1999.
- (2) Phase IV project means the project to construct a free-standing building across Henderson Street from the existing Convention Center, on a site owned by the Authority, containing approximately 1,500,000 square feet under roof including approximately 500,000 square feet of exhibit space, with accompanying meeting rooms, food service areas, building service areas, and other facilities functionally related thereto.
- (3) Phase V is a tourism development plan to enhance the Convention Center and install basic infrastructure to facilitate private development, including private development of lodging facilities, on property owned by the Exhibition Hall Authority, the public component of which is divided into the following four stages:
 - (a) Public infrastructure improvements on Convention Center Blvd., from Poydras St. to Orange St., including utility improvements, redevelopment of traffic lanes, a linear park and pedestrian mall, and the relocation and redevelopment of traffic along S. Peters St. and Tchoupitoulas St.; public infrastructure improvements by Henderson St., Tchoupitoulas St., Orange St., and the Mississippi River flood wall to extend Convention Center Blvd. from Henderson St. to Orange St., public utility infrastructure to support anticipated private development, and soil remediation; and

the relocation of existing power lines along Convention Center Blvd. and the incorporation of a "people mover" system along Convention Center Blvd., from Poydras St. to Orange St.

- (b) Development of a riverfront festival park along the Mississippi River at existing wharfs, providing access to the river through the development of approximately five acres for recreational, hospitality, commercial, and residential use; and development of park infrastructure, including public utilities, lighting, and landscaping.
- (c) Integration of the Convention Center with its surrounding urban areas through the renovation of the south end of the existing Convention Center by creating a new south entrance; and development of an executive conference center which may be integrated as part of a new, privately developed hotel.
- (d) Renovation, restoration, construction, or demolition of building or buildings and site preparation related thereto, to facilitate the creation and development of a riverfront festival park.

Proposed law retains present law.

Present law authorizes the Authority, for the purpose of funding Phase IV, to impose an additional 1% hotel occupancy tax and a 1/4% tax on food and beverages sold by any food service establishment located within Orleans Parish or in any airport or air transportation facility owned and operated by the city of New Orleans, excluding any food service establishments owned by any individual or corporation who had gross receipts of less than \$500,000 from the operation of all such establishments during the calendar year prior to the year in which the food and beverage tax is assessed. Further provides that the term "food service establishment" shall not include convenience stores or grocery stores.

Proposed law removes present law.

Present law authorizes the Authority to issue bonds to finance Phase III, IV, and V expansion projects of the Authority. Bonds issued by the Authority must be approved by the State Bond Commission.

Proposed law removes the Authority's power to issue bonds for Phase IV projects. Proposed law otherwise retains present law.

Proposed law further provides that provisions of proposed law shall not affect, alter, or diminish any rights or powers of the Board of Commissioners of the Port of New Orleans with respect to any property it owns, operates, or administers.

Proposed law provides that proposed law does not impair outstanding bonded debt obligations of the Authority, and to any extent that any provision of proposed law is inconsistent with other laws, the provisions of proposed law prevail.

Effective upon signature of governor or lapse of time for gubernatorial action.

(Amends §§20 and 23 of Act No. 305 of 1978 R.S., as amended)