Avoyelles Courthouse Light Up Foundation
Community Meeting
29 September 2026

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| Board members present: | Stevie Tillson, President<br>Todd Laborde, Vice President<br>Julie Laborde, Secretary<br>Gayle Gros Treasurer |
| Consultants/Liaison: | Mark Borrel, Avoyelles Parish Police Juror (APPJ) Liaison<br>Lydia Poret, Marksville Chamber of Commerce<br>Van Roy, Consultant |
| Community attendees: | Reagan Lemoine, Shannah Moreau, Chad Guillot,<br>Richard Klingensmith, Barry Laiche |
| Meeting called to order: | 5:35 p.m. |

This meeting was held at the Broken Wheel in Marksville, Louisiana, for continued updates and planning of the Avoyelles Courthouse Light Up Foundation (ACLUF) lighting event at the Avoyelles Parish Courthouse for the upcoming holiday season. The meeting was chaired by the President and Vice President. Points/updates discussed:

1. **Official non-profit status.** Avoyelles Courthouse Light Up Foundation (ACLUF) is officially recognized as a 509 (a)(2) organization. This status is similar to the 501(c) but is a status assigned for solely donor-operated, nonprofit entities.
2. **Date of lighting Event**. The date for the lighting event is set for 28 November 2026 from 4-8 pm. The date had been approved by both Avoyelles Parish Policy Jury and the City of Marksville.
3. **Lighting status/update.** The VP met with Greg Kojis of Gibko Signs to discuss lighting plans and options. VP advised Mr. Kojis that ACLUF had approximately 25 canned lights in inventory to work with. Mr. Kojis suggested use of permanent brackets to install the lights around the pillars of the courthouse and surrounds. Commercial grade power cords could be installed and the lights could be active year-round. Mr. Kojis suggested getting a control panel to facilitate programming the lights for different seasons/holidays. The Board approved purchase of a control board found on Amazon (under $150), which will be delivered within the week. The

Board will identify someone who can program the lights, and the control board will be stored in a secure location with limited access. The lights will be tested during the week of October 5th. Once the lights are tested, then Mr. Kojis will return to provide set up of brackets and discuss future possibilities. ACLUF will research the possibility of future lighting up the flagpole, the Solomon Northup statue, and the oak tree (instead of wrap lights currently used for the tree), all on the courthouse grounds. With continued donations, the goal is to build upon the lighting so that the courthouse will be lit up year-round to mark different holidays and seasons. During normal times, soft white lights will illuminate the courthouse.

4. **Logistics.** Several logistical points were discussed:
    a. Readying the grounds of the courthouse and atrium. Mark Borrel will approach the APPJ to discuss the possibly of power washing the courthouse steps and plaza, as well as the atrium.
    b. Porta Johns. ACLUF will secure porta johns for the event.
    c. Trash clean up. ACLUF will approach parish and city officials for available options for trash clean up after the event.
    d. Banner and t-shirts. Signs Plus will be hired to make the banner. Logos of all sponsors will appear on the banner. A t-shirt vendor has not yet been identified but several suggestions have been put forth. The deadline for a sponsorship logo is October 31st.
    e. Vendors are still being sought. Craft vendors will be set up on Mark Street. Food vendors will be set up Main Street, between Mark and Cappel. Vendor set up will begin at 2 pm when the streets are closed by the Marksville Police.
    f. ACLUF will investigate the possibility of storefronts around the event to give permission for local school holiday decoration of their windows.
5. **Plans for Santa.** As in years past, the Marksville Chamber of Commerce will provide Santa for the event in conjunction with the Toy and Doll Fund, as well as hot chocolate.
6. **Festival activities/plans.** The Light Up event will begin at 4 pm. There will be music throughout the event provided by a live DJ, as well as local school and church choirs and troupes. The ceremony for the official light up of the courthouse and tree will be at 5:15 pm. There will be opening remarks and the ceremonial light up will be performed by a local citizen. After the lighting, the music/entertainment and fun will continue until 8 pm.
7. **Holiday trees**. The APPJ has a 12-foot artificial tree that will be used as the official tree for the light up. ACLUF is researching the possibility of purchasing a live tree to be installed on the courthouse grounds with the intent of using this tree as the official Light Up tree beginning next year. Van Roy will work with the Avoyelles Arts

Council to inquire on status and viability of previously used artificial trees to place in the APPJ atrium and invite non-profit organizations to decorate the trees as done in years past. The atrium will be open during the day until 10 pm for citizens to walk through and enjoy the holiday trees. Marksville City Police will be the stewards of opening and securing the atrium.

8. **Liaison with local organizations.** ACULF will continue to work with the Marksville Chamber of Commerce, the City of Marksville, the APPJ, and Avoyelles Arts Council for the community event. The Avoyelles Parish Rotary has also been approached for participation. Any parish organization's/entity's participation is welcome.

<u>What is needed</u>

1. **Donations/sponsorships status discussed**. The Treasurer advised the community attendees that ACLUF has received some donations and some pledges for donation. This year's fundraising goal is $10-15K. ACULF needs community volunteers to help solicit more sponsorships for fundraising. This will allow more funds to be available for the purchase and installation of permanent seasonal lighting for the courthouse.
2. **Community Volunteers.** ACLUF needs community volunteers to help implement logistics in the various festival plans such as management of vendors, competitions, social media, and other planning elements.
3. **Grants for lights**. ACLUF board is researching possibilities of obtaining grants to use for the event.

Meeting adjourned at 6:36 pm