Avoyelles Courthouse Light Up Foundation
Community Meeting
19 August 2026

Board members present:	Stevie Tilson, President Todd Laborde, Vice President Julie Laborde, Secretary Gayle Gros Treasurer
Consultants/Liaison:	Mark Borrel, Avoyelles Parish Police Juror Liaison Anita Saucier, Marksville Councilmember Liaison "Bulldog" – Community/Tree Consultant
Community attendees:	Health Pastor, Danny Smith, Reagan Lemoine, Jessica Gaspard, Jonathan Gaspard, Robert Green, Laken Moreau
Meeting called to order:	5:30 p.m.

This meeting was held at the Broken Wheel in Marksville, Louisiana, for the purpose of introduction of the Avoyelles Courthouse Light Up Foundation (ACLUF) and its mission to bring lighting to the Avoyelles Parish Courthouse for the upcoming holiday season. The meeting was chaired by the President and Vice President. Points introduced and discussed:

1. **Introduction of Officers to the community group and nexus of formation**. Last year, the lighting of the courthouse was handled by a group of interested citizens who fundraised the inventory and monies needed to put on the event. Of that group, only three remain (Todd Laborde, Mark Borrel, and Jamie Wiley). Under the newly formed 501(c), ACLUF's mission will be to continue the holiday tradition of lighting up Avoyelles Courthouse for years to come. The previous monies collected and the lighting purchased by last year's citizen group has been absorbed into ACLUF and will be used as intended by last year's donors.
2. **Date of lighting Event**. Tentative date was set for 28 November 2026 from 4-8 pm. Community attendees brought concerns of the date being on Thanksgiving weekend, but due to area schools' compressed holiday schedule, and the date had been approved by both Avoyelles Parish Policy Jury and the City of Marksville, all agreed that it was likely the best date to hold it.

3. **Questions regarding the lighting.** The community attendees brought forth questions regarding the caliber of lighting. The Vice President assured the community attendees that ACLUF was looking into in getting commercial grade lighting and was in the process of obtaining quotes for installation of permanent lighting on the top of the courthouse and hopefully enough donations would be received to begin implementation of permanent lighting. With the purchase of commercial lighting, this ensures multi-year usage and cost effectiveness. The permanent lighting will also be used during seasons/holidays throughout the year.
4. **Finding Santa.** Community attendees asked about Santa for the children and offered a reference for Larry Page (ph) and his wife. Larry is from Natchitoches and is highly recommended. Other ideas are to enlist someone from the Marksville Fire Department and enter the festival on a firetruck. It was decided that ACLUF should secure Santa before the end of the month or as soon as can be done.
5. **Festival activities/plans.** Music for the festival was discussed as well as vendors and competitive art from the parish. Community attendees offered help with getting local school involvement and brokering local municipality involvement. ACLUF consultant Van Roy is the point person for music. Vendors will be solicited from last year's list and from contacts made during other local festivals held earlier this year.
6. **Holiday trees**. "Bulldog" discussed options for live trees that could become the parish's permanent tree at the courthouse, providing expertise and advise on which trees would work best. Additionally, contact was made with Maria Trichell (Marksville Garden Club) regarding the garden club's involvement in overseeing the competition of decorated artificial trees in the atrium.
7. **Liaison with local organizations.** Community was assured that the festival would be in partnership with local organizations to make a cohesive effort in putting on the festival for the parish. ACULF will work with the Marksville Chamber of Commerce, the City of Marksville, and Avoyelles Arts Council for the community event.

<u>What is needed</u>

1. **Donations/sponsorships status discussed**. The Treasurer advised the community attendees that ACLUF has received some donations, but more are needed. 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.
4. **T-Shirts/Banner.** Hard deadline for receipt of sponsorships will be 31 October 2026 for inclusion on the banner and t-shirts.

Meeting adjourned at 6:25 pm