

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE
COUNCIL OF THE PARISH OF ST. JAMES, STATE OF LOUISIANA
TAKEN AT A REGULAR MEETING HELD ON JANUARY 18, 2023**

The Council of the Parish of St. James, State of Louisiana, met in regular session in the Council Chambers of the Parish Courthouse Annex in Vacherie, Louisiana on Wednesday, January 18, 2023, at 6:21 p.m., following the public hearing.

On roll call, the following were recorded present: Council Members Alvin St. Pierre, Jr., Jason Amato, Ryan Louque, Mason Bland, Clyde Cooper, Donald Nash, and Chairwoman Vondra Etienne-Steib.

Those also in attendance were Linda Hubbell, Council Secretary; Peter Dufresne, Parish President; Ingrid Bergeron, Human Resources Director; Eric Deroche, Emergency Preparedness Director; Felix Boughton, Finance Director; Rick Webre, Operations Director, and Adam Koenig, Legal Advisor.

The Honorable Vondra Etienne-Steib, Chairwoman, duly convened the Council of the Parish of St. James, State of Louisiana, and stated that the Council was ready for the transaction of business.

Councilman Amato offered the invocation and Councilman Louque led the Pledge of Allegiance.

MINUTES

On a motion offered by Councilman Bland and seconded by Councilman Amato the minutes of the January 4, 2023 public hearing were approved as distributed, and the reading of these minutes dispensed with.

On a motion offered by Councilman Bland and seconded by Councilman Louque, the minutes of the January 4, 2023 regular meeting were approved as distributed, and the reading of these minutes dispensed with.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Dufresne presented this report to the Council:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Good evening, everyone.

- On Monday, January 16th, I attended the Winbush-Chriswell Scholarship Foundation Wreath Laying Ceremony honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Chairwoman Vondra Etienne Steib, the Clerk of Court Shane LeBlanc, Sheriff Willy Martin and Assessor Glenn Waguespack also attended. The Foundation put together an inspiring program, and it was an honor to come together as a community to celebrate the life and legacy of Dr. King.
- This Friday, I will be attending the St James Parish High School Tree Planting Initiative in honor of Arbor Day. My mom graduated from St James High back in 1957, and I'm excited to visit her Alma Mater, as 26 oak trees are planted at the school's entrances and exits. I would like to invite all of our council members to join me at the event this Friday at 9:00am.
- Throughout the rest of January, Barriere Construction will complete the 2022 Road Rehab Project. You can find a full list of roads and dates, weather permitting, on our website. We are beginning to work on the 2023 road rehab project, repairing and enhancing more streets throughout the parish, as soon as the 2022 project is complete.
- A preconstruction meeting was held today at 9:00am to coordinate the bidding and construction of a new concession stand at the Gramercy Park.
- Myself along with a few of our staff members will be at the State Capitol tomorrow morning to present St James Parish Round 2 Water Sector Projects to the State Water Sector Commission. Round one has already been approved, round two takes into consideration the West Bank water clarifier and filter. This project scored well, and we are confident it will get approved.
- On the agenda tonight are two Cooperative Endeavor Agreements with Facility Planning and Control. Both projects are approved Capital Outlay allocations, meaning it is funded by the State and does not substantially impact the Parish budget. The first is for the Blind River Boat Launch, which is a 1 million dollar project to replace docks and install a handicap pier. The other is for planning and design of the Westshore Interconnect Levee in St James Parish. This is very early in the planning phase, and I am scheduled to meet with the Corps of Engineers on February 1st with our engineering team to coordinate this levee extension into the ring levee project. More studies will confirm what type of infrastructure will be required. Drainage and flood protection has always been a priority in my administration. We started with the Levee Lift in South Vacherie back in 2020, which without a doubt prevented Vacherie from flooding during Hurricane Ida. Now, we are continuing that work and have plans to reinforce and create infrastructure that will protect our residents and encourage economic growth.
- Early in my administration, one of my priorities was to expand recreation facilities on the West Bank of the Parish. One of our first concepts was to expand the West Bank Reception Center to include a gymnasium and conference center. The original plan had to be redone, after accessing the project and discovering that the intended modifications to the building would not be cost effective. Design concepts shifted to purchasing land and building the West Bank Multipurpose Building, and design was started in mid-2020. That concept you can see posted on the walls here tonight. One of the major milestones for this project was the acquisition of property from the Hospital, which we completed today. We now own the property, and we can begin modifying the design, which will include a new senior center. Ways to enhance recreation facilities and programs in the West Bank of the Parish was and is a continuing priority of this administration.
- We received our final 10% on the first project worksheet for Hurricane Ida debris that was approved, an amount of approximately \$103,000.
- DHR will now have Vita tax and social services satellite office at the following locations: Vacherie Courthouse Annex, Welcome Senior Center, Lucher Satellite Office, and DHR Main Office/Convent Senior Center. This change is to ensure the residents have transportation and opportunities to be served.
- DHR will hold an additional Li-heap call-in. Due to the high volume of calls and phone issues experienced during the January 9th call in date, residents will be given another opportunity to call in for Li-heap services. Residents

that have already been placed on the appointment list do not need to call in again. These appointments will be spread out throughout the remainder of the year and will be announced when they are set.

- I would like to thank the permitting and code enforcement employees who have been working diligently to help clean blighted property.
- On last Wednesday, I had a Zoom Meeting with Clip Kline, CPRA, and other state officials to review the draft of the 2023 Master Plan Preview Flood Protection Plan, which includes St. James Parish.
- I just left a ribbon cutting for Chow Time, a new mobile food truck located at the corner of Lena St. and Highway 642 in Paulina. I would like to congratulate Carissa Russell on her successful grand opening.
- This concludes my report. God bless everyone here tonight, and God bless you and your families.

Councilman St. Pierre said he is proud of the West Shore Project and glad to be a part of it, and he thanked everyone who were involved.

Councilman Amato said that it is finally recognized that we have a threat, and they are working with us to make it viable.

Councilman Nash inquired about GOMESA funds being used for the Vacherie weir. President Dufresne said they used old GOMESA funds.

PUBLIC COMMENT – None

PRESENTATIONS

- A Resolution of Condolence plaque was presented to the family and friends of Norman Marmillion, Jr.
- Anne Harmon Brett, 13421 Shell Hill Lane, Vacherie, addressed the Council about the recreation facilities and senior exercise facilities. Mr. Dicharry said that since the senior exercise program issue were brought to his attention, a contract has been put in place for their use of the building.
- Cully Frisard, 705 E. Airline Hwy, Gramercy, addressed the Council in regard to recreational facilities.
- Rick Webre provided an explanation for the reasoning behind the social media post then rescinded it. He explained the Six Sigma process and the ordinances that have been in place for the past 23 years and asked the Council for their assistance to try to resolve the issues. Chairwoman Etienne-Steib said no one is opposed, costs have gone up and things may need to be revisited, it was just a premature release of the document. Mr. Webre said he wanted to stop renting the parks until the ordinances were resolved, and he apologized for the inconvenience. Councilman Bland said he is in support of moving forward and shared a few suggestions. Councilman St. Pierre requested a timeline be sent. Mr. Webre then answered the Council's questions. Brent Dicharry said is looking forward to merging the boards and requested to move the 7 budgets in to 1 fund.

APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None

OLD BUSINESS

Update of drainage study for Forrestal Street to Pool Lane – no additional update.

NEW BUSINESS

RESOLUTION 23-06, A RESOLUTION OF CONDOLENCE TO THE FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF NORMAN MARMILLION, JR. was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato. Councilman St. Pierre offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-07, A RESOLUTION PROCLAIMING MARCH 2023 AS PROBLEM GAMBLING AWARENESS MONTH IN ST. JAMES PARISH, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland. Councilman St. Pierre offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-08, A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE DISBURSEMENT OF PAYROLL FOR THE JANUARY 20, 2023 PAYROLL, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Nash and seconded by Councilman St. Pierre. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-09, A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS TO PAY PENDING CURRENT INVOICES AND PAYABLES, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman Louque. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-10, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT TO ENTER INTO A COOPERATIVE ENDEAVOR AGREEMENT WITH THE STATE OF LOUISIANA, FACILITY PLANNING AND CONTROL, DIVISION OF ADMINISTRATION (DOA) FOR THE WEST SHORE RISK REDUCTION CONNECTOR LEVEE (ST. JAMES) PROJECT (FP&C PROJECT NO. 50-J47-22-01) AND AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT TO SIGN ALL CONTRACTS AND AGREEMENTS IN CONJUNCTION WITH SAID AGREEMENT, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman St. Pierre and seconded by Councilman Louque. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-11, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT TO ENTER INTO A COOPERATIVE ENDEAVOR AGREEMENT WITH THE STATE OF LOUISIANA, FACILITY PLANNING AND CONTROL, DIVISION OF ADMINISTRATION (DOA) FOR THE STORM DAMAGE REPAIR TO THE DOCK ON BLIND RIVER (FP&C PROJECT NO. 50-J47-22-02) AND AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT TO SIGN ALL CONTRACTS AND AGREEMENTS IN CONJUNCTION WITH SAID AGREEMENT, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman Louque. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-12, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE OFFICE OF THE PARISH PRESIDENT TO ADVERTISE FOR AND RECEIVE REQUEST OR QUALIFICATIONS FROM PROFESSIONAL

ENGINEERING FIRMS FOR AUXILIARY POWER PROJECTS, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Nash. Councilman Louque offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-13, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE OFFICE OF THE PARISH PRESIDENT TO ADVERTISE AND TAKE BIDS FOR TWO SMALL SUV FOR ST. JAMES PARISH GOVERNMENT, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland. Councilman Amato offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-14, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ST. JAMES PARISH PRESIDENT TO ENTER INTO THE LOUISIANA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROGRAM, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland and was seconded by Councilman Louque. After a roll call vote showing Nash against, and Amato, Cooper, St. Pierre, Bland, Louque, and Etienne in favor, and the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-15, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF A CONTRACT WITH MOUGEOT ARCHITECTURE AND AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT TO SIGN, EXECUTE, AND ADMINISTER SAID AGREEMENT AND ALL RELEVANT DOCUMENTS, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Nash and was seconded by Councilman Cooper. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT - None

COUNCIL MEMBER'S REPORT

COUNCILMAN NASH – Councilman Nash had no comment.

COUNCILMAN COOPER – Councilman Cooper thanked everyone for attending and expressing their concerns about the senior exercise class, and to Mr. Webre and Mr. Dicharry for their concerns with the recreation facilities. He requested condolence letters for Ronald Geauthreaux, Jr., and Josie May Geason Tassin families. He shared concerns about a train that had broken down near Barras Street and said the street was blocked for many hours. He inquired about the emergency alarms in the parish. Mr. Deroche said the work should begin this month.

COUNCILMAN BLAND – Councilman Bland said plans to add bathrooms to the District 4 Park are underway. He requested the Parish Administration contact Waste Management Representatives for an update of when the automated trucks will be in the Parish. He inquired if we received contact info for the CN Representatives for the culverts under the railroad. He then read the following statement:

Constituents of District 4, thank you for trusting me to serve you. Throughout my time in office, I've seen much progress and have formed great relationships, so this my announcement comes after much reflection, prayer and family discussion. I will not be rerunning for District 4 Councilman in the 2023 Election in order for me to focus on my growing family and the duties that come with a recent advancement in my personal career. I am sharing this decision early to give ample time to my successor. I pray that this seat will be filled with someone who is dedicated to you, as I, and committed to continuing to make our community a place we love to live, work, learn, play, and pray.

COUNCILMAN LOUQUE – Councilman Louque had no comment.

COUNCILMAN AMATO – Councilman Amato requested a resolution for the two participants who competed in the North American Special Olympics. Reminded everyone that the 4H Livestock show is this weekend.

COUNCILMAN ST. PIERRE – Councilman St. Pierre expressed appreciation for the West Shore Connector Levee. He thanked Mr. Ingrid for her assistance with a resident. He requested Operations and Finance put together what is needed to raise the rate for garbage pickup, adding that fund isn't just for garbage, it provides for sanitation, garbage truck, litter abatement, etc., we need to address it before the fund is depleted.

CHAIRWOMAN ETIENNE-STEIB – Chairwoman Etienne-Steib expressed condolence to the families to Lionel Batiste and Norbert Paul families. She thanked the communities for attending and sharing their concerns and for making a commitment to help us build a better recreation program. She also thanked those who came out to support their respective districts.

ADJOURNMENT

After determining there was no additional business to come before the council, on a motion offered by Councilman Bland and seconded by Councilman Cooper and carried, the meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.


Linda Hubbell, Secretary