

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE  
COUNCIL OF THE PARISH OF ST. JAMES, STATE OF LOUISIANA  
TAKEN AT A REGULAR MEETING HELD ON JANUARY 20, 2021**

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 20, 2021, at 6:00 p.m.

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

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

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

The Honorable Alvin St. Pierre, Chairman, 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.

**MINUTES**

On a motion offered by Councilman Louque and seconded by Councilman Nash, the minutes of the January 6, 2021 public hearing were approved as distributed, and the reading of these minutes dispensed with.

One a motion offered by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman Louque, the minutes of the January 6, 2021 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:

Good afternoon –

- This past Monday, our country celebrated Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. We were saddened that our gatherings and festivities here in St. James Parish had to be canceled due to the coronavirus and our efforts to continue to stop the spread.
- Since Christmas week, we've been working and partnering with St. James Hospital for the vaccination of people that meet Phase 1A and Phase 1B, Tier 1 requirements. We've gotten local first responders along with 70+ age-range residents vaccinated. We are utilizing parish buildings so the public can get in and out easily. As different phases are released, we will continue working with the hospital. If you're interested in receiving the vaccine, visit the hospital's website ([www.sjph.org/vaccine](http://www.sjph.org/vaccine)) to fill out an interest form. You will be contacted to schedule the vaccine as they become available.
- Also, our parish now has 2 pharmacies administering the vaccine: Gem Drugs in Gramercy and SouthStar Urgent Care in Gramercy next to the pizza hut. If you are an eligible resident, please contact one of the two participating pharmacies to schedule an appointment. Please continue to check the LDH's website for updates on vaccine information.
- In addition, our West Bank Reception Hall is still open for free COVID testing every Wednesday from 9am to 4pm.
- Last week I met with Shell officials, presented them with a 5 year history of how much money we received annually and exactly how the revenue was used to provide pay for our employees and services for our residents. I asked Shell if they would consider committing 2 additional years of this same revenue stream so we can have some time to adjust our expenditures so we're not hit so hard at one time. Waiting to hear back from them.
- Last night, we hosted a public meeting on the west bank to discuss our Capital Improvement Plan, currently under development. We had around 10 residents present to hear the presentation, ask questions and offer comments or suggestions. Each attendee was given a brief survey to fill out asking them to rank priority concerns between drainage, utilities, transportation, road & bridge, and recreation.
- The second public meeting for this plan will take place next Tuesday, January 26<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 pm on the East Bank in the Courthouse Council Chambers. We encourage you to invite your district constituents to participate and provide feedback during the planning process. The information gathered at these meetings will be incorporated into the plan which is on track to be presented to council for approval. For those unable to attend the public meetings, an online survey will be made available in the coming week.

More on Operations.

- On January 7<sup>th</sup>, operations personnel met with representatives of RMI to review the road and pavement assessment that was done in November and December of 2020. Road pavement requests from the council members will be folded into this program and the council will be updated on the status of this project as it progresses.
- An RFQ is currently being advertised for the selection of engineering services for the Watershed Initiative project. The deadline for submission to the state has been extended to the end of month February 2021.
- Work began on January 19<sup>th</sup> on Phase 1 of the Bourbon subdivision gas line project, beginning with the replacement from PVC lines to Polyethylene lines to better increase gas pressure and bring lines up to industry standards, which should correct the problems we are having in the Grand Point/Paulina area up to North Nobile.
- The Humble St. Drainage project started on January 11, 2021 which will serve as a major drainage improvement to the Paulina area. This project beings at Industrial St. and ends west of Longview Park. All work will be performed by our SJP operations department.
- The Canatella St. Drainage project also started on January 11<sup>th</sup> and will improve the drainage conditions from the levee at Trudeau St. and continue down Canatella St. through the Courthouse.
- Concrete for the Molasion Sewer project was poured the week of January 11<sup>th</sup>. The sewer treatment plant was manufactured, delivered and, installed on site.

An update on our DHR Dept.

- We're very proud to announce that St. James Parish Government received 100% compliance for meeting all 50 of the LA Workforce Commission's Community Block Grant Organizational Standards. "The standards reflect

many of the requirements of the CSBG Act, applicable Federal laws and regulations, good management practices, and values of Community Action.

- Our senior centers remain closed to daily senior activities and operations. Telephone calls are made to clients daily for phone assurance.
- If you visit our website, you can find our DHR department has a Housing Podcast that you can listen to at your convenience which includes 5 topics crucial to owning/purchasing a home, and the steps to get there.

**PUBLIC COMMENT** - No public comments were received on agenda items that required a vote.

### **PRESENTATIONS**

Rene Castro, Director, LA Cooperative Extension Service presented the annual report to the Council.

Mike Smith with Exxon Mobil Pipeline presented a Good Neighbor Grant check to the North Vacherie Volunteer Fire Department in the amount of \$2,500.

### **APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS**

**RESOLUTION 21-09, A RESOLUTION REAPPOINTING LESLIE LOUP TO THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS, ST. JAMES PARISH HOSPITAL SERVICE DISTRICT**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Cooper. Councilwoman Etienne-Steib offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

**RESOLUTION 21-10, A RESOLUTION AMENDING THE EXPIRATION DATE OF ANYA BAILEY RANDLE'S TERM ON THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS, ST. JAMES PARISH HOSPITAL DISTRICT**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato. Councilman Louque offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

- District 5 Alternate Access Route – no new update.
- Acquisition of Land for Multipurpose Building Update – Councilwoman Etienne-Steib requested a meeting for February 12<sup>th</sup> to review the CEA that was sent by the Hospital.

After Chairman St. Pierre requested, due to Councilman Bland's absence, to table **RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ST. JAMES PARISH PRESIDENT TO SIGN AND EXECUTE A CONTRACT WITH MEYER ENGINEERING, LTD TO PROVIDE ENGINEERING SERVICES FOR THE ST. JAMES MISSISSIPPI EAST BANK MULTI-USE TRAIL – PHASE I STATE PROJECT NO. H.009724, A/E PROJECT NO. 20-2058**, until the February 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting, Councilman Amato offered a motion to table and was seconded by Councilman Cooper. After a unanimous roll call vote with Bland absent, the motion carried.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

**RESOLUTION 21-11, A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE DISBURSEMENT OF PAYROLL FOR THE JANUARY 22, 2021 PAYROLL**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Nash and seconded by Councilwoman Etienne-Steib. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Bland absent, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 21-12, A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS TO PAY PENDING CURRENT INVOICES AND PAYABLES**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Louque and seconded by Councilman Amato. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Bland absent, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 21-13, A RESOLUTION ACCEPTING CHANGE ORDER #1 FROM FORET CONTRACTING GROUP FOR THE DISTRICT 5 RECREATION PARK KITCHEN AND BATHROOM RENOVATIONS, AND AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT, AND/OR HIS DESIGNEE, TO SIGN EXECUTE, AND ADMINISTER ALL RELEVANT DOCUMENTS**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Cooper and seconded by Councilwoman Etienne-Steib. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Bland absent, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 21-14, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ST. JAMES PARISH PRESIDENT TO SIGN AND EXECUTE A CONTRACT WITH CYPRESS SURVEYING & CONSULTING, LLC TO PROVIDE PROFESSIONAL SERVICES FOR THE VACHERIE CANAL AND PROTECTION LEVEE**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Nash and seconded by Councilman Cooper. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Bland absent, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 21-15, A RESOLUTION AMENDING THE CONTRACT FOR DUPLANTIS DESIGN GROUP, TO INCREASE THE AMOUNT OF THE CONTRACT TO \$43,000**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Cooper and seconded by Councilman Amato. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Bland absent, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 21-16, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT AND/OR THE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES TO SIGN FUNDING APPLICATIONS, SUPPLEMENTS, AND ONE-TIME FUNDING APPLICATIONS FOR THE ST. JAMES PARISH DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES LIHEAP PROGRAM FUNDS INCLUDING APPROPRIATE ASSURANCES, AGREEMENTS, CONTRACTS, AMENDMENTS, AND REVISIONS IN ORDER FOR ST. JAMES PARISH TO ADMINISTER EXISTING OR NEW LIHEAP PROGRAM FUNDS IN THE YEAR OF 2021**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Louque and seconded by Councilwoman Etienne-Steib. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Bland absent, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 21-17, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING ST. JAMES PARISH GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES, CAA (DHR) TO ADVERTISE AND RECEIVE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FROM QUALIFIED FIRMS/INDIVIDUALS TO PROVIDE COMMUNICATION, PUBLIC**

**AWARENESS, AND MARKETING RESOURCES**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato. Councilman Louque offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

**PROPOSED ORDINANCE 21-01, AN ORDINANCE APPROVING A LEASE AGREEMENT BETWEEN VERON HOLDING, LLC AND ST. JAMES PARISH GOVERNMENT FOR THE CONTINUED OPERATION OF THE EXISTING ST. JAMES PARISH FITNESS CENTER AND AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT TO SIGN, EXECUTE, AND ADMINISTER SAID LEASE AGREEMENT AND ANY AND ALL RELEVANT DOCUMENTS**, was introduced on a motion offered by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman Nash. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Bland absent, the ordinance was accepted and ordered filed with the Secretary for public inspection and publication of Notice of Public Hearing, which was scheduled for 6:00 p.m., Wednesday, February 3, 2021, in the Council Chambers of the Parish Courthouse in Convent.

**PROPOSED ORDINANCE 21-02, AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE ST. JAMES PARISH CODE OF ORDINANCES TO IMPLEMENT INTERIM REVISIONS TO CHAPTER 102 GOVERNING SUBDIVISIONS**, was introduced on a motion offered by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman Cooper. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Bland absent, the ordinance was accepted and ordered filed with the Secretary for public inspection and publication of Notice of Public Hearing, which was scheduled for 6:00 p.m., Wednesday, February 3, 2021, in the Council Chambers of the Parish Courthouse in Convent.

### **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

**FELIX BOUGHTON** – indicated that the finance department will be completely moved to the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor by the end of this week. He said that they are in the middle of closing 2020 and will provide an accurate report once it's completed.

**RICK WEBRE** – said that he is extremely proud of his crews for the work they are accomplishing. He showed brief video of one of the projects currently being done. He thanked the Council and Administration for the equipment provided to do the jobs. President Dufresne also commended the crew for an exceptional job, adding that they are saving a lot of money by completing the jobs in-house.

**ERIC DEROCHE** – indicated that they are working with the hospital with the vaccines. He said he sent an email with the draft plan, and to let them know if you have questions, adding they will be coming forward in the next couple of weeks for adoption of the plan. Mr. Deroche said the hospital is encouraging everyone 70+ years of age to call the hospital to get on the list to receive the vaccine, he continued to say that they will be administered by appointment only.

**INGRID LEBLANC** – said that the format of the monthly report has changed. She also said they are encouraging more seniors to register at the centers to take advantage of the resources available.

### **COUNCIL MEMBER'S REPORT**

**COUNCILMAN NASH** – Councilman Nash inquired about the digging out of the canals in the South Vacherie area. Mr. Webre indicated that they will do those in the spring. Councilman Nash also inquired about the culvert that crosses Hwy 643. Mr. Webre said they received a cost benefit analysis and determined it is too expensive to do due to the utility relocation and said they could look for another outfall. President Dufresne indicated that they will be monitoring the levels to keep them at 2 feet unless we get significant rain. Councilman Nash inquired about the gas station upgrade. Mr. Webre indicated that they recently had a stake holders meeting and said the State and Gulf Coast Pipeline are willing to pay for both pay points.

**COUNCILWOMAN ETIENNE-STEIB** – Councilwoman Etienne-Steib thanked the Administration for the public hearing and said she was disappointed in the low turnout. She requested Mr. Webre to assist her in setting up a meeting with Mr. Bourgeois for access to his property on Martin Luther King Street. She requested the Administration to review the CEA with the hospital prior to the February 12<sup>th</sup> meeting and to share the pros and cons with the council so they can decide which direction to go in. She gave a shout out to the new Madam Vice-President and wished good luck to the new President.

**COUNCILMAN COOPER** – Councilman Cooper requested a condolence letter be sent to the family of Darwin Octave. He encouraged the administration to continue to work hard and said he appreciates the work. He congratulated the new President of the United States.

**COUNCILMAN BLAND** – Councilman Bland was absent.

**COUNCILMAN LOUQUE** – Councilman Louque expressed his appreciation to the operations department, adding there are several major projects ongoing in his district.

**COUNCILMAN AMATO** – Councilman Amato congratulated the DHR team on their successful audit. He requested a condolence letter be sent to the family of Ruth Gaudin, a long-time volunteer of St. James Parish. He commended the Parish team on the vaccine process, adding it was professional and orderly. He thanked the Parish Administration for the great job.

**CHAIRMAN ST. PIERRE** – Chairman St. Pierre thanked Mr. Webre and his personnel for the work they are doing. He also thanked the administration for setting up the meeting with him and the Mayor of Gramercy for the engineering of South Millet Street. He also congratulated Mr. Leblanc for obtaining 100% compliance. He informed the council that He and the Administration had a conversation about a deadline for agenda items. He said he had a conversation about having a meeting with the School Board about redistricting. He indicated that he had a conversation with Mr. Boughton regarding recovery of taxes.

**ADJOURNMENT**

After determining there was no additional business to come before the council, on a motion offered by Councilman Nash and seconded by Councilman Louque and carried, the meeting adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

  
Linda Hubbell, Secretary