

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE
COUNCIL OF THE PARISH OF ST. JAMES, STATE OF LOUISIANA
TAKEN AT A REGULAR MEETING HELD ON MARCH 2, 2022**

The Council of the Parish of St. James, State of Louisiana, met in regular session in the Council Chambers of the Parish Courthouse in Convent, Louisiana on Wednesday, March 2, 2022, at 6:05 p.m., following the public hearing.

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

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 O'Neil Parenton, 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 Nash led the Pledge of Allegiance.

MINUTES

On a motion offered by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman Nash the minutes of the February 16, 2022 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. First, I would like to thank Mr. O'Neil Parenton for sitting in as our counsel tonight. I'm glad to have you with us.
- Hopefully, everyone had a happy and safe Mardi Gras this past weekend.
- To start, last week, I met with Mr. Jay Dardenne, the Commissioner of the Division of Administration. If you recall, last year, the parish was awarded 500k for pre-construction services including some engineering work to widen HWY 3127 in Vacherie. This meeting was to go over the request that St. James has put in this upcoming legislative session for capital outlay, which involves the remainder of the engineering money and the beginning of the construction dollars.
- Westshore connector levee – The funding request involves planning and engineering money to support the Corps of Engineers and CPRA in developing the Westshore connector levee as part of the Westshore Lake Pontchartrain project. We are currently waiting on a CEA with Facility Planning for the last years funding for the HWY 3127, and as soon as we get that from the state, we will be bringing that here to the council for approval.
- Recently, multiple, very productive meetings were held, not only in Washington DC but in Baton Rouge pertaining to the Westshore Levee Extension Project. The risks, hazards, proposed alternative levee alignments, and possible solutions were explained to our congressional delegation. Upon returning to St. James Parish, joint meetings were immediately conducted with the Parish Officials, US Army Corps of Engineers, and the CPRA, both of which placed this project in a higher priority status. Funding sources seem to be aligning and projections for this critical project are positive.
- The Operations Department has been tentatively approved to remove hurricane generated debris from the Vacherie Canal under FEMA Category A. The lease or purchase of specialized equipment will be authorized by FEMA for the project.
- Considerable drainage mitigation work has taken place near Admiral's Landing. A new ditch was excavated on the east side of Admiral's landing, all channels south of HWY 3125 were excavated and realigned. All Channels North of HWY 3125 to the drainage laterals were cleared and grubbed. Operations crews will replace the undersized culvert at the intersection of Admiral's Landing and HWY 3125 as soon as materials are delivered.
- Engineering is complete for the HWY 643 drainage project. T. Baker Smith has submitted a permit request to DOTD to begin construction and is developing the bid packets. The operations department will obtain construction quotes once permitting is approved by DOTD.
- An RFQ was developed to select an engineering firm for the 2022 road rehab program and will advertise Thursday pending council approval. Results from the Material Resources Incorporated assessment indicate significant edge failure damage as predicted from Hurricane Ida. The 2021-2022 road rehab program will be divided into 3 categories: Preservation, Mill-Patch-Overlay and edge failure repair. Edge failure repair will be submitted to FEMA to develop a project work sheet under Category C.
- Bids have been accepted for the David Plantation drainage improvement project. A pre-construction meeting, a notice to proceed, and a public meeting was conducted last week. Contractors are scheduled to deploy on March 7th.
- The Humble St. Phase 2 project is progressing well. The final two driveways will be poured next week, and final grade will follow. The Operations Department has asked the engineer and the contractor to assess the installation of concrete lining on the channel that extends from HWY 3125 to St. James Street east of the apartment complex. The cost of this additional work will be covered by the grant and will expend the remaining balance of the grant.
- Our litter abatement program has been something we've been working on for quite some time now. Our crew members have been hired and started working today. A training and coordination meeting will be conducted tomorrow with the solid waste division to explain the critical nature of their job and determine shortfalls in equipment or personnel. We will have two full time employees in a pickup truck, their job is litter abatement and picking up trash on the side of the road. We will have one crew on the east bank and one on the west bank.
- This concludes my report. God Bless each one of you and God Bless St. James Parish.

PUBLIC COMMENT – None

PRESENTATIONS

Jay Robichaux, Executive Director, presented the River Parishes Tourist Commission's annual report.

Ms. Helen Scott was recognized for her upcoming 104th birthday on March 13th. A plaque and gift basket were presented to her and received by her family members in attendance.

Dana Groover, St. James Parish Housing Authority Director, presented an update on the status of the displaced public housing residents affected by Hurricane Ida, per the Council's request. She then answered the Council's questions.

APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None

OLD BUSINESS

Acquisition of Land for Multipurpose Building – Survey markers are in place. Dimensions need to be submitted to an appraisal company to get the value of the property.

Update of drainage study for Forrestal Street to Pool Lane – The data from the previous drainage study will be combined with some near-term things that are being done and a briefing will be provided.

ORDINANCE 22-02, AN ORDINANCE APPROVING A LEASE AGREEMENT BETWEEN S J KELLER PROPERTIES, L.L.C. AND ST. JAMES PARISH GOVERNMENT TO TEMPORARILY OPERATE ELDERLY AND DISABILITY SERVICES, AND AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT TO SIGN, EXECUTE, AND ADMINISTER SAID LEASE AGREEMENT AND ANY AND ALL RELEVANT DOCUMENTS, having undergone the hearing process, was offered and moved adoption by Councilman Nash and was seconded by Councilman Cooper. After a unanimous roll call vote, with St. Pierre and Bland absent, the ordinance was adopted.

NEW BUSINESS

RESOLUTION 22-39, A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE DISBURSEMENT OF PAYROLL FOR THE MARCH 4, 2022 PAYROLL, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Louque and seconded by Councilman Amato. After a unanimous roll call vote, with St. Pierre and Bland absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 22-40, A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS TO PAY PENDING CURRENT INVOICES AND PAYABLES, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Cooper and seconded by Councilman Nash. After a unanimous roll call vote, with St. Pierre and Bland absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 22-41, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT'S OFFICE TO ADVERTISE AND ACCEPT REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FROM PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERING FIRMS FOR THE MAGNOLIA INTERIOR DRAINAGE PROJECT, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Nash. Councilman Amato offered a second, the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 22-42, A RESOLUTION TO ENGAGE SPECIAL COUNSEL RELATIVE TO PARISH FIRE SERVICES, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman Louque. After a unanimous roll call vote, with St. Pierre and Bland absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 22-43, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING ST. JAMES PARISH GOVERNMENT TO ADVERTISE AND RECEIVE BIDS FOR A STANDBY DIESEL GENERATOR AT THE CONVENT COURTHOUSE, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Nash. Councilman Louque offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 22-44, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING ST. JAMES PARISH GOVERNMENT TO ADVERTISE AND RECEIVE BIDS FOR A STANDBY DIESEL GENERATOR AT THE MOLAISON SEWER PLANT, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Louque. Councilman Cooper offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 22-45, A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE APPLICATION OF RANDALL AND NILI ROUGEE TO ALLOW CONSTRUCTION OF A SMALL DOG DAYCARE AND BOARDING SERVICE IN A RESIDENTIAL AREA, (ITEM 21-39) 23144 PAUL ROAD, VACHERIE, LOUISIANA UNDER THE ST. JAMES PARISH LAND USE ORDINANCE, WITH CONDITIONS, was offered and move for adoption by Councilman Nash and was seconded by Councilman Cooper. After a unanimous roll call vote, with St. Pierre and Bland absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 22-46, A RESOLUTION ACCEPTING CHANGE ORDER #5 FROM LA CONTRACTING ENTERPRISE, L.L.C. FOR THE HUMBLE STREET DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENTS, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Louque and seconded by Councilman Amato. After a unanimous roll call vote, with St. Pierre and Bland absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 22-47, A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE APPLICATION OF RENE INDUSTRIES SOUTH LOUISIANA FILL MATERIALS L.L.C. (ITEM #22-02) UNDER THE ST. JAMES PARISH LAND USE ORDINANCE, WITH CONDITIONS, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Nash and seconded by Councilman Cooper. After a unanimous roll call vote, with St. Pierre and Bland absent, the resolution was adopted.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

ERIC DEROCHE – received notification that GOHSEP and FEMA have closed the registration for new applications for the RV travel program. Application will still be process for those who have already begun the process.

INGRID BERGERON – no comment.

FELIX BOUGHTON – no comment.

RICK WEBRE – no comment.

COUNCIL MEMBER'S REPORT

COUNCILMAN ST. PIERRE – Councilman St. Pierre was absent

COUNCILMAN AMATO – Councilman Amato indicated that Representative Schexnayder is on board with the Westshore Levee Alignment project. He said the tall grass ordinance should be revised to allow us to go on private property due to immediate danger. He will work with Adam and bring forth the recommendations.

COUNCILMAN LOUQUE – Councilman Louque said the work being done along Admiral's Landing lookd good and inquired which way they will be working next. Mr. Weber indicated they are moving farther west.

COUNCILMAN BLAND – Councilman Bland was absent.

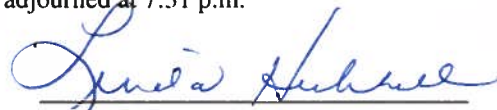
COUNCILMAN COOPER – Councilman Cooper requested a condolence letter to the family of Kerry Carter. He indicated that he spoke with Mr. Dicharry to inquire about renting the park. He asked for a status of the District 5 building. President Dufresne said they are moving forward with the project, just need to make sure they are on firm legal ground. The tentative date for the District 5 Town Hall is April 20th and will be under the pavilion, weather permitting. Councilman Cooper requested the status of the baseball field lights and a backstop. Mr. Webre indicated that it will be further in the year before they look at that. He thanked Ms. Ingrid for her efforts to get Ms. Dana Groover to attend the meeting tonight.

COUNCILMAN NASH – Councilman Nash indicated there is a situation in District 7 where a new developer has hauled a lot of dirt causing encroachment on the neighbor's property. He asked if there anything that can be done with the elevation, that it is 1 foot above the road, maybe bring it to down to 6 inches. He inquired about the culvert for Hwy 643. Mr. Webre indicated that they are waiting to get the bid package to put out the bid. Councilman Nash said progress on the bridge looks good.

CHAIRWOMAN ETIENNE-STEIB – Chairwoman Etienne-Steib shared an experience with a phone call that she made to the parish utilities. She said the tone of the employee's voice was antagonizing, condescending, and belittling. She suggested sensitivity training and said we are a service office and customers should be treated with respect, however, no employee should be subjected to cursing or belligerent customers either. She said she was appalled at the tone that was used.

ADJOURNMENT

After determining there was no additional business to come before the council, on a motion offered by Councilman Nash and seconded by Councilman Cooper and carried, the meeting adjourned at 7:31 p.m.


Linda Hubbell, Secretary