

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE
COUNCIL OF THE PARISH OF ST. JAMES, STATE OF LOUISIANA
TAKEN AT A REGULAR MEETING HELD ON MARCH 15, 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, March 15 2023, at 6:17 p.m., following the public hearing.

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

MINUTES

On a motion offered by Councilman St. Pierre and seconded by Councilman Nash the minutes of the March 1, 2023 public hearing were approved as distributed, and the reading of these minutes dispensed with.

On a motion offered by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman Louque, the minutes of the March 1, 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.
- The Department of Human Resources is hosting Legal Aid sessions this spring on how to do Medicaid and financial literacy from 5-7 pm on March 23rd, April 17th, April 19th, May 24th. All seniors over 60 are welcome, and their caregivers or family members are welcome as well.
- One of our bus drivers, Ernold Jones, lost his daughter a few weeks ago, I would like to extend my condolences to him and his family. I'd like to ask Linda to send a letter of condolence to the family of Mr. Jones.
- The St James Parish ARC won first place for the best float and third for the dance contest at the St. Charles Mardi Gras Event. Our ARC members truly enjoyed this event and meeting ARC members from other parishes.
- The ARC has a lemonade stand on Mondays at the ARC thrift store in Vacherie. Please stop by and support this small business endeavor.
- I have given each of you a copy of the five-year analysis of the Solid Waste Fund. If no changes are made, this fund can only operate for two more years. I'd like to recommend that maybe the council create an ad hoc committee of 3 council members, possibly appointed by the council chair, and 3 members of the administration to meet and make recommendations for this fund further in the future.
- I was contacted by FG earlier this week and given a status update on the Sunshine Project, which I provided a printed copy to each of you. I was informed that they are continuing to pursue successful permitting. I was assured by FG that they are deeply committed to protecting the environment and operating a safe facility for its employees and the community.
- Several of our staff members attended the River Region Chamber of Commerce General Membership Meeting this past Monday. These meetings are an excellent resource for our team and allow us to connect with leaders and businesses across our region.
- This past Saturday was Market Day at the Welcome Center. We had over 40 vendors, and a great turnout. Market Day is held the second Saturday of every month from 8am-2pm, so please mark your calendar for April 8.
- On Saturday, I also attended the Relay for Life Survivor and Caregiver Walk of Fame event. It was wonderful to see so many survivors celebrating recovery. Juanita Bourgeois was recognized as the longest survivor, and Braylee Loupe was honored as the newest survivor.
- I along with Councilman Jason Amato, EOC Director Eric Deroche, Linda Hubbell, and several other staff members, attended the Police Jury Association of Louisiana conference in Shreveport, Louisiana. It was a great opportunity to connect with fellow leaders and officials across the state and hear about new resources available to our community.
- I would also like to congratulate Linda again, who was recognized as the outgoing president of the Organization of Parish Administrative Officials. She did a fantastic job representing St. James Parish.
- Bid advertising for the expansion to the West Bank library opens tomorrow, March 16th. The library currently does not have a public meeting room, and this expansion will provide that resource to our library staff and residents.
- Bids for the AMI Meters will open on March 30th. These meters will automate water and gas meter reading, providing accurate monthly documentation for residents' bills. It's important to note, these meters will not cause any job losses in the Parish. Employees who currently work as meter readers will continue to be employed as technicians.
- On March 30th, we are opening bids for the new fuel tanks. These tanks were funded by the State's local government assistance program.
- We have issued a task order to Quality Engineering for the Welcome Center. This project will enhance the Welcome Center and make it more accessible for guests and residents alike.

- A task order was issued to DDG Engineering to develop an initial design concept and building placement for a new West Bank Senior Center and Multipurpose Recreation Facility on our property we recently purchased from the hospital.
- Operations Director Rick Webre and I attended the Amite River Basin Commission yesterday. This commission facilitates cooperation between federal, state, and local governing bodies to foster floodplain management and coordinate river management within the basin.
- We have issued a task order for the geotechnical inspections for the West Shore Interconnect Levee to begin.
- Numbers are currently low for baseball, so we have extended the registration deadline to this Friday. Please encourage youth to sign up for our baseball program.
- The windows and doors for the new DHR building in Lucher were supposed to be delivered by the end of February but have not arrived yet. Other than that, we are on track to complete this building on schedule.
- The Natural gas purchase point on the West Bank should be operational by the end of April. We are waiting on Acadian Pipeline to tap the line for service. Getting this project done before hurricane season starts on May 1 is a big accomplishment and will provide better service to residents of South Vacherie should the need arise.
- Next week, the office of U.S. Senator Bill Cassidy, will host Constituent Assistance Events in the Capitol Region for constituents needing assistance with federal agencies, ranging from the Social Security Administration to the Department of Veterans' Affairs. A staff member for Senator Cassidy will be on hand to help constituents fill out privacy release forms. The St James Parish event will be on Tuesday, March 21, from 12 to 2 PM at the St. James Parish Council Chambers of the St. James Parish Courthouse.
- Sirens for the Emergency Warning System repairs are at 50%. While we still have long way to go, this is major progress towards completing repairs caused from Hurricane Ida.

This concludes my report. God bless each one of you and your families.

PUBLIC COMMENT - None

PRESENTATIONS

1. Ken Guidry, Keep St. James Parish Beautiful Board Chairman presented information about the upcoming Clean Up Day in St. James Parish. He said they have chosen Saturday, April 27th, which is also Earth Day, and it is also Louisiana Love the Boot cleanup week. He requested continued assistance from the Parish. He said they are in the process of applying for a grant and it will require a CEA from the Parish.
2. At this time Councilman Amato offered a motion to amend the agenda to introduce the new fire department Board of Commissions. Councilman Louque offered a second, and after a unanimous roll call vote, with Bland absent, the motion carried. The fire department leadership each introduced themselves.
Damian Laiche - President; Sean O'Connor - Vice President; Joseph Guillot - Board of Directors;
Devon Jackson - Fire Chief; Brett Trosclair - East Bank District Chief; Mike Guillot - West Bank District Chief

APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

RESOLUTION 23-50, A RESOLUTION APPOINTING RACHEL BECNEL TO THE SOUTH CENTRAL LOUISIANA HUMAN SERVICES AUTHORITY, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman St. Pierre. Councilman Nash offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

OLD BUSINESS

Update of drainage study from Forrestal Street to Pool Lane – Need to finish up on Peach, 643, and Spruce and then will get the crews into the channel. Still have 300 more linear feet of pipe to be placed, then seeding and fertilizer, and one more box to pour on the back of 643; will also clear all the way to the Vacherie Canal.

Update of West Bank Multi-Purpose Complex – met with DDG to begin the infant stages of designing the complex. The architect will meet with Hospital officials and their design team on the 27th to discuss building placement for a new Vacherie Senior Center and the new Multipurpose Indoor Recreation Complex.

At this time Councilman Amato offered a motion to table ORDINANCE 23-04 AN ORDINANCE REPEALING ORDINANCE 10-20, EXCLUDING THE SALES COST, OR LEASE OR RENTAL PRICE OF MANUFACTURING MACHINERY AND EQUIPMENT FOR IRON AND STEEL MILLS LOCATED IN ST. JAMES PARISH FROM THE PARISH'S ONE PERCENT (1%) LOCAL SALES AND USE TAX LEVIED BY ORDINANCE C-81-7, AND PROVIDING FOR OTHER MATTER IN CONNECTION THEREWITH, to the next meeting to allow time for further review; was seconded by Councilman St. Pierre. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Bland absent, the motion carried. The ordinance was tabled until March 29, 2023. A public hearing was scheduled for March 29, 2023 in the Council Chambers of the Parish Courthouse Annex in Vacherie at 6:00 p.m.

NEW BUSINESS

RESOLUTION 23-51, A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE DISBURSEMENT OF PAYROLL FOR THE MARCH 17 2023 PAYROLL, 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 23-52, A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS TO PAY PENDING CURRENT INVOICES AND PAYABLES, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Nash and seconded by Councilman Amato. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Bland absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-53, A RESOLUTION PROCLAIMING MARCH 27, 2023 THROUGH MARCH 31, 2023 AS PAINT THE PARISH PURPLE WEEK IN ST. JAMES PARISH, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Nash. Councilman Cooper offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-54, A RESOLUTION ACCEPTING CHANGE ORDER #1 FROM FELICIANA WELDERS, INC FOR THE WESTBANK NATURAL GAS PURCHASE STATION PROJECT, was offered

and moved for adoption by Councilman St. Pierre and seconded by Councilman Louque. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Bland absent, the resolution was adopted.

Councilman Louque indicated that no information was sent with the resolution for him to make a decision. Councilman Nash offered a motion to table RESOLUTION 23- , A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE APPLICATION OF D.E. SHAW RENEWABLES INVESTMENTS, LLC (ST. JAMES SOLAR) TO ALLOW CONSTRUCTION OF ADDITIONAL INDUSTRIAL MET TOWERS TO MONITOR WEATHER CONDITIONS IN A RESIDENTIAL GROWTH AND AGRICULTURAL AREA, 2561 BACK QUARTERS STREET, VACHERIE, LOUISIANA (ITEM 23-07) UNDER THE ST. JAMES PARISH LAND USE ORDINANCE, WITH CONDITIONS, until March 29, 2023 to allow time for the Council to receive and review more information; Councilman Cooper offered a seconded. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Bland absent, the motion carried.

RESOLUTION 23-55, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ST. JAMES PARISH COUNCIL, ST. JAMES PARISH GOVERNMENT, PARISH OF ST. JAMES, (HEREIN REFERRED TO AS THE "GOVERNMENTAL UNIT") TO JOIN WITH THE STATE OF LOUISIANA AND OTHER LOCAL GOVERNMENTAL UNITS AS A PARTICIPANT IN THE LOUISIANA STATE LOCAL GOVERNMENT OPIOID LITIGATION MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (THE "MOU") AND ANY SUBSEQUENT FORMAL AGREEMENTS NECESSARY TO IMPLEMENT THE MOU, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO EXECUTION OF THE SETTLEMENT PARTICIPATION FORMS OF THE NATIONAL SETTLEMENT AGREEMENTS, RELEASES, AND OTHER DOCUMENTATION APPROVED BY COUNSEL, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman St. Pierre. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Bland absent, the resolution was adopted.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

FELIX BOUGHTON – The Parish will begin to spend money from Fund 802 (GOMESA) that will require a budget amendment. January sales tax is 17% higher than last January. If the trend continues, we will be \$1.7 million more than budgeted.

RICK WEBRE – He said he will try to get project data to the council at every meeting.

COUNCIL MEMBER'S REPORT

COUNCILMAN NASH – Councilman Nash inquired about an update on the Bayou Chevreuil Bridge. President Dufresne indicated that the State called the Bond in to continue with a new contractor under the same cost. If not, they will have to rebid the job again.

COUNCILMAN COOPER – Councilman Cooper requested a condolence to the family of Faye Hooker and to Ms. Dorothy Adams on the loss of her granddaughter.

COUNCILMAN BLAND – Councilman Bland was absent.

COUNCILMAN LOUQUE – Councilman Louque expressed appreciation to the Parish Administration for attending the Amite River Basin meeting. He inquired about drainage clearing on Bourbon Canal. Mr. Webre indicated that when they are done on the West Bank they will head to the East Bank.

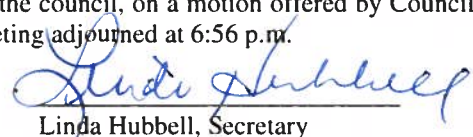
COUNCILMAN AMATO – Councilman Amato requested the Council review the Solar Farm Study and said they will ask Mr. Pat Gordon, with South Central Planning and Development, to review the study with the council at the next meeting. He requested condolence letters be sent to the families of Ms. Lucille Accardo and Mr. Billy Guzman. He congratulated Linda on her successful OPAO Presidential term. He said he was glad to be a part of the luncheon and Speaker Schexnayder attending as the Guest Speaker. He congratulated the Fire Department Leadership.

COUNCILMAN ST. PIERRE – Councilman St. Pierre thanked Ms. Flo Dumas with Entergy for her assistance with AT&T to have some utilities poles changed in District 1. He said the CPRA Master Plan meeting was interesting. He also congratulated Linda on her past Presidency of the OPAO.

CHAIRWOMAN ETIENNE-STEIB – Chairwoman Etienne-Steib congratulated Linda. She thanked the Council and the Community for their acts of kindness and warm words during the difficult time on the loss of her sister. She requested we invite the new Superintendent to the meeting on April 12th to introduce himself.

ADJOURNMENT

After determining there was no additional business to come before the council, on a motion offered by Councilman Louque and seconded by Councilman St. Pierre and carried, the meeting adjourned at 6:56 p.m.


Linda Hubbell, Secretary