

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE
COUNCIL OF THE PARISH OF ST. JAMES, STATE OF LOUISIANA
TAKEN AT A REGULAR MEETING HELD ON MARCH 29, 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 29, 2023, at 6:04 p.m., immediately following the public hearing.

On roll call, the following were recorded present: Council Members Alvin St. Pierre, Jr., Ryan Louque, Clyde Cooper, Donald Nash, and Vice Chairman Jason Amato. Chairwoman Etienne Steib and Councilman 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 Adam Koenig, Legal Advisor.

The Honorable, Jason Amato, 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 Cooper offered the invocation and Councilman Louque led the Pledge of Allegiance.

MINUTES

On a motion offered by Councilman Louque and seconded by Councilman St. Pierre the minutes of the March 15, 2023 public hearing were approved as distributed, and the reading of these minutes dispensed with.

On a motion offered by Councilman Nash and seconded by Councilman Cooper, the minutes of the March 15, 2023 regular meeting were approved as distributed, and the reading of these minutes dispensed with.

FINANCE DEPARTMENT'S MONTHLY REPORT

The Statement of Revenues and Expenditures for December 2022 was approved on a motion offered by Councilman St. Pierre and seconded by Councilman Cooper.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Dufresne presented this report to the Council:

- Thank you, Mr. Amato. Good evening, everyone.
- This week, we submitted an earmark request to Congressman Troy Carter's office for federal funding to supplement local funding for the West Bank Senior Center and Recreational Multi-Purpose Facility. We requested \$7 million to go with our \$3 million local match.
- The West Bank natural gas purchase point is still on schedule to begin operations prior to the hurricane season at the end of April.
- Two automated gas meter RFP's open tomorrow, March 30th. The project on the East Bank is funded by the first round of the water sector grant, which includes communications infrastructure and meters. The West Bank project will be paid for with internal funds.
- Our new DHR building has made huge progress in the last two weeks. The glass storefront and windows were installed, and crews are starting on all interior work. I know this has been a long project because we ran into obstacles along the way and supply chain issues. However, this project is progressing, and we are expecting to complete it within the one-year construction timeline.
- We are still working to get commercial kitchen upgrades for the DHR building in Convent. We ran into compliance issues that we weren't expecting. To be in code compliance, this kitchen will require a new HVAC, fire suppression, range hood, and sinks.
- The remodel of the 3rd floor of the St. James Admin Building is completed, and furniture came in today. This remodel will make Permitting, Utilities, and the Citizen Service Center more accessible to residents and will greatly increase our ability to serve residents in person.
- The Water Tank Rehabilitation RFP bids opened yesterday and will stay open for three weeks. We will complete interviews on the final two companies as this is an important bid for a grant application.
- Our baseball program has had a great response, and we have 24 teams registered currently. Batting cages are being installed throughout the parish, and I know it's going to be a great season.
- I'd like to remind you all that we now have pickleball on Monday nights at the Recreation Center from 5-8pm. We've had a great response so far, and our community is enjoying picking up this new sport and activity.
- We are also about to start line dancing on Thursday nights at the Recreation Center. Susan Bailey will be instructing the class, and I'm sure this will quickly become a much-loved weekly event. We will be providing more details about the class as they become available.
- The Blind River boat launch is progressing, and we are still anticipating DOTD to let the contract to replace the access bridge in April. Our proposal for a kayak launch at the Blind River and Grand Point Boat Launches will be submitted to the office of state parks for federal funding to create a kayak and canoe trail between the two boat launches.
- Our Librarian, Mrs. Walker, has been advocating for a crosswalk at the Lutchter Library. This will enable students to safely cross over from Lutchter High School to the library to read, do homework, and attend Library events. We are issuing a task order to get this project done so our students can safely access educational resources.
- We are continuing to make progress towards creating an Archive Center to store records and historical documents. Our librarian is meeting with a researcher this week to discuss needs for the project.
- TBT Contractors received the contract for the addition to the Vacherie Library. The library currently does not have a public meeting room, and this expansion will provide that resource to our library staff and residents on the West Bank.

- Today we conducted a final inspection of road construction under the 2022 Road Rehabilitation program. I am happy to share that the streets in the program have all been successfully repaired, which will preserve them and save taxpayer dollars over time. Later this year, work will begin on the 2023 program. Crescent Engineering will finish engineering the project at the end of April. Coring and testing have begun on roads and drainage in the Belle Vue Lakes subdivision. This will determine the budget and the extent of effort required to complete this project.
 - We have another reimbursement request Project Worksheet approved from FEMA for fire stations and sirens that were damaged during Hurricane Ida. We still have 4 project worksheets waiting on obligation.
 - On April 22nd, the Keep St James Parish Beautiful Board will be hosting their annual Parish Wide Clean-Up Event from 8:00-11:30 am. Volunteers will be meeting on the West Bank at the Vacherie Health Unit and on the East Bank at Lutch Park. Following the event, participants are invited to meet at Lutch Park for refreshments sponsored by Nucor. Nucor will also be hosting their tree giveaway event at this time, and community members are invited to stop by and receive a free tree.
 - The Department of Humans Resources is hosting Legal aid sessions this spring on how to do Medicaid and financial literacy from 5-7 pm on April 17th, April 19th, and May 24th. All seniors over 60 are welcome, and their caregivers or family members are welcome as well.
 - We are working to get a new commercial kitchen for the DHR building in Convent. That project seems to be on tract, and we are looking for an alternative location to avoid extending the contract with Bateman.
 - I would like to personally congratulate two of our local athletes, Ms. Brittney Williams, and Ms. Denise Louque of the St James Parish ARC. The ladies participated in the Louisiana Special Olympics Women's Bowling competition held March 4, 2023 in Baton Rouge. Brittney placed second and Denise placed fourth.
 - I would also like to congratulate the IOU Biddy Basketball All-Star team, who won the Biddy Basketball National Championship last week for the second year in a row. I am looking forward to recognizing these outstanding athletes and coaches in person at a future council meeting.
 - The Lutch High School Girls Powerlifting team recently won their 16th straight State Title. This is a huge accomplishment for these young ladies, and I would like to congratulate them for their hard work, determination, and big win.
 - Last week I participated in a Fly-In to DC with Chip Kline, Louisiana's Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, and a host of other parish presidents, advocating for additional GOMESA funding. This year there are many funding opportunities for states, and as part of the Parishes Advocating for Coastal Endurance, we are petitioning Capitol Hill for additional funding for coastal restoration and protection in coastal states.
 - Last Tuesday, Senator Cassidy's Office hosted a Constituent Assistance Event workshop for residents in St James Parish. One of Cassidy's staff members was available to support individuals needing assistance with federal agencies, ranging from the Social Security Administration to the Department of Veterans' Affairs.
 - I met with Entergy last week and they will begin installing additional poles on the right of way that was recently obtained for the Hwy 20 widening project. This is the first phase of the loop that will connect Chackbay to South Vacherie.
 - I would like to ask each of you to keep Albert Broden in your thoughts and prayers as he's battling cancer. Albert is a retired employee who dedicated many years to the parish.
- God bless everyone here, each of you and your families.

PUBLIC COMMENT - None

PRESENTATIONS - None

APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS - None

OLD BUSINESS

Update of drainage study from Forrestal Street to Pool Lane – no additional comment.

Update of West Bank Multi-Purpose Complex – the architects with DDG met with the Hospital and their architects. We are in the infant stages of developing the site layout for the new senior center, the multipurpose building, and how it will all blend in with the Hospital's anticipated project. Looking to advance those plans soon.

Councilman St. Pierre offered a motion to remove 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 from the table and take no action; was seconded by Councilman Nash. After a unanimous roll call vote with Bland and Etienne-Steib absent, the motion carried.

Councilman Louque offered a motion to remove 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 from the table and was seconded by Councilman Nash. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Bland and Etienne-Steib absent, the motion carried.

At this time, Councilman St. Pierre offered a motion to deviate from the agenda to allow for public comment on the aforesaid resolution and was seconded by Councilman Nash. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Bland and Etienne absent, the motion carried. After Austin Davis, representing Primoris Renewable Energy and DE Shaw, provided comments, he answered the Council's questions. No action was taken.

NEW BUSINESS

RESOLUTION 23-56, A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE DISBURSEMENT OF PAYROLL FOR THE MARCH 31, 2023 PAYROLL, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Nash and seconded by Councilman Cooper. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Bland and Etienne-Steib absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-57, 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 Cooper. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Bland and Etienne-Steib absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 29-58, A RESOLUTION PROCLAIMING APRIL 2023 AS AUTISM MONTH IN ST. JAMES PARISH, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman St. Pierre. Councilman Louque offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-59, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT TO SEEK AND RECEIVE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR DISASTER SUPPORT SERVICES, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Louque. Councilman Nash offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-60, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ST. JAMES PARISH PRESIDENT TO SIGN AND EXECUTE A PROFESSIONAL SERVICES CONTRACT WITH PARISH ENGINEERING, INC., was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Louque and seconded by Councilman St. Pierre. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Bland and Etienne-Steib absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-61, A RESOLUTION AMENDING THE CONTRACT WITH DUPLANTIS DESIGN GROUP TO EXTEND TWO (2) YEARS AND TO INCREASE CONTRACT AMOUNT TO \$750,000 FOR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES FOR EXISTING AND FUTURE PROJECTS, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Cooper and seconded by Councilman Louque. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Bland and Etienne-Steib absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-62, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT'S OFFICE TO ADVERTISE AND ACCEPT BIDS FOR THE ROMEVILLE-GRANDPOINT GAS LOOP PROJECT, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Nash. Councilman Louque offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-63, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT'S OFFICE TO ADVERTISE AND ACCEPT BIDS FOR THE LA 20 UTILITIES RELOCATE PROJECT, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Nash. Councilman Cooper offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-64, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ST. JAMES PARISH PRESIDENT TO ACCEPT THE BID AND ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH TBT CONTRACTING INC. OF LA, FOR THE VACHERIE LIBRARY ADDITION PROJECT, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman St. Pierre and seconded by Councilman Cooper. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Bland and Etienne-Steib absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-65, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT'S OFFICE TO ADVERTISE AND RECEIVE BIDS FOR A 2023 FORD F450 (DUALY) WITH SERVICE BODY OR EQUIVALENT OR THE DEPARTMENT OF OPERATIONS COURTHOUSE MAINTENANCE, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman St. Pierre. Councilman Cooper offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-66, A RESOLUTION MOVING THE LOCATION OF THE APRIL 12, 2023 MEETING OF THE ST. JAMES PARISH COUNCIL TO THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS OF THE PARISH COURTHOUSE ANNEX IN VACHERIE, LOUISIANA, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Cooper and seconded by Councilman Louque. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Bland and Etienne-Steib absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-67, A RESOLUTION ACCEPTING CHANGE ORDER #1 FROM B.E.T. CONSTRUCTION, INC. FOR THE NEW OFFICE BUILDING – ST. JAMES PARISH DHR PROJECT, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Nash and seconded by Councilman Cooper. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Bland and Etienne-Steib absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-68, A RESOLUTION ACCEPTING CHANGE ORDER #7 FROM TBT CONTRACTING, INC. F LA FOR THE EAST BANK RECREATION FACILITY, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman St. Pierre and seconded by Councilman Louque. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Bland and Etienne-Steib absent, the resolution was adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF PROPOSED ORDINANCE, AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ARTICLE III, DIVISION 4, WATER, SEWERS, OTHER UTILITIES, SECTION 102-326(G) OF THE ST. JAMES PARISH CODE OF ORDINANCES, SETTING SEWER USER FEES, was introduced on a motion offered by Councilman Louque and seconded by Councilman St. Pierre. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Etienne-Steib 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., on Wednesday, April 12, 2023, in the Council Chambers of the Parish Courthouse Annex in Vacherie.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

FELIX BOUGHTON – He said in spite of losing our biggest taxpayer, we still increased our cash position overall in 2022. He said fund 504 will require a budget amendment, and he asked the council to start monitoring emails from him regarding retiree insurance.

RICK WEBRE – He indicated that crews are about to wrap up on Hwy 643, Spruce Street, and a couple of other drainage projects and then will head back to the East Bank.

INGRID BERGERON – She informed everyone that Hurricane Recovery efforts are still ongoing and still in the process of trying to secure additional funding. She indicated that home repair is top priority.

ERIC DEROCHE – He said the fire department had their board meeting last night and things are going very well. The Parish legal counsel was invited to answer questions. The Board reported that they have 6 applications for volunteers.

COUNCIL MEMBER'S REPORT

COUNCILMAN NASH – Councilman Nash had no comment.

COUNCILMAN COOPER – Councilman Cooper inquired about the light on 3219/3127. Mr. Webre indicated they are clearing up an invoice issue before payment can be made. Councilman Cooper requested a meeting to discuss changes needed to the recreation ordinance.

COUNCILMAN BLAND – Councilman Bland was absent.

COUNCILMAN LOUQUE – Councilman Louque had no comment.

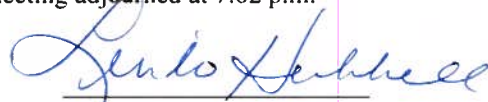
COUNCILMAN ST. PIERRE – Councilman St. Pierre thanked Ms. Bergeron for her assistance with a resident. He also thanked Ms. Flo with Entergy for her assistance. He requested the 2 old mowers at the Gramercy Park be picked up.

CHAIRWOMAN ETIENNE-STEIB – Chairwoman Etienne-Steib was absent.

VICE-CHAIRMAN AMATO – Vice-Chairman Amato congratulated the Lutch High Girls Powerlifting Team on winning the State Championship and also to the Boys who placed State Runner-up. He said he attended the West Shore Project meeting this morning. He wished everyone a Blessed Easter.

ADJOURNMENT

After determining there was no additional business to come before the council, on a motion offered by Councilman St. Pierre and seconded by Councilman Louque and carried, the meeting adjourned at 7:02 p.m.


Linda Hubbell, Secretary