

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE
COUNCIL OF THE PARISH OF ST. JAMES, STATE OF LOUISIANA
TAKEN AT A REGULAR MEETING HELD ON MARCH 30, 2022**

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 30, 2022, at 6:00 p.m.

On roll call, the following were recorded present: Council Members Alvin St. Pierre, Jr., Jason Amato, Ryan Louque, Mason Bland, Clyde Cooper, and Chairwoman Vondra Etienne-Steib. Councilman Donald Nash 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. Special Counsel Adam Parker was also in attendance.

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 Amato and seconded by Councilman Louque the minutes of the March 16, 2022 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 January 2022 was approved on a motion offered by Councilman Louque and seconded by Councilman Bland.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Dufresne presented this report to the Council:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Good evening, everyone.

- Our Senior Wellness Program will begin its Fitness Exercise classes April 21, 2022. The East Bank classes will be held at the St. James Fitness Center on Monday and Wednesdays from 9am to 10am. The West Bank classes will be held on Tuesday and Thursday at the West Bank Reception Hall from 9am to 10am.
- Our Keep St. James Parish Beautiful Board will be hosting a parish-wide clean-up day on Saturday, April 23rd from 8am-11:30am. East Bank will meet at the Tourist Welcome Center and West Bank will meet at the Vacherie Health Unit. Food and refreshments will be available post clean up.
- Parish baseball teams are about to start practicing. Their first games will be the last weekend of April.
- We also have Adult Cornhole every Tuesday night at the new East Bank Recreation Center. Kids Cornhole will be happening every other Monday as well.
- The lights at most of the parish parks have been an issue since the Hurricane. All parish park lights will be working by the last week of April.
- Our Operations crew are currently cleaning up and repairing the old post office at the Welcome Center.
- Once this is done, at the Welcome Center, we will be teaming up with LSU's Architectural class for the design of the landscaping at the Welcome Center.
- We are still accepting applications for our 2022 College Student Summer Internship Program. This will be a 10-week program, starting June 6, Friday, April 29th is the application deadline.
- Starting April 4th, our libraries will be hosting an Easter Egg Challenge. For every book that kids checkout, you can pick easter eggs filled with prizes.
- The Department of Human Resources is accepting applications for Hurricane Ida Disaster recovery and relief for residents of St. James Parish. Residents can speak with case managers to discuss their needs and submit application for assistance. The current services available for eligible residents are roll off dumpsters, debris and tree removal, and furniture and appliance replacement. Building materials and minor repairs will be available also depending on qualifying factors. Additionally, hotel and temporary lodging may also be available.
- DHR is also assisting eligible residents with rent, mortgage, and utility assistance through several funding programs. Due to Hurricane Ida and COVID relief programs, residents who may typically not qualify for services may be eligible. Residents are encouraged to contact the department to discuss eligibility requirements. For Hurricane relief, contact 225-562-2353 and for COVID and other emergency assistance contact 225-562-2442.
- An update regarding the ongoing legislative session in Baton Rouge – I am pleased to announce that on March 23rd, the initial version of the Capital Outlay bill was introduced and included two projects for St. James Parish. The first being continued funding for the pre-construction services for the LA Hwy 3127 widening project from LA 3213 (the bridge road) to past LA 20 with an additional \$1 million proposed for this year. We have items on the agenda tonight for the first round of funding from last year's Capital Outlay bill on this project. This would bring the total funding allocated to the project to \$1.5 million.
- Secondly, HB 2 contains a total of \$13.8 million for the West Shore Risk Reduction Connector levee. These funds would be matched with the Parish's GOMESA funding and utilized to augment and connect the planned West Shore ring levees in St. James Parish in order to make one continuous levee system at a 7 foot elevation. While the bill is not yet passed, this is a major step towards providing long-term sustainable flood protection to our East Bank residents and we will continue to be present at the Capitol to lobby for these funds as the legislative session continues. We certainly couldn't have reached this point without the support of our Legislators, so I want to give a special thanks to Speaker Clay Schexnayder, Representative Ken Brass and Senator Ed Price for their help and unwavering support of this project as well as our lobbyist firm, Matt Spradley.
- Highway 643 drainage mitigation project to add culvert by 643 and First American Bank will go out for bid in mid-April.

- Crescent Engineering is the firm selected for the Magnolia Height interior drainage project.
- The road rehabilitation program is already out for bid. (RFQ opens 4/11 at 2pm) Bid opening will be April 20th at 2pm.
- Final walk through and substantial completion for Humble St Phase 2 project is expected in 2 weeks.
- We will begin the bid process for the Convent Water Treatment Plant Clarifier in April.
- The bid opening for the Admin Building Standby Generator will be April 4th at 2pm. The bid opening for the Molaison Sewer Plant standby generator will also be April 4th at 2pm.
- We have received 3 bids for playground equipment for the Magnolia Park. Equipment is currently being ordered.
- Our Litter abatement crews have been working hard throughout the parish, and we've been seeing significant improvements, especially around the Veteran's Memorial Bridge area.

This concludes my report. Thank you, Madam Chair, Thank you everyone. May God Bless you and God Bless St. James Parish.

PUBLIC COMMENT – None

PRESENTATIONS

Dr. Kim Terrell with Tulane Environmental Law Clinic addressed the council regarding peer reviewed update of cancer rates and pollution. She then answered the Council's questions.

APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None

OLD BUSINESS

Acquisition of Land for Multipurpose Building – N/A

Update of drainage study for Forrestal Street to Pool Lane – N/A

Keep St. James Parish Beautiful Board Attendance and Parish Litter Clean-up Day – Mr. Amato said the Board's Chairman asked him to remind everyone of the Parish Cleanup Day on April 23rd and to ask your board appointees to attend the next meeting and if any member is no longer interested to serve on the board to step down to allow someone else to be appointed.

Tall Grass Ordinance (Section 54-29) – Immediate danger or hazard discussion (input for revision) – he said the statement in the ordinance is general and suggested a revision. After a discussion, Legal Advisor Koenig will work with the council to revise the ordinance.

NEW BUSINESS

At this time Chairwoman Etienne-Steib stated, in the spirit and safety of our guest (weather related), she asked for any objection to move item #16 to item #1. There being no objections, the item was moved.

After special counsel Adam Parker provided an explanation, **PROPOSED ORDINANCE 22-03, AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE 18-12 TO PROVIDE FOR ADDITIONAL COMMODITY PRICE INDICES FOR THE PARISH'S RATE OF SCHEDULE FOR SALES TO LARGE VOLUME INDUSTRIAL USERS OF NATURAL GAS LOCATED IN THE PARISH'S SERVICE AREA; AND OTHERWISE PROVIDING WITH RESPECT THERETO**, was introduced on a motion offered by Councilman St. Pierre and seconded by Councilman Louque. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Nash 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, April 13, 2022, in the Council Chambers of the Parish Courthouse in Convent.

RESOLUTION 22-57, A RESOLUTION PROCLAIMING APRIL 2022 AS AUTISM 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 22-58, A RESOLUTION PROCLAIMING APRIL 2022 AS CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH IN ST. JAMES PARISH, was offered and moved adoption by Councilman Bland. Councilman Louque offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 22-59, A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE DISBURSEMENT OF PAYROLL FOR THE APRIL 1, 2022 PAYROLL, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman Bland. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Nash absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 22-60, A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS TO PAY PENDING CURRENT INVOICES AND PAYABLES, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland and seconded by Councilman Louque. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Nash absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 22-61, A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE SIGNING OF NEW TITLE III SCHEDULE OF FUNDING BETWEEN THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF ELDERLY AFFAIRS AND ST. JAMES PARISH GOVERNMENT, DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES FOR JULY 1, 2022 TO JUNE 30, 2023 PROGRAM YEAR, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman Bland. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Nash absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 22-62, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING ST. JAMES PARISH PRESIDENT PETER A. DUFRESNE, TO SIGN AN AGREEMENT WITH JULIE GUIDRY TO PROVIDE THE "KEEP MOVING FOR LIFE" SENIOR EXERCISE PROGRAM FOR ST. JAMES PARISH ELDERLY PROGRAM, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman St. Pierre. Councilman Louque offered a second. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Nash absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 22-63, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING ST. JAMES PARISH PRESIDENT PETER A. DUFRESNE TO HAVE A ST. JAMES PARISH GOVERNMENT CREDIT CARD ISSUED TO KEEVA SCHEXNAYDER FOR THE FLEET MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman St. Pierre and was seconded by Councilman Bland. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Nash absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 22-64, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT'S OFFICE TO RE-ADVERTISE AND RECEIVE BIDS FOR A NEW TRACTOR TRUCK FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF OPERATIONS, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland. Councilman Amato offered a second, the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 22-65, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT'S OFFICE TO ENTER INTO A COOPERATIVE ENDEAVOR AGREEMENT WITH THE STATE OF LOUISIANA, FACILITY PLANNING AND CONTROL, DIVISION OF ADMINISTRATION (DOA) FOR THE LA 3127 WIDENING (HWY 20 TO LA 3213) PROJECT (FP&C PROJECT NO. 50-J47-21-01) AND AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT TO SIGN ALL CONTRACTS AND AGREEMENTS IN CONJUNCTION WITH SAID AGREEMENT, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman Louque. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Nash absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 22-66, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT TO SIGN AND EXECUTE A PROFESSIONAL SERVICES CONTRACT WITH CRESCENT ENGINEERING & MAPPING, LLC FOR THE LA 3127 WIDENING PROJECT, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman St. Pierre and seconded by Councilman Bland. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Nash absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 22-67, A RESOLUTION ACCEPTING CHANGE ORDER #1 FROM BYRON E. TALBOT CONTRACTOR, INC. FOR THE DAVID PLANTATION DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman St. Pierre and seconded by Councilman Louque. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Nash absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 22-68, A RESOLUTION TO SUPPORT AND AUTHORIZE THE PARISH PRESIDENT'S REQUEST FOR FEDERAL FUNDING AND TO CONTRACT WITH REQUIRED AGENCIES AND/OR JURISDICTIONS, SUCH AS BUT NOT LIMITED TO, THE FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION, LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FOR THE PURPOSE OF IMPLEMENTING THE LA 20 BYPASS ROADWAY, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Louque and seconded by Councilman Cooper. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Nash absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 22-69, A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE APPLICATION OF JED BOURGEOIS TO ALLOW CONSTRUCTION OF A POLE BARN FOR AGRICULTURAL USE IN A RESIDENTIAL GROWTH AREA, 32458 LA 642, PAULINA, LOUISIANA, 70763 (ITEM 22-11) UNDER THE ST. JAMES PARISH LAND USE ORDINANCE WITH CONDITIONS, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Louque and seconded by Councilman Amato. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Nash absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 22-70, A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE SYSTEM SURVEY AND COMPLIANCE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE FINANCIAL AND COMPLIANCE AUDIT OF ST. JAMES PARISH GOVERNMENT FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2021, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Louque. Councilman Amato offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 22-71, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE OFFICE OF THE PARISH PRESIDENT TO ADVERTISE AND TAKE BIDS FOR PICKUP TRUCKS FOR ST. JAMES PARISH GOVERNMENT, was offered and move for adoption by Councilman Louque. Councilman Bland offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

FELIX BOUGHTON – He said the resolution accepting next year's insurance will be on the next agenda. He added that the property insurance premium increased from \$200K to \$800K due to increased value of the buildings, repairs from Hurricane Ida, and our geographical location. He also said that they were able to increase our financial position at the end of the year by \$1 million. Councilman Amato inquired about tax collection. Mr. Boughton said they should meet with the School Board in April to discuss. Councilman Louque asked what would it take for the Parish to collect their own taxes. Mr. Boughton said he was unsure.

RICK WEBRE – He indicated that one of the barges being manufactured and will be picked up tomorrow, they are starting again this week clearing ditches, and said the litter crews are doing good job.

INGRID BERGERON – She informed everyone that a shelter was opened today for the severe weather event.

ERIC DEROCHE – Received word this evening that, regarding the substantial building's 50% rule, FEMA has done their assessment, and it is looking favorable.

COUNCIL MEMBER'S REPORT

COUNCILMAN NASH – Councilman Nash was absent.

COUNCILMAN COOPER – Councilman Cooper requested condolence letters be sent to the families of Lionel Broden, Leroy Whittington, Joann Joshua, Betty Napoleon, Melvin Landry, and Thaddeus Mitchell. He requested the status of the flashing stop sign in Moonshine. Mr. Webre said it has been ordered and waiting its delivery.

COUNCILMAN BLAND – Councilman Bland said the Redistricting Committee met and they have come to a consensus on one alternative and have requested modification on it. He inquired if there is any way the litter abatement crew can assist with reporting blighted property/tall grass. Mr. Webre said that is not a problem, as long as they don't go on private property. Councilman Bland inquired about the drainage study of Convent. Mr. Webre said they have the results, but need to find one more outfall, which is scheduled for the end of the year, but can move it up if it is causing an issue.

COUNCILMAN LOUQUE – Councilman Louque inquired about the Humble Phase 2, and said it looks like there is still some grating to do. Mr. Webre said the parish will be working there next week. Councilman Louque said they submitted the West Shore documents to our legislatures and that we have a good plan moving forward. He said it is ultimately up to the Corp's General Re-evaluation Report and requested a press release be published.

COUNCILMAN AMATO – Councilman Amato reminded everyone that Relay for Life is this Saturday at Lutchter Park. He informed everyone that the King Avenue left turn safety loop will be commencing very soon. He requested an updated of the Big Shake project at the next council meeting.

COUNCILMAN ST. PIERRE – Councilman St. Pierre said they received encouraging news of the West Shore Project and said it hasn't been stamped yet. He said he requested to a U.S. Senator to split the St. James/St. John resiliency study. He requested an update of the ADA equipment be emailed to him. He thanked President Dufresne, Rick, Eric, and Ryan for working to beautify the grounds at the Welcome Center.

CHAIRWOMAN ETIENNE-STEIB – Chairwoman Etienne-Steib thanked Mr. Dennis Hymel, Rep. Ken Brass, Senator Price, Congressman Carter, and anyone else who is working hard for us to get money for the projects needed in St. James Parish. She thanked Dr. Terrell for her report tonight, and she thanked the dedicated staff and our guests who come out every week to support us.

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 7:37p.m.


Linda Hubbell, Secretary