

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE
COUNCIL OF THE PARISH OF ST. JAMES, STATE OF LOUISIANA
TAKEN AT A REGULAR MEETING HELD ON AUGUST 8, 2018**

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, August 8, 2018, at 6:30 p.m.

On roll call, the following were recorded present: Council Members Alvin St. Pierre, Jr., Jason Amato, Ralph Patin, Clyde Cooper, Vondra Etienne-Steib, Eddie Kraemer, and Chairman Ryan Louque.

Those also in attendance were: Linda Hubbell, Secretary; Timothy Roussel, Parish President; Michelle Octave, Chief Administrative Officer; Chantal Waguespack, Director of Finance; Blaise Gravois, Director of Operations; Ryan Donadieu, Assistant Director of Emergency Preparedness; Ingrid Leblanc, Interim Director of Human Resources; and Cody Martin, Legal Advisor.

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

The Honorable Ryan Louque, 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 St. Pierre and seconded by Councilman Kraemer, the minutes of the July 25, 2018 special meeting were approved as distributed and the reading of these minutes dispensed with.

On a motion offered by Councilman Amato seconded by Councilman Patin, the minutes of the July 25, 2018 regular meeting were approved as distributed and the reading of these minutes dispensed with.

On a motion offered by Councilwoman Etienne-Steib and seconded by Councilman Kraemer, the minutes of the August 6, 2018 special meeting were approved as distributed and the reading of these minutes dispensed with.

FINANCE DEPARTMENT MONTHLY REPORT

The Statement of Revenues and Expenditures for June 2018 was approved on a motion offered by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman Patin.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Roussel provided this report:

- 1) It is with a heavy heart that I am informing you that we lost a very hard working employee, Mr. Allen "Tator" Rodrigue today. Please keep Allen and his family in your prayers.
- 2) The North and South Angelle culvert replacements will be completed soon.
- 3) Councilman Eddie Kraemer and I did attend a White House Conference with Louisiana and Alabama Parish & County Leaders at the White House last week. We did have subsequent meetings with the offices of Congressman Cedric Richmond, Senators Kennedy and Cassidy while there. We did receive a listing with phone numbers and email addresses of all of the Federal Departments contacts for local government, along with the White House. It was an important trip and I feel we both gained additional contacts on the National Level and a wealth of knowledge.
- 4) Soccer Registration is in full progress while taking place this week.
- 5) The Fire Association will be meeting on August 14th at 6:30 pm in South Vacherie.
- 6) I received compilations of monies that was sent to St. James Parish by Veterans or their dependents and the number of veterans served by the LA Department of Veteran Affairs Service Officer in St. James Parish for the years of 2016 and 2017. For FY 2016, St. James Parish received \$5,151,000 in VA Compensation and Pension to 1,489 LA Veterans and their families. For FY 2017 St. James Parish received \$5,264,000 in VA Compensation and Pension to 1,002 LA Veterans and their families.
- 7) I am sure you all watched or read the news announcing that through Senator Bill Cassidy's measure, the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) was afforded an extension until January 31, 2019. This is important due to the fact that this vote actually demonstrate a strong bipartisan agreement in the Senate against letting the program lapse. A lapse would have not afforded people to renew their flood insurance during the peak of hurricane season. Of course, this would not be acceptable. The ultimate win everyone is searching for is to reform and reauthorize the NFIP for 10 years. The purpose is to allow continued efforts at reform of this program to again make it more accountable, more affordable, and more sustainable.
- 8) At this time I want to call up Ms. Amber Shepard. Recently at the NACo Conference in Nashville, Tennessee, there was the 2018 Awards of Excellence by the National Association of County Information Officers. Through Amber Shepard's hard work, persistence, and love for her job, St. James Parish was presented with the following five (5) awards:
 - a. For Internal Publication – Superior – for "St. James Parish Government Employee Spotlights"
 - b. For Internal Publication – Excellence – for "St. James Parish Government Employee Newsletters"
 - c. For Best Facebook Page – Meritorious – for "St. James Parish Facebook Page"
 - d. For Website – Meritorious – for "St. James Parish Government Website"
 - e. For Annual Reports – Meritorious – for "State of the Parish"
- 9) A task force was put together that consisted of 3 Years of monthly meetings that was held from February 2015 to March 2018.
- 10) Richard St. Pierre led this group as Chairman. The group consisted of a total of approximately 22 people across our community, including East Bank Councilmen, Mayors of the two towns and Pontchartrain levee district representatives.

- 11) I personally, am not ready to throw away 3 years of work by this volunteer group, even more so after this present-day, seated Parish Council endorsed and approved the recommendations coming from their final report.
- 12) The highest priority recommended by this group was the backwater protection along Highway 61 with gate closures and pump stations.
- 13) Now, we all know that improved drainage means improved tidal or backwater encroachment.
- 14) So, in essence, the projects that will be implemented by the proposed tax millage on the East Bank include the major project that is being proposed (namely, flood gates and pumps at Blind River and other items to be covered shortly by BKI) was identified by the Task Force as the most economically viable project and the quickest to implement. This will help protect the East Bank from flooding during heavy rains, storm surge and back water events. This project is not temporary, as long as it is maintained, its life expectancy will last as long as Hwy 61 is passable.
- 15) The US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) strongly believe in multiple lines of defense; this will be one of them to coincide with the West Shore Project.
- 16) On the West Bank, we will add levees identified for the Coteau Canal project, among other needed improvement items as discussed at the public hearings at a value of \$12 million.
- 17) With the earlier than expected announcement of the approval of funding for the West Shore Project, the final outcome of the project only allowed St. James Parish to have ring levees (with a 6.5 feet NAVD 88 elevation), non-structural elevation of an estimated fourteen (14) residential structures, and the installation of one-way flap-gate closures (currently an estimated 145 gates) to existing culverts on the north side of Hwy 3125. The first contract for the project is planned for October 2020; while they are aiming for completion during the summer of 2023. CPRA is the non-federal cost-sharing sponsor for all features of the West Shore Plan. St. James Parish will be responsible for a debt service of approximately \$3.5 million and the "operations and maintenance" of the ring levees and gate valves and pumps stations in perpetuity. Just this alone will warrant the need of a millage passed.
- 18) The USACE hired the BKI Engineering group to conduct the study for the West Shore Project; for St. Charles, St. John & St. James Parishes.
- 19) BKI is already working with Pontchartrain Levee District with the West Shore Project for the three River Parishes.
- 20) BKI has been and still in contract with St. James Parish for our east bank drainage & flood protection projects.
- 21) St. James Parish has been hampered with backwater in the recent past years; hampered by heavy rainfall at times also. We witnessed flooding of homes in both types of events. Having said this, I ask you this very important question, "What is to happen when the 145 flap gate closures along the north side of Hwy 3125 are in the closed position due to back water and our area receive 4 – 6 inches of rain in a 1, 2, or 3 hour period?" My thoughts are (now hear me out) that's when we start flooding on the south side of Hwy 3125. However, if the weirs and pump stations are installed along Hwy 61, no one floods. That's the importance of the Hwy 61 project....
- 22) Our Drainage budget, that you all approved for this year is set at \$2.1 million. One has to figure out quickly that debt service of \$3.5 million and operations & maintenance probably valued at \$.5 million per year, opens the door for the NEED (not desire) for additional funds for our drainage area.
- 23) It is stated clearly by the USACE, CPRA & PLD that we will never have enough money to satisfy our levee and pump needs for backwater and hurricane protection for our citizens.
- 24) It was stated that new industry will bring in new taxes. That statement is correct, however the new property taxes will not be realized until 8 to 10 years down the road. Many hurricanes and / or flooding events can take place with that timeframe.
- 25) It is foolish for any of us to think that someone else will continue to build the necessary infrastructure without us putting any "skin in the game."
- 26) If for nothing else, this Council should, by right, give every consideration into collecting this tax, not only for the projects described above but also escrowing some to put towards matching funds for our future needs.
- 27) While it is our job to lay out all of the details in being transparent and translucent as possible, the decision really should lie in the hands of the voting public. The voters of St. James Parish should be allowed to express their voice on this tax millage whether it being for or against.

Thank You ... May God Bless you; may God bless all of St. James Parish! Semper Fi !!!

PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Glenn Millet was not in attendance to present the Planning Commission's Annual Report.

Linda Hubbell read aloud comments received from Mr. Richard St. Pierre regarding the Tax Millage Proposal

CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED - None

APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

RESOLUTION 18-161, A RESOLUTION APPOINTING BEN RODRIGUE AS A DISTRICT 3 REPRESENTATIVE TO THE KEEP ST. JAMES PARISH BEAUTIFUL BOARD, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Kraemer. Councilwoman Etienne-Steib offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

Councilwoman Etienne-Steib offered and moved for adoption **RESOLUTION 18-162, A RESOLUTION REAPPOINTING VEDA BAILEY TO THE ST. JAMES PARISH PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD**. Councilman Kraemer offered a second, and the resolution as unanimously adopted.

OLD BUSINESS

The following updates were provided:

- North Vacherie evacuation route project – received report from consultant.
- North Vacherie railroad culvert upgrade – jacking and boring under railroad is in progress.

- North Rosary/High Ridge/Oak Street Drainage Update – will begin in the next week or two.
- Update on Security Lighting Project at Lutch Park – will pour concrete within the next weeks.
- East Bank Drainage/Flood Protection – Councilman St. Pierre said, being new information has come in the past couple of weeks from the West Shore Project, he said they met with the Corp. and said they don't have a footprint yet of how the project will go. He said a meeting is scheduled next week in LaPlace with PLD, the Corp., St. James, and St. John. He said we should meet with CPRA and find out how this money can be obtained.
- District 5 Evacuation Route – request for qualifications were received for a feasibility study. A resolution should be presented at the next meeting.
- Sportsman Pond Lily Spraying Update – working with DHH and Wildlife and Fisheries to see how it can be handled

ORDINANCE 18-07, AN ORDINANCE ADOPTING THE AMENDMENT OF THE ANNUAL BUDGET OF REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR JANUARY 1, 2018 TO DECEMBER 31, 2018, PARISH OF ST. JAMES, STATE OF LOUISIANA, having undergone the hearing process, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and was seconded by Councilman Kraemer. After a roll call vote showing St. Pierre, Amato, Patin, Cooper, Etienne-Steib, and Kraemer in favor, and Louque against, the ordinance was adopted.

After Councilman Cooper expressed his concerns for the use of the building, and the AmSpec Representative explained the company's intended use of the building and answered Councilman Cooper's questions, **RESOLUTION 18-163, A RESOLUTION TO OBTAIN APPROVAL FOR LAND USE CONFORMITY FOR A VARIANCE FOR THE BUILDING LOCATED AT 5525, HWY 18, ST. JAMES, LOUISIANA**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Kraemer. Councilman Amato offered a second, and after a roll call vote showing Amato, Patin, Etienne-Steib, Kraemer, and Louque in favor, and St. Pierre, and Cooper against, the resolution was adopted.

NEW BUSINESS

RESOLUTION 18-164, A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE DISBURSEMENT OF PAYROLL FOR THE AUGUST 10, 2018 PAYROLL, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato. Councilman St. Pierre offered a second, and after a unanimous roll call vote the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 18-165, A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS TO PAY PENDING CURRENT INVOICES AND PAYABLES, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman St. Pierre. Councilman Patin offered a second, and after a unanimous roll call vote the resolution was adopted.

After a lengthy discussion, Councilman St. Pierre made a motion to amend the resolution to include full cooperation from the administration, the council, and the East Bank Drainage and Flood Protection Taskforce to request and inform CPRA of support for the appropriated funds for the East Bank inter levee alignment project. This is in conjunction with a parallel path that was issued in the East Bank storm water master plan. The St. James Parish administration and council hereby requests that the money that has been appropriated in the next two budget cycles be released to do engineering on the inter-levee alignment. Councilman Amato made a substitute motion to include additional language to what Councilman St. Pierre said to include full cooperation for all 5 flood protection projects identified on the East Bank of St. James Parish, **RESOLUTION 18-166, A RESOLUTION ORDERING AND CALLING A SPECIAL ELECTION TO BE HELD IN THE PARISH OF ST. JAMES, STATE OF LOUISIANA, TO AUTHORIZE THE LEVY OF A SPECIAL TAX THEREIN; MAKING APPLICATION TO THE STATE BOND COMMISSION IN CONNECTION THEREWITH; AND PROVIDING FOR OTHER MATTERS IN CONNECTION THEREWITH**. Councilman Kraemer offered a second, and after a unanimous roll call vote the resolution was adopted with amendments.

RESOLUTION 18-167, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ADVERTISEMENT AND RECEIVING OF BIDS FOR A 2018 OR 2019 52,000 GVWR HEAVY DUTY CAB AND CHASSIS WITH ROLL OFF HOIST FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF OPERATIONS, SOLID WASTE DIVISION, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato. Councilman Patin offered a second, and after a unanimous roll call vote the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 18-168, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING ST. JAMES PARISH GOVERNMENT PARISH PRESIDENT TIMOTHY ROUSSEL, TO SIGN A COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT WITH THE LSU AGCENTER TO SUPPORT AND ADMINISTER LOUISIANA COOPERATIVE UNITS OFF CAMPUS, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Kraemer. Councilman Amato offered a second, and after a unanimous roll call vote the resolution was adopted.

After a lengthy discussion, Councilman Kraemer made a motion to grant a variance at 5.1' elevation TO MITCH CORTEZ PURSUANT TO FLOOD DAMAGE PREVENTION SEC. 50-69. Councilman Amato offered a second, and after a unanimous roll call vote, the motion carried

RECOMMENDATION FROM THE ST. JAMES PARISH PLANNING COMMISSION TO THE PARISH COUNCIL TO HOST TWO PUBLIC HEARING, ONE ON THE EAST BANK AND ONE ON THE WEST BANK OF ST. JAMES PARISH, FOR THE APPLICATION OF LAND USE PERMIT FG LA LLC., (318-30) AT THE DISCRETION OF THE PARISH COUNCIL. THE DATE NAD TIME OF THE PUBLIC HEARING WILL BE DETERMINED BY THE PARISH COUNCIL. The public hearings were scheduled for September 5, 2018 at 6:00 p.m. in the Courthouse in Convent and on September 19, 2018 at 6:00 p.m. in the Courthouse Annex in Vacherie.

Councilman Kraemer offered a motion to APPROVE, WITH CONDITIONS, THE LAND USE APPLICATION OF ERGON ST. JAMES, INC. (#18-26) PURSUANT TO ST. JAMES PARISH CODE OF ORDINANCES, SECTION 86-37(e). Councilman Amato offered a second, and after a unanimous roll call vote, the motion carried.

COUNCILMAN'S REPORT

COUNCILMAN ST. PIERRE – Councilman St. Pierre congratulated Amber Shepard for the awards received. He said we are asking for a resolution be prepared for the next meeting to go to CPRA for the inter-levée alignment.

COUNCILMAN AMATO – Councilman Amato thanked the parish for assisting the Town of Lutcher with the parking lot lights. He questioned replacement of the Hwy 20 solar lights. Mr. Gravois said they will put it in next year's budget. Councilman Amato said they will receive an update from Entergy this week on the Hwy 641 lighting project. Councilman Amato expressed condolence to Allen Rodrigue and his family.

COUNCILMAN PATIN – Councilman Patin had no comment.

COUNCILMAN COOPER – Councilman Cooper also expressed condolence to Allen Rodrigue and his family. He asked if the ditch near Mr. Cavalier's residence was addressed. Mr. Gravois said it was done 4 weeks ago and that they do not have a right of way for the other ditch. Councilman Cooper questioned the bus turn around on Geason St. Mr. Gravois said he hadn't received anything from the School Board for Geason St. Councilman Cooper said he spoke with Mrs. Leblanc and they are trying to get a bus turnaround on Wilkerson Dr., due to an elderly resident needing to use the transit bus. He added that the bus can't use her driveway any longer. Mr. Gravois said they will be looking into the servitudes and then will address. Councilman Cooper asked Mr. Donadieu if they received the response time information from Acadian Ambulance. Mr. Donadieu said Mr. Hymel should have sent it and that he looked into the particular incident and said the response time was 13 minutes. Councilman Cooper requested a list of where the ambulances are stationed.

COUNCILWOMAN ETIENNE-STEIB – Councilwoman Etienne-Steib expressed condolence to the Rodrigue family, as well. She requested the status of the fire hydrant issue on N. Rosary. Mr. Gravois said the utilities crew is looking into it. She indicated that she received a call from a resident that there is a big dip at the entrance of N. Rosary St. Mr. Gravois said he will contact the resident.

COUNCILMAN KRAEMER – Councilman Kraemer also expressed condolence to the Rodrigue family. He asked for an update on the cameras. Mr. Gravois indicated that they are in at the vendor and will make arrangements to have them installed. Councilman Kraemer asked, as a result of the gas/water line meeting, if they met with the consultant. Mr. Gravois said he is waiting for the contract. Councilman Kraemer thanked the public for attending the Hwy 20 public hearing and said the comments have been positive.

CHAIRMAN LOUQUE – Chairman Louque asked if there are plans to renovate the old historical building. Mr. Gravois said there is no funding.

DIRECTOR REPORT

BLAISE GRAVOIS – made a few comments on the tragedy this morning. He said 2 SJPVFD rescue members responded, along with the St. James Parish Sheriff's and commended them on the tremendous job. He said it was amazing what his guys did this morning to assist each other. He said a crew, that was not working on the cement job at the time, stepped in to allow the others to go to the hospital to be with their coworker. President Roussel said they are planning to call Mr. Keller to provide his services.

CHANTAL WAGUESPACK – requested the Council Members send their budget information by August 17th.


INGRID LEBLANC – indicated they are working with Legal to address the turnarounds.

RYAN DONADIEU – said at Monday's public hearing, a comment was made that a facility, other than Ergon, was releasing H2S vapors. He said they made a surprise visit and conducted air monitoring and H2s was not found on site. He said if they are ever made aware by someone's comments they will look into it.

MICHELLE OCTAVE – she informed the council members that she had access badges for those planning to attend the St. James High School Performing Arts celebration on August 17th.

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 Amato and carried, the meeting adjourned at 9:12 p.m.


Linda Hubbell
Secretary