

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE  
COUNCIL OF THE PARISH OF ST. JAMES, STATE OF LOUISIANA  
TAKEN AT A REGULAR MEETING HELD ON AUGUST 18, 2021**

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, August 18, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

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

Those also in attendance were Linda Hubbell, Council Secretary; Peter Dufresne, Parish President; Ryan Donadieu, Assistant Director of Emergency Preparedness; Ingrid Bergeron, Human Resources Director; Felix Boughton, Finance Director; Rick Webre, Operations Director; and Adam Koenig, Legal Advisor.

Councilman Amato offered the invocation and Councilwoman Etienne-Steib led the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Honorable Alvin St. Pierre, Jr., 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 Nash and seconded by Councilman Louque, the minutes of the August 4, 2021 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, Mr. Chairman. Good evening Council, Good evening everyone.

- I'd like to begin tonight with a brief update on the Covid-19 front. While cases continue to surge state-wide, our Emergency Preparedness staff have coordinated with the Louisiana Department of Health and Ochsner to provide a free testing and vaccine site for our residents next week. The site will be open on Monday, August 23 from 8 am – 4pm and again on Friday, August 27 from 8 am – 4 pm. Both events will take place at our West Bank Reception Hall. More information can be found on our Parish website Covid-19 page. Again, I continue to encourage our residents to take action to stop the spread of this virus and do their part to keep our community healthy.
- I'd like to thank all of our dedicated volunteer firefighters and first responders who responded to a large house fire in Lutchter earlier this week. Their response and action contained the fire as quickly as possible, preventing further spread.
- Recently, at the Fire Association meeting, we discussed the possibility of allocating funds in next year's budget which would allow for two paid firefighters on each side of the river. I think the events that took place this week only further demonstrate this need in order to provide quick, life saving response.
- Additionally, we are looking into allocating funds in the budget for parish-wide litter abatement department and also routine grass maintenance in entrance areas to the parish to increase beautification for our residents and visitors.

**DHR:**

- Our Department of Human Resources will distribute Pandemic care packages to qualified and pre-registered families on September 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>. These packages will include fresh produce, a digital thermometer, hand sanitizer, masks and at home testing kits.
- The last day to register for this program will be August 30<sup>th</sup>. Anyone interested in applying or in need of more information including income guidelines can visit our parish website or call our DHR department at 225-562-2305.
- The department has also received an additional \$12,268 in Cares funding for providing homebound meals to eligible seniors for fiscal year 2021-2022. In addition, DHR is partnering with the state and receiving funding for Vaccine Outreach in the community for seniors.
- DHR is continuing to monitor the state guidance and recommendations for centers for the ARC and Elderly during the new wave of pandemic; however, there has not been any word on closures at this time.

**Operations:**

- St. James Parish was awarded funding through the DOTD Transportation Alternatives Program. Our Mississippi River East Bank and West Bank trails were selected projects for funding as part of this program. In total, St. James will receive over 2.6 million dollars for the bike paths on the levee. This funding will allow for additional recreation and safe travel by bike for our residents along the Mississippi River.
- A few updates on operations projects include:
  - The District 5 drainage study is nearing 80 percent completion.
  - The Operations staff is beginning to outline a budget for the ADA compliant playground in District 1.
  - This week, improvements began at the East Bank Library and West Bank Reception Hall. (roof repairs)
  - The Longview Subdivision Gas infrastructure project should have a notice to proceed issued in the coming week to begin installation of natural gas infrastructure in the Longview Subdivision. Residents in this area will soon have natural gas service as the project continues.
  - Our operations staff have also been working through the application process for the American Recovery Act Sector Program, which is a competitive grant program to provide funding for parish water and sewer districts. This will allow for potentially up to 15 million dollars to be used towards infrastructure and service improvements if awarded.

This Sunday, August 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Knights of Columbus will hold their monthly benefit dinner. Proceeds will benefit St. James ARC. Lunches can be picked up at the KC home in Lutchter beginning at 10:30 am for \$9 a plate. The menu

will include baked chicken, dirty rice, coleslaw, and garlic bread. Please consider supporting our most deserving residents.

Lastly, since implemented, our work order system, to date, our crews have completed 6,021 work orders.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**-no public comments were received on agenda items that required a vote.

#### **PRESENTATIONS**

Harold Keller, with Get High on Life made a presentation about the employee assistance program.

**APPOINTMENTS TO BOARD AND COMMISSIONS** – None

#### **OLD BUSINESS**

**District 5 Alternate Access Route** – no additional update

**Acquisition of Land for Multipurpose Building Update** – no additional update

#### **NEW BUSINESS/**

**RESOLUTION 21-189, A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE DISBURSEMENT OF PAYROLL FOR THE AUGUST 20, 2021 PAYROLL**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Louque and seconded by Councilman Nash. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Cooper absent, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 21-190, A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS TO PAY PENDING INVOICES AND PAYABLES**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman Louque. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Cooper absent, resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 21-191, A RESOLUTION OF THE ST. JAMES PARISH COUNCIL APPROVING LOUISIANA SUGAR REFINING, LLC GRAMERCY REFINERY FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE INDUSTRIAL TAX EXEMPTION PROGRAM**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Nash and seconded by Councilman Amato. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Cooper absent, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 21-192, A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF RESUMING FEDERAL OFFSHORE LEASING IN THE GULF OF MEXICO**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman Bland. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Cooper absent, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 21-193, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT TO SIGN AND/OR EXECUTE A CONTRACT WITH GET HIGH ON LIFE**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Nash and seconded by Councilman Louque. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Cooper absent, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 21-194, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ST. JAMES PARISH PRESIDENT TO SIGN AND EXECUTE A PROFESSIONAL SERVICES CONTRACT WITH MEYER ENGINEERING, LTD. FOR THE ST. JAMES MISSISSIPPI EAST BANK MULTI-USE TRAIL – PHASE 1, STATE PROJECT NO. H.009724, A/E PROJECT NO. 20-2058**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland and seconded by Councilman Nash. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Cooper absent, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 21-195, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ST. JAMES PARISH PRESIDENT TO SIGN AND EXECUTE A PUBLIC WORKS/CONSTRUCTION CONTRACT WITH FELICIANA WELDERS, INC. FOR THE LONGVIEW SUBDIVISION GAS LINE INSTALLATION**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Louque and seconded by Councilman Amato. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Cooper absent, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 21-196, A RESOLUTION ACCEPTING THE BID OF CAZENAVE MOTOR, INC. FOR ONE (1) 2022 F-250 FOR THE UTILITIES DEPARTMENT**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and was seconded by Councilman Bland. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Cooper absent, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 21-197, A RESOLUTION ACCEPTING THE BID OF CAZENAVE MOTOR, INC. FOR ONE (1) 2022 F-350 FOR THE UTILITIES DEPARTMENT**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland and was seconded by Councilman Louque. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Cooper absent, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 21-198, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT'S OFFICE TO ADVERTISE FOR AND RECEIVE REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS FROM PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERING FIRMS FOR THE WATER SECTOR PROGRAM PROJECT**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato. Councilman Louque offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

**RESOLUTION 21-199, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE FILING OF AN APPLICATION WITH THE LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND DEVELOPMENT FOR A GRANT UNDER ANY OF THE FOLLOWING FTA PROGRAMS MANAGED THROUGH LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND DEVELOPMENT**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland. Councilman Louque offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

#### **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

**RYAN DONADIEU** – sent prayers to those affected by the fire this week. He said the large increase of COVID cases is affecting more than just the hospitals. He said Acadian Ambulance has seen a large increase, not only call volume,

but also transports from hospitals. He said they are looking into the long response time to a recent call. He said the hospitals are having to transport patients as well. He said the hospital has seen a large increase in testing, so there will be a testing site on Monday and Friday of next week at the West Bank Reception Hall from 8am to 4pm to help alleviate some of the pressure from the hospital, adding that the State will also be offering the vaccine. He said both the testing and vaccine will be free of charge of anyone who wants.

INGRID BERGERON – said the monthly report was distributed this afternoon. They are planning a memorial celebration for the seniors that were lost during COVID. She said recommendations for the Youth Commission will be coming soon and a social will be planned.

FELIX BOUGHTON – said they were able to complete payroll with a skeleton crew and said he is proud of his staff for that. He said we will collect \$1.5 million less than last year and there is somewhat of an allowance in the budget, but we didn't anticipate \$1.5 million less.

RICK WEBRE – said don't hesitate to call if support is needed. He complimented his staff for going a great job, as they are also working with a skeleton crew.

### COUNCIL MEMBER'S REPORT

COUNCILMAN NASH - Councilman Nash inquired about the progress of the levee at the weir. Mr. Webre said they are about 300 feet from the weir, adding that rain is causing delays. Councilman Nash asked, regarding the Hwy 643 culvert project, if asphalt can be placed temporarily until the project can be started.

COUNCILWOMAN ETIENNE-STEIB – Councilwoman Etienne-Steib expressed a special Thank You to Nucor, Ergon, FG, Toys for Tots, Mr. Cooper, and Mr. Glen Duncan for their help and assistance with the book bag giveaway. Over 200 book bags were distributed within 1½ hours. She said she is praying that people take COVID serious and they do what is necessary to keep everyone safe.

COUNCILMAN COOPER – Councilman Cooper was absent.

COUNCILMAN BLAND – Councilman Bland expressed thanks to Donovan with Meyers Engineering for his work assisting us in getting the grants and he thanked the Council for moving forward with it. He added that its close to \$4 million in grants available and will continue to apply in the future to make our paths complete. He also expressed great work for getting the contractor to begin fighting the blighted properties. He said it's already making a difference in District 4. He requested that status of turning over Romeville Park back to the school board. Mr. Webre indicated that he hasn't spoken with anyone yet to begin the legal work. He said he received numerous complaints about the post office in Hester due to their hours of operation and requested assistance with this issue. He said next week he will meet with Eric on the Unified Recreation Board concept and will keep everyone informed. He thanked Nucor for donating the crepe myrtles for the District 4 park.

COUNCILMAN LOUQUE – Councilman Louque requested the construction start date of the Humble Phase 2. Mr. Webre said they received a schedule without a date on it and that COVID is starting to impact their staff and material delivery. He echoed Councilman Bland concerns regarding the post office. He said he was in support of having paid firemen.

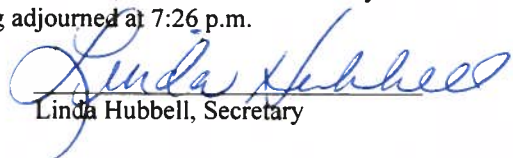
COUNCILMAN AMATO – Councilman Amato requested a status of the environmental study at the next meeting. He thanked everyone who responded to the fire on Monday. He also thanked the parish workers for their help with the fire. He said the ladder truck proved valuable.

CHAIRMAN ST. PIERRE – Chairman St. Pierre said his mom's house received damage in the fire and he thanked everyone who responded. He said they are talking about making a deadline for submitting items on the agenda. He said they have been talking about the order of the roll call vote and they have been looking into it. He said the council secretary has downloaded an app that will randomly shuffle the names and he said they will try it at the next meeting to see how it goes. Chairman St. Pierre said you can access your COVID vaccination information on the LA Wallet app if you don't want to carry your card.

At this time President Dufresne stated that they are continuing to monitor the COVID cases and that anytime the Council would feel the need to return to virtual meetings to please let him know.

### ADJOURNMENT

After determining there was no additional business to come before the council, on a motion offered by Councilman Bland and seconded by Councilman Louque and carried, the meeting adjourned at 7:26 p.m.

  
Linda Hubbell, Secretary