

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE  
COUNCIL OF THE PARISH OF ST. JAMES, STATE OF LOUISIANA  
TAKEN AT A REGULAR MEETING HELD ON NOVEMBER 9, 2022**

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, November 9, 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, Donald Nash, and Chairwoman Vondra Etienne-Steib.

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 Amato the minutes of the October 26, 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 September 2022 was approved on a motion offered by Councilman Bland and seconded by Councilman Louque.

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

President Dufresne presented this report to the Council:

- Thank you, Madam Chair. Good evening, everyone.
- I'd like to start off by thanking all those who helped with the train derailment that occurred in Paulina on Highway 642. The volunteer fire department, our EOC Staff, and the St James Parish Sheriff's Office did a tremendous job in their immediate response to the incident. Starting at ground zero by the railroad crossing on 642, our team went door to door evacuating individuals in the vicinity and created a large enough buffer zone to protect our citizens. All but two households were able to return home 27 hours after the incident. Of course, all our departments had a role in the recovery. The Department of Human Resources arranged hotels for displaced residents, gift cards to help cover necessities, and reimbursements for those who secured their own hotels. The finance department had to work overtime to ensure all our staff were paid this week despite the delays caused by the derailment. Operations helped with containment and repaired a gas line that ruptured during the cleanup effort. This was truly an all-hands-on deck incident, and our Parish came together like we always do to mitigate this incident and protect our people.
- I would like to invite you all to our Veterans Day Celebration tomorrow, November 10<sup>th</sup>, at Lucher Park. The event will be from 4:30-6:30pm, and will feature free food, fireworks, performances by local schools, and much more. We are honored to have Bobby Lovergne, Jr., member of the VFW National Council of Administration as our guest speaker. U.S. Senator Bill Cassidy will also be sharing remarks at the event. We are thrilled to host this event honoring all of our veterans who have served our country.
- Magnolia Heights subdivision clearing and grubbing of vegetation continues on the south side of the subdivision and just north of the railroad track. We are working now to secure the right-a-way for an additional drainage outlet for the Magnolia Drainage Project.
- Highway 643 update: St James Parish crews are currently excavating old culverts from the drainage channel between Fern Street and LaBelle Rue. A concrete catch basin will be poured south of Highway 643. Crews will continue to clear and grub this drainage outfall to the Vacherie canal. In addition to that, crews are currently working on cleaning Jaco Cannel that hasn't been cleaned in decades in the South Vacherie area. This canal also runs from Hwy 643 to the Vacherie Canal.
- Meeting with DOTD – A meeting is scheduled tomorrow with Billy Williamson. St James Parish Operations will submit an application for expenses incurred by the parish for engineering and construction related to the drainage project under Highway 643 between Fern St. and LaBelle Rue.
- Buddy Whitney Update: A pre-construction meeting was held today between St. James Parish Operations, the Town of Lucher, St James Parish School Board, Myers Engineering, and LA Contractors. The Buddy Whitney Drainage project will begin by the end of November and has a 180-day contractual time frame.
- Spruce St Project: St James Parish Crews have assessed the drainage conditions on the west shoulder of Spruce St. New culverts have been ordered and infrastructure improvements is expected to begin next week.
- The East Bank Recreation Center basketball court finishing and aligning is complete. Bleachers, the score board, and goals have been installed, and Allied Alarms is scheduled to activate the fire alarm system on Friday. A final walkthrough is scheduled for November 16<sup>th</sup> and substantial completion is expected to be issued at that time. We will be hosting a Grand Opening at the first Bidy Basketball game on December 3<sup>rd</sup>. I would like to invite you all to this exciting event for our parish. A formal invite will be extended to all local officials in the coming week.
- Gramercy Roundabout – a DOTD Open House is scheduled for December 17<sup>th</sup> at 4:00pm to receive public comment on this project.
- In addition to these road projects, I will be attending the DOTD Road Show at the State Capitol tomorrow morning to address more highway concerns in St James Parish.
- 3127 widening project – A progress meeting is scheduled for November 18<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 between St James Parish Operation and Facility Planning and Control. Two disbursements have been submitted thus far on this project.

- Diamond Center purchase – Meetings were held on site with the surveying crews and the current owners of the Diamond Center and the Hospital property, and both final surveys have been received by the operations department. Prior to the next public hearing on these facilities, the council members will receive a copy of the surveys, appraisals, and purchase agreements.
- Road Rehab – A notice to proceed was issued on November 3<sup>rd</sup> to Barrier Construction. All patching is expected to be complete by the end of the year and the road and bridge budget will be amended to \$450,000 to cover this expense.
- Road preservation – Material Resources, Inc. completed the last roads under the preservation project which is North Rosary in South Vacherie. Crack sealing will continue through the winter.
- Vacherie Senior Center – St James Parish Crews have completed the ADA compliant components of the fire training center and Michel's Plumbing has replaced the grease trap. DHH will be contacted to inspect this facility next week.
- We are waiting for a check from the state for 90% of our cost from the Vacherie canal storm debris clean up. It is in the 4<sup>th</sup> stage of the reimbursement process, meaning it has already been approved and we are just waiting on the check.
- The seniors of St. James Parish are invited to attend our annual Thanksgiving Dinners events. On Sunday, November 13<sup>th</sup> the East Bank Thanksgiving will be hosted by the Boat Club Members. On Thursday, November 17<sup>th</sup>, the West Bank Thanksgiving Dinner is hosted by DHR with the help of several local sponsors.
- I would like to extend my sincerest condolences to the family of Mrs. Genevieve Roberts, a lifelong native and resident of Convent. Mrs. Genevieve passed away on the morning of November 7<sup>th</sup>. Her granddaughter, Dakota Harness, is the receptionist in my office and she is truly a joy to work with. She is evidence of the positive legacy of Mrs. Genevieve.

This concludes my report. God bless everyone.

**PUBLIC COMMENT** – None

**PRESENTATIONS**

- Ms. Desiree Lemoine with Industry Makes explained to who they are, their purpose, and how they will support St. James Parish.

**APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS** – None

**OLD BUSINESS**

Acquisition of Land for Multipurpose Building – the public hearing is scheduled for the next meeting.

Update of drainage study for Forrestal Street to Pool Lane – The back part of Spruce St. is part of the comprehensive plan.

Buddy Whitney drainage project update – had a meeting with several entities and we are working with the school board to move forward.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**RESOLUTION 22-213, A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE DISBURSEMENT OF PAYROLL FOR THE NOVEMBER 11, 2022 PAYROLL**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman St. Pierre. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 22-214, 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 Nash. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 22-215, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT TO SIGN FY2023 NEW AND/OR AMENDED CONTRACTS FOR THE COMMUNITY SERIES BLOCK GRANT BETWEEN THE LOUISIANA WORKFORCE COMMISSION AND ST. JAMES PARISH DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES, CAA**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman St. Pierre. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted.

After President Dufresne explained the resolution, he stated that the title of the resolution was incorrect that it was not to install a metering station, Councilman St. Pierre offered a motion to amend the resolution to correct the title and was seconded by Councilman Amato. After a unanimous roll call vote, the motion carried. **RESOLUTION 22-216, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ST. JAMES PARISH PRESIDENT TO ENTER INTO A REIMBURSEMENT AGREEMENT WITH ACADIAN GAS PIPELINE SYSTEM TO INSTALL A NATURAL GAS PIPELINE TAP ADJACENT TO HWY 3127 EAST OF VACHERIE, LOUISIANA**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Nash and seconded by Councilman Cooper. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted, as amended.

**RESOLUTION 22-217, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT TO APPLY FOR AND EXECUTE ALL DOCUMENTATION FOR FUNDING FROM THE LOUISIANA OFFICE OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, COMMUNITY WATER ENRICHMENT FUND PROGRAM FOR FUNDING TOWARDS VARIABLE SPEED MOTORS AT THE WEST BANK WATER TREATMENT PLANT**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Cooper and seconded by Councilman Louque. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 22-218, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT TO APPLY FOR AND EXECUTE ALL DOCUMENTATION FOR FUNDING FROM THE LOUISIANA OFFICE OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR DIGITAL FUEL DISPENSERS AND PUMPS FOR THE EAST BANK AND WEST BANK FUEL SITES**, was offered

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

**RESOLUTION 22-219, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING AND EMPOWERING PARISH PRESIDENT PETER DUFRESNE TO SIGN A CHRISTMAS BONFIRE PROGRAM AGREEMENT AND HOLD HARMLESS AGREEMENT WITH THE PONTCHARTRAIN LEVEE DISTRICT AND THE LAFOURCHE BASIN LEVEE DISTRICT RELATING TO CHRISTMAS BONFIRES**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman Bland. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted.

**PROPOSED ORDINANCE, AN ORDINANCE AMENDING SECTION 46-21 "CHRISTMAS LEVEE BONFIRES; PERMIT REQUIRED" RELATIVE TO CHRISTMAS BONFIRES**, was introduced on a motion offered by Councilman St. Pierre and seconded by Councilman Amato. After a unanimous roll call vote, 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., Tuesday, November 22, 2022, in the Council Chambers of the Parish Courthouse Annex in Vacherie.

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

**ERIC DEROCHE** – he thanked all the responders for assisting with the train derailment, and the DHR staff for their short notice with shelter operations. We are communicating daily with CN Rail.

**RICK WEBRE** – the Bonding Commission approved the \$2 million bond for the Blind River boat launch and we put in another \$3 million for capital outlay. Waste Management will begin using the Grand Point fire station for delivering the waste containers. Will begin placing bonfire stakes next week.

**INGRID BERGERON** – the Elderly Thanksgiving Dinners will be held next week.

**FELIX BOUGHTON** – The special budget meeting will be held next Tuesday at 5pm in Convent. He requested any questions to be given to him early so he can have the answers for the meeting. Received October sales tax and for the 2<sup>nd</sup> time in a row had a little more than last year at this time.

#### **COUNCIL MEMBER'S REPORT**

**COUNCILMAN ST. PIERRE** – Councilman St. Pierre had no comments.

**COUNCILMAN AMATO** – Councilman Amato thanked the volunteers for assisting with the bonfire permits. He congratulated all the candidates, and he wished Happy Veteran's Day to all our Veterans.

**COUNCILMAN LOUQUE** – Councilman Louque expressed appreciation to all the agencies with the train derailment, and he said he would like to be part of the after action review.

**COUNCILMAN BLAND** – Councilman Bland inquired about the solar study by SCPD and asked if we received correspondence from the executive session regarding Big Shake Pit. He thanked all who worked swiftly and diligently with the train derailment. He expressed his frustrations on how the communications were handled. He wished Happy Veteran's Day to all our Veterans.

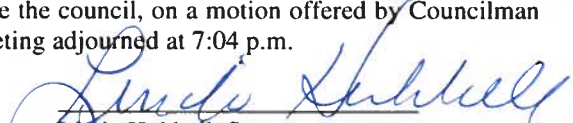
**COUNCILMAN COOPER** – Councilman Cooper expressed concerns with the polling precincts on Saturday's election. He congratulated the candidates and wished them well. He said he appreciated the discussion with industry.

**COUNCILMAN NASH** – Councilman Nash inquired about the timeframe for the changing of the poles. Mr. Webre will get it to him in the morning.

**CHAIRWOMAN ETIENNE-STEIB** – Chairwoman Etienne-Steib also expressed her frustration about communications with the derailment.

#### **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 Bland and carried, the meeting adjourned at 7:04 p.m.

  
Linda Hubbell, Secretary