

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE
COUNCIL OF THE PARISH OF ST. JAMES, STATE OF LOUISIANA
TAKEN AT A REGULAR MEETING HELD ON JANUARY 6, 2021**

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, January 6, 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. Councilman Clyde Cooper was absent.

Those also in attendance were; Linda Hubbell, Secretary; Peter Dufresne, Parish President; Felix Boughton, Finance Director; Richard Webre, Operations Director; Ingrid Leblanc, Human Resources Director; Eric Deroche, Emergency Preparedness Director; and Adam Koenig, Legal Advisor.

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

At this time Chairman St. Pierre introduce the new legal counsel, Mr. Adam Koenig.

The Honorable Alvin St. Pierre, 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 Louque and seconded by Councilman Nash, the minutes of the December 22, 2020 public hearing were approved as distributed, and the reading of these minutes dispensed with.

One a motion offered by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman Bland, the minutes of the December 22, 2020 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 November 2020 was approved on a motion offered by Councilman Louque and seconded by Councilwoman Etienne-Steib.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Dufresne presented this report to the council:

Good afternoon. I pray everyone had a happy and safe Christmas and New Year's holiday.

First Off

- Beginning Monday, January 4, the first very limited COVID-19 vaccine doses were made available to the public. 107 Louisiana pharmacies received vaccines for those individuals in Phase 1B, Tier One. This applies to people who are 70 years of age and older, home health patients and staff, and staff of schools of allied health. Eligible residents must contact a participating pharmacy and make an appointment. Please check the LDH's website for a list of pharmacies and their contact information.
- The West Bank Reception Hall is still open for free COVID testing every Wednesday from 9am until 4pm. Please take advantage of this testing site if you are showing any signs or symptoms.
- Over the holidays, our Department of Human Resources Community Action Agency, had another year of blissful success with our Annual Toy and Coat Drive. With the total donations received of \$6,940.00 from our Community Stakeholders, Businesses and Residents, we were able to assist 119 families, and 292 children for this Holiday Season.

A few updates on Operations.

- Our Operations Department is hosting 2 public meetings for our residents to provide feedback for the Capital Improvement Plan currently being developed. The West Bank public meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 19th at 5:30pm at the St. James Parish Annex Council Chambers in Vacherie. The East Bank public meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 26th at 5:30pm at the Courthouse Council Chambers. All feedback from residents will be incorporated into this 3-year improvement plan to help create a quality place to live in St. James Parish.
- All excavation equipment for the drainage division was received January 5 and will be placed into operation by the end of the month.
- St James Parish has been selected as a finalist to draft an application for the 60-million-dollar water shed initiative grant. Our operations department is working with Rostan, Inc that will provide administrative support for this project. The deadline for submission to the state has been extended to the end of the month February 2021.
- The Lutchter basketball pavilion is substantially complete.
- The bidding has been completed on phase one of the Bourbon subdivision gas line and a contract was let to replace the natural gas trunk line along LA Hwy 642 in the amount of \$563,369 from Benton Georgia, Inc. We should see this work beginning real soon. This project will begin the enhancement of the much needed natural gas infrastructure that has been causing so many problems for our residents.
- The District 4 and 5 Splash Parks are nearing completion and is projected for final inspection before the end of January 2021. Also, we received from Mosiac \$38,000 dollars which will be divided equally between the two splash parks for recreation equipment. I want to thank this industry leader for their contribution to our children.
- A notice to proceed was issued to the contractor to begin work on the covered court at the Magnolia Park and is projected for completion by the end of January.
- Our Department of Human Resources along with the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank will distribute commodities to eligible families and individuals in St. James Parish on January 25th through January 28th. Commodities will be distributed in a drive through on a first-come, first served basis to all registered applicants.
- Our offices will be closed to celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr. Day on Monday, January 18th.
- Finally, let's all pray for our Nation to heal.

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

PRESENTATIONS – None

APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

RESOLUTION 21-01, A RESOLUTION APPOINTING ANYA BAILEY RANDLE TO THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS, ST. JAMES PARISH HOSPITAL SERVICE DISTRICT, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato. Councilwoman Etienne-Steib offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

OLD BUSINESS

- **District 5 Alternate Access Route** – no update
- **Acquisition of Land for Multipurpose Building Update** – Councilwoman Etienne-Steib requested for President Dufresne to meet with Ms. Pratt to discuss the agreement to see if this is something that the council would be interested in partnering with. President Dufresne said he, and Mr. Webre, will meet with the Hospital to review the agreement, tweak it, and add our own input into the agreement.

ORDINANCE 20-14, AN ORDINANCE TO ADD SECTION 98-3 OF THE ST. JAMES PARISH CODE OF ORDINANCES TO AUTHORIZE THE PARISH TO REMEDIATE OBSTRUCTIONS OF ROADS, STREETS, AND DRAINAGE FEATURES; AND TO RECOVER THE COST THEREOF, having undergone the hearing process, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Nash and was seconded by Councilman Louque. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Cooper absent, the ordinance was adopted.

NEW BUSINESS

RESOLUTION 21-02, A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE DISBURSEMENT OF PAYROLL FOR THE JANUARY 8, 2021 PAYROLL, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilwoman Etienne-Steib and seconded by Councilman Louque. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Cooper absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-03, A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS TO PAY PENDING CURRENT INVOICES AND PAYABLES, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman Nash. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Cooper absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-04, A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE LAND USE APPLICATION OF NEW CINGULAR WIRELESS, PSC (ITEM #20-20) UNDER THE ST. JAMES PARISH LAND USE ORDINANCE, WITH CONDITIONS, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman Nash. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Cooper absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-05, A RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR THE ACCEPTANCE OF WORK PERFORMED BY COMMAND CONSTRUCTION, LLC IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CERTIFICATE OF SUBSTANTIAL COMPLETION, FOR THE MATHERNE, WOODS CANAL, DAVID CANAL, 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 21-06, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT AND/OR THE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES TO SUBMIT A GRANT APPLICATION AND SIGN A CONTRACT ON BEHALF OF ST. JAMES PARISH GOVERNMENT TO IMPLEMENT A YOUTH BUILD PROGRAM INCLUDING CONSTRUCTION PLUS COMPONENT IN ST. JAMES PARISH, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland and seconded by Councilwoman Etienne-Steib. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Cooper absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-07, A RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CANVASSING THE RETURNS AND DECLARING THE RESULTS OF THE SPECIAL ELECTION HELD IN FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT NO. 2 OF THE PARISH OF ST. JAMES, STATE OF LOUISIANA, ON SATURDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2020, TO AUTHORIZE THE RENEWAL OF A SPECIAL TAX THEREIN, 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 21-08, A RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CANVASSING THE RETURNS AND DECLARING THE RESULTS OF THE SPECIAL ELECTION HELD IN THE PARISH OF ST. JAMES, STATE OF LOUISIANA, ON SATURDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2020 TO AUTHORIZE THE RENEWAL OF A SPECIAL TAX THEREIN, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman Louque. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Cooper absent, the resolution was adopted.

COUNCIL MEMBER'S REPORT

COUNCILMAN AMATO – Councilman Amato thanked the recreation board for the basketball canopy. He welcomed Mr. Adam Koenig and congratulated Judge Martin. He recognized Susan Bailey for being a great role model and thanked her for all she does. He said he would make the Shell Convent refinery aware of the services that Ms. Bailey provides with the Workforce Investment Agency.

COUNCILMAN LOUQUE – Councilman Louque inquired about the property complaints that were submitted and said he hasn't received a response. Mr. Webre said he will check on them.

COUNCILMAN BLAND – Councilman Bland also thanked Mosaic for donating \$39,000 to the District 4 and District 5 Recreation Parks. This is the first part of hopefully two that will fund our playground equipment at the new park. He added that he applied for the grant in 2020 because they had funds available, and will apply for the 2021

grant, so that hopefully Mosaic can fully fund the equipment for both District 4 and District 5, so we wouldn't have to use funds from the General Fund, which is already budgeted for the playground equipment. He thanked Mosaic again for their continued support of our youth. He asked President Dufresne/Directors if they received responses to the questions regarding the bike path. Mr. Boughton indicated they have a meeting with the municipalities to see if they will assist in maintaining the bike path through Gramercy and Lutchter. After that we either need to see the status of Phase I or we start with the \$1.2 million and shorten the path. President Dufresne said we need to get a cost estimate of the relocation of utility poles or redesign the walking path. Councilman Bland said he has seen a work order regarding Nucor's water intake. He added that during his campaign in 2019 residents around the water tower area complained that this was normal and sometimes they would wake up without water in their homes. He asked how do we avoid this in the future and is this a bigger problem draining out the water tower in Convent. Mr. Webre said it's not just the water tower draining, it's also the fire suppression pipes. Mr. Webre said he spoke with an operator and the ES&H representative at Nucor and they need to meet to resolve the issue. President Dufresne said they are currently working with Nucor. Councilman Bland asked for the status of the Romeville Park so it could be turned back over the School Board. Mr. Webre indicated that there is only one thing that needs to be removed. Councilman Bland said he spoke with Mr. Brent about the District 4 park splash park and he said they are hopeful to have the final walk though before the end of January. Councilman Bland inquired about trash and how do we fight it in the Parish. He said he received a text from Mr. Paul Beier, appointee for the Keep St. James Parish Beautiful Board, about a specific trash around the Veteran's Memorial Bridge in Gramercy that has been there for about 4 weeks. He asked whose responsibility it is to clean up trash, in bulk, such as tires, a sofa, and dumped trash on the side of the road. Mr. Webre indicated that it is a state highway so in that right of way it would be DOTD's responsibility, but we could work with them. Councilman Bland said he thinks the bigger question is, "how do we be more proactive in keeping our parish clean?" He suggested that as Parish employees are riding the highways and road, that if they see trash or a sign that is down to report it to their supervisor or submit a work order. He asked why should we have to rely on our residents, or ourselves to find and report these types of issues. He stated that he is just trying to figure out how, we as a parish, can be more proactive. President Dufresne said our resources are very limited. Councilman Bland said he didn't think they were. President Dufresne said we have a lot of services that we provide to our residents, we completed over 2,000 work order this year. Councilman Bland said I'm not saying, that nobody is not doing our job, all I'm saying is why does it have to fall on our residents, or us as council members to find blighted property, or get a phone call about a stop sign down, or looking at trash by the road." President Dufresne said that we are not in the business of going behind all of our residents picking up trash, we need to ask them not to put the trash there. Councilman Bland said he was not asking that, but if you are saying you've got a parish employee on the East Bank traveling to the West Bank and he is passing that trash every single day for 4 weeks, why wouldn't we want our employees to help promote a better St. James Parish. Mr. Webre said that it is not indicative in St. James Parish, that our neighboring Parish pays \$125,000 to have trustees pick up litter. Councilman Bland indicated that the Keep St. James Parish Beautiful Board has not met in a long time. Councilman Nash then shared what works for him in his district and Chairman St. Pierre suggested that Councilman Bland come up with a couple of things so they could sit down and find out what could they do about it. Councilman Bland said all he's saying is to let's start thinking about being more proactive.

COUNCILMAN COOPER – Councilman Cooper was absent.

COUNCILWOMAN ETIENNE-STEIB – Councilwoman Etienne-Steib wished Happy 1st Year Anniversary to the new Council Members, adding that we've done a good job together, we're better and stronger, and looks forward to the next three years. She congratulated Anya Randle. She thanked Mayor Nosacka, Representative Brass, and Aldermen Clyde Williams and Barbara Woods for assisting her in the Santa Picture Day and the Toy Give-Away. She said they gave away close to 60 bicycles and served 217 people on East Bank and about 207 on the West Bank. She said it truly was a good feeling to be part of that experience and thanked anyone that helped in anyway.

COUNCILMAN NASH – Councilman Nash requested a letter be sent to DOTD to have the sides of Highways 18 and 20 grated. He also requested a letter be sent to RTC and/or Charter regarding cable service on Hwy 3127.

CHAIRMAN ST. PIERRE – Chairman St. Pierre thanked Mr. Webre for the in-depth report. He welcomed Adam Koenig, and he congratulated Anya. He requested Mr. Webre get with Lindsay on the information that goes in the packet for the walking path. Chairman St. Pierre wished everyone Happy New Year.

DIRECTOR REPORT

FELIX BOUGHTON – Mr. Boughton said since we finished with this tax renewal, we won't have to call another election until 2025.

INGRID LEBLANC – Mrs. Leblanc thanked the Council for their support and the Administration's desire to go after the Youth Build grant again, adding that they are looking forward to some great things and hoping they are successful. Mrs. Leblanc congratulated Anya on her appointment and for being the first woman on the board. Mrs. Leblanc also wished everyone Happy New Year.


ERIC DEROCHE – Mr. Deroche said they received calls as to why there are no pharmacy in St. James Parish on the State's website for the COVID vaccine. He indicated that have already been in communication with LDH, Region 3. Dr. Riggins, Regional Medical Director has already pushed it up the chain, and they are trying to work with one or two pharmacies in the parish to get the vaccine. He thanked Ms. Pratt and the hospital staff for working with them to get vaccinations for our first responders. He indicated that the process we are doing in St. James is very aggressive compared to what other parishes are doing in the State, and it's being noticed. Mr. Deroche said their goal next week is to send out, for the council's review, the All-Hazard Emergency Operations Guide. Its mandated to be updated every four years.

At this time Councilman Louque inquired about the industrial audit. Mr. Deroche said that the first audit went out in December, to YCI. Mr. Deroche said we're looking at it like what an OSHA audit is. He said we provide the

questionnaire, they will provide the data, we will review the data and do spot checks. If we find no deficiencies in the data, then we will make an assumption that it's all valid.

ADJOURNMENT

After determining there was no additional business to come before the council, on a motion offered by Councilman Nash and seconded by Councilman Louque and carried, the meeting adjourned at 7:11 p.m.


Linda Hubbell, Secretary