

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE
COUNCIL OF THE PARISH OF ST. JAMES, STATE OF LOUISIANA
TAKEN AT A REGULAR MEETING HELD ON MARCH 16, 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 16, 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. Special Counsel Martin Maley 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 St. Pierre led the Pledge of Allegiance.

MINUTES

On a motion offered by Councilman Louque and seconded by Councilman Amato the minutes of the March 2, 2022 public hearing were approved as distributed, and the reading of these minutes dispensed with.

On a motion offered by Councilman Nash and seconded by Councilman Louque the minute of the March 2, 2022 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, Madam Chair. Good evening, everyone.

- I'd like to start off by congratulating our council secretary Mrs. Linda Hubbell. Mrs. Linda is the newly elected President of the Organization of Parish Administrative Officials. This took place at the Police Jury Association conference last week in Lake Charles.
- We've almost completely closed the books for 2021 and the preliminary results are very encouraging:
Despite the following challenges like the reduction in property taxes, the reduction in sales taxes, the increase expenditures because of COVID, the increase in expenses because of Hurricane Ida, and the increase in drainage expenses also because of Hurricane and catching up on parish wide drainage issues. We managed to increase our financial position by approximately \$1,000,000.00. The restructuring of our spending played a part in allowing us to increase our financial position despite facing these financial issues. And for the third consecutive year, we will not roll our millages forward in 2022, saving the taxpayers another \$ 300,000.
- Mr. Boughton and I have been working with First American Bank to coordinate a plan to move our investments from LAMP so we can do business locally.
- The Department of Human Resources 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, and the West Bank Class will be held on Tuesday and Thursday at the West Bank Reception Hall from 9am to 10am.
- The Operations Department will soon be launching online permitting – This will allow people to make online payments when they apply for their permits; we will be looking forward to online payments for permitting in mid-May.
- Union Pacific Railroad culvert project at Magnolia is in the permitting process with T. Baker Smith.
- Highway 643 drainage mitigation project to add culvert by 643 and First American Bank. T. Baker Smith is compiling a bid packet and should be ready to advertise within the month of April. Statewide flood control will be used to fund this project.
- Magnolia Height interior drainage project is currently advertising now for RFQ for engineering.
- David Plantation is already starting to lay down material this week and saw cutting driveways have already begun.
- Humble St Phase 2 project is waiting for one driveway to be bricked this weekend and the materials for St. James Street to 3125 ditch concrete lining have been ordered.
- Our new Litter Abatement crews have been working hard along our roadsides picking up trash. The task ahead of them is monumental so let's please be courteous as we pass them on the roads, and importantly lets help them by making an assertive effort to not litter in the first place.
- We are moving along with natural gas infrastructure improvements on both the East and West Bank. Hopefully by the summertime we should have that in place. Also, we are continuing to move forward with both east and west bank water treatment plant improvements.
- I met with Entergy earlier today and had lengthy discussions about street lighting. This project has taken longer than we anticipated but they are working on it and it should be completed soon.
- The 5th Circuit overturned the ruling on the Big Shake Pit which means they will have to come back to the planning commission for approval to continue with their operations.
- We are going to have our summer worker program this year and we will have room for 20 or so applicants like in the past.
- FEMA is coming do site inspections on the 28th of March for the Vacherie senior center, the Gramercy recreation building and fire station - the 50 % rule.
- Private Property Debris Removal- we received approval letter from FEMA, more information will be coming out on how residents will be able to apply.

This concludes my report. God Bless everyone here and God Bless St. James Parish.

PUBLIC COMMENT – None

FINANCE DEPARTMENT'S MONTHLY REPORT

The Statement of Revenues and Expenditures for December 2021 was approved on a motion offered by Councilman Nash and seconded by Councilman St. Pierre.

PRESENTATIONS

Mr. Paul Aucoin was not in attendance to receive the plaque honoring him for his years of service to the Port of South Louisiana.

Ingrid Bergeron, Department of Human Resources Director, presented DHR's Annual Report. She then answered the council's questions.

At this time Chairwoman Etienne-Steib stated that she received a request from Councilman Nash to allow a resident in his district to address the council regarding a neighbor complaint. She then requested a motion to amend the agenda to allow the resident to speak. Councilman Nash offered a motion and was seconded by Councilman Bland. After a unanimous roll call vote, the motion carried. Mr. Kevin Lancaster, 29346 Hwy 20, Vacherie, Louisiana addressed the council concerning issues with a neighbor's living conditions. He shared information about the property having no electricity and sewerage.

APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None

OLD BUSINESS

Acquisition of Land for Multipurpose Building – waiting on the appraisal.

Update of drainage study for Forrestal Street to Pool Lane – information from the last study is still valid. One of the major showstopper was the cost of mitigation on the wetlands and need to look at ways to pay for that.

RESOLUTION 22-48, A RESOLUTION AMENDING THE CONTRACT WITH TRIO COMMUNITY MEALS PREVIOUSLY KNOWN AS ELIOR NORTH AMERICAN'S CORP, D/B/A/ BATEMAN COMMUNITY LIVING FOR A 4% HYPERINFLATION INCREASE FOR FOOD SERVICES TO SENIOR CONGREGATE AND HOMEBOUND MEAL NUTRITION PROGRAM, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman Nash. After a unanimous roll call vote, resolution was adopted.

NEW BUSINESS

RESOLUTION 22-49, A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE DISBURSEMENT OF PAYROLL FOR THE MARCH 18 2022 PAYROLL, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Nash and seconded by Councilman Louque. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 22-50, A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS TO PAY PENDING CURRENT INVOICES AND PAYABLES, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman St. Pierre and seconded by Councilman Bland. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 22-51, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT'S OFFICE TO ADVERTISE FOR AND RECEIVE REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS FROM PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERING FIRMS FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2022 ROAD REHABILITATION PROJECT, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland. Councilman Louque offered a second, the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 22-52, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ST. JAMES PARISH PRESIDENT TO ACCEPT THE BID AND ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH MORCORE ROOFING, LLC FOR THE ROOF REPLACEMENT AT THE VACHERIE AND CONVENT WATER TREATMENT PLANTS, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman St. Pierre and seconded by Councilman Bland. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 22-53, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT'S OFFICE TO ADVERTISE FOR AND RECEIVE BIDS FOR ROAD PRESERVATION SERVICES THROUGHOUT ST. JAMES PARISH, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Louque. Councilman Nash offered a second, the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 22-54, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT'S OFFICE TO SEEK AND RECEIVE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR DEBRIS REMOVAL AND MONITORING SERVICES, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland. Councilman Louque offered a second, the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 22-55, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT'S OFFICE TO SEEK AND RECEIVE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR MOSQUITO CONTROL SERVICES, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato. Councilman Bland offered a second, the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 22-56, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT'S OFFICE TO SEEK AND RECEIVE REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY FEEDING DURING A DECLARED EMERGENCY, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland. Councilman Amato offered a second, the resolution was unanimously adopted.

An **EXECUTIVE SESSION** convened at 7:04 p.m., on a motion offered by Councilman Bland and seconded by Councilman Louque. After a unanimous roll call vote, the motion carried. Members of the Council, President Dufresne, along with Mr. Martin Maley withdrew to an adjoining chamber to receive a status report from special counsel concerning Doris Brignac v. Timothy Roussel, et al, Civil Action No. 2:18-cv-06491, United States District Court, Eastern District of Louisiana. All returned at 7:17 p.m., and the regular session was reconvened. Chairwoman Etienne-Steib informed everyone that the council was made aware of a settlement agreement. Councilman Amato then offered a motion to accept the settlement with Councilman Bland offering a second. After a unanimous roll call vote, the motion carried.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

FELIX BOUGHTON – he said one of the GOMESA funds will require an amendment, to purchase equipment. He said we are \$24,000 under on sales tax compared to this time last year.

RICK WEBRE – the Pipeline Hazardous Material Safety Administration contacted the operations department to inform them of a grant opportunity. He said it's for projects that have been completed or in progress. He said the purchase point for natural gas and some others that were recently completed are eligible. The East Bank Recreation Building - the contractor did not follow some of the engineering standards that were involved in the plans so they had to remove all of the rebar from the forms and there is still a delay with the red iron being delivered. Three barges are being manufactured now and most will be reimbursable by FEMA.

INGRID BERGERON – DHR started to roll out the hurricane recovery applications.

ERIC DEROCHE – no comments

COUNCIL MEMBER'S REPORT

COUNCILMAN NASH – Councilman Nash inquired about the time frame for the Hwy 643 project. Mr. Webre said about 3 weeks to a month.

COUNCILMAN COOPER – Councilman Cooper requested a condolence to the family of Cheryl Nicholas Southhall. He inquired about replacing the solar light at 3125/3219 with a slashing stop sign. He also inquired about ditch digging on Barras Street and in the Baytree area. He said there are still some items that needs to be corrected at the District 5 pavilion. He asked if the public could use the loose asphalt/gravel on their driveway. Mr. Webre said it is not available to the public.

COUNCILMAN BLAND – Councilman Bland informed everyone that they had the introduction meeting for redistricting committee and asked the council to provide comments for the next meeting on the 30th. He reminded the public not to put hurricane debris next to the road because it is no longer getting picked up. Blighted property is an issue, and anyone can call 562-2500 to put a work order in to get the process started.

COUNCILMAN LOUQUE – Councilman Louque had no comments.


COUNCILMAN AMATO – Councilman Amato thanked Mr. Boughton and Mr. Tommy Hessburg for meeting with the Town of Lutchter officials last week to discuss taxable hurricane recovery revenue bonds. He provided the following update of the lighting for exit 194 (Gramercy exit on I-10): a project program manager is evaluating and hoping to get a project number in the next week or two, afterwards they will determine feasibility, engineering, and fiscal year letting. He said there was a Union Diversion project meeting and will share the information once he receives it. He expressed appreciation for the light changing at Lutchter Park. He congratulated Linda.

COUNCILMAN ST. PIERRE – Councilman St. Pierre congratulation Linda on being President of OPAO. He thanked Rick, Eric, and Pete for the discussions of the issues at the Welcome Center. He said the drainage project has begun at David Planation and asked residents to be patient.

CHAIRWOMAN ETIENNE-STEIB – Chairwoman Etienne-Steib requested to have the grease trap cleaned at the District 6 Park and requested the pot hole get fixed.

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 7:39 p.m.


Linda Hubbell, Secretary