

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE
COUNCIL OF THE PARISH OF ST. JAMES, STATE OF LOUISIANA
TAKEN AT A REGULAR MEETING HELD ON MARCH 17, 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, March 17, 2021, at 6:00 p.m.

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

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.

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 March 3, 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:

- First, I'd like to give a brief update on the Covid-19 Pandemic. It's hard to believe that a little over one year ago, the first case of Covid-19 in the United States was realized. Since then, St. James Parish had suffered 1,882 cases and 49 deaths. I'd like to take a moment recognize and pray for the individuals and families in our community impacted by the virus and the 49 members of our community, families, friends, and colleagues who lost their lives. I want to stress that we are not out of the woods yet and it is still vitally important to maintain the guidelines set forth by the Governor and CDC.
- Our hospital partners recently provided us some statistics on our incident rate of cases in St. James. The incidence rate is the total number of positive cases in the parish divided by our population and multiplied by 100 thousand, which allows us to compare ourselves to other parishes. As of yesterday, our incidence rate was at a 52.29.
- When we reach a rate of 50 or less, the state will decrease our risk level from high to moderate.
- Our hospital has worked diligently to provide emergency medical response during the last year and I applaud our front-line hospital staff and administration for their efforts. To date, the hospital has administered 2,000 vaccines.
- Last week, the Governor expanded the eligibility for Covid-19 vaccinations to any persons aged 16-64 with one or more health conditions defined by the CDC.
- A full list of vaccination sites in St. James Parish and surrounding areas is available on our website along with information on the CDC identified health conditions and forms necessary for vaccinations.
- I encourage our residents to take advantage of this extended eligibility and get vaccinated so that together, we can continue to stop the spread of Covid.

DHR:

- Our Department of Human Resources is continuing work with the Volunteer Tax Assistance program, which provides free tax services to our residents. Around 10 households have been assisted thus far and more appointments are continuing to be scheduled. The last day to take advantage of this free service is April 15th. More information on how to sign up can be found on our website.
- The transit division has partnered with Apache and the St. James Parish School Board to provide daily transportation for up to 25 local students Monday through Friday.

EOC:

- St. James Parish Government is partnering with the Blood Center to host a blood drive on Tuesday, March 30th from 10 am to 5 pm. The blood drive will take place at the Lutchter Senior Center from 10 am to 5 pm. Residents are encouraged to help save the lives of others by donating blood.
- More information about this event including registration information can be found on our community events calendar on our parish website.
- Beginning on Monday, March 22 the parish will begin mosquito spraying in the unincorporated areas of the parish.

Recreation

- Our recreation leagues and sporting events are beginning to kick off. Our cornhole league started this week and will take place each Monday.
- We will be continuing our senior aerobics programs at the new recreation building in Lutchter.
- Youth Baseball registration closed last week, and the league will begin in late April.
- We will be hosting our summer work program this year and look forward to providing critical work experience to our students. We will begin taking applications in the coming weeks and more information about this program will be made available on our website and social media pages.

Operations

- Our operations department has been hard at work completing over 20 major projects and work orders since 2020. To date, over 3000 work orders have been closed out and 250 linear miles of drainage maintained.
- I'd like to share some of the major projects this administration has completed to date:
 - Several improvements were made to our recreation facilities including the Lutchter baseball field, District 6 basketball courts, and District 4 & 5 splash parks
 - The 2019 road and bridge program was completed and this year's roadway improvements are beginning now.
 - Several drainage improvement projects were completed including the North Bank drainage mitigation, Humble Street, Trudeau Street, and Canatella Street drainage mitigation projects.
 - Lastly, a number of utilities improvements took place and some of which will be completed in the coming weeks.

- Including, Phase 1 of the Bourbon Subdivision gas infrastructure improvements, the Molaison sewer treatment facility which is now operational, the water intake relocation in Convent, and Reverend Samuel Jones Gas line replacements.

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

PRESENTATIONS

Matthew Jewel, St. Charles Parish President did not attend the meeting.

Rick Webre, St. James Parish Operations Department Director, spoke about water rates and the need for an increase.

Claston Bernard introduced himself as a candidate for U.S. Representative 2nd Congressional District.

APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None

OLD BUSINESS

- **District 5 Alternate Access Route** – Parish Administration, Councilmen Cooper and St. Pierre met with Rep. Brass and Senator Price last week. The Administration will reach out to parties involved to determine how to move forward. Chairman St. Pierre stated that they need to select a location for the route by the end of September, for Capital Outlay.
- **Acquisition of Land for Multipurpose Building Update** – Parish Administration, Council Members St. Pierre and Etienne-Steib, and our Legal Advisor met with the Hospital on Tuesday. After the meeting it has been determined that this project with the hospital may not be feasible at this time. Mrs. Etienne-Steib proposed to use property already owned by the Parish, in the area originally proposed, and hopefully purchase a smaller portion of property from the hospital to move forward with the Multipurpose Building. President Dufresne said the pace that the hospital wants to proceed is not quite as fast as what the Parish's needs are. He said nothing was decided at the time, that they are in the infant stages of the project. Chairman St. Pierre said the hospital has a good vision and it wouldn't be a fast process. Councilman Amato suggested to create a special zone or district in that area to dictate that future construction have a similar architect style. Councilman Bland inquired about the timeline that the hospital gave. Chairman St. Pierre said they really don't have a time yet.

NEW BUSINESS

RESOLUTION 21-43, A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE DISBURSEMENT OF PAYROLL FOR THE MARCH 19, 2021 PAYROLL, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Louque and seconded by Councilwoman Etienne-Steib. After a roll call showing, Amato, Louque, Cooper, Etienne-Steib, Nash, and St. Pierre voting in favor, and Bland voting No, the resolution was adopted.

Councilman Bland explained that his reason for a No vote was because he requested, at the last meeting, to have employee numbers added to the report, because of the modification of the payroll report - which was said to have no privacy issue, so he could adequately approve and analyze the payroll to make a decision of yes.

RESOLUTION 21-44, 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 Amato. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-45, A RESOLUTION APPROVING AND ADOPTING THE REVISIONS TO THE PERSONNEL POLICY GOVERNING ST. JAMES PARISH EMPLOYEES, 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 21-46, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING ST. JAMES PARISH PRESIDENT PETER DUFRESNE TO SIGN A COOPERATIVE ENDEAVOR AGREEMENT WITH THE LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and was seconded by Councilman Louque. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-47, A RESOLUTION PROCLAIMING THE MONTH OF MARCH 2021 AS AMERICAN RED CROSS MONTH IN ST. JAMES PARISH, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato. Councilwoman Etienne-Steib offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted. A plaque was presented Mr. Regi Mullins.

RESOLUTION 21-48, A RESOLUTION AMENDING THE CONTRACT FOR HIGH TIDE CONSULTANTS, LLC TO \$250,000 FOR TASK ORDER #6 AND TO EXTEND THE CONTRACT BY ONE YEAR, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland and was seconded by Councilman Louque. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-49, A RESOLUTION PROCLAIMING THE WEEK OF APRIL 5-9, 2021 AS NATIONAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WEEK IN ST. JAMES PARISH, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Nash. Councilman Louque offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-50, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT'S OFFICE TO ADVERTISE AND RECEIVE BIDS FOR SECURITY CAMERAS AND RELATED ACCESSORIES, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman Louque. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-51, A RESOLUTION AMENDING THE CONTRACT FOR UNIQUE CONSTRUCTION, LLC, TO INCREASE THE AMOUNT OF THE CONTRACT TO 87,350.00, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman Louque. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-52, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ST. JAMES PARISH PRESIDENT TO SIGN THE CONTRACT WITH CIVICPLUS, INC., was offered and moved adoption by Councilman Bland and was seconded by Councilman Nash. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted.

PROPOSED ORDINANCE 21-03, AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 110 "TRAFFIC AND VEHICLES" OF THE OF THE ST. JAMES PARISH CODE OF ORDINANCES TO ADD SECTIONS 12 "GOLF CARTS" AND 13 "UTILITY TERRAIN VEHICLES" TO PROVIDE FOR THE OPERATION OF THESE VEHICLES UPON PUBLIC STREETS OR ROADS, was introduced on a motion offered by Councilman Louque and seconded by Councilman Bland. After a roll call vote showing Amato, Louque, Bland, Etienne-Steib, Nash, and St. Pierre voting in favor, and Cooper voting No, the ordinance was accepted and ordered filed with the Secretary for public inspection and publication of Notice of Public Hearing, which was scheduled for Wednesday, March 31, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Parish Courthouse Annex in Vacherie. Councilman Cooper explained his reason for a No vote is because he doesn't think it is being fairly described to give other opportunities to 4-wheeler riders.

COUNCIL MEMBER'S REPORT

COUNCILMAN NASH – Councilman Nash inquired about the culvert on Hwy 643. Mr. Webre asked for the camera scope so they can see if there is any damage to the culvert.

COUNCILWOMAN ETIENNE-STEIB – Councilwoman Etienne-Steib expressed condolences to the family of Mr. James Florent. She thanked Representative Brass and Pastor McGee for hosting the vaccination drive at the First Baptist Church in Vacherie today. She said she received calls about dogs not on leashes, and said she received calls that the new pole seems to be in the way of adequate play on the basketball court.

COUNCILMAN COOPER – Councilman Cooper also expressed condolence to the Mr. Florent family. He indicated that a constituent on Baytree Street has a speed bump to their house and causing their walls to crack and inquired if it could be relocated. Mr. Webre said he will look at it. Councilman Cooper said he received complaints about drainage and requested the main canal be cleared. He indicated that the water is not draining in the area of Hwy 3127 and Landry Geason Road.

COUNCILMAN BLAND – Councilman Bland informed everyone that he reached out to the Sheriff and Chief Deputy Sid Berthelot about creating Safe Exchange Zones in the Parish. They both responded that it is in the planning phase and he asked for support of these zones. He indicated that they are only a few weeks out for the delivery and install of their new District 4 playground equipment. He said the splash park should be ready to open on April 1st and will reach out to a few industry leaders, Meredith and Amber to host a ribbon cutting event. He asked Councilwoman Etienne-Steib if she thought about Magnolia Street name change. She indicated that she hasn't done the research to see what the effect would be. He thanked the Operations Department, East and West Bank for their hard work on the Trudeau and Canatella Street projects, as they near completion.

COUNCILMAN LOUQUE – Councilman Louque inquired about the completion of the gas project. Mr. Webre indicated that they are pressure testing Phase I in the Bourbon Country, approximately 40%. Councilman Louque said he is hoping the 11 streetlights in Bellevue Lakes Subdivision are working soon. Mr. Webre said they are working on it.

COUNCILMAN AMATO – Councilman Amato recognized Lutchter Mayor St. Pierre who was in attendance and thanked him for the good work. He thanked Jumpy for his quick response to the bad culvert on Marquette Drive. He wished everyone Happy St. Patrick's Day.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

INGRID LEBLANC – She said she hopes the report helpful.

FELIX BOUGHTON – He said he had computer problems and they were remedied quickly due to the money invested in the IT system.

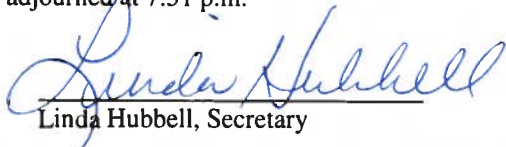
RICK WEBRE – He informed Councilman Cooper that they are working on the drainage study in his area. He also indicated that they lost a gear box on the West Bank pump station and are the process of getting it rebuilt.

At this time Councilman Bland inquired about Waste Management. Mr. Webre indicated that it is older equipment and personnel issues causing the delays. He said there was no good reason for the intermittent misses.

CHAIRMAN ST. PIERRE – Chairman St. Pierre informed the council that he is looking into the order of the way we vote, possibly using a voting machine. He reminded the council members that if you want to speak during the meeting to please be recognized by the Chairman prior to making your comments.

ADJOURNMENT

After determining there was no additional business to come before the council, on a motion offered by Councilman Bland and seconded by Councilman Amato and carried, the meeting adjourned at 7:51 p.m.


Linda Hubbell, Secretary