

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE
COUNCIL OF THE PARISH OF ST. JAMES, STATE OF LOUISIANA
TAKEN AT A REGULAR MEETING HELD ON APRIL 12, 2023**

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, April 12, 2023, at 6:18 p.m., following the public hearing.

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 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 Bruce Mohon, John King and two associates, were also in attendance.

The Honorable, Vondra Etienne-Steib, 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 Bland led the Pledge of Allegiance.

MINUTES

On a motion offered by Councilman Louque and seconded by Councilman Amato the minutes of the March 29, 2023 public hearing were approved as distributed, and the reading of these minutes dispensed with.

On a motion offered by Councilman St. Pierre and seconded by Councilman Louque, the minutes of the March 29, 2023 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 January 2023 was approved on a motion offered by Councilman Nash and seconded by Councilman Amato.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Dufresne presented this report to the Council:

- Thank you, Madam Chair. Good evening, everyone.
- The West Bank library addition bid opened on March 16th, and we have now signed a contract with TBT for the project.
- We have been reimbursed \$31,000 for high service pumps for both of our water plants through the community water enrichment program grant, with more to come.
- Operations is in the process of reviewing proposals for the automated gas and water meters, we are looking forward to being able to improve our efficiencies with these upgrades.
- The baseball season is underway, and practice has begun. The first game will be this Saturday at Lutchter Park.
- The Operations Department met with the developers, engineers, and contractors for the next phase of Bellevue Lakes subdivision. Myers Engineers was present and explained the construction standard expected by St. James Parish Government during construction. Myers will also be performing inspection services throughout the project.
- Material lead time on generator delivery is on schedule for mid-May for both the Parish administration building and the Molaison sewer treatment plant. This will provide resiliency during hazardous weather conditions that impact the electrical grid.
- St James Parish vegetation control crews have completed 90% of their first pass on the West Bank and 60% of the first pass on the East Bank.
- Land purchase of Blackberry Farms on Highway 44 to install clarifiers and water storage tanks is just about complete. This project will greatly increase our water production capacity.
- The project on Bayou Chevreuil bridge has stalled and State agencies have called the bond on this project. They are in search of a new contractor.
- The West Bank natural gas purchase point is still on schedule. At the end of April, Acadian Natural Gas will install a tap which will finish the project, this will enhance the gas service to South Vacherie.
- A preconstruction meeting was conducted today with two contractors competing for the bid for the Romeville-Grandpoint natural gas loop at Highway 642. This bid will open on April 27th.
- The St. James Parish waterline had to be relocated for the DOTD project that is installing a roundabout and 4-laning Highway 70, near the Sunshine Bridge area. Boring was completed and cutover was accomplished on yesterday.
- We have a pre-bid opening tomorrow for the relocation of gas, water, and sewer lines for the Highway 20 widening project. Bid opening will be on April 27th.
- Projects on North Spruce and La-Highway 643 are complete. Drainage crews are re-deployed to the East Bank for priority projects.
- Members of St. James Parish Operations, the US Army Corp of Engineers, CPRA, and Pontchartrain Levee District, conducted a tour of the tentative sites for St James' portion of the Westshore Levee Project. This tour included engineers, hydrologists, environmentalists, and real estate specialists that will provide input to the Corp's decision-making process. The tour was very successful and we expect good results. We are planning a town hall meeting to update the public as soon as we get reports backs from these agencies.
- The United Way grant is open, and we will be applying for additional funds.

- Our first line dance class will be tomorrow, April 13th, from 6-7pm at the St James Parish Recreation Center. Instructor Susan Bailey will be teaching the class, and we are anticipating a great turnout. We are also offering classes on April 20th and April 27th.
- This week is National Public Safety Telecommunications Week. I would like to personally thank each of our dispatchers for the work they do 24/7 to keep our community safe. We are the only parish in the state with two agencies in one dispatch room, our parish dispatch and the Sheriff's office dispatch.
- On May 16th we will be hosting a Senior Picnic and Health Fair in conjunction with the St James Parish Hospital in celebration of May being Older American's Month. The fair will offer free screenings, education, entertainment, prizes, and a meal for participants. Vendors interested in participating can register online with the St James Parish Hospital.
- The Senior Olympics in St. Charles that our seniors traditionally participate in has been cancelled for this year. We are looking forward to it returning in the future.
- May 1st is Senior Day at the Capitol. Our Elderly Services team will be bringing residents on a trip to the State Capitol to meet officials and tour the Capitol. If you can attend, I know our seniors would love to have you.
- I would also like to invite you to our St. James Parish Day at the Capitol on May 2nd. We will be meeting with legislatures and hosting a lunch at 12pm at the Pentagon Barracks.
- Finally, I would like to invite you to our annual Parish Wide Clean-Up event on next Saturday, April 22nd. This is an opportunity for us to participate in Louisiana Love the Boot Week and help keep St. James Parish Beautiful. Participants will meet at 8:00am on the West Bank at the Vacherie Health Unit and on the East Bank at Lutcher Park. Refreshments will follow the event at 11am at Lutcher Park.

God bless each of you and your families.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Gail Leboeuf, 758 N. Ezidore Street, Gramercy, spoke about new business #13 (Atty General/FEMA), and asked to be transparent.

PRESENTATIONS - None

APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS - None

OLD BUSINESS

Update of drainage study from Forrestal Street to Pool Lane – cleared some of Vacherie Canal and are about to get into Cross Cut Canal/Brazan Canal to start clearing.

Update of West Bank Multi-Purpose Complex – Our Architects are still in communication with the Hospital's Architects. Currently, the thought process for the Senior Center is to duplicate the District 4 Senior Center, with a few modifications. The recreation building and the Senior Center will be two separate projects.

ORDINANCE 23-05, AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ARTICLE III, DIVISION 4, WATER, SEWERS, OTHER UTILITIES, SECTION 102-386(G) OF THE ST. JAMES PARISH CODE OF ORDINANCES, SETTING SEWER USER FEES, having undergone the hearing process, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman St. Pierre and seconded by Councilman Bland. After a unanimous roll call vote, the ordinance was adopted.

At this time, Councilman St. Pierre offered a motion to amend the agenda to move item #12 to this time and then proceed with the executive session. Councilman Bland offered a second. After a unanimous roll call vote, the motion carried.

RESOLUTION 23-69, A RESOLUTION TO ENGAGE SPECIAL COUNSEL TO PROVIDE LEGAL REPRESENTATION IN CONNECTION WITH THE CIVIL ACTION ENTITLED INCLUSIVE LOUISIANA, ET AL V. ST. JAMES PARISH ET AL., CIVIL ACTION NO.: 23-CV-00987-WBV-JVM FILED IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF LOUISIANA AND RELATED MATTERS THERETO, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Louque and seconded by Councilman Amato. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted.

An **EXECUTIVE SESSION** convened at 6:41 p.m., on a motion offered by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman St. Pierre. After a unanimous roll call vote, the motion carried. Members of the Council, President Dufresne, Legal Advisor Koenig, Special Counsel, Bruce Mohon, John King and two associates withdrew to an adjoining chamber to receive a status report from counsel on the pending litigation in the civil action entitled INCLUSIVE LOUISIANA, ET AL V. ST. JAMES PARISH ET AL., CIVIL ACTION NO.: 23-cv-00987-WBV-JVM FILED IN THE UNITED STATE DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF LOUISIANA. All returned at 7:23p.m. Chairwoman Etienne-Steib stated that no action was taken.

NEW BUSINESS

RESOLUTION 23-70, A RESOLUTION PROCLAIMING APRIL 2023 AS CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH IN ST. JAMES PARISH, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman St. Pierre. Councilman Bland offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-71, A RESOLUTION PROCLAIMING THE WEEK OF APRIL 10-14, 2023 AS NATIONAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WEEK IN ST. JAMES PARISH, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman St. Pierre. Councilman Louque offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-72, A RESOLUTION PROCLAIMING THE MONTH OF APRIL 2023 AS FAIR HOUSING MONTH IN ST. JAMES PARISH, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland. Councilman Nash offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-73, A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE DISBURSEMENT OF PAYROLL FOR THE APRIL 14, 2023 PAYROLL, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman Nash. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-74, 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 Cooper. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted.

After Ms. Carmel Breaux, Insurance Consultant with Norris Consulting provided an explanation of the current property market in Louisiana and answered the Council's questions **RESOLUTION 23-75, RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ST. JAMES PARISH PRESIDENT TO ENTER INTO CONTRACTS WITH STARSTONE, LANDMARK, EVANSTON, WESTFIELD, LEXINGTON, ARROWHEAD, TRAVELERS, HUDSON, AND LOCA FOR PROPERTY AND CASUALTY INSURANCE AND TPA FEES AND REJECT UNINSURED MOTORIST COVERAGE**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman Nash. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-76, A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE SYSTEM SURVEY AND COMPLIANCE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE FINANCIAL AND COMPLIANCE AUDIT OF ST. JAMES PARISH GOVERNMENT FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2022, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman St. Pierre and seconded by Councilman Louque. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-77, A RESOLUTION ACCEPTING CHANGE ORDER #1 FROM J.P. CAVALIER CONSTRUCTION LLC FOR THE CONVENT COUNCIL CHAMBER RENOVATION PROJECT, 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 23-78, A RESOLUTION ACCEPTING THE BID OF JF PETROLEUM GROUP FOR (TWO) 2 5,000 GALLON DOUBLE-WALLED STEEL ABOVE GROUND STORAGE TANKS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF OPERATIONS, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman Nash. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-79, A RESOLUTION AMENDING THE CONTRACT WITH LOUISIANA CONTROLS, INC. TO EXTEND ONE (1) YEAR FOR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES FOR HVAC CONTROLS, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland and seconded by Councilman Cooper. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-80, A RESOLUTION ACCEPTING CHANGE ORDER #2 FROM B.E.T. CONSTRUCTION, INC. FOR THE NEW OFFICE BUILDING – ST. JAMES PARISH DHR PROJECT, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Louque and seconded by Councilman Amato. After a roll call vote showing, Nash, Cooper, Amato, St. Pierre, Louque, and Etienne-Steib in favor, and Bland against, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-81, A RESOLUTION FOR ST. JAMES PARISH GOVERNMENT TO JOIN THE ATTORNEY GENERAL OF LOUISIANA IN LITIGATION AGAINST FEMA TO CHALLENGE RISK RATING 2.0, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland and seconded by Councilman Amato. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted.

PROPOSED ORDINANCE 23-06, AN ORDINANCE SETTING AND DESIGNATING THE ADOPTED PROPERTY TAX MILLAGE FOR THE YEAR 2023 LEVIED ON ALL TAXABLE PROPERTY WITHIN THE PARISH OF ST. JAMES, STATE OF LOUISIANA, was introduced on a motion offered by Councilman St. Pierre and seconded by Councilman Cooper. 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., on Wednesday, April 26, 2023, in the Council Chambers of the Parish Courthouse Annex in Vacherie.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

FELIX BOUGHTON – February sales tax is about the same as last year. If it stays at that level, we'll be about the same as last year and we will be about \$800,000 more than budgeted.

RICK WEBRE – Completed the projects on Spruce St. and on Hwy 643, completed installation of new security fencing and catwalk at the weir pumping station, completed a project on Hwy 3127 near Blackberry Farms. Started in District 3 at the end of Bayou Des Acadiens. Will also work to District 1 and then into the waterways. DOTD let the contract out for the bridge at the boat launch. A meeting is scheduled for April 21st with Facility Planning and Control for two capital outlay projects – inner connect levee for the West Shore and for the boat launch itself.

INGRID BERGERON – Thanked the Council for supporting the resolutions.

ERIC DEROCHE – received notification that another PW was officially obligated with funding. They are Ida recovery for the fire station and siren system that was damaged.

COUNCIL MEMBER'S REPORT

COUNCILMAN NASH – Councilman Nash inquired about the start time of the road program. Mr. Webre said they still have to bid the contract.

COUNCILMAN COOPER – Councilman Cooper inquired about the progress on Hwy 3219. Mr. Webre said he will follow up regarding the name change on the invoice. Councilman Cooper requested a condolence letter for Donald Nelson's family.

COUNCILMAN BLAND – Councilman Bland asked for a status of Bellevue Subdivision. Mr. Webre said they laid out the site, what is expected, and drainage retention. Councilman Bland said he has issues with the laterals that flow to 3125 because the laterals are not following what the Planning Commission set forth. Councilman Bland inquired about the District 4 restrooms. Mr. Larousse said he is waiting to hear from DHH on the sewer plant. Councilman Bland inquired about the deadline for temporary housing. Mr. Deroche said they received an email from the State's contractor today and said Amber is addressing the list of questions. Ms. Bergeron indicated the residents are being contacted regarding both the FEMA and GOHSEP guidelines.

COUNCILMAN LOUQUE – Councilman Louque informed everyone that they should begin to see additional enforcement on Hwy 642. He said he has been receiving complaints for a number of years regarding truck traffic and speeding. He said he has put in several requests and have been in communication with DOTD, but for now the only option is active enforcement. He said the radar trailer should be deployed and the Sheriff's office should be doing enforcement, the State Transportation DPS Truck Enforcement Division should also be present. President Dufresne indicated that he has contact one of the trucking companies that he has noticed and requested them use Lutcher Avenue. He said Rene's has complied, so they should have a decrease in the amount of 18-wheeler traffic. He said he will continue to contact some of the others.

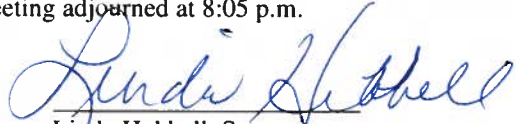
COUNCILMAN AMATO – Councilman Amato reminded everyone that Relay for Life is this Saturday at Lutcher Park.

COUNCILMAN ST. PIERRE – Councilman St. Pierre said from Central Canal to the dump there is blockage around the track and requested to take the canal all the way to Airline.

CHAIRWOMAN ETIENNE-STEIB – Chairwoman Etienne-Steib asked if there is anything that may bar them from doing anything with the West Bank Multipurpose building and the Senior Building at the same time. President Dufresne said they are doing them together.

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 Cooper and carried, the meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.


Linda Hubbell, Secretary