

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE
COUNCIL OF THE PARISH OF ST. JAMES, STATE OF LOUISIANA
TAKEN AT A REGULAR MEETING HELD ON MAY 10, 2023**

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, May 10, 2023, 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 Etienne-Steib.

Those also in attendance were Linda Hubbell, Council Secretary; Peter Dufresne, Parish President; Ingrid Leblanc, DHR Director; Felix Boughton, Finance Director; Rick Webre, Operations Director, and Adam Koenig, Legal Advisor.

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 Louque led the Pledge of Allegiance.

MINUTES

On a motion offered by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman Nash the minutes of the April 26, 2023 public hearing were approved as distributed, and the reading of these minutes dispensed with.

On a motion offered by Councilman Bland and seconded by Councilman Louque, the minutes of the April 26, 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 March 2023 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:

- First off, I would like to say that it is good to have our Council Chamber renovations complete here in Convent. The new screens and system for viewing votes are a big improvement for community members who are in attendance. We will begin renovations to the chambers at the Vacherie Annex soon.
- Two weeks ago, we launched our Capital Improvement Plan Survey, and we have had a good number of responses so far. Please continue to encourage residents in your districts to fill out the survey on our website, or in person at the Vacherie Library, Lutchter Library, or Convent Courthouse.
- We have been working closely with Instructor Susan Bailey to make line dancing a regularly scheduled event on our recreation calendar. I am pleased to share that we will be offering line dancing classes every Wednesday beginning May 17th through July 5th from 7-8pm. Registration will be \$10 a person for the full session and will include a T-shirt.
- I would like to personally thank the 11 businesses who sponsored our youth baseball program this year. Thank you to Cypress Physical Therapy, Guzman's Machine Works, Quality Machine Works, Sandwich World, High Tide Consultants, Prism Nutrition, Taylor's Express, Veron's Supermarket, Brignac Physical Therapy, Roussel's Fine Jewelry and Gifts, and Crescent Engineering and Mapping
- Our Mens Slow Pitch Softball league will be starting up soon, with games to be played at the Paulina Park every Monday and Wednesday night from June through July.
- The East Bank Clarifier is being advertised, and bids will open on June 15th, funding for the clarifier is through the American Cares Act.
- The 2022 road rehab and road preservation program is officially closed out. Bids for the 2023 road rehab program opens on May 25th. We are waiting to hear from the contractors on when preservation will begin and will give an update in two weeks on when they will begin the program. As it stands now, we will be seeking additional funding for a road rehab program for the year 2024.
- Southern Underground was the lowest responsive bidder to the contract for Highway 20 utility relocations contract.
- The DHR building in Lutchter is slightly behind schedule, substantial completion was due last week but we are getting very close to the project being completed.
- The District 4 kitchen is waiting on the Fire Marshall and DHH to complete design services. We should have cost estimates available soon. This kitchen will be a permanent location to prepare senior and home-bound meals for St. James residents. The school board passed an IGA at last night's meeting allowing us to use the kitchen at the Science and Math academy until our renovations are complete.
- I am pleased to share that we have officially dissolved many discrepancies with 4 grants that remained open from the previous administrations. This is over three million dollars in funding that we would have had to potentially pay back due to grant projects that were not completed, and lack of documentation. By finalizing these longstanding projects, we are saving over \$3 million taxpayer dollars.
- Applications for our 2023 College Student Summer Internship Program are still open and will close on May 19th.
- Last week I attended the Retired Seniors Volunteer Program Crawfish Boil. This celebration was for RSVP members who have worked hard all year meeting critical community needs in St. John, St Charles, and St. James Parishes. I'd encourage all residents over 55 years old to consider getting involved in this excellent local organization.
- Beacon Behavioral Health held their meet and greet last week to recognize their new administrator, Scott Tranchina. Beacon is located at the old hospital building in Lutchter, and provides a wide variety of inpatient, outpatient, and healing and wellness services.

- Next Tuesday, May 16th, I'd like to invite you to the 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.
- This month, the St. James Parish Government, Department of Human Resources, are celebrating Community Action Month and St. James Council on Aging (Non-Profit), 50th year of providing services for St. James Parish Residents in the month of May. There will be an event in South Vacherie, at the West Bank Reception Hall, at Lucher Park, and the Convent Community Center. We will be releasing more information about these events soon.
- May is also Older American Month. The 2023 theme is Aging Unbound, which offers an opportunity to explore diverse aging experiences and discuss how communities can combat stereotypes.
- We will also celebrate Try Transit Week May 22-26. Our transit program provides a valuable resource to community members who need transportation, providing roughly 44,808 passenger trips annually. We have found additional funding for this program, and as of this month, we will not be charging fees for transit services.
- On May 1st our Department of Human Resources Community Action Agency held their Senior Day at the Capitol. Our Elderly Services team brought a large group of residents on a trip to the State Capitol to meet officials and tour the Capitol.
- On May 2nd, we held St. James Parish Day at the Capitol. Uncle Larry served an incredible lunch at the Pentagon Barracks, and we were able to connect with many staff members and legislatures, while discussing pressing issues to St. James Parish such as funding for road and bridge repair, and our connector levee.
- On Friday I attended the first St James Parish Special Olympics event held at St James High School. It was inspiring to see so many young athletes giving their all on the field.
- This concludes my report. God bless each of you and your families tonight.

PUBLIC COMMENT - None

PRESENTATIONS

Mark Anderson with Poche Plantation talked about the Poche Plantation Arts and Crafts festival that will be held October 21st and 22nd, 2023.

APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Councilman St. Pierre offered and moved for adoption **RESOLUTION 23-95, A RESOLUTION APPOINTING CATHY BLAND TO THE GRAMERCY RECREATION BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**. Councilman Amato offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-96, A RESOLUTION APPOINTING STEVEN BOURGEOIS AS THE ST. JAMES PARISH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD'S APPOINTMENT TO THE RIVER PARISHES TOURIST COMMISSION, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman St. Pierre. Councilman Nash offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

OLD BUSINESS

Update of drainage study from Forrestal Street to Pool Lane – Councilman Nash requested maintenance be done to the canal that runs on the left side of Swimming Pool Street.

Update of West Bank Multi-Purpose Complex – The conceptual design placement of both buildings should be completed by May 19th. A meeting for review and input will be held on May 25th.

After Councilmen St. Pierre and Nash clarified that these new towers would replace the existing towers. **RESOLUTION 23-97, A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE APPLICATION OF D.E. SHAW RENEWABLES INVESTMENTS, LLC (ST. JAMES SOLAR) TO ALLOW CONSTRUCTION OF ADDITIONAL INDUSTRIAL MET TOWERS TO MONITOR WEATHER CONDITIONS IN A RESIDENTIAL GROWTH AND AGRICULTURAL AREA, 2561 BACK QUARTERS STREET, VACHERIE, LOUISIANA (ITEM #23-07) UNDER THE ST. JAMES PARISH LAND USE ORDINANCE, WITH CONDITIONS**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland and was seconded by Councilman Cooper. After a vote showing St. Pierre, Amato, Louque, Bland, Cooper, and Etienne-Steib in favor, and Nash against, the resolution was adopted.

NEW BUSINESS

RESOLUTION 23-98, A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE DISBURSEMENT OF PAYROLL FOR THE MAY 12, 2023 PAYROLL, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Nash and seconded by Councilman Bland. After a unanimous vote, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-99, 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 Bland. After a unanimous vote, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-100, A RESOLUTION PROCLAIMING JUNE 2, 2023 AS PAUL KELLER DAY IN ST. JAMES PARISH, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland. Councilman Cooper offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-101, A RESOLUTION ACCEPTING CHANGE ORDER #2 FROM LA CONTRACTING ENTERPRISE, LLC FOR THE BUDDY WHITNEY CANAL DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENTS, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman Bland. After a unanimous vote, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-102 A RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR THE ACCEPTANCE OF WORK PERFORMED BY LA CONTRACTING ENTERPRISE, LLC, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CERTIFICATE OF SUBSTANTIAL COMPLETION, FOR THE BUDDY WHITNEY CANAL IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman Bland. After a unanimous vote, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-103, A RESOLUTION PROCLAIMING THE MONTH OF MAY AS COMMUNITY ACTION MONTH 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 23-104, RESOLUTION PROCLAIMING THE MONTH OF MAY AS OLDER AMERICANS MONTH IN ST. JAMES PARISH, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman St. Pierre. Councilman Amato offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-105, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT'S OFFICE TO ACCEPT THE BID AND ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH VALENTINE & LEBLANC, LLC FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE ROMEVILLE-GRAND POINT GAS LOOP PROJECT, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland and seconded by Councilman Louque. After a unanimous vote, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-106, A RESOLUTION TO PROCLAIM MAY 22-26, 2023 AS "TRY TRANSIT" WEEK was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland. Councilman Louque offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-107, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT'S OFFICE TO ADVERTISE AND ACCEPT BIDS FOR THE CONVENT WATER PLANT UPGRADE PROJECT, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland. Councilman St. Pierre offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

FELIX BOUGHTON – March sales tax was received. If the trend continues, we will be about \$300,000 more than last year. Councilman Bland asked if they need to make any moves on the waste side, due to increase in the bill. Mr. Boughton said if everything stays the same, they will need to go from \$5 a month to \$25 a month by the end of 2025. President Dufresne indicated that they do not have to make drastic changes or increase fees for the next couple of months but by the end they should begin to have serious discussions. He said they have been having internal discussion on ways to improve to help benefit the residents, to not pass a significant increase on the garbage rates. Councilman Bland inquired if there is the plan if residents move, and requested to compare the utilities report to the bill. Councilman St. Pierre said residents don't understand that the fee paid includes, abatement, landfills, grabble truck, etc. He asked for a spreadsheet for the Council to review. Councilman Bland said with the PPI we will see another \$9,000 per month and said he feels we need to move on it soon than later. Councilman Nash said if they need to do something, to do it soon.

RICK WEBRE – Received \$22,644 in 2022 in tall grass fees and over \$58,000 so far this year.

COUNCIL MEMBER'S REPORT

COUNCILMAN ST. PIERRE – Councilman St. Pierre requested a list of summer workers. He indicated that Ferrara Canal on 3125 going north in Gramercy is bad and requested to make a plan to address it.

COUNCILMAN AMATO – Councilman Amato said he sent the latest draft of the solar ordinance and requested that questions be sent to him. He said the little league opening tournament was successful and he thanked the sponsors. He congratulated all graduates and ended with "go out and do good."

COUNCILMAN LOUQUE – Councilman Louque had no comments.

COUNCILMAN BLAND – Councilman Bland indicated that a resident had applied for a dumpster during hurricane recovery and never received one and now residents are complaining that it is blighted property and asked Ms. Leblanc for assistance.

COUNCILMAN COOPER – Councilman Cooper requested a condolence letter for the family of Evelie Scioneaux.

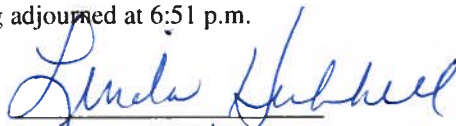
COUNCILMAN NASH – Councilman Nash indicated there is a large hole at Hwy 643 and Falgoust Street next to First American Bank and requested it be addressed. He informed everyone that there is a scam going around to seniors requesting property information and wants to make everyone aware. He requested an update on the Bayou Chevreuil bridge. Mr. Webre said there is no additional update. He gave a shout out to Entergy, and Flo, for assisting with an issue on Margaret Street.

CHAIRWOMAN ETIENNE-STEIB – Chairwoman Etienne-Steib thanked the code enforcement team for assisting on Collins Street and asked if there's a plan to cleanup that area. Mr. Webre indicated that will clean it internally. She asked if there is any way to stop people from putting the trash. Mr. Webre said they can add additional sign and requested the Sheriff's office assistance. She said if the area on the corner of highways 18 and 20 are not cleaned up by the weekend she will request code enforcement be notified. Mr. Webre said he spoke with the owner.

Councilman St. Pierre suggested Councilman Nash notify D. Batiste, with the Sheriff's department, about the scam.

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 6:51 p.m.



Linda Hubbell, Secretary