

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE
COUNCIL OF THE PARISH OF ST. JAMES, STATE OF LOUISIANA
TAKEN AT A REGULAR MEETING HELD ON MAY 11, 2022**

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 11, 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, Donald Nash. Councilman Cooper and Chairwoman Etienne-Steib were absent.

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 Kenneth Dupaty, Legal Advisor.

The Honorable Jason Amato, Vice-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.

Councilman Bland offered the invocation and Councilman Nash led the Pledge of Allegiance.

MINUTES

On a motion offered by Councilman Louque and seconded by Councilman St. Pierre the minutes of the April 27, 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 St. Pierre the minutes of the April 27, 2022 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 2022 was approved on a motion offered by Councilman Nash and seconded by Councilman Louque.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Dufresne presented this report to the Council:

- Thank you, Mr. Vice Chairman. Good evening, Council. Good evening, everyone.
- I'd like to thank the members of the planning commission for hosting the public hearing on Monday night in Vacherie. I also want to thank the many residents who came out, took an interest, and voice their opinions on how we should move St. James Parish forward.
- Our Keep St. James Parish Beautiful Board will be hosting an electronic recycling and paper shredding community event this Saturday, May 14 from 8:30am until 11am at the St. James Parish Health Unit. I encourage all residents to take advantage of this event if you have any unwanted paper or old electronics that you've been wanting to get rid of.
- I'd like to remind everyone of our Public Property Debris Removal program in conjunction with FEMA. This program allows residents to apply for assistance with Hurricane Ida damages and debris removal from their private property. Residents will need to complete an application and provide necessary documentation for FEMA to determine eligibility. The application deadline for submission will be this Friday, May 13th.
- All Parish splash parks are operating and open for residents to enjoy for the summer. The operating hours of the parks are 10am until 8pm.
- For the first time, natural gas projects are being considered for grant funding opportunities through the Infrastructure Investment and Job Act. St. James Parish has contracted with the SJB Group on possible projects to apply for the IJA Natural Gas Grant.
- St. James Parish Department of Operations has taken the lead on the Buddy Whitney Canal Drainage Project. This project will begin bid advertising tomorrow, Thursday May 12. The project consists of removing damaged and under-sized culverts and replacing them with new concrete culverts and basins. St. James Parish will apply the cost of this project to the interior drainage hazard mitigation grant monies.
- Bridge Replacement at the Blind River Boat Launch is still expected to begin in September 2022. We'd like to, again, thank Speaker Clay Schexnayder for his aid with these additional funds, which will provide bulk heads, a new dock and a handicap fishing accessibility pier at the Boat Club.
- St. James Parish Government has been working on The Vacherie Canal Hurricane Debris Removal Project which is the reduction of waterway debris. The parish has over 250 miles of navigable waterways. The Vacherie Canal is the first waterway that has been cleared because it is one of our larger drainage canals with flood control pumps and infrastructure. St. James Parish Government has saved millions of dollars by purchasing 3 custom built barges which include one power barge and two transport barges. The barges can also be used for loading herbicide equipment to reduce aquatic vegetation. Using inhouse labor and equipment instead of contracting helped reduce the cost of this project. The debris from the canal is cleared, then loaded onto the barges to be hauled back to an off-loading site. The debris is then transferred to the West Bank Landfill which was approved by DEQ as our temporary Debris Reduction Site. This project has been fully permitted and we are working closely with FEMA, GOSHEP, and DEQ during this debris removal process. The parish will be reimbursed from FEMA for labor, equipment, and materials. I would like to thank our drainage crew for their countless hours of hard work on this project. Our operation crews are now clearing the lateral channels that drain all of South Vacherie to the Vacherie Canal. This project will be complete by the end of this week.
- This concludes my report. God Bless you and God Bless St. James Parish.

At this time, Vice-Chair Amato introduced Mr. Kenneth Dupaty who was sitting in as legal counsel.

PUBLIC COMMENT – None

PRESENTATIONS

Larry Roussel, with Uncle Larry's Food and Spice Company was presented with a plaque from the Economic Development Board as Small Business of the Month for March 2022. He thanked everyone for their support.

Matt Spradley and Linda Spradley with Spradley and Spradley, who represents the parish with their lobbying efforts provide an update on the projects they have been working on for St. James Parish. He then answered the Council's questions.

APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Councilman Nash offered and moved for adoption **RESOLUTION 22-97, A RESOLUTION APPOINTING BEVERLY DUMAS AS A DISTRICT 7 REPRESENTATIVE TO THE KEEP ST. JAMES PARISH BEAUTIFUL BOARD**. Councilman St. Pierre offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Acquisition of Land for Multipurpose Building – ready to move forward with the negotiations. The resolution should be on the next agenda to allow negotiations.
2. Update of drainage study for Forrestal Street to Pool Lane – just finished cleaning all the tributaries that feed the Vacherie Canal and are almost complete with the Vacherie Canal. Looking to clean the back area of Forrestal area.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Steve Nosacka explained that on April 27th the Parish President received notice from the Louisiana Economic Development of the Board of Commerce and Industry's approval of Industrial Tax Exemption program benefit for Louisiana Sugar Refinery's 2021 expansion project. He stated that this exemption would constitute an 80% reduction of property tax for that particular \$12 million project for the first 10 years. He said this requires action from the Council, as well as the School Board and Sheriff. He said the action is to approve or deny the ITEP benefits to LSR. He then provided a brief background of LSR. He said as we move forward with the consideration request, we're asking tonight that you commit to schedule consideration of a resolution to approve or deny at your May 25th or June 8th council meeting. President Dufresne thanked Mr. Nosacka for his presentation and recommend the Council show as much favor as possible, that they have been in existence since the 1890s, operating continuously without interruption since then, an employment history of over 400 employees with at least 80% local, adding he believes they are the poster child of what the ITEP program is meant to be for a community. The council then decided to put it on the May 25th agenda.

RESOLUTION 22-98, A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE DISBURSEMENT OF PAYROLL FOR THE MAY 13, 2022 PAYROLL, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Louque and seconded by Councilman Bland. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Cooper and Etienne-Steib absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 22-99, 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 Nash. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Cooper and Etienne-Steib absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 22-100, RESOLUTION PROCLAIMING JUNE 2, 2022 AS PAUL KELLER DAY 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 22-101, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ST. JAMES PARISH PRESIDENT'S OFFICE TO ADVERTISE AND ACCEPT BIDS FOR THE BUDDY WHITNEY CANAL DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland. Councilman Louque offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 22-102, A RESOLUTION AMENDING THE CONTRACT FOR HIGH TIDE CONSULTANTS, LLC TO EXTEND THE CONTRACT BY TWO (2) YEARS FOR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES FOR EXISTING AND FUTURE PROJECTS, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman St. Pierre and seconded by Councilman Louque. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Etienne-Steib and Cooper absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 22-103, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING ST. JAMES PARISH PRESIDENT TO SIGN AND EXECUTE A CONTRACT WITH FELICIANA WELDERS INC. FOR EXTENSION OF A 4" GAS LINE ALONG HWY 3125 PROJECT, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Louque and seconded by Councilman St. Pierre. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Etienne-Steib and Cooper absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 22-104, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING ST. JAMES PARISH PRESIDENT TO SIGN A CONTRACT WITH BECNEL GROUNDS MANAGEMENT FOR LAWN CARE AND VEHICLE CLEANING, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Nash and seconded by Councilman Louque. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Etienne-Steib and Cooper absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 22-105, A RESOLUTION REJECTING THE BID RECEIVED FOR HYDRAULIC EXTRICATION TOOLS, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Louque. Councilman St. Pierre offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 22-106, A RESOLUTION ACCEPTING THE BID OF ITA TRUCK SALES & SERVICE, LLC FOR ONE (1) 2022 INTERNATIONAL HX 520SFA TRACTOR TRUCK FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF OPERATIONS, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland. Councilman Nash offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

After Councilman Bland expressed the need for awareness, he provided the phone number for the suicide prevention hotline – 1-800-273-8255 and he requested the parish wear blue on a day to show awareness, and he asked to advertise it on social media. **RESOLUTION 22-107, A RESOLUTION PROCLAIMING MAY 2022 AS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH IN ST. JAMES PARISH**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland. Councilman St. Pierre offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted

RESOLUTION 22-108, A RESOLUTION DESIGNATING THE NEW EXAMINER-ENTERPRISE AS THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE ST. JAMES PARISH COUNCIL FOR FISCAL YEAR 2022-2023, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Nash. Councilman Louque offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

FELIX BOUGHTON – the annual audit is on-going, no major issues yet. We are \$164,000.00 under for March sales tax. A meeting is schedule next week with the school board to discuss sales tax and will provide an update at the next meeting.

RICK WEBRE – a kick-off meeting is scheduled with Gulf South Pipeline on May 16th. He expressed appreciation for the barge and said they are continuing to work on drainage. Councilman Bland requested a meeting with Mr. Dicharry to discuss recreation.

INGRID BERGERON – provided an update of the hurricane recovery efforts. She informed everyone that they moved the disaster recovery service to the satellite office. They were able to secure funds for a summer camp and working on a curriculum. Working to resolve the issues with the building that will be used for ARC services. Indicated that the food services project is on track. President Dufresne said it is disheartening when we work so hard and receive resistance from the State and said they are working to have an in-house sanitarian.

ERIC DEROCHE – received notification from the State that they approved another PW for all of our management costs with Rostan and will be reimbursed by FEMA.

COUNCIL MEMBER'S REPORT

COUNCILMAN ST. PIERRE – Councilman St. Pierre said there are tires at Beaver Canal and requested to have it cleaned up. He said the water pressure is low to the splash park and requested it also be repaired. He wished best of luck to Luchter High School in the State Championship.

COUNCILMAN LOUQUE – Councilman Louque inquired about the industrial fire Ordinance, adding there was a fire at a facility. Mr. Deroche said he has a meeting with the facility to review the process.

COUNCILMAN BLAND – Councilman Bland requested an update of the Big Shake pit. President Dufresne indicated that Mr. Vic is in the process of drafting documents. Mr. Webre also indicated that Mr. Vic needed to coordinate with law enforcement and other agencies prior to drafting the documents.

COUNCILMAN COOPER – Councilman Cooper was absent.

COUNCILMAN NASH – Councilman Nash inquired about the permit fee for handicap steps. Mr. Webre said there is no charge for handicap ramps. Councilman Nash asked if we could communicate to the public, that at the present time, we cannot supply a sufficient amount of gas for new generator permits in District 7. Councilman Nash also inquired about the Hwy 643 culvert project. Mr. Webre said he is looking to see if it can be done in-house.

President Dufresne informed everyone that he will be Vacherie on Thursdays, occupying an office in the Council Chambers, if anyone needs to see him (pending appointments or meetings).

CHAIRWOMAN ETIENNE-STEIB – Chairwoman Etienne-Steib was absent.

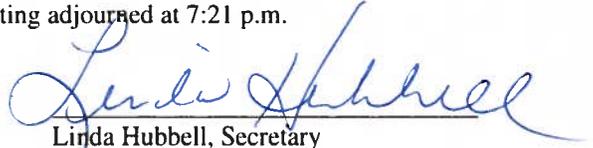
VICE-CHAIRMAN AMATO – Vice-Chairman Amato also wished Good Luck to the Luchter baseball team, adding that he hopes they bring home the State Championship. He indicated that they received word about the request for solar panels. He said he, and Councilman St. Pierre, reached out to Kevin Belanger with South Central Planning and said we currently do not have an ordinance dealing with solar panels and said they are hoping to engage them to develop an ordinance and said he would like to have an economic development study performed. President Dufresne said we have a situation now that could possibly occupy over 4000 acres of solar panels and we have no idea of the economic impact and said he thinks it is important that the Parish seek an opportunity study, adding that we have a lot of work to do before we go ahead and just approve solar panels. He said we have a lot of infrastructure improvements in the works for the West Bank and Vacherie area, allowing the opportunity for Vacherie and West Bank to grow as fast as the people want it to grow.

Councilman St. Pierre inquired about the plans for the land owned by the Port of South Louisiana. President Dufresne said no one from the Port shared anything with him.

Councilman Bland informed everyone that the next redistricting meeting is scheduled for May 25th at 4:30 p.m. in Vacherie to finalize the plans.

ADJOURNMENT

After determining there was no additional business to come before the council, on a motion offered by Councilman Bland and seconded by Councilman St. Pierre and carried, the meeting adjourned at 7:21 p.m.


Linda Hubbell, Secretary