

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE
COUNCIL OF THE PARISH OF ST. JAMES, STATE OF LOUISIANA
TAKEN AT A REGULAR MEETING HELD ON MAY 24, 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, May 24, 2023, at 6:00 p.m.

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

Those also in attendance were Linda Hubbell, Council Secretary; Peter Dufresne, Parish President; Ingrid Bergeron, DHR Director; Eric Deroche, Emergency Preparedness 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 Cooper led the Pledge of Allegiance.

MINUTES

On a motion offered by Councilman Nash and seconded by Councilman Amato, the minutes of the May 10, 2023 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.

- Earlier today, Rick Webre and I attended a pre-construction conference with DOTD, in reference to the bridge replacement at the blind river boat launch. A notice to proceed will be effective May 29, 2023, with contractor deployment taking place within 30 days. The temporary bridge will be installed first, and should be completed by August of this year, with the permanent bridge being completed in January. The temporary bridge should be adequate enough to proceed with the dock renovation at the boat launch.
- Our Capital Improvement Plan Survey is open through the end of the month. Please continue to encourage residents in your districts to fill out the survey on our website, or in person at the Vacherie Library, Lutcher Library, or Convent Courthouse.
- We still have openings for teams to play in our Mens Slow Pitch Softball league. Games will be played at Paulina Park every Monday and Wednesday night from June through July.
- The DHR Building in Lutcher is two weeks away from substantial completion. The building will be a huge asset as we continue to provide essential resources to residents through our Community Action Agency.
- The Kayak launch and handicap fishing pier is making progress and is still currently under design.
- The St James Parish Library has an exciting itinerary planned for the Summer. Our Library Supervisor Keri Walker is here tonight to share her annual report with you, so I won't give away all her secrets. However, I am happy to share that the library is doing a summer feeding program this summer with the Food Bank. Youth ages 18 and under can enjoy a free breakfast and lunch at both branches of the library.
- We finally have some good news to share about the 5th District multipurpose building. This morning I received an email from our attorney, reporting that we received three favorable decisions from the Louisiana Supreme Court. Their rulings upheld the Louisiana 5th Circuit Court of Appeals' decisions to reinstate the parish's claims against the bonding agency and contractor, enabling us to return the case to the district court. We are now able to pursue this case and will have a new scheduling order and trial date soon.
- Bids for the 2023 road rehab program opens on tomorrow, May 25th. Road preservation has begun on several streets, including mastic sealing on Carly Street and bio seal on several other roads.
- For the 5th district park the proposed new baseball field has been graded and field material has been added. Additionally, a new batting cage has been constructed and back-stop fencing has been ordered.
- We have applied for a 2-million-dollar grant through Statewide Flood Control for the North and South Rosary Drainage Project, and we are hopeful that this funding will be allotted.
- The natural gas purchase point on the West Bank will be operating by June 15th for South Vacherie.
- The culverts on Redbud Street were recently jettied, which revealed major deficiencies in the drainage system. Several undersized, off-grade, and collapsed culverts were excavated and new 24-inch culverts were installed. This will substantially improve drainage in that area, however more work is required.
- On yesterday the Operations Department completed the automated water meter compatibility test with successful results. Assessment continues to determine a vendor for this important project.
- The Romeville-Grandpoint gas loop is nearly completed. We were waiting on one signature from a vendor, which has been received. All permitting has been completed and this project will proceed soon. This is the last piece required to complete the comprehensive natural gas infrastructure project on the East Bank.
- We are advertising for bids for the East Bank clarifier. The pre-bid conference is on May 30th, and the bid opening is on June 15th.
- RFP's for storage tank rehab have been reviewed and interviews conducted with two firms that are qualified to complete storage tank rehabilitation in St. James Parish. The Department of Operations will contract with both companies, for projects on both sides of the parish. One of the firms is capable of in-house tank fabrication and repair. By selecting two firms, it doubles the maintenance capacity as required.
- Crews have been deployed to started clearing hurricane debris and vegetation from the Bourbon Canal. Currently, drainage crews are working between Highways 3125 and 642 and are deploying barges and equipment to the Grand Point boat launch. Waterway debris removal training and evaluation will begin on Tuesday, May 30th with full operations beginning on June 5th. As a reminder the Grand Point boat launch will be closed Monday-Thursday during business hours after June 5th.

- I would like to congratulate PJ's coffee on opening their new business in Lutcher this week. They had a great turnout for their first day yesterday, and I'm confident it will soon become a staple in our community.
- The Louisiana State police visited Vacherie Elementary last week, along with our St. James Parish Sheriff's Department and Volunteer Fire Department. The kids had a wonderful time learning about law enforcement and first responders and had firsthand experience. They were able to climb aboard fire trucks, ambulance, and safety equipment.
- We held our monthly market day on May 13th, and our next event will be on June 10th. Please come out and support our parishes' small businesses at this event.
- St. James Parish 4-H held their first Health and Safety Day on May 13th. Community members were invited to come out to Lutcher Park and learn about safety tips from various entities, explore the smokehouse and obstacle courses, and much more. I am looking forward to attending this event again next year.
- I would also like to note that local artist and teacher K. Levy held his first Legends Fest event last weekend. With 1500 people in attendance to hear positive and encouraging music artists, St. James Parish's first music festival was a huge success.
- I'd like to thank the St James Parish Hospital and our DHR Department for hosting their annual Senior Picnic and Health Day on May 16th. There was a great turnout, and participants were able to access educational resources including free screenings. This is a valuable resource for our community, and I know it was appreciated by all who attended.
- Finally, I'd like to remind you that June 1st is the beginning of hurricane season. Our Emergency Preparedness Department has created several videos with helpful preparation tips, and they can be found on our YouTube channel and social media accounts. Please take the steps needed to prepare for hurricane season and keep you and your family safe.

God bless each of you and your families tonight, and God bless St James Parish.

PUBLIC COMMENT - None

PRESENTATIONS

Keri Walker, Librarian and Joellen Hebert, Board President, presented the Library Board's Annual report. They touched upon topics for the year 2022: number of books checked out, attendance at programs and workshops, technology users, meeting rooms used, library visitors, reading materials, the online catalog, the Cloud Library app, etc. Mrs. Walker provided information on the summer reading program, and she provided information about the addition of the Vacherie Library meeting room.

After the Council Secretary read aloud the resolution, Mr. Jones was presented with a plaque. **RESOLUTION 23-108, A RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING AND COMMENDING LERON JONES ON HIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS AS AN ALLIGATOR HUNTER AND HIS APPEARANCES ON "SWAMP PEOPLE"**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Nash. Councilman Cooper offered a second and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

After the Council Secretary read aloud the resolution, Mr. Williams was presented with a plaque. **RESOLUTION 23-109, A RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING AND COMMENDING ANTHONY "PORKCHOP" WILLIAMS ON HIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS AS AN ALLIGATOR HUNTER AND HIS APPEARANCES ON "SWAMP PEOPLE"**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato. Councilman Louque offered a second and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Councilman Amato offered and moved for adoption, **RESOLUTION 23-110, A RESOLUTION REAPPOINTING R. J. ST. PIERRE AS A DISTRICT 2 REPRESENTATIVE TO THE ST. JAMES PARISH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD**. Councilman Louque offered a second and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-111, A RESOLUTION REAPPOINTING JEREMY CATOIRE AS A DISTRICT 4 REPRESENTATIVE TO THE ST. JAMES PARISH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato. Councilman Louque offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

OLD BUSINESS

Update of drainage study from Forrestal Street to Pool Lane – An additional H&H study to include Forrestal Street needs to be completed. It will be costly and are looking to include it in the Capital Improvement Program.

Update of West Bank Multi-Purpose Complex – a meeting is scheduled for tomorrow with the architects for the placement of the projects. Will have more information after the meeting.

Bellevue Lakes Development and Drainage Update – working with the contractor and engineer and will keep the Council updated on the progress.

NEW BUSINESS

RESOLUTION 23-112, A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE DISBURSEMENT OF PAYROLL FOR THE MAY 26, 2023 PAYROLL, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman Louque. After a unanimous roll call vote, with St. Pierre and Bland absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-113, A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS TO PAY PENDING CURRENT INVOICES AND PAYABLES, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Nash and seconded by Councilman Louque. After a unanimous roll call vote, with St. Pierre and Bland absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-114, RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ST. JAMES PARISH PRESIDENT TO ACCEPT THE BID AND ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH SOUTHERN UNDERGROUND OF

LOUISIANA, LLC FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE UTILITY UPGRADE-LA 20 RELOCATIONS PROJECT, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Nash and seconded by Councilman Amato. After a unanimous roll call vote, with St. Pierre and Bland absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-115, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT, PETER DUFRESNE, TO ENTER INTO AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT WITH ST. JAMES PARISH SCHOOL BOARD FOR USE OF A COMMERCIAL KITCHEN FOR HOMEBOUND MEAL PREPARATION, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Nash and was seconded by Councilman Cooper. After a unanimous roll call vote, with St. Pierre and Bland absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-116, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF A CONTRACT FOR DISASTER SUPPORT SERVICES SANITARY PACKAGES BETWEEN DRC EMERGENCY SERVICES AND ST. JAMES PARISH, AND AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT TO SIGN, EXECUTE, AND ADMINISTER SAID AGREEMENT AND ALL RELEVANT DOCUMENTS, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman Louque. After a unanimous roll call vote, with St. Pierre and Bland absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-117, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF A CONTRACT FOR DISASTER SUPPORT SERVICES SHOWERS AND BASECAMPS BETWEEN GRAND ISLE SHIPYARD, LLC AND ST. JAMES PARISH, AND AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT TO SIGN, EXECUTE, AND ADMINISTER SAID AGREEMENT AND ALL RELEVANT DOCUMENTS, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman Nash. After a unanimous roll call vote, with St. Pierre and Bland absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-118, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF A CONTRACT FOR DISASTER SUPPORT SERVICES TEMPORARY STRUCTURES BETWEEN DRC EMERGENCY SERVICES AND ST. JAMES PARISH, AND AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT TO SIGN, EXECUTE, AND ADMINISTER SAID AGREEMENT AND ALL RELEVANT DOCUMENTS, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Nash and seconded by Councilman Louque. After a unanimous roll call vote, with St. Pierre and Bland absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-119, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF A CONTRACT FOR DISASTER SUPPORT SERVICES GENERATORS AND PUMPS BETWEEN DRC EMERGENCY SERVICES AND ST. JAMES PARISH, AND AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT TO SIGN, EXECUTE, AND ADMINISTER SAID AGREEMENT AND ALL RELEVANT DOCUMENTS, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Louque and seconded by Councilman Amato. After a unanimous roll call vote, with St. Pierre and Bland absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-120, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF A CONTRACT FOR DISASTER SUPPORT SERVICES POD SUPPORT PACKAGES BETWEEN GRAND ISLE SHIPYARD LLC AND ST. JAMES PARISH, AND AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT TO SIGN, EXECUTE, AND ADMINISTER SAID AGREEMENT AND ALL RELEVANT DOCUMENTS, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Cooper and seconded by Councilman Amato. After a unanimous roll call vote, with St. Pierre and Bland absent, the resolution was adopted.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

ERIC DEROCHE – participated in a Region 3 hurricane preparedness meeting with all State agencies. One thing noted was that all major hurricanes, category 3 and above, that made landfall in the coastal US Gulf Coast all started in the Gulf of Mexico in less than 48 hours, in the last decade.

INGRID BERGERON – the youth summer camp is underway. The Community Action Celebration will be June 6-8. Information will be posted on the website.

FELIX BOUGHTON – the retiree health insurance proposed ordinance was distributed to the Council, will begin the process in 2 weeks.

RICK WEBRE – In District 3, working on Bourbon Canal between 3125 and 642. Tracking next to that channel and afterward will move to track channels from Grand Point to Gramercy, clearing out hurricane debris.

COUNCIL MEMBER'S REPORT

COUNCILMAN NASH – Councilman Nash asked to contact DOT in reference to the trees South of Hwy 20 that are close to the road. He indicated that DOT will probably have to make the repairs to the large hole on Hwy 643 near First American Bank. He inquired if taller poles could be installed on Hwy 20 because they are in the ditch.

COUNCILMAN COOPER – Councilman Cooper requested condolence letters to the families of Myron Charles and Martin Mayo. He said he is thankful for the decision of the District 5 building. He inquired about the status of the light in Moonshine on Highways 3219 and 3127. He shared an issue a resident is having with DHH regarding a sewer system and asked for assistance to resolve the issue.

COUNCILMAN BLAND – Councilman Bland was absent.

CHAIRWOMAN ETIENNE-STEIB – Chairwoman Etienne-Steib thanked Leron and Javy for all they are doing to highlight the community in a positive light. She said this year we have a lot more college students asking to be hired

for the summer program. She expressed condolence to all of the families in the surrounding area, particularly to the families of Cindy Batiste and Jaisia Steib.

COUNCILMAN LOUQUE – Councilman Louque expressed appreciation to the operations department for the work removing debris on Bourbon Canal. He requested to have the water was turned on for the splash park in District 3.

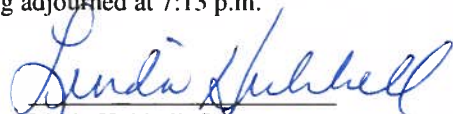
COUNCILMAN AMATO – Councilman Amato said the new DHR building is looking nice. He requested to have Rostan attend a council meeting to provide a recap of Hurricane Ida and to recognize them. He asked if there is anything in particular that they should be keeping an eye on from the current session. President Dufresne indicated he and Mr. Webre met with Senator Allain yesterday at the Capital to go over our capital outlay requests. He said one issue is if they are going to extend the spending cap to adequately fund all of St. James Parish's requests that are currently in the capital outlay system. He thanked Senator Price and Representative Brass for their partnership. Councilman Amato informed the Council that he gave them each a copy of House Concurrent Resolution No. 45, which will create a Louisiana Solar Siting Task Force to study the impact of, and alternatives to, locating solar energy developments on farmland.

Chairwoman Etienne-Steib inquired about the last day that residents have to get out of the FEMA trailers. Mr. Deroche indicated that they have until August, but the State has requested another extension from FEMA and said that information will be available in about 30-45 days.

COUNCILMAN ST. PIERRE – Councilman St. Pierre was absent.

ADJOURNMENT

After determining there was no additional business to come before the council, on a motion offered by Councilman Louque and seconded by Councilman Cooper and carried, the meeting adjourned at 7:13 p.m.


Linda Hubbell, Secretary