

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE  
COUNCIL OF THE PARISH OF ST. JAMES, STATE OF LOUISIANA  
TAKEN AT A REGULAR MEETING HELD ON JUNE 21, 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, June 21, 2023, at 6:13 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, Donald Nash, and Chairwoman Etienne-Steib. Councilman Cooper was 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 Bland led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**MINUTES**

On a motion offered by Councilman Bland and seconded by Councilman Amato, the minutes of the June 7, 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.
- I'd like to take a brief moment to remember my brother-in-law Allen Gravois who recently passed, and I'd also like to send a letter of condolence to his family.
- On yesterday, we experienced some inclement weather, including a flash flood watch and severe thunderstorm advisory. Many areas of the parish lost power, however Entergy and parish crews were in response quickly working to get effected streets back up. All roads are open, but we still have some sporadic power outages. The parish opened two cooling centers today due to the prolonged power outages, one at the Westbank Reception Hall and one at the Convent Community Center.
- Tomorrow our Operations Team is continuing our hurricane preparations by hosting a hurricane preparation meeting for all of the Operations Staff Members and essential staff of other departments. Our teams have been working tirelessly to ensure we have efficient systems in place for any natural disasters which may occur.
- The men's softball has been going extremely well. Co-ed cabbage ball will be starting on July 18<sup>th</sup> on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Registration is opening this week and will close on July 12<sup>th</sup>.
- During this year's legislative session, HB2's capital outlay funding allotted us 2.3 million for the gramercy roundabout, \$1 million for the Blind River dock, \$13.8 million for the West Shore risk reduction connector levee, along with other GOMESA funds, \$8.5 million for the 3127 widening, and the Parishwide road rehab program received \$2.2 million. We also received an additional \$500,000 from the state general fund for school zone warning lights in Paulina and the Bellevue Lakes Subdivision road rehab and preservation. Project. The only thing we requested that we didn't receive funding for was the \$1 million dollars for the Welcome Center. We are looking for alternative ways to fund this project.
- We have one purchase order for a fire truck and one purchase order for a rescue truck that was budgeted and approved by the Council, and is being purchased under State contract.
- To date, we have been approved for up to \$7.2 million dollars in reimbursements for Hurricane Ida, which includes our matching funds. We are still working on other projects that have not been approved, and this figure will increase.
- We have another project worksheet approved for the water towers, Bellevue Lakes sewer plant, and the Molaison sewer plant. It is still unobligated but has been approved.
- The natural gas purchase point on the west bank is completed, except for a control agreement from the pipeline company. This should be finalized shortly and then it will be in service.
- We will select a contractor for the automated gas and water meter installation project in the next few weeks. Our operations team is doing their due diligence to ensure we select a quality vendor to implement this much needed project.
- Bid opens for the new East Bank clarifier on June 22<sup>nd</sup>. This project will increase water production from 800,000 to 2 million gallons per day.
- We are still in the process of applying for statewide flood control funding for the North Rosary drainage project in South Vacherie. We will know about it sometime in the fall.
- The DHR building timeline is having to be extended due to working on IT, paint, and other small finishing touches. This building will be finalized soon and will be a huge asset to our DHR department and to the local community.
- The West Bank Reception Hall and East Bank Recreation Center are being fitted for transfer switches and hubble plugs as part of our hurricane preparations.
- We have received a bid for \$54,000 to upgrade the council chambers here on the West Bank at our Vacherie Council Chambers. A contract is being drafted with a vendor and construction will begin within 30 days.
- On yesterday, we conducted two pre-construction conferences with the six vendors for the commercial kitchen at the 4<sup>th</sup> district senior center and the restroom at the 4<sup>th</sup> district park. Bids will open on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> of July.
- I'd like to remind you that the Grand Point waterway debris removal process is underway, and the Launch will remain closed to the public from 6:30a.m. on Mondays through 4:30p.m. on Thursdays until cleanup is completed. Our operations team has removed a huge amount of debris. Starting in August, this project is scheduled to continue

on the West Bank to clear the Brazan and Coteau canals as well as Bayou Lassange. Right now, crews have cleared from the Blind River train trestle to 3125, as well as the bourbon canal.

- The Department of Human Resources held their Community Action Events the first week of June, it was a great event for our community and they had a wonderful turnout. I know many residents greatly appreciated the resources that were made available at the event.
- The Economic Development Board held their annual Small Business Banquet last night. I was honored to speak at the event and share progress we have made in St. James Parish, in the last three years, with this group of leaders.
- As per the Governor's executive order, our government offices will be closed on July 3<sup>rd</sup> for a statewide day of rest, as well as on July 4<sup>th</sup>.
- Due to the July 4<sup>th</sup> Holiday we are cancelling the July Market Day, and our next Market Day event will be on August 12<sup>th</sup>. Please come out and support our parishes' small businesses at this event.
- The last two of the Department of Human Resources Youth Summer Camp Partnership Program Camps began this week. The camps have had a great attendance, and we've seen a great overall response to the partnership. I'd like to thank DHR staff and all of the partner churches for making these youth events happen.
- This concludes my report. God bless each of you and your families.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT** - None

#### **PRESENTATIONS**

- Mr. Glen Millet, Chairman, presented the Planning Commission's Annual report to the Council. He relayed the duties of the board and named the 10 members of the Commission. He said they had 9 Land Use Items; 4 family subdivisions; 2 public subdivisions; and 17 simple subdivisions. He said in February of 2022 they appointed a committee for site restoration that has 4 members. He said they came up with a plan and are hoping to get Council approval. He then answered the Council's questions.
- Jennifer Tregre, with the Bayou Council, recognized the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Drug Free Calendar Contest winners from St. James Parish. Each winner was presented with a Certificate of Outstanding Achievement from the Parish Council and Parish President.
- Mr. Kyle Jones, with Rostan Solutions, said they are the FEMA consultant for St. James Parish and said their objective was to maximize federal funding at an accelerated rate. He said there is still a lot to be done regarding permanent work with some infrastructure. He they were able to secure and get reimbursed for emergency works projects that were over \$1 million. He said St. James Parish was the first to receive a large project worksheet obligation from the federal government that was over \$1 million, for debris, adding St. James Parish did it in a little over 3 ½ months after the storm. He also said that St. James Parish was the first to receive a disaster recovery reformat, Section 1206 of the Stafford Act, project worksheet for substantial damage assessment, that the parish recognized early on. He said the decision that the Parish Administration made from a cost savings perspective to self-perform the waterway debris removal projects, the Parish was the first Parish to receive a project worksheet for waterway debris removal because of the ample source documentation from the operations, finance, emergency preparedness departments, in conjunction with their team. Councilman Amato said he wanted to recognize the good work that was done by everyone. President Dufresne thanked Mr. Jones and his staff.
- Mr. Cullen Curole with South Central Planning and Development Commission provided information regarding the Restore Small Business Loan Program. He said SCPD was awarded \$25 million for the program and that they are accepting applications. He touched on the qualifications, eligibility requirements, and terms of the loan. He then answered the Council's questions.

#### **APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS** -None

#### **OLD BUSINESS**

Update of drainage study from Forrestal Street to Pool Lane – Mr. Nash indicated that the back part of Maple Street has debris built up, going to the canal, and he requested to have crews survey the east and west side of Pool Lane at the major drainage ditch.

Update of West Bank Multi-Purpose Complex – moving forward with ordering the soil boring where the buildings will be placed. They are in the schematic design for the senior center. May need to modify a task order to move to the schematic design for the multipurpose building. Need discussions regarding the sewer facility for that site.

Bellevue Lakes Development and Drainage Update – the hydrology study has been sent to the engineer for the next phase.

**ORDINANCE 23-07, AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE 91-6 AUTHORIZING THE CONTINUATION OF HEALTH BENEFITS FOR RETIRED EMPLOYEES**, having undergone the hearing process, was offered, and moved for adoption by Councilman Nash and seconded by Councilman Bland. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Cooper absent, the ordinance was adopted.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

**RESOLUTION 23-134, A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE DISBURSEMENT OF PAYROLL FOR THE JUNE 23, 2023 PAYROLL**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman St. Pierre. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Cooper absent, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 23-135, 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 Cooper absent, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 23-136, RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT TO EXECUTE A JOINT AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE ST. JAMES PARISH SCHOOL BOARD AND THE ST. JAMES PARISH COUNCIL FOR THE COLLECTION OF SALES AND USE TAXES FOR THE PERIOD JULY 1,**

**2023 TO JUNE 30, 2024**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland and seconded by Councilman Amato. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Cooper absent, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 23-137, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT, TO SIGN A CONTRACT EXTENSION WITH MATHERNE'S MARKET FOR EMERGENCY FEEDING**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and was seconded by Councilman Bland. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Cooper absent, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 23-138, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT TO SIGN A CONTRACT WITH TETRA TECH FOR DEBRIS MONITORING**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman St. Pierre. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Cooper absent, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 23-139, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT TO SIGN A CONTRACT WITH DRC EMERGENCY SERVICES FOR DEBRIS REMOVAL**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland and seconded by Councilman Louque. After a unanimous vote, with Cooper absent, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 23-140, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ST. JAMES PARISH PRESIDENT TO ENTER INTO A COOPERATIVE ENDEAVOR AGREEMENT WITH THE STATE OF LOUISIANA, OFFICE OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FOR A CONTRACTUAL RELATIONSHIP FOR THE PURPOSE OF FUNDING ST. JAMES WATERSHED PROGRAM PROJECT AND AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT TO SIGN ALL CONTRACTS AND AGREEMENTS IN CONNECTION WITH SAID AGREEMENT**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Nash and seconded by Councilman Louque. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Cooper absent, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 23-141, A RESOLUTION SCHEDULING A BOARD OF REVIEW FOR SEPTEMBER 13, 2023**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman St. Pierre. Councilman Bland offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

**RESOLUTION 23-142, A RESOLUTION ACCEPTING CHANGE ORDER #1 FROM BARRIERE CONSTRUCTION CO., LLC FOR THE FY2022 ROAD REHABILITATION PROJECT**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Nash and seconded by Councilman Bland. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Cooper, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 23-143, A RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR THE ACCEPTANCE OF WORK PERFORMED BY BARRIERE CONSTRUCTION CO., LLC IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CERTIFICATE OF SUBSTANTIAL COMPLETION FOR THE FY 2022 ROAD REHABILITATION PROJECT**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Louque and seconded by Councilman Bland. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Cooper absent, the resolution was adopted.

#### **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

**FELIX BOUGHTON** – in the process of ordering a new fire truck and rescue truck.

**RICK WEBRE** – the last big cypress tree was removed from Blind River. Bourbon Canal has been completed and sprayed with aquatic herbicide. Had a meeting with DOTD, Corps of Engineers, Pontchartrain Levee Board for the walking path.

**INGID BERGERON** – cooling sites were open for residents affected by the power outage. She thanked the council for supporting the resolutions for the purchase of the buses. She said 4 buses are down for engine repairs. She indicated that there will be a resolution for the next meeting to purchase a 20-passenger bus. She clarified that they will be supporting 50 youths who may qualify for the Salute 1<sup>st</sup> Program; they are not directing funds to the school board, just providing assistance to eligible students and families.

President Dufresne said they were notified by Cazenave Motors that 2 vehicles that were approved for purchase, only one will be received. Mr. Deroche indicated that Ford cancelled 1 vehicle, not Cazenave, and said they are exploring what options are best for the Parish.

**ERIC DEROCHE** – the fire department received quotes for renovations to station 15, in Gramercy. The resolution should be on the next agenda.

#### **COUNCIL MEMBER'S REPORT**

**COUNCILMAN NASH** – Councilman Nash requested an update of Bayou Chevreuil bridge. President Dufresne said the last updated was in May to say they were signing contract documents with a new contractor. At this time, he acknowledged Ms. Flo Dumas, with Entergy. He then offered a motion a motion to deviate from the agenda to allow Ms. Dumas to give a brief update of the power outage. Councilman St. Pierre offered a second, an after a unanimous roll call vote, with Cooper absent, the motion carried. She indicated there were about 1100 customers that were out in the Parish. She said there was a pole broken on W. Arbeed Street with the transformer hanging in the tree. As of now, except for a few streets, power has been restored in South Vacherie. Convent had extensive damage and the courthouse had been restored. She thanked the council and everyone for their patience.

**COUNCILMAN COOPER** – Councilman Cooper was absent.

**COUNCILMAN BLAND** – Councilman Bland extended thanks to Ms. Dumas, the liaison to Entergy, for working hard to restore power. He dittoed President Dufresne’s comment regarding the letter of condolence to Mr. Alan Gravois family. He said the prebid meeting for the District 4 restrooms went well. He said Ryan will work on the District 4 black top request. He said culverts are undersized and causing major drainage issues on river road in the College Point area. He said, in reference to people donating to the school board, it is time people present checks to the Parish and support the Parish.

**COUNCILMAN LOUQUE** – Councilman Louque also extended condolence to the Alan Gravois family.

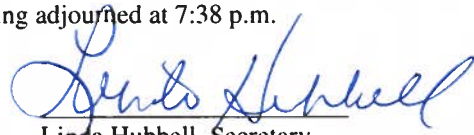
**COUNCILMAN AMATO** – Councilman Amato extended a great job for the small business banquet last night. He said the Republican Rally on the River will be held at the Welcome Center on Saturday, hosted by St. James, St. John, and St. Charles Republican Parties.

**COUNCILMAN ST. PIERRE** – Councilman St. Pierre also extended condolence to the family of Alan Gravois.

**CHAIRWOMAN ETIENNE-STEIB** – Chairwoman Etienne-Steib had no comment.

**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 7:38 p.m.

  
Linda Hubbell, Secretary