

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE  
COUNCIL OF THE PARISH OF ST. JAMES, STATE OF LOUISIANA  
TAKEN AT A REGULAR MEETING HELD ON JULY 5, 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, July 5, 2023, at 6:00 p.m.

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

Those also in attendance were Linda Hubbell, Council Secretary; Peter Dufresne, Parish President; Felix Boughton, Finance Director; Rick Webre, Operations Director; Ingrid Bergeron, DHR Director; Eric Deroche, Emergency Preparedness 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 21, 2023 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 Bland, the minutes of the June 21, 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 May 2023 was approved on a motion offered by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman Cooper.

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

President Dufresne presented this report to the Council:

- Thank you, Madam Chair. Good evening, everyone.
- The bid opening for the 4th District senior center and the restroom at the 4th District park was scheduled to open on July 5th and 6th, however, it was rescheduled to July 12th at 2:00 p.m. due to the 4th of July holiday.
- The walkthrough, inspection, and acceptance of work have been completed for the natural gas purchase point on the Westbank. We are still waiting on a document from Acadian Pipeline, and then the project will be operational.
- I went ride down the canals back of Grand Point this morning and our operations department is doing an excellent job clearing everything out. They have removed an enormous amount of fallen trees and vegetative debris. I'm proud of the work we are doing in-house without having to hire contractors.
- Quotes are being obtained to line bore gas lines into North and South Angelle. This project should be completed by the end of the 3rd quarter of 2023.
- The Romeville-Grand Point natural gas loop boring project under the CN railroad track is in process and should be complete within two weeks. This project will integrate both natural gas systems on the East Bank of St. James Parish and help provide better services during weather events.
- On July 11th, a preconstruction meeting will be held with Barriere Construction to initiate the 2023 road rehab program.
- I'm pleased to share that St. James Parish has received \$1,230,000 in Capital Outlay Funding for the 2024 Road Rehab Program. This funding in addition to our local funding should provide an adequate road program for 2024.
- The Parish has also received \$300,000 from direct Senate appropriation for planning and design of the required repairs to the roads in Bellevue Lakes Subdivision.
- A meeting is being scheduled with the developers of Bellevue Lakes Subdivision phase 4 and phase 5 to determine enhancements to the sewer lift station, and for assistance with road repair, which we anticipate will be needed due to damages caused by heavy equipment in use during the expansion.
- We have submitted a statewide flood control application for the North Rosary Street drainage project and anticipate an update this fall.
- Our operations department is researching federal highway funds to repair the Apple Street Canal under Highway 20 near Molaison. Coordination with DOTD has been made on this project.
- Purchase orders were issued to install manual transfer switches and Hubble plugs at the West Bank Reception Hall and the East Bank Recreation Center. This equipment will be used for generator power to support sheltering operations during a natural disaster.
- Contractors have deployed and have begun placing signage on Airline Highway to begin the installation of a temporary bridge to the Blind River Boat Launch. St. James Parish, with High Tide Consultants, will begin to advertise for the Boat Launch Repair and Enhancement Project in 2023 as soon as the temporary bridge is constructed.
- The St. James Parish Recreation Line Dancing Class this summer with instructor Susan Bailey has been a huge hit, and we have one class remaining. We are working to get Ms. Bailey for line dancing to be a regular program in our recreation department.
- The men's softball league has been going extremely well. The co-ed cabbage ball league will be starting on July 18th on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Registration is currently open and will close on July 12th. We have online registration open for cabbage ball, and I'd like to ask interested teams to register online on our website.
- We will complete a walkthrough and inspection of the new DHR building by the end of the month. I am looking forward to this building being operational. It will be a great resource for our DHR department to continue and expand the excellent work they are already doing in St. James Parish.

- We partnered with the St. James ARC to host their Friends and Family Luau on last week. All the participants had a great time painting, dancing, and receiving awards. I would also like to thank the volunteers who help to make St. James Parish ARC a success.
- I met with Congressman Graves on the 28th at Nicholls in Thibodaux along with PACE (Presidents advocating for Coastal Enhancement) on the program for all-inclusive care for the elderly, and we talked a lot about FEMA and its reimbursement.
- PJ's Coffee held its grand opening event last Friday, and it was a huge success. It was great to see so many people in attendance to support this new local business.
- The Department of Human Resources Community Action Agency, in partnership with K. Levy, will be hosting "St. James Proud Writing & Drama Camp" on July 17-28th. The camp is for youths ages 8-15, where they will have an opportunity to grow their skills as artists while being mentored in their craft by K. Levy. Youth must audition to participate. Applications are on our website and are due by July 9th, auditions for the camp will be held on July 11th.
- The annual audit for St. James Parish is complete for fiscal year 2022. The auditors will present the report at an upcoming meeting. There were no audit findings, only recommendations to improve our internal control system.
- I'd like remind all residents whose home was damaged by Hurricane Ida that the Restore Louisiana program is accepting applications until August 1st. Grant funds are available to help you repair or rebuild your home, or you can be reimbursed for repairs you already made. To get started, all you have to do is complete the brief survey online at [restore.la.gov](http://restore.la.gov) or by calling 866.735.2001.
- I will be meeting tomorrow with the Colonel Jones and the Corp of Engineers to receive a status update on the position the Corp is taking on St. James Parish's portion of West Shore Protection Levee, and to get updated on the value engineering study.
- This concludes my report. God bless each of you and your families.

**PUBLIC COMMENT** - None

**PRESENTATIONS**

Councilman Nash offered a motion to amend the agenda to allow Mr. Jake Benoit, with Senator John Kennedy's office, to introduce himself. Councilman Bland offered a second, and after a unanimous vote, with St. Pierre and Louque absent, the motion carried. Mr. Jake Benoit introduced himself and offered assistance for constituents.

**APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS** -None

**OLD BUSINESS**

Update of drainage study from Forrestal Street to Pool Lane – Councilman Nash requested the back part of Forrestal Street be cleaned.

Update of West Bank Multi-Purpose Complex – a meeting is scheduled for tomorrow on the design of the buildings.

Belleve Lakes Development and Drainage Update – still waiting on the hydrology study. Meeting with the developer about the roadway and pump.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**RESOLUTION 23-144, A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE DISBURSEMENT OF PAYROLL FOR THE JULY 7, 2023 PAYROLL**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Nash and seconded by Councilman Amato. After a unanimous vote, with St. Pierre and Louque absent, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 23-145, 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 Amato. After a unanimous vote, with St. Pierre and Louque absent, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 23-146, RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ST. JAMES PARISH PRESIDENT, PETER DUFRESNE, TO SIGN A COOPERATIVE ENDEAVOR AGREEMENT BETWEEN CAPITAL AREA FINANCE AUTHORITY AND ST. JAMES PARISH FOR FINANCING HOMEOWNERSHIP FOR LOW AND MODERATE INCOME FAMILIES**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland and seconded by Councilman Cooper. After a unanimous vote, with St. Pierre and Louque absent, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 23-147, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH J.P. CAVALIER, CONSTRUCTION, LLC FOR THE VACHERIE COURTHOUSE ANNEX CHAMBER RENOVATION PROJECT**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland and was seconded by Councilman Nash. After a unanimous vote, with St. Pierre and Louque absent, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 23-148, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE OFFICE OF THE PARISH PRESIDENT TO SEEK AND RECEIVE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR DISASTER PUBLIC ASSISTANCE AND HAZARD MITIGATION SUPPORT SERVICES**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato. Councilman Nash offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

**RESOLUTION 23-149, A RESOLUTION MOVING THE LOCATION OF THE JULY 19, 2023, AUGUST 16, 2023, AND AUGUST 30, 2023 MEETINGS OF THE ST. JAMES PARISH COUNCIL TO THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS OF THE PARISH COURTHOUSE IN CONVENT, LOUISIANA**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland and seconded by Councilman Amato. After a unanimous vote, with St. Pierre and Louque absent, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 23-150, A RESOLUTION FOR GASQUEST USE AGREEMENT TO BE SIGNED**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland and seconded by Councilman Amato. After a unanimous vote, with St. Pierre and Louque absent, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 23-151, A RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR THE ACCEPTANCE OF WORK PERFORMED BY FELICIANA WELDERS, INC. IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CERTIFICATE OF SUBSTANTIAL COMPLETION, FOR THE WEST BANK NATURAL GAS PURCHASE POINT**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman Bland. After a unanimous vote, with St. Pierre and Louque absent, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 23-152, A RESOLUTION APPROVING A VARIANCE TO BE GRANTED FOR MICKEY AND TAMMY ROUSSEL FOR A 25' PUBLIC UTILITY ACCESS SERVITUDE**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland and seconded by Councilman Nash. After a unanimous vote, with St. Pierre and Louque absent, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 23-153, A RESOLUTION APPROVING A VARIANCE FOR THE TILDEN AND BARTHELEMY TRACT OWNER RICKY AND JOAN LOUQUE FOR A 25' PUBLIC UTILITY ACCESS SERVITUDE**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland and was seconded by Councilman Amato. After a unanimous vote, with St. Pierre and Louque absent, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 23-154, A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE APPLICATION OF CINDY FREMIN (ITEM #23-19) TO ALLOW CONSTRUCTION OF A RESIDENCE IN AN INDUSTRIAL AREA, 9736 HIGHWAY 44, CONVENT, LOUISIANA, UNDER THE ST. JAMES PARISH LAND USE ORDINANCE, WITH CONDITIONS**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland and was seconded by Councilman Amato. After a unanimous vote, with St. Pierre and Louque absent, the resolution was adopted.

At this time Chairwoman Etienne-Steib explained that the agenda would need to be amended to add an ordinance that was mistakenly taken off of the agenda. Legal Advisor Koenig stated that the law gives the Council the ability to deviate from the agenda. He said in the past we mostly deviated for presentations, folks who have concerns, nothing of substance. He said we have to remember that if we deviate that the purpose of the deviation is not to subterfuge or dodge the notice requirement. He then asked for clarification that the purpose of it being on the agenda, adding it was supposed to be on the agenda but was mistakenly taken off. Chairwoman responded yes. Legal Advisor Koenig then stated that there was no intent of the Council to dodge the notice requirement. Councilman Bland added that the item is of heightened urgency from the Secretary of State's Office. He then read an email that stated this ordinance is to define and change and condense some of the precinct boundaries and polling locations. He said if the ordinance does not get passed prior to the qualifying then the Parish will have to pay for 11 polling locations that are not needed per the Secretary of State. He continued to read "This needs to be adopted as soon as possible. The Secretary of State has already pre-approved the precinct changes and the changes that are represented in the ordinance". He added that the Registrar of Voters needs time to implement the changes to all resident's voter's registration so that when the qualifying comes everyone has the correct precincts on the voter's registration card. Chairwoman asked what happens if it doesn't pass. He said if it doesn't pass, his understanding is, the Voter's Registration Office will not have enough time to complete the updating on the polling precincts and then will have to wait an entire year to update the precincts and polling locations. For the next year, any election that occurs, the Parish will have to pick up the cost to keep those polling locations open.

At this time Councilman Bland offered a motion to amend the agenda and was seconded by Councilman Nash. After a unanimous vote, with St. Pierre and Louque absent, the motion carried. After the Council Secretary read aloud the ordinance, Chairwoman Etienne-Steib called for public comments. No comments were received from the Public.

Chairwoman Etienne-Steib then stated that if the Council desires to add the ordinance, it will only be an introduction, no voting, and it will be published in the paper for the public to see, and we will have a public hearing. Councilman Cooper asked that once it gets finalized will a map be available. Councilman Bland suggested he speak with the Registrar of Voter's office.

Councilman Nash then offered a motion to introduce an ordinance to establish and define the St. James Parish visible precinct boundaries and polling locations. Councilman Bland offered a second, and after a unanimous vote, with St. Pierre and Louque absent, the motion carried. The public hearing was then set for Wednesday, July 19, 2023 in the Council Chambers of the St. James Parish Courthouse in Convent, Louisiana at 6:00 p.m.

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

**RICK WEBRE** – On July 11<sup>th</sup> the Amite River Basin Commission, Pat Forbes will brief the Commission on the indication of what it will take to get the project to push through the Louisiana Watershed initiative. One is our project, for a pump station and control structure on the East Bank that will enhance the levee.

Councilman Bland inquired about the Status of the Recreation Manager position. Mr. Webre said it is Tevin Smith. Councilman Bland said he would like to have communications regarding recreation activities sent out early to try to get better sign-up and attendance.

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

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

**COUNCILMAN AMATO** – He said he received feedback on the solar farm ordinance from the Directors. He said they will tie in the industrial ordinance for firefighting to that ordinance, and also around the annual inspection by the fire chief. He said Mr. Boughton provided input about fees going toward parks and recreation projects but in the

absence of identified projects then the funding would roll over to our roads and bridges. He said he is hoping to have it come before the Council on August 2<sup>nd</sup>. He said, as a reminder, as we move forward with the solar farm ordinance approval process there still is the House Concurrent Resolution 45 in the State – Solar Farms and Agriculture Land. He said if they move ahead and approve the ordinance, with the knowledge that the House Concurrent Resolution may impact it. He said the Committee should be ready to report in February. He said with the new Council in January, we do our due diligence, by having a solar farm ordinance approved knowing that there could be some revisions to it. He said at least most of the work is done by us setting up the next Council for success when it comes to Solar Farms.

**COUNCILMAN LOUQUE** – Councilman Louque was absent.

**COUNCILMAN BLAND** – Councilman Bland had no comment.

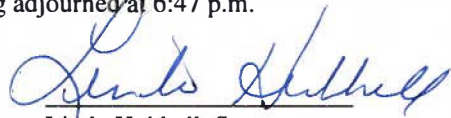
**COUNCILMAN COOPER** – Councilman Cooper requested condolence letters be sent to Shantel Nelson and Elvina Rodrigue families.

**COUNCILMAN NASH** – Councilman Nash requested DOTD look at the culvert on Hwy 643 and Falgoust Street.

**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 Bland and seconded by Councilman Amato and carried, the meeting adjourned at 6:47 p.m.

  
Linda Hubbell, Secretary