

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE  
COUNCIL OF THE PARISH OF ST. JAMES, STATE OF LOUISIANA  
TAKEN AT A REGULAR MEETING HELD ON JULY 19, 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 19, 2023, at 6:11 p.m., following the public hearing.

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

Those also in attendance were Linda Hubbell, Council Secretary; Peter Dufresne, Parish President; Felix Boughton, Finance Director; Dustin Falgoust, Operations Project Manager; 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 St. Pierre led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**MINUTES**

On a motion offered by Councilman Bland and seconded by Councilman Nash, the minutes of the July 5, 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 would like to wish our Operations Director Rick Webre a speedy recovery. He should return to work soon.
- I would like to extend my thoughts and prayers to the family of the little boy who was shot during a repass at the West Bank Reception Hall. I've spoken with his mom, and heard he is recovering well. I know the family would appreciate thoughts and continued prayers for a quick recovery.
- I'd also like to extend my condolences to our Council Chairwoman Vondra Etienne-Steib and her family on the loss of her sister, Rita. I know we are all thinking and praying for you and your family.
- I would also like to offer condolences to our employee Schiwyn Joseph and her family on the loss of her mother, Glenda Ambrose Lumar. Ms. Glenda served our community as a Title 9 training employee with the Parish through our elderly services program. I know she will be missed by all of her family, and friends.
- We received some preliminary schematic designs for the Vacherie Senior Center and Recreation Center. I have copies for each council member. This is in the infant stages of design. At the next council meeting in two weeks, we should have a presentation from Duplantis Design Group.
- St. James Parish has received two grant awards from the 2020-2021 Storms Economic Development and Infrastructure Allocation. We were awarded \$644,361 with the Resilient Communities Infrastructure Program, and \$956,300 with the Hometown Revitalization Program. Both programs will require the St. James Parish Council to pass a resolution for us to advertise for proposals for management of the grant, and we will hold public meetings to invite the community to partner with us in selecting ways to best utilize these funds for the community's benefit.
- The natural gas purchase point on the West Bank is officially ready for service. This purchase point provides essential redundancies and helps to provide better uninterrupted service during a natural disaster.
- We received two RFPs for automated gas meters – both are being rejected. One was 35% higher than budgeted, and the other RFP used meters that weren't compatible with our system. We will be re-advertising for bids in August and will update the Council on the dates at the next meeting.
- We are waiting on a permit from the Corp of Engineers and the Lafourche Levee Basin to continue with the Vacherie groundwater storage tank.
- We have estimated a cost of \$49,000 to install the Angelle Gas Loop Infrastructure. We will be sending a questionnaire to all residents in the area to determine the total number of residents interested in participating in the program.
- The Romeville Gas loop is moving forward, and we are waiting on the flaggers with Union Pacific Railroad. Once we receive the go-ahead from the railroad, we will begin the process of boring under the tracks.
- Progress is continuing for the purchase of land for the East and West Bank water plant improvement projects, and they should be completed soon.
- We are continuing to work toward the new water plant clarifier on the East Bank. Myers Engineering is currently talking with the State to see about additional funding for the EB clarifier.
- The generators have been installed and tested at the Molaison sewer plant, and the Administration building in Convent. Both are functional and working properly. The generator at the administration building will allow our building to remain fully open and operational during a power outage. The generator at Molaison allows sewer to still be treated during a storm or power outage.
- Last week we held a pre-construction meeting with Barriere Construction Co. for the 2023 Road Rehab Program. The Notice to Proceed was issued and work started on Monday. The contractors will be placing door hangers to alert residents about work on their streets. We estimate that the program will be finalized by September 29<sup>th</sup>.
- Crews have finished half of the Bourbon Canal clean up in Grand Point and relocated to continue work on the West Bank. We were originally approved to work through July 31<sup>st</sup>, however we requested an extension from FEMA and have been approved to continue work through the end of the year. Crews just finished the Couteau canal and moved on to clearing the heavily blocked Cross Cut Canal, also known as Clock Canal. Work in the canals is temporarily interrupted due to extremely low water levels and will continue as soon as the water levels allow.

- We have combined the East Bank and West Bank grass cutting crews due to staff shortage and quantities. Both teams will be working together to quickly cut all parish-maintained state highways. All tractors are located on the East Bank right now and will work their way up to Sunshine Bridge, and then cross over and cut all parish-maintained grass on the West Bank. This cycle should allow us to maintain our grass quickly and efficiently with our current workforce.
- The DHR building will be considered substantially complete on tomorrow. This process allows the contractors 2-3 weeks for any final items on the check list.
- We have ordered two manual transfer switches for the West Bank Reception Hall and the St. James Parish Recreation Center to allow mobile generators to be used during a disaster situation.
- The West Bank Council Chamber remodel has begun. Demolition has started, and we anticipate it will be finalized in around 45 days.
- We are continuing to work on the kitchen remodel that is needed for the Convent Community Center. We had one quote come in for \$280,000, and as it's above the threshold amount of \$250,000 we will be going out for bid for this project.
- The Science and Math Academy building is waiting on inspections from the DHH, and then we will be able to operate and prepare meals for our seniors from that facility.
- Men's softball held their final tournament on Saturday, and they had a great season. We are gearing up for our next adult sport – co-ed cabbage ball. Registration is open through July 21<sup>st</sup> and games will start on July 25<sup>th</sup>. Please encourage residents in your district to participate.
- I'd also like to share that registration for our youth soccer season will be opening next week on July 25 and remain open until August 25<sup>th</sup>. Teams will be announced after registration ends, and the season will begin on September 30<sup>th</sup>. Please encourage everyone in your districts to participate.
- DHR writing and drama camp with local artist K.Levy began this week at the Convent Community Center. Students are enjoying learning and being mentored in the arts and will be producing a play to be performed on Friday the 28<sup>th</sup>. Parents and council members are invited to attend the program.
- The 5<sup>th</sup> district summer camp has wrapped up for the season. Thank you to all the camp directors and workers who made the camp a good experience for the participants.
- The Department of Human Resources is in the process of finalizing our Housing Preservation Grant, which has already completed nine homes. We have an additional 6 homes we can assist with this grant, and there is currently a waiting list. Residents can call 225-562- 2344 for more information.
- I attended the Library's Alligator Encounter with Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries last week and 140 children and 80 adults attended the program. The library has done a great job with the summer program this year, and it's been good to see such a huge attendance at events, especially following COVID-19 and Hurricane Ida.
- Today the St James Parish Library held their end of the year celebration for students who finished the summer reading challenge. We had 37 children attend the celebration today. Children who completed the summer reading challenge received invites to this celebration, as well as a yard sign to display in their yard announcing their successful completion of the program. Look out to see those signs popping up all over the Parish.
- I want to give kudos to our library and staff for an excellent job with programs and enticing our children to be active and participate in programs.
- I'd like remind all residents whose home was damaged by Hurricane Ida that the Restore Louisiana program is accepting applications until August 1. 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.
- River Parishes Community College Adult Education will be hosted at the Vacherie Annex on this Friday the 21<sup>st</sup> from 9:00a.m.-2:00p.m. This program provides information on the FREE services RPCC provides, including high school equivalency, English Second Language, and computer literacy classes.
- This concludes my report. God bless each of you and your families.

**PUBLIC COMMENT** - None

### **PRESENTATIONS**

Tommy Naquin, with EisnerAmper, formally P&N, presented the Fiscal Year 2022 audit results. He said no problems were encountered with conducting the audit. He also said there were no findings with the audit. The 2022 audit booklet was reviewed page-by-page. He said it was a clean report and extended compliments to our people.

**APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS** -None

### **OLD BUSINESS**

- Update of drainage study from Forrestal Street to Pool Lane – no update.
- Update of West Bank Multi-Purpose Complex – simple building plans/placement plans were distributed to the council. President Dufresne then went over the plans. A brief discussion on costs was had with the Council and Administration.
- Bellevue Lakes Development and Drainage Update – Councilman Bland indicated they are following a 2016 plan and we have yet to see an updated drainage plan. He said they have started construction and they have problems with the current sewerage on one side and also have road problems. He said there is no turnaround; buses, garbage, etc., are turning on private property. He said the Parish needs to put them on notice to say they need a turnaround and that we need to get into the weeds of what they have going on.
- **ORDINANCE 23-08, AN ORDINANCE TO ESTABLISH AND DEFINE THE ST. JAMES PARISH VISIBLE PRECINCT BOUNDARES AND POLLING LOCATIONS**, after undergone the hearing process, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman Nash. After a unanimous vote, with Cooper absent, the ordinance was adopted.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Councilman Amato said its time to have a discussion of our parish facilities and security cameras. He said he understands that it is not cheap but it's time to develop a plan to move forward. Chairwoman Etienne-Steib said her concern is all the crime that we have been having on both the West and East Banks and said it's a matter of public safety. She said they had a conversation, some time ago, about the placement and upkeep of the maintenance and said it needs to be revisited. She asked if there could be a conversation about a partnership with the Sheriff's department to share the cost of the cameras. Mr. Deroche said yes, and they will get together to get a plan and present it to the Council for review, adding that it will be a multiple-year project. Councilman St. Pierre said it should be a 5-year plan and prioritize. He said the idea is to protect our facilities and, in the meantime, if we recognize activity then the sheriff's department would get involved. President Dufresne said the cost would be astronomical and dip into project costs. Councilman Bland said not only cameras but badge access as well. Chairwoman Etienne-Steib said we need to know what is going on in our buildings, adding little by little, step by step, we need to start. Councilman Amato recommended to begin with a plan and bring in a firm to perform an audit. He said St. James Parish Administration does a good job in getting grants and our St. James Delegation does a good job of bringing funds from the State. He said St. James Parish has a good history of when we develop a plan, we execute it properly. President Dufresne said he will get with his staff to come up with a plan and what the cost will be.

**RESOLUTION 23-155, A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE DISBURSEMENT OF PAYROLL FOR THE JULY 21, 2023 PAYROLL**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman St. Pierre and seconded by Councilman Nash. After a unanimous vote, with Cooper absent, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 23-156, 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 Amato. After a unanimous vote, with Cooper absent, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 23-157, RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT, AND/OR HIS DESIGNEE, TO SIGN, EXECUTE, AND ADMINISTER SAID LEASE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE STATE OF LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES AND THE ST. JAMES PARISH GOVERNMENT FOR THE USE OF THE DISASTER SUPPLEMENT NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AT THE ST. JAMES WEST BANK RECEPTION HALL FOR RESIDENTS OF THE PARISH OF ST. JAMES**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman St. Pierre and seconded by Councilman Amato. After a unanimous vote, with Cooper absent, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 23-158, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ST. JAMES PARISH PRESIDENT TO SIGN A CONTRACT WITH SUN COAST PROPERTIES AND INVESTMENT LLC FOR FIRE STATION #15 RENOVATIONS**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman St. Pierre and was seconded by Councilman Amato. After a unanimous vote, with Cooper absent, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 23-159, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT'S OFFICE TO ADVERTISE FOR AND RECEIVE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR SERVICES FROM PROFESSIONAL FIRMS FOR PROGRAM MANAGEMENT SERVICES**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland. Councilman Nash offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

**RESOLUTION 23-160, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT'S OFFICE TO ADVERTISE FOR AND RECEIVE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FROM PROFESSIONAL FIRMS FOR CREATING A COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN, CODE AMENDMENTS, AND CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman St. Pierre. Councilman Bland offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

**RESOLUTION 23-161, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT TO EXECUTE ANY AND ALL DOCUMENTS AND AGREEMENTS REQUIRED IN IMPLEMENTING A GRANT UNDER THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS THROUGH THE RESTORE LOUISIANA INFRASTRUCTURE: FEMA PUBLIC ASSISTANCE NONFEDERAL SHARE MATCH PROGRAM FOR THE AFTERMATH OF HURRICANE IDA**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and was seconded by Councilman Nash. After a unanimous vote, with Cooper absent, the resolution was adopted.

## **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

**ERIC DEROCHE** – He requested a few volunteers from the Council to join in talks for the Acadian Ambulance contract negotiations. Councilmembers St. Pierre, Amato and Nash volunteered.

**FELIX BOUGHTON** – May sales tax figures are in, and they are staying pretty much as last year. If it stays where it is now, we will collect \$1.2 million more than last year. He said he reports monthly because it is the largest estimate of the budget, the most volatile, and gives an indication of how the economy is doing on a month-to-month basis.

Councilman St. Pierre gave Kudos to Jumpy for the work that he has been doing to save the Parish money.

## **COUNCIL MEMBER'S REPORT**

**COUNCILMAN ST. PIERRE** – Councilman St. Pierre thanked Flo, with Entergy, for the assistance with issues in his District.

**COUNCILMAN AMATO** – Councilman Amato congratulated the Administration on the great financial report and thanked them all they do. He updated everyone on the Solar Farm Ordinance saying he took the final recommendations from Mr. Deroche and Mr. Boughton, consolidated them, and sent to Mr. Franckiewicz for his review. He said in the

last 5 months remaining in their term they should set up the next Council for success. He requested an update from President Dufresne and Mr. Webre on the Amite River Basin Commission, at the next meeting.

**COUNCILMAN LOUQUE** – Councilman Louque had no comment.

**COUNCILMAN BLAND** – Councilman Bland requested the status of the bids for the District 4 restrooms. Jumpy said they did receive and will send forward the information to Councilman Bland. Councilman Bland also inquired about his request to get a quote for the blacktop for District 4 parking lot. Jumpy said he will follow up on the request. Councilman Bland said he had seen that the School Board received another check and that no one presented a check to us this week.

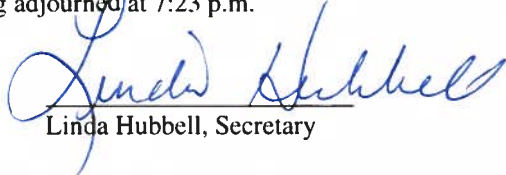
**COUNCILMAN COOPER** – Councilman Cooper was absent.

**COUNCILMAN NASH** – Councilman Nash indicated that there is a big hole on Hwy 20 near Wag-a-pak. Jumpy said he will look into it. Councilman Nash said the culvert is bad across from Apple Street. Jumpy said they are waiting on the State. President Dufresne it will be a very large-scale project but they are working on it. Councilman Nash also requested that the bad culvert near First American Bank and Falgoust street get fixed.

**CHAIRWOMAN ETIENNE-STEIB** – Chairwoman Etienne-Steib wished a speedy recover to Mr. Webre. She also expressed condolences to the family of Glenda Lumar and Ryan Malancon families. She thanked everyone for their condolences for the loss of her sister.

#### **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 7:23 p.m.

  
Linda Hubbell, Secretary