

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE
COUNCIL OF THE PARISH OF ST. JAMES, STATE OF LOUISIANA
TAKEN AT A REGULAR MEETING HELD ON OCTOBER 11, 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, October 11, 2023, at 6:55 p.m., following the public hearings.

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 and Ryan Louque were absent.

Those also in attendance were Courtney Tomlinson, Deputy 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. Mr. Vic Franckiewicz, Special Counsel, was also in attendance.

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 Nash and seconded by Councilman Bland, the minutes of the September 27, 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 August 2023 was approved on a motion offered by Councilman Bland and seconded by Councilman Amato.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Dufresne presented this report to the Council:

- First off, I'd like to wish a happy birthday to our Council Chair Ms. Vondra, her birthday was on Thursday.
- A large portion of Gramercy and Lutchter experienced an emergency Entergy outage last week. This was not due to any fault on the parish or Entergy, unfortunately the substation was vandalized and emergency repairs had to be made. While the outage did last longer than originally anticipated, I would like to thank Entergy for addressing the issue and working to communicate with customers.
- Operations, DHR, and I met with DDG to review designs for the Senior Center in Vacherie. The current focus is on civil engineering, such as sewer and water, for both structures. Schematic design is ongoing and nearing completion for the senior center. Renderings for both structures are available by the entrance.
- The Romeville natural gas loop is now completed, allowing for redundancy and increasing our ability to provide uninterrupted services in emergency situations.
- Contractors have had to pause work at the Blind River Boat Launch due to high water.
- We have drafted an Inter-Governmental Agreement for maintenance and administrative services at Gramercy Park, which is under review by the Gramercy Recreation Board. This will be reviewed by the Council at the next meeting.
- We have heard from the majority of residents in the Angelle Gas Loop area in response to the survey we sent out, and the majority of residents were in favor of the project. We will be proceeding with accepting bids on the project.
- The Louisiana Watershed Initiative Phase One is funding an extension to the major drainage trunk line south of Angelle Loop. Surveying is ongoing, and a completed design is expected within 60 days.
- The DHR building recently constructed in Lutchter is now substantially complete, there are a few minor punch list items to finalize and furniture is being installed. Once fully completed, we will send out an invitation to the grand opening of the new facility. This new building will provide easier access to residents for the critical services the Department of Human Resources provides.
- The District 4 restrooms are currently under construction, with mechanical, electrical and concrete block walls in place. We gave notice to proceed on August 28th, and we anticipate it being done before the end of the year.
- While the Highway 20 road widening project is a State DOTD project, this administration has been actively advocating for this much needed project. I am happy to share that construction started on October 2nd for the Highway 20 widening project, with clearing and grubbing of vegetation within the state right of way.
- Our operations department just relocated to Highway 3127 and are currently clearing hurricane generated debris out of the Clock Canal, they will then move down bayou Lassigne.
- The FEMA project worksheet has finally been obligated for the Gramercy Recreation District for damages from Hurricane Ida. We are working with the District to move the project forward.
- This week is fire prevention week, our fire department will be visiting schools tomorrow, Friday, and next week due to fall break. This is a great outreach program to help educate children at an early age on how to prevent fires.
- The state has allowed each parish to decide if the burn ban should remain. At this time, the burn ban is still in place for St. James Parish, however the department of agriculture and forestry commissioner has allowed agricultural burning. We are hopeful that with the amount of rain received today the ban will be lifted soon.
- The Sheriff's Office hosted their Senior Citizens Crime Expo last week. I was invited to share with attendees about progress in St. James Parish and recent infrastructure upgrades. The event was well attended, and it was great to see so many of our seniors accessing crucial safety information.
- I signed a proclamation declaring the week of October 1-7 as 4-H Week. As a previous 4-Her myself, I have personally experienced the growth and opportunities this organization provides our youth.

- The River Region Chamber of Commerce held their 4th Quarter General Membership Meeting on Monday. The Region 4 Small Business Association Administrator Ted James spoke, and it was a privilege to hear from him about small business development in our region.
- On Thursday – October 19th from 9:00 am – 4:00 pm, we will be hosting a blood drive at the Convent Community Center. One donation can save up to three lives – please come out and donate if you are eligible to.
- Tomorrow is the DHR Fall Harvest Festival from 10am-1pm at the Westbank Reception Hall, and the event is football themed. I'd like to invite the council to attend and be sure to represent your team with a jersey or football attire.
- On October 18th from 10am-1pm the Department of Human Resources is hosting their 50 Shades of Pink Wellness Program at the Westbank Reception Hall. Attendees are invited to wear pink and participate in the fashion show.
- This week we are hosting our annual Pumpkin Patch. Fieldtrips are being held during the week, with a fall fest and market day on the 14th and 15th. Our Pumpkin Patch 5k fun run registration is still open, and so is the pumpkin painting contest. We have also secured 1000 solar eclipse glasses, so participants can enjoy watching the solar eclipse that's taking place on the 14th right from the Pumpkin Patch. Please encourage all residents to come out and enjoy the festivities.
- Biddy Basketball Registration is open, please encourage local children in your district to participate. We have a great program and our teams have won the national championships multiple times.
- God bless each of you and your families tonight, and God bless St James Parish. This concludes my report.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- Shamell Lavigne, 8581 Hwy 18, St. James, spoke in opposition of Koch Methanol's ITEP Participation.
- Shamell Lavigne, 8581 Hwy 18, St. James, spoke in opposition of Acadian Pipeline's Land Use Application.
- Gail LeBoeuf, 758 N. Ezidore, Ave, Gramercy, spoke in favor of Koch Methanol's ITEP Participation, if 80/20.
- Gail LeBoeuf, 758 N. Ezidore, Ave, Gramercy, spoke in opposition of Acadian Pipeline's Land Use Application.
- Kevan Reardon, 5101 Wildcat St. St. James, spoke in favor of Acadian Pipeline's Land Use Application.
- Barbara Washington, 8191 Pleasant Hill St, Romeville, spoke in opposition of Koch Methanol's ITEP Participation.
- Beverly Alexander, 7177 Edwards St., St. James, spoke in opposition of Koch Methanol's ITEP Participation.
- Tim Robertson, 8724 Jefferson Hwy, Baton Rouge, clarified some of the items address by previous speakers.

PRESENTATIONS - None

APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

RESOLUTION 23-204, A RESOLUTION APPOINTING DEVIN SCHEXNAYDER AS THE DISTRICT 4 REPRESENTATIVE TO THE KEEP ST. JAMES PARISH BEAUTIFUL BOARD, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland. Councilman Amato offered a second and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

OLD BUSINESS

Update of drainage study from Forrestal Street to Pool Lane – working on the servitude for the channel east of Pool Lane.

Update of West Bank Multi-Purpose Complex – nearing the final design stages of the Senior Center and are continuing work on the Multipurpose building, renderings are available.

NEW BUSINESS

RESOLUTION 23-205, A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE DISBURSEMENT OF PAYROLL FOR THE OCTOBER 13, 2023 PAYROLL, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman Nash. After a unanimous vote, with St. Pierre and Louque absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-206, 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 Bland. After a unanimous vote, with St. Pierre and Louque absent, the resolution was adopted.

After Mr. Steve Nosacka provided a few details of the exemption and Councilman Cooper clarified some things that were said, in reference to character, **RESOLUTION 23-207, RESOLUTION OF THE ST. JAMES PARISH COUNCIL APPROVING KOCH METHANOL ST. JAMES, LLC FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE INDUSTRIAL TAX EXEMPTION PROGRAM**, 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 23-208, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT'S OFFICE TO ADVERTISE FOR AND ACCEPT BIDS FOR THE DISTRICT 4 COMMUNITY CENTER KITCHEN RENOVATION PROJECT, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland. Councilman Amato offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-209, A RESOLUTION SETTING THE HOURS FOR "TRICK-OR-TREAT" ON HALLOWEEN NIGHT FROM 6:00 P.M. TO 8:00 P.M., was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato. Councilman Cooper offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-210, A RESOLUTION AMENDING THE CONTRACT BETWEEN THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF ELDERLY AFFAIRS AND ST. JAMES PARISH GOVERNMENT, DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and was seconded by Councilman Bland. After a unanimous vote, with St. Pierre and Louque absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-211, A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE AREA AGENCY ON AGING DISASTER PLAN TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF ELDERLY AFFAIRS FOR JULY 1, 2023 TO JUNE 30, 2024 PROGRAM YEAR, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Nash and seconded by Councilman Bland. After a unanimous vote, with St. Pierre and Louque absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 23-212, A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE APPLICATION OF ACADIAN PIPELINE TO ALLOW INSTALLATION OF A 20-INCH DIAMETER PIPELINE TO KOCH METHANOL, WHICH CONSISTS OF 7,412 FEET OF NEW PIPE FROM THE EXISTING ACADIAN'S PIPELINE, USE IN A RESIDENTIAL GROWTH AREA 5882 ST. EMMA STREET, ST. JAMES, LOUISIANA 70086 (ITEM #23-27) UNDER THE ST. JAMES PARISH LAND USE ORDINANCE, WITH CONDITIONS, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Cooper and was seconded by Councilman Amato. After a unanimous vote, with St. Pierre and Louque absent, the resolution was adopted.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Councilman Bland inquired with Ms. Bergeron about the letters to residents regarding temporary homes. Ms. Bergeron said the letter looks good to move forward. Found out, on a call with GOHSEP, there are about 43 residents still in the system, not sure if in a RV on their property or in some type of State sheltering and are working with that list. Councilman Cooper inquired with Ms. Bergeron regarding an update from the Housing Authority.

FELIX BOUGHTON – a budget adoption schedule will be distributed at the next meeting.

RICK WEBRE – confident that the Hwy 3127 widening and the levee projects be included on the Bond Commission's agenda. Operations received a permit from LDEQ, we are now a waste tire transporter. The North Rosary application has been submitted to the Statewide Flood Control and will go into the next session. Will keep everyone informed about what will be submitted for Capital Outlay projects.

COUNCIL MEMBER'S REPORT

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

COUNCILMAN AMATO – Councilman Amato expressed appreciation for work done on the Acadian ditch mitigation project. Indicated that Sara Bourgeois will make a presentation at the next meeting on the Parish Security Camera Study. Requested an update on the funds for school warning lights at St. Peter Chanel and Paulina Elementary. He reminded everyone that Saturday is election day.

COUNCILMAN LOUQUE – Councilman Louque was absent.

COUNCILMAN BLAND – Councilman Bland said he agrees that council meetings being should be recorded or are live on Facebook and said he thinks that is something that the Parish should invest in or look into. He dittoed Councilman Amato's remark regarding Saturday being election, adding that the polls open from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., and he wished good luck to those running.


COUNCILMAN COOPER – Councilman Cooper requested a condolence letter to the family of Samuel Jones. He thanked Rise for their concerns for protecting the residents of the 5th District. He also reminded everyone that Saturday is election day. He said what every fight or challenge you are in, do it with the right motive, and do it respectfully.

COUNCILMAN NASH – Councilman Nash inquired how much debris was removed from Coteau Canal. Mr. Webre said several hundred cubic yards. He said they cleaned from the boat launch to the bridge, up Clock Canal up to where it was too shallow. They then relocated to Hwy 3127 and will work back south on Clock Canal, then Lassene to the parish line. He said, in reference to Ordinance 23-11, his stand against the panels is based on no economic benefit for the public and that it will only benefit the private landowners. He said if the private landowners will be the only ones that will seek benefits then he feels St. James Parish needs to look at some type of other resource for solar panels.

CHAIRWOMAN ETIENNE-STEIB – Chairwoman Etienne-Stieb wished good luck to all candidates.

ADJOURNMENT

After determining there was no additional business to come before the council, on a motion offered by Councilman Nash and seconded by Councilman Bland and carried, the meeting adjourned at 8:04 p.m.


Courtney Tomlinson, Deputy Secretary