

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE
COUNCIL OF THE PARISH OF ST. JAMES, STATE OF LOUISIANA
TAKEN AT A REGULAR MEETING HELD ON OCTOBER 14, 2020**

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 14, 2020, at 6:30 p.m.

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

Those also in attendance were; Linda Hubbell, Secretary; Peter Dufresne, Parish President; Felix Boughton, Finance Director; Richard Webre, Operations Director; Ingrid Leblanc, Human Resources Director; Eric Deroche, Emergency Preparedness Director; and Cody Martin, Legal Advisor.

Councilman Amato offered the invocation and Councilman Nash led the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Honorable Alvin St. Pierre, Chairman, 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.

MINUTES

On a motion offered by Councilman Nash and seconded by Councilman Louque, the minutes of the September 30, 2020 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 2020 was approved on a motion offered by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilwoman Etienne-Steib.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Dufresne presented this report to the council:

Good Afternoon Everyone:

- I hope everyone felt little to no effects from Delta. Thankfully our prayers were answered, and we dodged another one. Our Departments did a tremendous job preparing the parish for any possible storm related impacts and our employees were on standby. I want to thank each and every one of our employees and staff for the tremendous efforts each time an event like this happens! We are prepared more than most people realize.
- While we were spared, our friends in southwest Louisiana were not. So please keep them in your thoughts and prayers.
- On a lighter note, St. James Parish met the threshold to reopen our bars last week. We must remain below 10% positivity in order for these establishments to stay open. With that being said, the West Bank Reception Hall will be a COVID testing site every Wednesday from 9am to 4pm.
- Just yesterday, I signed an agreement with DOTD for the surveying, preconstruction right of ways, and a geometric study to begin the Gramercy roundabout on Highway 3125 by McDonalds.
- The DOTD Highway Maintenance recently completed the Highway 3125 and Highway 642 turn lane project and will begin the turn lane from Highway 3125 turning right onto Highway 641 (the Veterans Memorial Bridge road).
- Capital Outlay requests are due by November 1st. This year we will be submitting requests for the Highway 3127 four lane from the intersection of 3213 past Highway 20 where it will connect with the future Highway 20 Bypass.
- Contracts were let out from Federal Highway Fund for the Highway 20 widening at the Bayou Chevreuil Bridge area. In the next few years, we should see several infrastructure improvements here in St. James Parish!
- This Friday, October 16th will begin Early Voting for the November 3rd Election. Early voting will take place October 16 through October 24 (excluding Sundays) at the Vacherie Courthouse Annex, Convent Courthouse (in these chambers), and on Saturdays at the Lucher Machine Warehouse.
- The library is hosting a Virtual Escape Room throughout the month of October. You can call the library at 869-3618 to register and receive the link to participate.
- Bidy Basketball Registration is now underway until November 6th.
- Transit services are fully operational at this time.
- We are making preparations to open the ARC within the next few weeks and looking forward to the new arrangement in assisting the ARC with their needs.
- The Census has extended the deadline until October 31st. There is still time to get St. James Parish properly counted! In less than ten minutes, you can help shape many different aspects of our community!
- On the agenda tonight is a resolution to approve hours for trick or treating in St. James Parish. I support this endeavor in hopes of giving children and families a little sense of normalcy. Please know that if you do not feel comfortable with participating this year, it is okay to stay home and turn your lights off! We are encouraging participants to be Covid conscience to protect yourself and others. For example, treat givers should individually wrap candies and lay them out on a table instead of putting them in a big bowl to dig through.
- The Festival of the Bonfire Board of Directors made the difficult decision to cancel the 2020 Festival. However, we will continue the tradition of the lighting of the bonfires on Christmas eve. The Board of Directors will issue a press release with more details.
- In honor and support of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, our employees are asked to wear pink this Friday!

PUBLIC COMMENT - No public comments were received on agenda items that required a vote.

PRESENTATIONS

Aaron Chaisson, Jr. addressed the Council as a candidate for District Court Judge for Division B in the 23rd Judicial District.

Mr. Myron Lambert, General Manager of PC Electric gave a history of PC Electric and spoke about franchising.

CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED - None

APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

RESOLUTION 20-212, A RESOLUTION REAPPOINTING JODY ORDENEUX, JR. TO THE GRAMERCY RECREATION BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Louque. Councilman Bland offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

OLD BUSINESS

- **District 5 Alternate Access Route** – no update. Mr. Brass and Mr. Price are in Special Session.
- **North Vacherie Railroad Culvert Upgrade Project Status** – Project is ongoing and will go into next year. This item will be removed from the agenda and Mr. Webre was asked as he completes one part and begins another to provide an update.
- **Acquisition of Land for Multipurpose Building Update** – Met with the hospital and received Mrs. Mary Ellen Pratt's vision for the building, as well as ours. An agreement is under review by Legal Advisor. Councilman Cooper said the Parish asked important questions and they are under consideration to ensure we have a strong voice, just as much as the hospital. President Dufresne said we will not just issue money to the hospital and wait for a building, we will put our specifics in and make sure we receive our just.
- **St. James Parish Environmental Study Proposal** – the consulting agreement with Ramboll has expired. A new agreement needs to be negotiated and need to figure out what the scope of work under that agreement will be. A meeting with Ramboll will be scheduled. A Parishwide Environmental Study needs to be part of a new contract.

At this time Chairman St. Pierre stated that the meeting place rotation will resume. The next meeting will be held in Vacherie.

NEW BUSINESS

RESOLUTION 20-213, A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE DISBURSEMENT OF PAYROLL FOR THE OCTOBER 16, 2020 PAYROLL, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Cooper and seconded by Councilman Bland. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 20-214, A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS TO PAY PENDING CURRENT INVOICES AND PAYABLES, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman Bland. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 20-215, A RESOLUTION SETTING THE HOURS FOR "TRICK-OR-TREAT" ON HALLOWEEN NIGHT FROM 6:00 P.M. T 8:00 P.M., was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Louque. Councilwoman Etienne-Steib offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 20-216, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND DEVELOPMENT FOR THE FEDERAL OFF-SYSTEM BRIDGE REHABILITATION PROGRAM was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Louque and seconded by Councilman Nash. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 20-217, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT TO ADVERTISE AND ACCEPT BIDS FOR MATERIALS FOR THE CANATELLA STREET DRAINAGE PROJECT, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland. Councilman Cooper offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 20-218, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT'S OFFICE TO SELL PROPERTY AT A PUBLIC AUCTION, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato. Councilwoman Etienne-Steib offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 20-219, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING ST. JAMES PARISH TO ENTER INTO AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT WITH THE ST. JAMES PARISH SCHOOL BOARD AND AUTHORIZING THE ST. JAMES PARISH PRESIDENT TO EXECUTE SAID AGREEMENT, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland and seconded by Councilman Nash. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 20-220, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING PARISH PRESIDENT PETER DUFRESNE TO SIGN A COOPERATIVE ENDEAVOR AGREEMENT WITH SOUTH CENTRAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION FOR FY'18 DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY/GOHSEP GRANT, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Louque and seconded by Councilman Amato. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

ERIC DEROCHE – We had everything prepared for Delta, luckily and we didn't have to do anything, adding that Beauregard Parish fared out well this time.

INGRID LEBLANC – All elderly activities have been postponed until further notice. Christmas dinners haven't been postponed yet, as we are hoping we may still be able to some activities before the end of the year.

FELIX BOUGHTON – We made our 2nd request for CARES Act funding. In two weeks, you should have the budget for next year.

RICK WEBRE- He introduced Meredith Conger, from the Operations Department. She presented a draft of the Capital Improvement Plan for St. James Parish.

COUNCIL MEMBERS REPORT

COUNCILMAN AMATO – Councilman Amato said they met with the Pontchartrain Levee District to go over the bonfire regulations. One change to the bonfires this year, due to COVID, there will also be an 11:00 p.m. curfew on Christmas Eve night. He expressed a great job to everyone with Hurricane Delta, and said he appreciated the good work everyone is doing.

COUNCILMAN LOUQUE – Councilman Louque had no comment.

COUNCILMAN BLAND – Councilman Bland thanked Operations and the Call Center Representatives for getting his January through June work orders fixed and re-entered. He requested an update of the Bellevue Lakes drainage. Mr. Webre indicated that they had a meeting with the developer of the subdivision and showed them what the plan was with the gate valve. He said they concurred with the science behind it. He said before they do anything, they want to meet with the Homeowners Association President and provide an explanation, so they are not blind-sided when they see the excavator working. Councilman Bland said his Recreation Board has some questions regarding the progress at the park. Mr. Webre said they requoted the cinderblock building that holds the plumbing and controls. The requote was about half the price than before, so they are doing both District 4 and District 5 and you should see movement within the next week or so.

COUNCILMAN COOPER – Councilman Cooper requested a condolence letter be sent to the family of John Winchester. He asked the Administration if they could send a letter to the resident on Landry-Geason Road to explain the process of grass cutting along a ditch that is on private property. He inquired about the Parish's position on down trees after a rain event or a hurricane. Mr. Deroche said they can go on someone's property only for a life-saving event, other than that we cannot go on private property. Mr. Webre said the only other time is if it is threatening public property. Councilman Bland indicated that DHR is working on funding for these issues. Mrs. Leblanc gave a brief explanation of some of the different types of funding for these situations. She said Parish funds cannot provide this type of services, funds from Local, Federal, and State grants are used. Councilman Cooper also inquired about private donation of tarps. Mr. Martin said the donation should be made directly to the landowner.

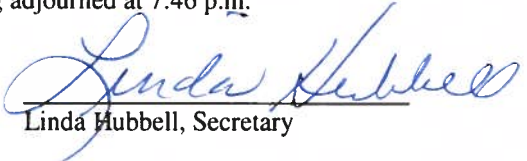
COUNCILWOMAN ETIENNE-STEIB – Councilwoman Etienne-Steib asked if someone could check the signs at Magnolia Park. She said they were blown down. She asked Mr. Webre if he was able to secure the permission to complete the work with the School Board. Mr. Webre indicated that it is in the attorney's hands. Mr. Martin said that when the abstract was pulled they found it was a sizable tract of property, and have been working with the School Board as to what they would agree too, and said he thinks they have reached a decision, that they will let us lease it all in exchange for maintaining it. It should be presented at the next meeting.

COUNCILMAN NASH – Councilman Nash requested a gas study for South Vacherie. Mr. Webre indicated that they are looking into an additional booster station. Councilman Nash requested an update of the drainage issues on Highway 643. Mr. Webre said it has been completed and they are applying for a traffic study/diversion permit from DOTD, adding it should go quickly once they get the manufactured catch basins and permit. Councilman Nash inquired about the ditch cleaning on Spruce Street. Mr. Webre said he will check the work orders.

CHAIRMAN ST. PIERRE – Chairman St. Pierre thanked Mr. Boughton and Mr. Webre for the answers today. He said the demolition of the Gramercy pool is just about complete.

ADJOURNMENT

After determining there was no additional business to come before the council, on a motion offered by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman Louque and carried, the meeting adjourned at 7:46 p.m.


Linda Hubbell, Secretary