

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE  
COUNCIL OF THE PARISH OF ST. JAMES, STATE OF LOUISIANA  
TAKEN AT A REGULAR MEETING HELD ON OCTOBER 25, 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, October 25, 2023, at 7:06 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, Clyde Cooper, Donald Nash, and Chairwoman Etienne-Steib.

Those also in attendance were Linda Hubbell, Council Secretary; Peter Dufresne, Parish President; Felix Boughton, Finance Director; Rick Webre, Operations Director; Darnell Jones, SHR Field Operations Manager; Eric Deroche, Emergency Preparedness Director, and Adam Koenig, Legal Advisor. Victor 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 St. Pierre led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**MINUTES**

On a motion offered by Councilman Bland and seconded by Councilman Nash, the minutes of the October 11, 2023 public hearing were approved as distributed, and the reading of these minutes dispensed with.

On a motion offered by Councilman Bland and seconded by Councilman Amato, the minutes of the October 11, 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 start by offering my condolences to Brandon and Lauren Bourgeois and their family on the loss of their three month old son, Jaxx. This was a true tragedy, and our thoughts and prayers go out to them.
- I would like to congratulate Mon Amour Apparel and Gifts on their successful ribbon cutting and grand opening this past weekend. This new boutique has a little bit for everyone. It's always good to see new businesses opening in St. James Parish. This administration is committed to supporting economic development and is consistently making infrastructure improvements to support new business endeavors and residential growth.
- We met yesterday with the third company to apply for the automated gas and water meters, and we are currently reviewing applications.
- We have a resolution from the Board of the Gramercy Recreation District for approval of the Inter-Governmental Agreement for maintenance and administrative services at Gramercy Park. This will be presented to the Council at the next meeting.
- The Vacherie Library addition should be substantially complete by next week. We are working to schedule an official grand opening for the facility and will be sending the council invitations in the upcoming weeks.
- The District 4 restroom is making progress. Paint colors are currently being picked. A notice to proceed was issued on August 28<sup>th</sup>, and we anticipate it being done before the end of the year.
- Our Operations Department is currently cleaning hurricane debris from Bayou Lasseigne and the Clock Canal. We are working on this project in conjunction and partnership with the Lafourche Levee District. Cleaning these canals helps to improve our drainage and protects our community from storm water. Additionally, this project will make Bayou Lasseigne and the Clock Canal navigable to the Couteau Canal and Lake Des Allemands.
- The DHR Building in Lutchet is substantially complete, and we will be scheduling a ribbon cutting and grand opening in November. We will be sending invitations to the council soon.
- The West Bank Senior Center is currently in design and development, and challenges with sewer system are being resolved. This project will advertise for bid in early 2024. We are continuing to make steady progress on this project.
- The Highway 20 relocation project to move St. James Parish utilities water sewer and gas lines for the upcoming Highway 20 widening project is currently underway. This relocation project will be complete in December of 2023.
- Currently, the 2024 Road Rehab Program is being funded through a combination of revenue sources. St. James Parish has been awarded \$1.2 million in capital outlay funding, which was approved by the bond commission on October 19, 2023. This funding combined with our local budget will allow St. James Parish to complete a \$2.4 million road rehab program in 2024, which will include approximately 20 additional streets. So far, this administration has completed 220 parish roads, that have been refurbished.
- St. James Parish was awarded the Community Water Enrichment Grant through the Office of Community Development in the amount of \$43,000. This funding will be used to purchase a variable speed motor and an electrical panel for the West Bank Water Plant.
- A contract was issued to rehab the above ground water storage tank in Paulina. The term of this contract will be for 60 days and is valued at 115,705. This project will be funded by the Water Sector Grant, through the Office of Community Development.
- Our Volunteer Fire Department is currently in need of more volunteers. I know several of our council members are past volunteers and can testify to the crucial work our volunteers do. In the last 12 months, the East Bank Fire Department has responded to 878 calls for service, and if trends continue, they will respond to 1000 calls by the end of this year. On the West Bank, our department has responded to 546 calls for service so far this year, and if trends continue will respond to 700 calls this year. That's an average of 5 calls a day in our parish. With

this high call volume, there is a huge need for more volunteers. Koch Methanol will be providing funds for a recruiting campaign to support volunteer recruitment. If you know anyone who may be interested, please have them contact one of our fire chiefs, or anyone you may know who's a volunteer firefighter, their contact information is on our website.

- At this time, the burn ban is still in effect. We are in constant communication with the fire chief and getting recommendations from the fire department on the burn ban.
- DHR held their first 50 Shades of Pink Health and Wellness Event and Fashion Show last week. The turnout was great, and the seniors loved the opportunity to show off their best outfits while learning more about cancer awareness and staying healthy. Flu vaccinations were available at this event.
- DHR also held their annual Fall Festival, which was football themed this year. These events are a great way to keep our elderly community connected, and DHR does an excellent job hosting our seniors. I'd like to invite you to the DHR Thanksgiving events, so you can experience what DHR has to offer. The Westbank Event will be on November 9th at 10:00am at the Westbank Reception Hall, and the East Bank event will be on the 19th of November at the Boat Club at 10:00 am.
- The annual Toy and Coat Drive is accepting donations until December 1<sup>st</sup>, if interested in supporting this great cause please contact our Department of Human Resources, Community Action Agency. Applications to participate in the event are open October 20th through November 20, 2023.
- Last week we hosted our annual Pumpkin Patch. There was a huge turnout, and many of the food vendors completely sold out of meals. It's great to see so many people supporting this event. Each year this event has grown tremendously, and I'm looking forward to its continued success.
- I'd like to congratulate Poche Plantation on a successful festival this past weekend. This event draws in many tourists and brings our community together.
- The Gubernatorial Election is on November 18<sup>th</sup>, and early voting is open November 3<sup>rd</sup> through 11<sup>th</sup>.
- Also on November 18<sup>th</sup> is our Keep St. James Parish Beautiful Board's annual Electronic Recycling and Paper Shredding event. It will be from 8:30a.m. – 11:00a.m. at the Winn-Dixie Parking lot in Gramercy.
- St. James Parish Government is hosting its annual Veterans Day Celebration in conjunction with the VFW and American Legion at Lucher Park on Thursday, November 9<sup>th</sup>, from 4:30p.m. - 6:30 p.m. Please mark your calendar and plan to attend as we honor and celebrate our veterans.
- Our last market day of the year will be on November 11<sup>th</sup>, from 8:00am-1:00pm. This event has been steadily growing with new and return vendors every month. It's great to see our community support these small businesses.
- I'd like to invite you to the Economic Development Board's 2nd annual Christmas Stroll Down Main Street and Beyond. The event is on December 3rd from 1:00p.m. - 4:00p.m. Following your stroll, stop by the Welcome Center between 3:00p.m. - 5:00p.m. for an Open House.
- Bidy Basketball Registration is open through November 4<sup>th</sup>, please encourage local children in your district to participate. We have a great program and our teams have won the national championships multiple times.
- Yesterday we had a booth at Party with the Pumpkins and gave out safety coloring books and snacks to around 800 local children.
- Last week neighborhoods around the parish hosted Night Out Against Crime events. This annual event is a great way to learn about safety while bringing our neighborhoods together.
- I'm pleased to share that the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual NuStar St. James Charity Golf Tournament on October 27<sup>th</sup> will be benefiting St. James Arc. This organization makes a big difference for our clients, and I'd like to encourage you to get out and support the event.
- God bless each of you and your families tonight, and God bless St James Parish. This concludes my report.

**PUBLIC COMMENT** - None

**PRESENTATIONS**

Eric Deroche shared information regarding the parish wide security cameras study. He said they would protect our assets, not necessarily baseball fields or open areas. And, because of the costs they would have to be purchased and installed in priority order. He then answered the Council's questions.

Ms. Dana Groover, St. James Parish Housing Authority Director provided an update of the housing authority. She indicated that they are still recovering from Hurricane Ida. She said they still have 89 units that are still off-line and are in the process of replacing lost contents, such as stoves, refrigerators, etc. She touched upon FEMA applications, funding, and families that were affected due to Hurricane Ida. She then answered the Council's questions.

**APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS** – None

**OLD BUSINESS**

Update of drainage study from Forrestal Street to Pool Lane – will head to Pool Lane ditch once the crew is finished with Clock Canal.

Update of West Bank Multi-Purpose Complex – still progressing with the design of the Senior Center and progressing with the design and cost estimates of the Multi-Purpose Center.

Councilman Amato offered a motion to table action on ORDINANCE 23-11, AN ORDINANCE AMENDING SECTION 82-25(E), 82-25 (H), AND 30-53(D) OF THE ST. JAMES PARISH CODE OF ORDINANCES; ENACTING NEW SECTION 82-26 PROVIDE SOLAR ENERGY FARM FACILITY STANDARDS FOR DEVELOPMENT; AND REPEALING SECTION 82-25(O) REGARDING LIMITATIONS ON COMMERCIAL SOLAR FACILITIES until the November 8, 2023 meeting to allow for some suggested changes to be incorporated to the proposed ordinance and the council has time to review. Council Bland offered a second. After a vote showing, St. Pierre, Amato, Louque, Bland, Cooper, and Nash in favor, and Etienne-Steib against, the motion carried.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**RESOLUTION 23-213, A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE DISBURSEMENT OF PAYROLL FOR THE OCTOBER 27, 2023 PAYROLL**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman St. Pierre and seconded by Councilman Cooper. After a unanimous vote, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 23-214, A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS TO PAY PENDING CURRENT INVOICES AND PAYABLES**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman St. Pierre and seconded by Councilman Bland. After a unanimous vote, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 23-215, RESOLUTION ACCEPTING CHANGE ORDER #3 FROM TBT CONTRACTING INC. OF LA FOR THE VACHERIE LIBRARY ADDITION PROJECT**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland and seconded by Councilman Amato. After a unanimous vote, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 23-216, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ST. JAMES PARISH PRESIDENT TO SIGN AND EXECUTE A CONTRACT WITH CSG FORTE FOR CREDIT CARD SERVICES**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and was seconded by Councilman Cooper. After a unanimous vote, the resolution was adopted.

**RESOLUTION 23-217, A RESOLUTION AMENDING THE CONTRACT FOR CRESCENT ENGINEERING & MAPPING, LLC TO EXTEND THE CONTRACT BY THREE (3) YEARS AND INCREASE CONTRACT PRICE FOR THE FACILITY PLANNING AND CONTROL PROJECT 50-J47-21-01 LA HWY 3127 WIDENING (LA 20 TO LA 3213)**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland and was seconded by Councilman St. Pierre. After a unanimous vote, the resolution was adopted.

**INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCE 23-12, AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 27, ST JAMES PARISH RECREATION PARKS AND FACILITIES, SECTION 1 RULES AND REGULATIONS OF THE ST. JAMES PARISH CODE OF ORDINANCES**, was introduced on a motion offered by Councilman St. Pierre and seconded by Councilman Nash. After a unanimous vote, the ordinance was accepted and ordered filed with the Secretary for public inspection and publication of Notice of Public Hearing, which was scheduled for 6:00 p.m., on Wednesday, November 8, 2023, in the Council Chambers of the Parish Courthouse in Convent.

**DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

**FELIX BOUGHTON** – informed the council to check their email tomorrow for information regarding the Budget.

**RICK WEBRE** – asked to thank the cleaning crew for the work being done at Lassene and Clock Canals.

**COUNCIL MEMBER'S REPORT**

**COUNCILMAN NASH** – Councilman Nash asked for an update of the issue on Hwy 643 near First American Bank. Mr. Webre said they are working with Aaron with DOTD. He congratulated the new Boutique in Vacherie and encouraged everyone to visit the store.

**COUNCILMAN COOPER** – Councilman Cooper requested condolence letters for the families of Samuel Jones, Jr. and Gregory Eugene Ford.

**COUNCILMAN BLAND** – Councilman Bland requested a condolence letter to the Bourgeois and Dudley LeBlanc families.

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

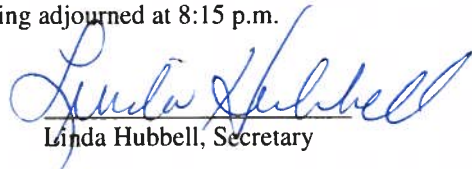
**COUNCILMAN AMATO** – Councilman Amato congratulated Mr. Mike Johnson, who was elected as Speaker of the House, and he congratulated everyone who was successful in the recent election. He acknowledged Mr. Jasmin, Mr. Neal Poche, and Mr. Todd Poche, who were in attendance. He reminded everyone that there is a run off for District 2 Councilmember and encouraged everyone to go out and vote.

**COUNCILMAN ST. PIERRE** – Councilman St. Pierre requested a letter of congratulations be sent to Mr. Mike Johnson.

**CHAIRWOMAN ETIENNE-STEIB** – Chairwoman Etienne-Stieb explained why she voted no on the Solar Facilities ordinance. She said “it is time to move on with the ordinance, we have to come to some type of decision to get the rules and regulations in place.”

**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 8:15 p.m.

  
Linda Hubbell, Secretary