

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE
COUNCIL OF THE PARISH OF ST. JAMES, STATE OF LOUISIANA
TAKEN AT A REGULAR MEETING HELD ON SEPTEMBER 29, 2021**

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, September 29, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

On roll call, the following were recorded present: Council Members Jason Amato, Ryan Louque, Mason Bland, Vondra Etienne-Steib, and Chairman Alvin St. Pierre, Jr. Councilman Clyde Cooper was not in attendance during roll call, and Councilman Nash was absent.

Those also in attendance were Linda Hubbell, Council Secretary; Peter Dufresne, Parish President; Eric Deroche, Director of Emergency Preparedness; Ingrid Bergeron, Human Resources Director; Felix Boughton, Finance Director; Rick Webre, Operations Director; and Adam Koenig, Legal Advisor.

The Honorable Alvin St. Pierre, Jr., 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.

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

MINUTES

On a motion offered by Councilman Bland and seconded by Councilwoman Etienne-Steib, the minutes of the September 15, 2021 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 July 2021 was approved on a motion offered by Councilman Louque and seconded by Councilman Amato.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Dufresne presented this report to the Council:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good evening, everyone. Thank y'all for being here tonight.

I want to start my report tonight by going over some of the latest information on our Hurricane Ida Recovery.

Debris Collection

- We have received many questions regarding debris pick up – so I'd like to address some of those concerns. I, like many of you have been concerned and displeased with the level of debris removal in our parish. As of this morning, our parish-wide debris collection was at 137,000 total cubic yards. Plain and simple – there has just not been enough debris collected or enough trucks operating in St. James, and we shouldn't stand for that. For this reason, myself, EOC Director Eric Deroche and members of the EOC staff met with leaders of DRC Emergency Services, who is our debris removal contractor earlier today to express our dissatisfaction.
- During our meeting, DRC presented us with their plan for moving forward to ensure that areas previously neglected including streets that are very narrow with low hanging power lines were addressed and additional resources would be brought in to increase in collection rates.
- DRC is working to bring in skid steers and smaller vehicles to allow for pick up down narrow streets that do not allow for the large debris trucks to travel. Residents who live down a narrow roadway are asked to not park any vehicles in front of debris piles in order to have your pile able to be picked up. Beginning today trucks and crews are re-canvassing areas we know still have remaining vegetative debris to ensure we are able to complete the pickup of vegetation.
- Crews will be continuing to pick up construction and demolition debris as well. It's important for our residents to know, multiple passes will be made as we know many have not yet begun gutting homes.
- To ensure that your debris is picked up, its vitally important to make sure you do not stack your construction debris together with vegetative debris, ensure you have not stacked debris under low hanging power lines that large debris trucks cannot operate near, and ensure you have not stacked any debris near mailboxes, utilities, or parked vehicles.
- Please note, DOTD is responsible for picking up along all state highways and roadways. Parish contracted trucks, by regulation, cannot pick up on state highways until DOTD has completed their debris removal operations.
- My office will continue to communicate daily with debris contractors and our parish crews will be following up on completed areas to inspect work being done.

Household Garbage Collection

- I am pleased that our household garbage collection has improved tremendously and made progress following the overwhelming amount of household garbage that had built up immediately following the storm. Residents are reminded to not place bagged household garbage near debris piles. FEMA and State regulations do not allow for debris contractors to pick up any bagged household garbage.
- Please continue to place regular trash in your trash bins and know that waste management is fully staffed and working extra shifts to pick up all household garbage. If your collection was skipped, it should be picked up the next day. We know Waste Management had several interruptions in service during the initial aftermath of Hurricane Ida, but I am confident services have greatly improved and we are thankful for their continued working relationship to improve collections in our parish.

Blue Roof Program

- EOC staff and myself also met this week with representatives from the US Army Corps of Engineers who oversee the Blue Roof Program. We know there has been a slow response with this program, and while we understand resources are stretched incredibly thin state-wide during this time, we pushed for additional support here in St. James. Today and tomorrow, a mobile Corps of Engineers unit will be parked at the Lutchter Senior Center and West Bank Reception Hall from 9:30 am – 5:00 pm.

Disaster Recovery Center remains open

- Anyone in need of FEMA or recovery resources, please visit the homepage of our website, where we have created a page specifically to house all available Hurricane recovery resources for our residents.

Housing

- Unfortunately, we have now been faced with a housing crisis in the aftermath of Hurricane Ida. The State Fire Marshall's Office ordered the local Housing Authority to relocate over 100 residents due to sustained damages rendering the project housing unlivable.

Councilman Cooper arrived and assumed his seat on the council.

- I have met with HUD Secretary, Marcia Fudge, as well as our local, state, and federal elected officials to ensure the situation is addressed and solutions are found to quickly repair public housing structures.
- We know this is a regional problem and not just exclusive to our parish and it is my hope that we can continue to work towards solutions as a region for this housing crisis.

Recreation

- In more positive news...several of our recreational programs have restarted.
 1. Our fitness center has reopened with all regular aerobics' classes resuming.
 2. Youth Soccer teams have been assigned with the first game beginning October 16th with app practices and games being held at Gramercy Park.
 3. Our popular cornhole league has started back up each Tuesday night at 7 pm in the new recreation building in Gramercy.
 4. Currently, while our crews continue to repair damaged lights and ensure fields are safe, there will be no baseball practices on any fields until further notice.
 5. All regular park rentals are able to be reserved as normal.

Pumpkin Patch

- We are continuing to move forward with plans for this year's pumpkin patch, however, have limited the event to one weekend due to continuing recovery from Hurricane Ida. It was important to me that we bring back a small sense of normalcy to the children in our community during this time. Last year's event was cancelled due to covid-19, but we will not let Hurricane Ida cancel this year's event.
 - The pumpkin patch will be held Thursday, October 21st through Sunday October 24th. On the Sunday of our pumpkin patch will also be a small fall festival that will include a 5k run, performances by local dance groups, as well as booths featuring local food and craft vendors.
 - As more details become available with final planning taking place, we will release a full schedule of events.
- I would like to end my report by expressing my sincere thanks to all of those working so diligently during our recovery process and those who have been so generous to our people and our Parish.
 - We have been blessed with numerous donations from our local industry partners to individuals. I especially would like to recognize Marathon for their contribution of \$75,000 in cash to the Parish to assist in our recovery efforts.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Michelle Nailor-Octave, 21255 Judge Becnel Lane, Vacherie, addressed the council regarding agenda items #3 and #10 under new business. She stressed the importance of working with landowners and FEMA to address the short-term housing crisis.

At this time Chairman St. Pierre requested a motion to deviate from the agenda to allow an update from Entergy Representative Mark Johnson. Councilman Bland offered the motion and Councilman Louque seconded. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Nash absent, the motion carried. Mr. Johnson then provided an update on Hurricane Ida recovery efforts.

PRESENTATIONS

Myrtle Felton, 8222 Pleasant Hill Street, and Barbara Washington, 8191 Pleasant Hill Street, Romeville, LA, addressed the council with issues they are experiencing with Nucor.

Mary Ellen Pratt, St. James Parish Hospital CEO, provided the annual report to the council.

APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

RESOLUTION 21-209, A RESOLUTION REAPPOINTING EDWARD JOHNSON TO THE GRAMERCY RECREATION BOARD, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato. Councilman Cooper offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

Councilman Bland offered a motion to adopt **RESOLUTION 21-210, A RESOLUTION REAPPOINTING TERRENCE JONES AS THE DISTRICT 4 REPRESENTATIVE TO THE ST. JAMES PARISH PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD**. Councilman Cooper offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

OLD BUSINESS

District 5 Alternate Access Route – no additional update

Acquisition of Land for Multipurpose Building Update – the footprint of the building should be delivered to the Parish President sometime this week and then hoping to discuss with the hospital.

NEW BUSINESS

RESOLUTION 21-211, A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE DISBURSEMENT OF PAYROLL FOR THE OCTOBER 1, 2021 PAYROLL, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilwoman Etienne-Steib and seconded by Councilman Cooper. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Nash absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-212, 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 Cooper. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Nash absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-213, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE OFFICE OF THE PARISH PRESIDENT TO SEEK AND RECEIVE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS OR REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATION FOR HURRICANE IDA RECOVERY, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Louque. Councilwoman Bland offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-214, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ST. JAMES PARISH PRESIDENT TO RENEW AN EXISTING CONTRACT WITH CORRECTHEALTH ST. JAMES, LLC FOR MEDICAL CARE FOR INMATES OF THE ST. JAMES ADULT DETENTION CENTER, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland and seconded by Councilman Cooper. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Nash absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-215, A RESOLUTION RESCHEDULING A BOARD OF REVIEW FOR NOVEMBER 9, 2021, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland. Councilman Amato offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-216, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING ST. JAMES PARISH PRESIDENT TO SIGN THE CONTRACT AGREEMENT WITH PYROTECNICO, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilwoman Etienne-Steib and was seconded by Councilman Bland. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Nash absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-217, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT'S OFFICE TO ADVERTISE FOR AND RECEIVE REQUESTS FOR QUALIFICATIONS FROM PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERING FIRMS FOR THE WATER SECTOR PROGRAM PROJECT, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato. Councilman Louque offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-218, A RESOLUTION AMENDING THE CONTRACT FOR COASTAL CORROSION CONTROL, INC., was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Louque and seconded by Councilman Bland. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Nash absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-219, A RESOLUTION ACCEPTING CHANGE ORDER #1 FROM LA CONTRACTING ENTERPRISE, LLC FOR THE HUMBLE STREET DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENTS, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Louque and was seconded by Councilman Bland. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Nash absent, the resolution was adopted.

After a lengthy discussion, Chairman St. Pierre requested a motion to table the resolution to allow for the proper verbiage to provide for temporary housing, to include referencing Ordinance 13-08 for RV parks and campgrounds, a clause concerning the variance process, and to change length of time. After the discussion Councilman Louque offered a motion to table A RESOLUTION DECLARING THE CONSTRUCTION/DEVELOPMENT OF RV PARKS/CAMPGROUNDS WITHIN ST. JAMES PARISH FOR THE USE FOR HURRICANE IDA RELATED RECOVERY EFFORTS FOR THE TIME FRAME OF TWO (2) YEARS to the October 13, 2021 meeting and was seconded by Councilwoman Etienne-Steib. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Nash absent, the motion carried.

RESOLUTION 21-220, A RESOLUTION AMENDING THE CONTRACT FOR ROSTAN SOLUTIONS, LLC TO EXTEND THE AGREEMENT BY ONE (1) YEAR FOR DISASTER RECOVERY MITIGATION, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Louque and was seconded by Councilman Amato. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Nash absent, the resolution was adopted.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

FELIX BOUGHTON – should have all of the budget worksheets in by the end of this week and will upload to the DMS drive for review.

RICK WEBRE – gave each council member some sheets on damage assessment throughout the parish; the capital improvement plan for 2020, 2021, 2022; and a list of all channels that crews are working in, and he indicated that he is waiting to hear from NCRS and CPRA on which channels they will clear.

INGRID BERGERON – services are still going on. Anticipating opening the elderly centers next week. The Vacherie Senior center received damage so they may have to combine the centers. No word yet as to when the ARC will reopen but looking for an alternative center for them and working out details for field trips. Have placed 32 families in hotels, and some families with family members and are communicating with FEMA. Connecting families with mental health resources.

ERIC DEROCHE – the Disaster Recovery Center is now open through November 15th and will extend the agreement as long as it is needed. Had their first meeting with FEMA on housing needs.

At this time Ms. Bergeron said they have a long-term Recovery Group Committee and indicated that United Way is supporting those efforts.

COUNCIL MEMBER'S REPORT

COUNCILMAN NASH - Councilman Nash was absent.

COUNCILWOMAN ETIENNE-STEIB – Councilwoman Etienne-Steib said she was glad that the lack of visibility/service was addressed. She said she had been receiving a lot of calls about Waste Management, but it seems to be working itself out. She thanked Mrs. Octave for her comments. She indicated that she and the Parish President had spoken to Pastor McGee about the chances of getting FEMA trailers in this area with local landowners.

COUNCILMAN COOPER – Councilman Cooper requested a condolence letter be sent to the family Leo Levy. He thanked the Parish President, Dennis Hymel, Jr. and the council for the work being done on Burton Lane. He said he met with Judge Cody Martin and received some supplies from him to help some people. He said so many people/churches/organizations have been reaching out to help. He said cleaning supplies are still needed. He thanked all the non-profit groups for assisting. He thanked the Administration and Council for allowing the 5th District Park to be utilized to help the community. He said Convoy of Hope, through New Hope Church/Pastor Aubert, will be issuing supplies Sunday at 12:30 at Welcome Park.

COUNCILMAN BLAND – Councilman Bland thanked everyone for continuing to help in our area.

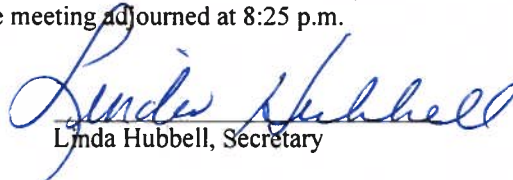
COUNCILMAN LOUQUE – Councilman Louque had no comment.

COUNCILMAN AMATO – Councilman Amato inquired about entering private property to remove trees. Mr. Deroche said he is waiting guidance from GOHEP, but it will be, address by address basis and will have to go through a complete, 100%, FEMA review and said the process is not short. He said there were two representatives from Blue Roof at the Lutcher Senior center. He said he can assist with the walk-through of the Lutcher Senior for early voting. He inquired if the School Board had requested help with streets that the busses cannot access. Mr. Webre said they didn't at the office but will check with the call center. He said last week he reached out to Entergy regarding streetlights. He thanked everyone for the quick response to the water issue on Dey Say Street.

CHAIRMAN ST. PIERRE – Chairman St. Pierre thanked the administration for answering his questions. He said there was damage at the Gramercy Recreation Park and requested it to be addressed prior to the beginning of soccer.

ADJOURNMENT

After determining there was no additional business to come before the council, on a motion offered by Councilwoman Etienne-Steib and seconded by Councilman Amato and carried, the meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.


Linda Hubbell, Secretary