

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE
COUNCIL OF THE PARISH OF ST. JAMES, STATE OF LOUISIANA
TAKEN AT A REGULAR MEETING HELD ON FEBRUARY 17, 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, February 17, 2021, at 6:00 p.m.

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

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 Adam Koenig, Legal Advisor.

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

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.

MINUTES

On a motion offered by Councilman Bland and seconded by Councilman Amato, the minutes of the February 3, 2021 public hearing were approved as distributed, and the reading of these minutes dispensed with.

On a motion offered by Councilwoman Etienne-Steib and seconded by Councilman Bland, the minutes of the February 3, 2021 regular meeting were approved as distributed, and the reading of these minute dispensed with.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Dufresne presented this report to the council:

- Yesterday, we put out an emergency message regarding the conditions of our water treatment facility. I wanted to explain in further detail our current conditions and actions being taken by our utilities department.
 - First, I'd like to thank all our residents who took notice of our emergency request and began to conserve water yesterday. Your actions helped tremendously to prevent our utility crews from implementing an emergency shut down of our water system last night.
 - Under Normal operating conditions – both of our water plants can produce around 3.5 million gallons of treated water per day.
 - On both East and West Banks we have 2,075,000 gallons of storage capacity. (We can typically store 575 thousand gallons stored in elevated water towers. In ground storage, we store 1.5 million gallons.)
 - Over the last few days we've experienced extreme winter weather. As a result of this, within a 24-hour time period, our storage capacity was depleted entirely.
 - We are not out of the woods yet with the current winter weather event we are experiencing. Our storage capacity is still lower than normal, and our water system is still recovering from the drastic surge in usage over the last 24 hours. This is why we are asking residents to continue to conserve water usage as much as possible.
 - What we have experienced through this event has demonstrated the need for additional storage capacity and infrastructure improvements within our water system. Had this event continued across several days, our water system would have likely completely failed.
 - I would also like to remind everyone that our water distribution service is not funded by tax revenue. We solely depend on revenue received from water bills.
- As St. James Parish's COVID positivity rate slightly decreases, we are continuously asking residents to follow the safety guidelines outlined by the CDC. If you are eligible for the vaccine, there are several locations in St. James Parish where you can receive the vaccine. These locations include Gem Drugs in Gramercy, South Star Urgent Care, St. James Parish Hospital, and the St. James Parish Health Unit. Please call to pre-register at your location of choice.
- Our parish youth baseball registration is now open and will close on March 5, 2021. The registration fee is \$35, and you can call the Recreation Office at 225-562-2337 for more information.
- Our DHR has partnered with United Way to provide free tax return preparation from February 22-April 15, 2021. For more information on documents needed and drop off locations, please visit our website.
- St. Vincent de Paul has partnered with the Baton Rouge Food Bank to offer food distribution to our residents on Wednesday, February 24, 2021. The distribution will be held at the Sacred Heart PSR center at 9am until all boxes have been distributed.
- Due to the inclement weather the past several days, the ARC is not open this week, but will be reopening on Monday, February 22, 2021.
- Our DHR transit annual federal monitoring review was conducted last week, and we received 100% compliance.
- People's Health sponsored the Mardi Gras drive-through on Thursday, the 11th for our seniors. Although the event ended early due to inclement weather conditions, all seniors were delivered care packages by staff.

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

PRESENTATIONS – None

APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Councilman Nash offered and moved for adoption **RESOLUTION 21-24, A RESOLUTION REAPPOINTING MARVEL RAPHAEL AS THE DISTRICT 7 REPRESENTATIVE TO THE ST. JAMES PARISH PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD**. Councilman Amato offered a second and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

OLD BUSINESS

- District 5 Alternate Access Route – Waiting to get a response from Reps. Brass and Price on a meeting date.
- Acquisition of Land for Multipurpose Building Update – met on 2/12 to look at the CEA with the hospital and concluded that we need to sit at the table again before committing. They explored options should that property become unavailable. Nothing has been decided, they are in the early stages of discussions. Administration will speak with the hospital to see how flexible they will be with the CEA. President Dufresne stated that if the hospital won't be any more flexible, he suggested to cease negotiations and move in a different direction.

NEW BUSINESS

RESOLUTION 21-25, A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE DISBURSEMENT OF PAYROLL FOR THE FEBRUARY 19, 2021 PAYROLL, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Nash and seconded by Councilwoman Etienne-Steib. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Louque absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-26, A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS TO PAY PENDING CURRENT INVOICES AND PAYABLES, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Cooper and seconded by Councilman Nash. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Louque absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-27, A RESOLUTION ACCEPTING THE BID OF FELICIANA WELDERS, INC. FOR THE PAULINA GAS LINE INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS – PHASE 2, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman Nash. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Louque absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-28, A RESOLUTION AMENDING THE BLD CONTRACT FOR THE WATERLINE UNDER THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Nash and was seconded by Councilman Bland. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Louque absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-29, A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN FY 2021-2022 FOR ST. JAMES PARISH, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and was seconded by Councilman Bland. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Louque absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-30, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH PRESIDENT TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH THE LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND DEVELOPMENT FOR SPOT REPLACEMENT OF LOCAL ROAD OVER BORROW PIT (BLIND RIVER BOAT LAUNCH) BRIDGE (RECALL 610059), STATE PROJECT NO. H.013997 AND FEDERAL PROJECT NO. H013997, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland and was seconded by Councilman Amato. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Louque absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-31, A RESOLUTION NAMING DUPLANTIS DESIGN GROUP, PC AS THE PROJECT ENGINEER TO PERFORM ARCHITECTURAL AND ENGINEERING SERVICES IN THE PREPARATION OF BID DOCUMENTS, PLANS, AND SPECIFICATIONS FOR WIND RETROFITTING OF THE ST. JAMES PARISH WEST BANK RECEPTION CENTER THROUGH HMGP, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilwoman Etienne-Steib and seconded by Councilman Cooper. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Louque absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-32, A RESOLUTION NAMING T. BAKER SMITH, LLC AS THE PROJECT ENGINEER TO PERFORM ENGINEERING SERVICES IN THE PREPARATION OF BID DOCUMENTS, PLANS, AND SPECIFICATIONS FOR THE LOUISIANA WATERSHED INITIATIVE ON THE WEST BANK OF ST. JAMES PARISH, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilwoman Etienne-Steib and seconded by Councilman Nash. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Louque absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-33, A RESOLUTION NAMING GSA CONSULTING ENGINEERS AS THE PROJECT ENGINEER TO PERFORM ENGINEERING SERVICES IN THE PREPARATION OF BID DOCUMENTS, PLANS, AND SPECIFICATIONS FOR THE LOUISIANA WATERSHED INITIATIVE ON THE EAST BANK OF ST. JAMES PARISH, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and seconded by Councilman Bland. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Louque absent, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-34, A RESOLUTION ACCEPTING CHANGE ORDER #2 FROM NATIONAL CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS, LLC (NCMC) FOR THE MOLAISON SEWER PROJECT, was offered and moved adoption by Councilman Nash and was seconded by Councilman Amato. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Louque absent, the resolution was adopted.

At this time Chairman St. Pierre explained that the agenda needed to be amended to approve a resolution to amend the Personnel Policy to change the Call Out policy as it relates to water samples. No public comments were received. Councilman Amato then made a motion to amend the agenda and was seconded by Councilwoman Etienne-Steib. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Louque absent, the motion carried. **RESOLUTION 21-35, A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE REVISIONS TO THE PERSONNEL POLICY GOVERNING ST. JAMES PARISH EMPLOYEES**, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Nash and was seconded by Councilman Amato. No public comment was received. After a unanimous roll call vote, with Louque absent, the resolution was adopted.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

ERIC DEROCHE – stated that vaccines for tomorrow have not arrived at the Hospital and not sure about the shipment for Friday. They will make up next week if needed.

INGRID LEBLANC – said if anyone has any questions about the Monthly Report to get with her. She said they have already begun to draft documents toward the non-profit side of the department. She indicated they are proposing new services, adding the needs of our residents are changing, and they are also proposing changes to some services.

FELIX BOUGHTON – indicated that payroll was completed while we were on holiday and he thanked Julie Gilbert and Melanie Deroche for working on their off days to get it complete.

RICK WEBRE – thanked Ryan, Beau, and the utility crew for their hard work since Sunday. He also thanked Meredith for her hard work.

COUNCIL MEMBER'S REPORT

COUNCILMAN NASH – Councilman Nash inquired about the gas station in South Vacherie regarding generators. Mr. Webre indicated they are in the process of doing the acquisition and an IGA is needed for South Vacherie. He said they need to do the same for Moonshine, and he added that it will be a long-term project because the State and Gulf States Pipeline will pay for the whole project. Councilman Nash indicated there is a major pothole in the area on Hwy 643 in the area where the culvert needs replacement, and he inquired about an additional outlet near Ricky Road. Mr. Webre will get the details after the meeting.

COUNCILWOMAN ETIENNE-STEIB – Councilwoman Etienne-Steib requested condolence letters be sent to the families of Ms. Louise James and Mr. Leroy Jeffery. She thanked Meredith with her work on the Plan and enlisted her help to find a grant to help with some of the blighted property. She thanked the residents for taking the time to fill out the survey. She said she looks forward to working with the hospital on the CEA, to come to a conclusion as to where we are going to go. She asked Mr. Webre if had been in contact with Mr. Teddy Bourgeois about digging the ditch. Mr. Webre said he did contact him, and it looks positive so they will be able to make it happen.

COUNCILMAN COOPER – Councilman Cooper requested a condolence letter be sent to the family of Allen Gauthreaux. He asked if any information was received from the Solar Panel Company regarding employment.

COUNCILMAN BLAND – Councilman Bland requested to have someone ride to the construction zone (CMT to Ory Street) on the Illinois Central Railroad to see if they any improvements were made or if they see any issues. He requested the 2021 road repaving list be sent to the council. He asked if any funds were received from Black Belt Energy. Mr. Webre indicated that they are getting ready to enter into it and will keep him informed.

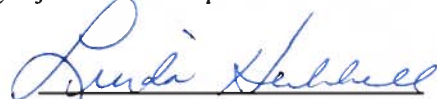
COUNCILMAN LOUQUE – Councilman Louque was absent.

COUNCILMAN AMATO – Councilman Amato expressed a great job by everyone working with the winter storm, in addition to a pandemic. He recognized the volunteer fire department for attending the many alarms. He thanked Councilwoman Etienne-Steib for the update on the Hospital.

CHAIRMAN ST. PIERRE – Chairman St. Pierre thanked the administration, parish workers, utilities workers, payroll, and anyone else for stepping up the last four days.

ADJOURNMENT

After determining there was no additional business to come before the council, on a motion offered by Councilman Bland and seconded by Councilman Cooper and carried, the meeting adjourned at 7:16 p.m.


Linda Hubbell, Secretary