

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE
COUNCIL OF THE PARISH OF ST. JAMES, STATE OF LOUISIANA
TAKEN AT A REGULAR MEETING HELD ON MAY 26, 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, May 26, 2021, at 6:20 p.m., following the public hearing.

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, Jr.

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

Councilman Amato offered the invocation and Councilwoman Etienne-Steib 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 Nash and seconded by Councilman Louque, the minutes of the May 11, 2021 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:

I would like to extend condolence to Ryan Donadieu and his family on the passing of his father.

- I'd like to start my report tonight by discussing the high-water event we've experienced over the last week.
- After experiencing several days of heavy rainfall, our area was impacted with high and rising water levels as backwater flooding moved into our area on both east and west banks.
 - On our west bank, levels in Lake Des Allemands reached an all-time high breaking the record of 3.9 feet in October 1985. In this last event, the level rose to 4.21 feet. A huge thanks is owed to our operations crews who worked around the clock operating pumps at our weir and continuously inspected the levee system to ensure none of our residents would face flooded homes.
 - On our east bank, levels in Blind River and Lake Maurepas rose to 4.19 feet before cresting early Monday morning. Water levels have slowly begun decreasing since then. We had one home report flooding to our EOC and the house was located in town of Gramercy.
- My staff and I provided updates to the public through our social media channels and parish website as forecasts were updated and sandbags were made available.
- With the influx of water our area has seen in the last two weeks, the need for an alternative alignment to the Westshore levee extension project in St. James Parish is needed now more than ever. Yesterday, Director Webre and I met with the Corps of Engineers to discuss the options to connect the ring levee design and eliminate the flap gates to ensure it fully protects all residents. I have confidence that we will soon come to a solution and project we can all agree upon.
- Hurricane season will officially begin next Tuesday, June 1st. I would like to remind residents that the time to prepare is now. We have several resources available on our website on how residents can prepare their emergency kits at home and be ready for another storm season.

Covid-19:

- Yesterday, Governor John Bel Edwards further loosened restrictions related to covid-19. As more of our state's population has been vaccinated and hospitalizations drop, masks are now only required in educational settings through the end of this academic semester. However, masks will continue to be required in healthcare settings, jails, and public transit as per federal guidance and mandates.
- Children ages 12 and up are also now able to receive vaccinations for Covid-19. Next Thursday, June 3rd and Thursday, June 10th first dose Pfizer vaccinations will be available for children ages 12 and up at the St. James Parish Health Unit in Vacherie.

DHR:

- DHR recently received approval from the Governor's Office of Elderly Affairs to directly provide the nutritional program for registered seniors. This approval brings us closer to officially operating a meal prep (cooking) site within our parish; and it brings us to phase II in our planning and implementation of this project. We are looking forward to serving our seniors meals locally.
- In speaking of our Elderly residents, Monday marks the first day of the reopening of the senior centers, which have been closed since the start of the pandemic. Our senior centers are now operating at 50% capacity with a max of 20 people. Reservations are made 2 days in advance with limited activities, 4 days a week, Monday thru Thursday from 10 am-12:30
- In more good news, The ARC will be operating at 100% capacity starting June 1st, 2021, 5 days per week.

Recreation:

- In our Recreation department, our Men's softball league will officially begin June 2nd with a full roster of teams.
- Several improvements are continuing in our parks as well. The construction of new bathrooms and kitchen area in our district 5 park is about 65% complete.
- Some of the other projects include upgraded playground equipment and splashpad in district 1, and resurfacing swing sets in District 7.

Operations

- Moving on to some updates in our Operations department. The road rehab program began this week with the patchwork portion beginning. A portion of highway 44 to the parish line was also recently overlaid by DOTD.

- The RFQ process will begin soon for engineering of a new east bank clarifier and west bank storage tank to improve our water infrastructure. This project will be funded by the monies we received through the America Rescue Plan.
- Operations crews have also been working hard to clear channels of any obstructions or debris as water recedes. Our herbicide crews are working in District 7 this week to spray drainage channels and keep the vegetative growth down.
- Crews have staged equipment in the Magnolia area to continue with drainage mitigation projects and will be beginning work as soon as it dries out and water goes down.
- We met with DOTD to go over plans and logistics for the new Blind River Bridge replacement at the St. James Boat club. It's scheduled for replacement in 2022.

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

PRESENTATIONS

Keri Walker, Library Supervisor presented the Library Board's Annual report.

Jeffery Brown, 19916 Hwy 643, Vacherie, addressed the council regarding water entering his house and garage during heavy rainfall. He shared pictures of his flooded property, water in his house and in his garage.

Bart Simon, 13113, N. Spruce St., Vacherie, also address the council regarding water entering in his garage during heavy rainfall. His presentation included pictures of his flooded property and water in his garage.

Mark Johnson and Trey Granger with Entergy informed the council of improvements they are putting in place. They then answered the council's questions.

Marlishia Williams, Derron Cook, and Gavin Webster spoke about the Juneteenth. They received a plaque Proclaiming June 19, 2021 as Juneteenth Day in St. James Parish.

APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Councilman Amato offered and moved for adoption **RESOLUTION 21-105, A RESOLUTION REAPPOINTING CHARLES FARLOUGH AS A DISTRICT 2 REPRESENTATIVE TO THE ST. JAMES PARISH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD.** Councilman Nash offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

Councilman Bland offered and moved for adoption **RESOLUTION 21-106, A RESOLUTION REAPPOINTING TERRENCE JONES AS A DISTRICT 4 REPRESENTATIVE TO THE ST. JAMES PARISH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD.** Councilwoman Etienne-Steib offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

Councilman Louque offered and moved for adoption **RESOLUTION 21-107, A RESOLUTION APPOINTING MICHAEL HOPPING TO THE RIVER PARISHES TOURIST COMMISSION.** Councilman Bland offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

OLD BUSINESS

- District 5 Alternate Access Route – a meeting for next week has been scheduled with all parties involved.
- Acquisition of Land for Multipurpose Building Update – took a tour of the Assumption and Lockport facilities. Encourage the council members to tour the Lockport facility as it is more in tune to our parish's needs. Still need to negotiate with the hospital to purchase land.

After Councilman Nash offered a motion to amend the ordinance to state that the effective date shall be January 1, 2022, Councilman Amato offered a second, and after a unanimous roll call vote, the motion carried. **ORDINANCE 21-06, AN ORDINANCE AMENDING SECTION 114 OF THE ST. JAMES PARISH CODE OF ORDINANCES TO INCREASE WATER RATES FOR THE USERS OF THE ST. JAMES PARISH WATER DISTRICTS 1 AND 2,** having undergone the hearing process, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Nash and was seconded by Councilman Amato. After a unanimous roll call vote, the ordinance was adopted, as amended.

NEW BUSINESS

RESOLUTION 21-108, A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE DISBURSEMENT OF PAYROLL FOR THE MAY 28, 2021 PAYROLL, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Nash and seconded by Councilman Louque. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-109, A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS TO PAY PENDING CURRENT INVOICES AND PAYABLES, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Louque and seconded by Councilman Bland. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-110, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE OFFICE OF THE PARISH PRESIDENT TO ADVERTISE AND ACCEPT BIDS FOR THE EAST BANK RECREATION FACILITY ADDITION PROJECT, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Louque. Councilman Amato offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-111, A RESOLUTION AMENDING THE CONTRACT FOR T. BAKER SMITH, LLC TO \$300,000 AND TO EXTEND THE CONTRACT BY ONE YEAR, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Cooper and was seconded by Councilwoman Etienne-Steib. After a roll call vote showing Amato, Louque, Cooper, Etienne-Steib, Nash, and St. Pierre voting in favor, and Bland against, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-112, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ST. JAMES PARISH PRESIDENT TO SIGN AND EXECUTE A CONTRACT WITH DUPLANTIS DESIGN GROUP FOR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilwoman Etienne-Steib and was seconded by Councilman Cooper. After a roll call vote showing Amato, Louque, Cooper, Etienne-Steib, Nash, and St. Pierre voting in favor, and Bland against, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-113, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ST. JAMES PARISH PRESIDENT TO SIGN AND EXECUTE A CONTRACT WITH MEYER ENGINEERS, LTD FOR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Nash and was seconded by Councilman Amato. After a roll call vote showing Amato, Louque, Cooper, Etienne-Steib, Nash, and St. Pierre voting in favor, and Bland against, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-114, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE OFFICE OF THE PARISH PRESIDENT TO ADVERTISE AND RECEIVE BIDS FOR THE HWY 642/HUMBLE STREET DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENTS – INDUSTRIAL STREET TO SOUTH ANGELLE STREET DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Louque. Councilman Cooper offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-115, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ST. JAMES PARISH COUNCIL TO ENTER INTO A HEALTH INSURANCE CONTRACT WITH UNITED HEALTHCARE TO MANAGE AND ADMINISTER ST. JAMES COUNCIL'S HEALTH PLAN AND QBE INSURANCE COMPANY TO PROVIDE STOP LOSS INSURANCE AND TERMINATE AGREEMENT WITH GILSBAR, GERBER LIFE INSURANCE AND CIGNA, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Nash and was seconded by Councilman Bland. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-116, A RESOLUTION ACCEPTING CHANGE ORDER #1 FROM BENTON GEORGIA, LLC FOR THE PAULINA GAS INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS – PHASE I PROJECT, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Louque and was seconded by Councilman Nash. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-117, A RESOLUTION DESIGNATING THE *NEWS EXAMINER-ENTERPRISE* AS THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE ST. JAMES PARISH COUNCIL FOR FISCAL YEAR 2021-2022, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato. Councilman Bland offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-118. A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ST. JAMES PARISH PRESIDENT TO SIGN AND EXECUTE A CONTRACT WITH CYPRESS SURVEYING & CONSULTING, LLC FOR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Cooper and was seconded by Councilwoman Etienne-Steib. After a roll call vote showing Amato, Louque, Cooper, Etienne-Steib, Nash, and St. Pierre voting in favor, and Bland against, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-119, A RESOLUTION PROCLAIMING JUNE 19, 2021 AS JUNETEENTH DAY IN ST. JAMES PARISH, was offered and move for adoption by Councilman Bland. Councilman Cooper offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-120, A RESOLUTION ACCEPTING CHANGE ORDER #4 FROM NATIONAL CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS, LLC (NMC) FOR THE MOLAISON SEWER PROJECT, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Amato and was seconded by Councilman Louque. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-121, A RESOLUTION ACCEPTING CHANGE ORDER #1 FROM VETERANS' CONSTRUCTION, LLC FOR THE RENOVATIONS OF THE ASSESSOR'S OFFICE, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland and was seconded by Councilman Louque. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-122, A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE SIGNING OF REVISED AND/OR NEW TITLE IIB, IIC-1, IIC-2, IIC-D, IIE, NSIP, PCOA, MIPPA AND OTHER CONTRACTS BETWEEN THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF ELDERLY AFFAIRS AND THE ST. JAMES PARISH GOVERNMENT, DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES FOR PROGRAM YEAR 2021-2022, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Band and was seconded by Councilman Nash. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-123, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING ST. JAMES PARISH GOVERNMENT TO ADVERTISE AND RECEIVE BIDS FOR SAND, SOIL, AND AGGREGATE, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland. Councilman Nash offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-124, A RESOLUTION ACCEPTING CHANGE ORDER #2 FROM FELICIANA WELDERS, INC. FOR THE PAULINA GAS LINE INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS PHASE 2 PROJECT, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Louque and was seconded by Councilman Amato. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-125, A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE APPLICATION OF JOHN T. DOYLE TO ALLOW CONSTRUCTION OF RESIDENCE IN AN INDUSTRIAL AREA, 9134/9144 WINNIE RD. IN CONVENT (ITEM #21-08) UNDER THE ST. JAMES PARISH LAND USE ORDINANCE, WITH CONDITIONS, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Bland and was seconded by Councilman Cooper. After a unanimous roll call vote, the resolution was adopted.

RESOLUTION 21-126, A RESOLUTION ACCEPTING THE BID OF CAZANAVE MOTOR, INC., FOR ONE (1) 2022 FORD F-250 FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS, was offered and moved for adoption by Councilman Cooper. Councilman Nash offered a second, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF PROPOSED ORDINANCE 21-05, AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING ADMINISTRATION TO PAY CERTAIN ACCOUNTS PAYABLE INVOICES PRIOR TO COUNCIL APPROVAL was introduced on a motion offered by Councilman Louque and was seconded by Councilman Nash. After a unanimous roll call 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 Wednesday, June 9, 2021, at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Parish Courthouse in Convent.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

FELIX BOUGHTON – he said they receive half of the money from the American Rescue Plan and said they are recommending to spend the money on water and gas infrastructure. President Dufresne gave kudos to Mr. Boughton for his efforts in obtaining the money without the use of a consultant.

RICK WEBRE – emailed the road rehab program information today for the council's review. He thanked Ryan Larousse for his hard work.

INGRID LEBLANC – she said DHR is encouraging residents to complete the customer needs survey. They are looking into re-establishing the Youth Commission – to be more legislative type meetings. She commended the staff for their hard work with Community Action Month.

ERIC DEROCHE – He said that your Covid vaccine information can be accessed on the LA Wallet app. to use as verification that you have been vaccinated. He thanked his staff for their hard work with the back water flooding.

COUNCIL MEMBER'S REPORT

COUNCILMAN NASH – Councilman Nash had no comment.

COUNCILWOMAN ETIENNE-STEIB – Councilwoman Etienne-Steib thanked all the presenters at the meeting this evening and said she hopes they can provide relief to those residents who experience flooding.

COUNCILMAN COOPER – Councilman Cooper expressed condolence to the family of Paulette Johnson. He requested a drainage update on Baytree, Barras, and Kingview Streets.

COUNCILMAN BLAND – Councilman thanked Meredith for the recent changes to the council communications. Had constituents reach out to him regarding Hwy 44 overlay from St. John to Hwy 3174 and asked when Paulina to Lutchter was going to get done. He thanked DOTD for restriping Hwy 44. Ribbon Cutting for District 4 Park is scheduled for June 10th. Expressed condolence to Ryan Donadieu and his family on the loss of his father. He inquired about moving to a centralized board for all Recreation Districts.

COUNCILMAN LOUQUE – Councilman Louque had no comment.

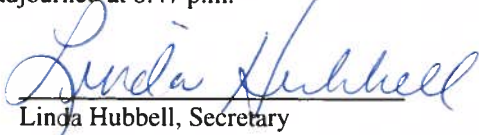
COUNCILMAN AMATO – Councilman expressed sympathies to Ryan Donadieu and family. He thanked Rep. Schexnayder and Aaron Elisar for their assistance on the resurfacing of Hwy 3193 in Lutchter. He stated that he is in support of the Formosa Project.

CHAIRMAN ST. PIERRE – Chairman St. Pierre expressed thanks for the work on the Gramercy Recreation ball fields. Expressed condolence to Ryan Donadieu on the loss of his dad. Thanked everyone who came to the meeting tonight and encourage others to attend. He congratulated the summer employees. He thanked the administration for their hard work. He said that he is also pro industry.

Councilman Nash requested to have a resolution to either support or not support the Formosa project. Councilman Louque stated that he expressed his support to President Dufresne. President Dufresne stated that he, and his counterparts in Ascension and St. Charles Parishes, will be sending a cordial letter to President Biden debunking the fact that this area is cancer alley. Councilman Bland suggested to wait until we have the information from the Environmentalist before passing the resolution. Councilman Cooper said he is not against industry just against them piling up in the poorest districts of the parish, he then expressed his disappointment that the plants are not hiring local residents.

ADJOURNMENT

After determining there was no additional business to come before the council, on a motion offered by Councilman Cooper and seconded by Councilman Bland and carried, the meeting adjourned at 8:47 p.m.


Linda Hubbell, Secretary