

The Mayor and Council of the City of Abbeville met in regular session on May 18, 2021 at 5:30 P.M., at the regular meeting place, the Council Meeting Room, located at 101 North State Street, Abbeville, Louisiana, with the Honorable Mark Piazza, Mayor, presiding.

Members Present: Council Members, Francis Plaisance, Terry Broussard, Brady Broussard, Jr., Francis Touchet, Jr., Mayor Pro-Tem and Roslyn White

Members Absent: None

Also, Present: Ike Funderburk, City Attorney
Jude Mire, Fire Chief
Bill Spearman, Police Chief
Jason Hebert, Police Department Lieutenant
Clay Menard, Public Works Director
Allie Horton, Digital Media Assistant
Gene Sellers, Engineer
Richard Primeaux, Engineer
Bridget Levy, Parks and Recreation Board
Tommy Picard, QSA
Charles Vallot, 906 Greene Street

Mayor Piazza asked Councilman Francis Plaisance to lead those assembled in prayer. Mayor Piazza asked Councilman Brady Broussard, Jr. to lead the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

-01 introduced by Ms. Terry Broussard and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to deviate from the agenda to add an item of personnel pertaining to the vacant position of Street Maintenance Foreman. The motion carried unanimously.

-02 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Ms. Terry Broussard to approve the probational appointment of Robbie Miguez and Archery Stevens to the position of police officer with the Abbeville Police Department pending successful completion of all post-hire assessments. The motion carried unanimously.

Mayor Piazza stated we have been advertising for the position of Street Maintenance Foreman and we are not at this time able to certify a list of eligibles to present to the Council. There being no list of eligibles, the Council would need to authorize re-advertisement of the vacant position as it is now vacant, as of yesterday, with the official resignation of Marlon Batiste. If the Council also wishes to appoint a provisional appointment, then that would also be appropriate.

-03 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Ms. Terry Broussard to authorize re-advertisement of the vacant Street Maintenance Foreman position. The motion carried unanimously.

-04 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. to approve the provisional appointment of Eldridge Harrison, Jr. to the vacant position of Street Maintenance Foreman at the base pay of Range 15. The motion carried unanimously.

-05 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Ms. Terry Broussard to ratify bills paid in the month of April 2021. The motion carried unanimously.

Mayor Piazza asked if there were any comments from the public on any agenda item prior to action. There were none.

Councilwoman Broussard stated that Mr. Ronald Darby has requested a three-way stop sign at the intersection of B. K. Stevens and Maude due to speeding.

-06 introduced by Ms. Terry Broussard and seconded by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. to authorize the installation of a three-way stop at the intersection of B. K. Stevens Drive and Maude Avenue. The motion carried unanimously.

B. Broussard/Plaisance
Resolution R21-23

A resolution adopting the millage rates for the 2021 Tax year.

The motion carried unanimously.

-07 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Ms. Roslyn White to approve payment of partial payment number 2 in the amount of \$787,121.31 payable to Elliott Construction, LLC for the Rehabilitation of the Runway and Partial Taxiway Project. The motion carried unanimously.

-08 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Ms. Roslyn White to approve plan change order #1 for the Rehabilitation of the T-Hangar Taxilane and Apron Areas Project which reflects an increase of \$41,698.20 to add Alternate number 2 work to the project. The motion carried unanimously.

-09 introduced by Ms. Roslyn White and seconded by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. to award the contract for the Hollingsworth Street and Cypress Street Improvement Project to the only bidder, Glenn Lege Construction, Inc., in the amount of \$131,038.50. The motion carried unanimously.

Councilwoman White reminded everyone that the Vermilion Parish Police Jury will be paying for one-half, up to \$75,000, of the project.

-10 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. to approve the purchase of a motor, in the amount of \$7,800 from Gator Tail for the new Whaly rescue boat. The motion carried unanimously.

Chief Mire stated the boat was used today without a motor because an 18-wheeler flipped over in Coulee Kinney. The boat was donated to the Fire Department by the Abbeville Rotary Club. The Fire Department will train in the pond at LaFitte Park to learn how to utilize the boat. The boat is 14 to 16 feet long. It can go in 12 inches of water. We hope to have the boat ready to present at the next Council meeting.

-11 introduced by Ms. Terry Broussard and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to table awarding the contract, from bids submitted, for the demolition of the structure located at 906 Greene Street and to allow Mr. Charles Vallot to work with Sarah Alpough, with the tax department,

pertaining to the property and to offer a timeline to get the property cleared and to keep in touch with Councilwoman Broussard regarding the progress. The motion carried unanimously.

Mayor Piazza stated that when 906 Greene Street was first discussed, it was decided that we wanted to see what type of bid results we would get if offered for bid as a total package with the tree, the yard, the debris, the asbestos and the building. That doesn't seem like it would be the least expensive or most efficient way to do it. He feels like, before we award this because it is such a high price and there is only one bidder, we might be better off doing each piece separately. There is a family member here and he may want an opportunity to do some of this work himself to try to lighten the burden for the City and his family. Mr. Vallot stated he wanted the City to find a cheaper way to get the property cleared so they can afford to pay the bill. Councilwoman Broussard asked for a timeline for completion of this. Mayor Piazza stated Mr. Vallot will have to get someone to do this. He has no intention of doing the work himself. We have had a hearing on this property already. The tree and the damage were from one of the hurricanes. This property has been to the table a couple of times. We need to come up with a better game plan. Councilwoman Broussard stated she still would need a timeline so Mr. Vallot needs to get with Sarah about this. Mr. Vallot stated he would get with Sarah and keep in touch with Councilwoman Broussard.

-12 introduced by Ms. Terry Broussard and seconded by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. to approve the date change of the Anything over Rice cookoff to be held at LaFitte Drive-in Park from May 29, 2021 to June 19, 2021. The motion carried unanimously.

Gene Sellers, Engineer

- *Discussed the Main Street Outfall Project. The pipe has been laid prior to the rain.*
- *Finished the plans for the sidewalk project at the park. He will leave a set of plans in the Mayor's office and the Council's office.*

Richard Primeaux, Engineer

- *Discussed the drainage project. The crossing on 2nd Street has been completed. They started on the Lafayette Street part. We did have some conflicts as we expected. Most of those have been resolved. The project is going well and is ahead of schedule at this time. He will present a pay estimate at the next meeting. The rain storm tested the new pipe. The water initially had to stabilize then it started to flow the way it should. Mayor Piazza stated that a resident of 5th Street called him today to let him know that he already saw a significant difference in his drainage from the work that was done on 2nd Street.*

Ike Funderburk, City Attorney

- *Discussed the American Rescue Plan. On May 10, 2021, the Department of the Treasury issued a 151-page report on its delivery of \$350 billion to state and local governments. The City of Abbeville is schedule to receive \$4.4 million. We will receive 2 payments. The first one will be for ½ of the \$4.4 million which should be received on or about 60 days from the passage of the rescue plan. That is around June 10th. The second payment for the second ½ of the \$4.4 million will be received 365 days after the initial payment. The treasury recommends that the funds be deposited into a single purpose account. The Mayor has authorized accounting to establish such account. By doing this, there will be clear accounting of utilization of the funds. All necessary steps have been taken to expedite the acquisition of the funds. He emailed the Mayor and Council a link to the fact sheet published by the Treasury which goes into greater detail than what is presented tonight. He discussed some of the approved projects and those that are ineligible. The plan allows a municipality to replace lost public section revenue that is attributable to*

COVID. We are in the process of trying to identify any loss of revenue suffered as a result of COVID, especially from the Utility department. The plan encourages the expenditure of these funds by investing in water and sewer infrastructure. We can upgrade facilities, transmission and distribution lines and storage systems. This would include replacement of lead service lines. According to the Mayor, we have been seeking grant funds for years for a project at the water plant. This is the lime project. It is shovel ready to go and would fit in this aspect. Also, wastewater infrastructure projects include treatment plants, managing and treating storm water and subsurface drainage water. At the wastewater treatment plant, we have another shovel ready project for improvements to the clarifiers. These projects are aligned with DEQ and EPA's Clean Water Act. Using that criteria, we won't have problems getting approval for those types of projects. There is also a provision for broadband. Those are the big picture items we can look at for expenditures for the first payments. There are also some things that you can't spend the money on. These are things that we really need to be careful with. The funds may not be used to offset a reduction in net tax revenue from March 3, 2021 through December 31, 2024. That will not affect us because we will not decrease our sales tax. You can't deposit these funds into a pension fund. You can't use these funds to pay off bonded indebtedness. You can't use these funds to satisfy a judgement. You can't use these funds to put into a rainy-day fund or a financial reserve account. You can't go outside of the water or sewer infrastructure or broadband infrastructure. The projects have to fit into water, sewer or broadband. We can't use the money to fix streets or buy park equipment. Those are the restraints put on us by the act. If we don't spend the funds by December 31, 2024 you have to give the money back. The City will be subject to an audit for the utilization of these funds so it is prudent for the City to document the expenditure of these funds minutely to show that the funds are being used for the intended purposes. We will maintain these records in accordance with our normal retention policy. Councilman Touchet stated he disagrees with Ike that it has to be used just for this. We need to consider the negative impact, economically, on the community. This is the perfect opportunity to think outside the box. Broussard and Youngsville are whipping our tails. We need to find a way to bring people into our City or we will lose businesses. Ike stated that there is a provision to allow for the speedy recovery of travel, tourism and hospitality sectors that have been particularly hard hit by COVID. He didn't cover everything and he said that from the get go because time tonight doesn't allow that. The items discussed tonight were very broad strokes with the paintbrush. Councilman Plaisance stated we do need a lot of work in our sewer and water infrastructure however he makes a good point. We do have to be very careful how we spend this money. Mayor Piazza stated it is kind of like a hurricane and FEMA. You spend a bunch of money hiring contract crews, cleaning up and getting your lights back on and fixing roofs and buildings and you hope to get your money back. Once you do, you get audited years later and then if they don't like the project, they take the money back. He was hoping that there would have been a pre-approval process but it doesn't look like the way this will operate. The federal government wants to let you hang yourself out to dry and then they will come back and audit you and then they will take the money back. Councilman Broussard likes the idea of broadband because that is the future. That is an economic development inducement in attracting new businesses. Councilwoman White stated that she would like to continue this conversation in that we can bring the shovel ready projects we have with the estimated costs of those projects. All of them as Council Members speak to their constituents and think about the projects that we think might qualify and continue to have conversations and brainstorming possibilities of how this money might be spent for economic development to help small businesses and for critical infrastructure. She had a very long conversation with Kaptel about fiber optics and broadband infrastructure and she plans to continue those conversations with them.

It is very important if we could expand that infrastructure and make it affordable for businesses in the downtown area. It is another selling point to moving a business downtown. They already have a lot of infrastructure in place coming right through downtown, right up to City Hall and right up to the Courthouse. They already have those main trunk lines. She would like us to pull all the plans for the projects that we have waiting and see those numbers so we can have an idea and then bring our ideas to the table. Maybe we can have a special committee meeting on that. Mayor Piazza agreed that we should have a meeting just on this particular issue and look at some of the shovel ready projects with our engineers. We can also bring in our grant consultant to see if there are other grant opportunities available. Councilman Touchet stated that he is interested in putting turf on four baseball fields at Comeaux Park with this money. Mayor Piazza stated that may not be an appropriate use of these funds according to the guidelines. Also, it would be hard to justify spending \$500,000 when not many children from Abbeville play on those fields. People were in Broussard and Youngsville way before the ballparks were built and those locations have a recreation tax and we do not. Councilman Plaisance stated that some of our problem is the blighted property you see right when you come into town and also our crime. We have to work together on that. Councilwoman Broussard agreed and this bothers her too. We need to attract more businesses and people to come here. Mayor Piazza stated that we all need to start thinking about projects. Councilwoman White stated it would be nice to see if we can get grant opportunities where we could leverage our \$2 million and turn it into \$10 million.

Clay Menard, Public Works Director

- *The Electrical Superintendent will be going out on medical leave tomorrow. We have contractors and Harvey Dubois available. We don't know how long the superintendent will be out at this time.*
- *The sidewalks at the splashpad have been poured. The electrical work is completed. We need to dress up the area, paint the splashpad and install the features. We hope to complete in within the next few weeks.*
- *We hauled dirt at Harmony Park. We excavated the ditch on South Lamar and we will install culverts.*
- *We signed the contract to elevate the pavilion at McKinley Scott Park and the contractor has ordered the materials. He hopes the material will be in within 6 to 8 weeks.*

Tommy Picard, Park Director

- *Baseball season is coming to an end.*
- *Discussed the tennis courts. They close at 9:00 PM. Mayor Piazza asked if he had a keypad lock installed. Tommy said the guy came out but never got back with him. Councilman Broussard stated we need to get that done as soon as possible. We can't afford to repair it again so we have to protect that taxpayer investment. Tommy said he would take care of it tomorrow. Councilwoman White stated it should be locked after each use.*
- *Wants to rent the pavilion and charge a fee instead of just allowing people to reserve it for free. Councilwoman Broussard stated she is not in favor of charging a fee because it is a public park and a public pavilion. Tommy asked about setting a price to use it. Mayor Piazza stated the idea behind the splashpad was to have it open in the summer months where kids could enjoy some coolness in the hot weather but it was also supposed to be made available for birthday parties and festivals and those types of things. We will charge someone if they want to reserve the splashpad for their kid's birthday party. That is something we will have to think about. Councilwoman White stated if we do that then we need to put that money in a special account to build another public pavilion. That way*

you could have a public pavilion and a private pavilion. You could rent one and the other would be for public use.

- *The recessed lights at pavilion #1 are being damaged. Clay Menard stated these are the new lights that were installed when the Rotary Club completed the renovation recently. Tommy asked for something to be installed over the lights to protect them. Mayor Piazza asked Clay to get with an electrician regarding this.*
- *Wants two new metal doors for Luquette Field.*
- *Wants two metal storage containers for Comeaux Park to store equipment and supplies. The 8 X 20 is \$3,200 and the 8 X 40 is \$4,600. Mayor Piazza asked him to submit a firm quote to him so it can be put on the agenda for the next City Council meeting.*
- *There are 10 keys for pavilion #1. Wants to change the locks and wants the City to pay for it. The cost is \$385. Mayor Piazza requested a list from Tommy showing what cores are where, what locks we have, who has keys and who is going to get keys. A year from now you will come back and say you gave a key to this person and a key to another person and we never got it back and now we have to change all the cores. He does not want to go back down that road again. He wants the list in writing.*
- *Councilwoman Broussard asked about registration. Tommy explained that everybody has to register online only and pay at the time of registration. We had so many people that came in and didn't pay. If they don't have access to a computer, they can come to the office. They will pay us there and then we will use our credit card to register them. We are owed \$2,000 from people who did not pay their registration for baseball.*
- *Councilwoman White asked Tommy to have the flyers at the baseball field when there are events going on.*
- *Tommy asked Ike if he had worked on the agreement between Abbeville High School and the City. Ike stated he had not.*

Mayor Mark Piazza

- *The Municipal Employees Civil Service Board meets tomorrow and they will accept the resignation of Tracette. They will be advertising for a part-time director. It is about 20 hours per week. If you have anyone, please ask them to submit their application to either Nicole or Lynn.*
- *The electrical superintendent will be out as Clay reported. He will be out a few weeks. We have a two-man crew, from the tree trimming crew, that is here full-time. We have made contact with LUS and they have assured us that if we have any emergencies, they will respond and help us out. We have also made contact with Shelton Energy and they are on standby in case we have an emergency and we need their assistance. We have backup. They will help us in emergencies. They will not assist us with the normal, everyday maintenance like street lights and tree trimming and those types of things. Those things will take time to get to and hopefully some of the younger guys on the crew will gain some experience while the electrical superintendent is out. We are asking them to step up to the plate and get them into a bucket and start getting some benefit from that.*
- *Richard reported on the drainage project earlier and we did have some compliments in Councilman Broussard's district. We need to get with the drainage board to continue the project to 5th Street and all the way to A. A. Comeaux from the bridge. It is pretty bad and it has grown a lot. That has not been done in many years. Richard stated that he spoke to them already and it is on the drainage board's schedule.*
- *Sandbags are available but we were unable to get dry sand. The Police Jury has sandbags available too. We do have a stock pile of about 200 bags but we were unable to get more dry sand.*

- They had crews cleaning catch basins today and flushing culverts yesterday and today. We will need to catch up on our schedule and he asked Clay to meet with them to do that and the crew might have to work this weekend.
- We spoke in detail about the \$4.4 million. That is something we will have to work on in the near future. Be thinking along those lines. We will put together a series of meetings where we will talk it out and discuss it to see what are the best uses of those finances.

Bill Spearman, Police Chief

- He discussed calls and gave breakdown of those to the Mayor and Council.
- He discussed personnel. He is 6 short. Three are in the hiring process. We hired two of those tonight.
- We have been using the DWI grants. We can only use those for state highways.
- One of his sergeants was in a traffic accident in Lafayette while attending training. Risk Management was notified. His estimate to repair the vehicle is about \$15 shy of the totaled value.
- A week ago, we had a drive by shooting at a residence on Hawthorne. We were able to get the license plate on one of our cameras. Mr. Brooks was able to track him. We are still awaiting the other cameras. There are a few agencies ahead of us. Mayor Piazza asked Chief to have his liaison person for the apartment complexes to go out and do an audit on their camera systems.

Jude Mire, Fire Chief

- He has two on extended sick leave and the one we hired at the last meeting is in the middle of medicals.
- Station #3 on Maude, the garage door motor went out so we are getting that repaired.
- The firetruck at Hebert Substation is being repaired.
- We will begin hydrant testing on May 31, 2021 and it will take approximately two weeks. They will notify as many people as possible. Once we finish that we will paint the fire hydrants.
- He discussed the calls in the last two weeks.
- Beginning 7/1/21, we will begin running full medicals again.
- Councilwoman White asked about the hydrant on E. Vermilion and N. St. Charles. It gets hit all the time. Chief Mire said since he has been chief it has been hit at least 7 or 8 times. He met with the guy who tests them for the PIL and because of the placement of the nearby hydrants, we will abandon that hydrant. We will still have plenty of water to fight fires.

Councilman Francis Plaisance

- The work that we were able to do to alleviate some of the water on Old Kaplan Highway has helped. It still comes up but it recedes a lot quicker.
- He gave a report on the Abbeville Family Fish Fest that was held on May 8th. There were 619 people in attendance. The event was filmed by Paradise Louisiana. It is not on YouTube and it is episode 971. Councilman Touchet is in it. Nobody caught the tagged fish. People came Sunday to fish again. They were fishing this past weekend again. Bridget put a sign that fishing was not allowed in the dog park. Councilman Touchet asked if there is enough fish or will it have to be restocked. Councilman Plaisance stated there is more than enough now as the pond is overstocked. However, Wildlife & Fisheries will continue to restock the pond as needed. Councilman Touchet complimented Councilman Plaisance on the event. There were a lot of people there and they were catching fish. He was afraid we would run out of fish. Councilman Touchet asked that we make sure we have enough signs regarding fishing at your own risk. Councilman Plaisance would like to

open another day for fishing and asked the Council for their thoughts. We really need to keep the fishing out of the dog park. Councilwoman White asked Councilman Plaisance to come up with the rules, days and times and come back with that at the next meeting so everybody can be on the same page. It is not a good idea to let them fish where the dog park is. Tommy asked who monitors the park. Mayor Piazza stated that Bridget is there when the park is open so the hours it opens will depend when Bridget can work.

- *Mayor Piazza asked Tommy to look into installing disc golf at LaFitte Park. His son from Dallas stated that is very popular there. Councilman Broussard stated that we already have it purchased but it was never installed. Tommy said he would look into it because Denise had spoken to him about it recently.*

Councilman Brady Broussard, Jr.

- *Complimented the Garden Club. Over 150 people attended their garden tour.*
- *There were a lot of people at Comeaux Park. These people were not from Abbeville. Those parks were filled. This was girl's softball. It was so wonderful that it became a problem because the out of towners were parking on both sides of the circle and it was impeding traffic. Clay will get the No Parking stencil and paint that area to correct that.*
- *Mayor Piazza stated years ago, when we first agreed to the School Resource Officer, we had agreed to it because the resource officer could serve as Park Security for the summer months. That was a different chief way back then. That was the reason we started the Resource Officer program. Chief Spearman stated the Resource Officer works traffic or training now. Mayor Piazza would like us to get back to that when we can. Tommy wanted security beginning in February. Mayor Piazza stated the high school has to provide their own security.*

There being no further business to discuss, Mayor Piazza declared this meeting adjourned.

ATTEST:

APPROVE:

Kathleen S. Faulk
Secretary-Treasurer

Mark Piazza
Mayor