

City of Abbeville  
Regular Meeting  
January 3, 2023

The Mayor and Council of the City of Abbeville met in regular session on January 3, 2023 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 Roslyn R. White, Mayor, presiding.

Members Present: Council Members, Carlton Campbell, Brady Broussard, Jr., Francis Touchet, Jr., Mayor Pro-Tem and Tony Hardy

Members Absent: Councilwoman Terry Broussard

Also, Present: Bart Broussard, City Attorney  
Mike Hardy, Police Chief  
Jude Mire, Fire Chief  
Chris Gautreaux, Director of Public Works & Parks  
Marie Buteaux, Water Plant Superintendent  
Allie Horton, Digital Media Assistant  
Gene Sellers, Engineer  
Charles Dill, Abbeville Planning Commission  
Elaine Dill, Municipal Employees Civil Service Board  
Theresa Holmes & Elbert Dawson, MLK Celebration  
Michael Bertrand, Abbeville General Hospital

*Mayor White asked Councilman Carlton Campbell to lead those assembled in prayer. Mayor White asked Mr. Michael Bertrand to lead the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.*

-01 introduced by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Tony Hardy to amend the agenda to add a resolution to postpone the ordinance directed annual water and sewer increase until March 1, 2023 due to the freezing weather and the excessive water use of our customers around the Christmas holidays. The motion carried unanimously.

*Mayor White asked if there were any public comments from the audience on any agenda item prior to action. There were none. Mayor White asked that we keep agenda item comments limited to 3 minutes in order to move the meeting along.*

-02 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Carlton Campbell to ratify the appointment of Nicholas Vincent to the position of Police Officer in the Abbeville Police Department. The motion carried unanimously.

*Ms. Theresa Holmes and Mr. Elbert Dawson discussed the upcoming Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration. The festivities will begin on January 6, 2023 and will continue until MLK Day on January 16, 2023. They will be honoring Mr. Terry Bessard and Ms. Geralyn Thomas. Mayor White asked Ms. Holmes to give the motorcade route to Allie Horton so she can post that route. We have not required them to get a permit in the past so they are not required to get a permit this year.*

-03 introduced by Mr. Tony Hardy and seconded by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. to approve the minutes from the regular City Council meeting held on November 15, 2022 and the Committee meeting held on December 5, 2022. The motion carried unanimously.

-04 introduced by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Carlton Campbell to approve the cleanup remediation permit for 1100 Charity Street. The motion carried unanimously.

-05 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Tony Hardy to surplus Lieutenant Jonathan Touchet's service weapon so that the Fraternal Order of Police can purchase it at fair market value to present to Lieutenant Touchet since he has retired. The motion carried unanimously.

-06 introduced by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Carlton Campbell to authorize repairs, at a cost of between \$8,000 and \$10,000, to the spare fire truck for the Abbeville Fire Department. The motion carried unanimously.

### **Touchet/Campbell Resolution R23-01**

*A resolution to postpone the ordinance directed 3% annual increase of water and sewer rates until March 1, 2023, due to the excess water usage of customers during the hard freeze at the end of December 2022.*

*The motion carried unanimously.*

Gene Sellers, Engineer

- *The sidewalk project will begin on Monday.*

Chris Gautreaux, Director of Public Works and Parks

- *He discussed the recent extended freeze. Many departments worked around the clock nonstop. Marie put together some notes to discuss tonight. He asked Marie to discuss this. Marie presented a graph. The blue line represents the air temperature, the orange line represents the PSI in the system and the grey line is the water tower levels. Through the freeze on December 24<sup>th</sup>, at 12:00 PM, we maintained a very high PSI in the 60s. Our tower levels were in the 20s. When the temperature rose above freezing and the pipes defrosted, in conjunction with residents running their water, it was too much demand for the system. We could not keep up. As the temperature rose, the pressure came down and the towers plummeted. What limits you losing the water is having an end cap on the system that can retain the water. When you have this much water going out, those service pumps are not doing their usual PSI, they are rolling. You are not pumping against any head. You have lost the head of the tower and you have lost the pressure in the system that is retained when you have a closed system. Councilman Touchet asked Marie to give an overview of the system and how water is distributed. Marie stated that we pump water from the wells. From the wells we go to the clarifier. From the clarifier we go into filters. Those filters drain into a clear well underneath the water plant. That water is then pumped to the system. This system provides water to residents, businesses and the water towers. Mayor White added that the towers are what keep the head pressure high. We always have water in those two towers which help to keep the pressure in the system higher. Within 5 hours we lost both towers and almost the entire clear well from open water lines, people bleeding their lines, people cooking for Christmas Eve, family over taking baths and we identified as of this date, 170 water leaks on private property. This was like a stab victim with a bunch of wounds and you are trying to put blood into it. Until you close all the wounds, you are just pumping aimlessly. We wanted to try and notify the public but the rapid decline of the water pressure did not afford us much time. We have members of our team that went above and beyond.*

*They gave up their Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and the day after Christmas. It was an unprecedented event. We prepared as much as we possibly could. Mr. Gene Sellers stated on Christmas morning that he didn't know. We have never heard him say that. It was the perfect storm of events. We called out all of our fire and police to help look for water leaks. Marie Buteaux proved to us that she is the right person for the job. Her and Chris were communicating constantly and bringing in Mr. Gene when needed. Marie and her whole team did a great job. They were working 24-hours a day from 6:00 AM, Thursday until Tuesday. She also recognized Chris Gautreaux, Shirley Bertrand, Mary Rogers, Gene Sellers, Alex Boudine, Larry Moore, Jr. and his team, Lee Schexnaider and his team and the City Council. It took the entire team for this event. We were out of water for only 4 hours and 10 minutes in four days. That is remarkable considering the events. She looked at the CDC website and there were 199 public water systems that had boil advisories from being out of water due to freezing temperatures. We lifted ours on Friday. On Saturday there were still 63 public water systems still under a boil advisory. We can't control Mother Nature. Marie stated that we didn't start working when the freeze happened. We were working the day before the freeze at 6:00 AM. We did plan, we filled the towers and we did pump. We normally use 2.1 million gallons of water a day in Abbeville. We were pumping at a rate of 3.5 million gallons per day. She asked Mr. Gene if there would have been any way that we could have put out more water. Mr. Gene stated no. You put out more than the capacity of the plant. Chris stated that going forward we will inspect the pumps. Since Jacquelyn tower was empty, we had it cleaned and sanitized. It will most likely be back in service tomorrow morning. In two weeks, we will also clean and sanitize the St. Theresa tower too. Mayor White read through a timeline of events. The City of Abbeville's ideal pressure is 63 PSI. On average we pump 2.5 million gallons per day and we use about 2.1 million gallons per day. We are rated to produce 3 million gallons per day. As Marie stated, during the freeze, we were pumping at 3.5 million gallons per day and we couldn't keep up. We have two water towers which hold 500,000 gallons each. The ground storage at the plant holds 650,000 gallons. The clear well hold about 220,000 gallons of water. At 11:00 PM on Thursday, 12/22/22, freezing temperatures began. At 12:01 AM, Friday, 12/23/22, St. Theresa's water tower was at 28.5 feet and the pressure was 64 PSI. Temperatures stayed at or below freezing the entire day. At midnight on Christmas Eve, 12/24/22, tower level was at 21.9 and the PSI was 64. At 11:00 AM, air temperature came up to 32 degrees. At noon on that day, the air temperature was 34 degrees and tower level was at 22.8 feet and the pressure was at 62 PSI. No reason to be alarmed. At 1:29 PM she received the phone call from 911 saying low tower alarm at St. Theresa. That is not an uncommon thing as anytime it drops to 20 feet we get that alarm. Pressure was still 59 PSI. We sent the team out to look for leaks and shut those off. The operators were monitoring at the plant. At 4:00 PM, Larry Moore, Jr. isolated St. Theresa tower. By the time he got there, the water level was at 12.9 feet and the system pressure was 60 PSI. The towers do stay pretty much equal. We lost 7.1 feet of water in the tower in two and one-half hours with no change in pressure. We are still not overly alarmed. At 5:00 PM, Jacquelyn Street tower was at 9.2 feet and the system pressure was slowly declining at 55 PSI. The team is still out looking for leaks and shutting those off as they are found. 6:25 PM, the water level at Jacquelyn tower was at zero and the pressure was at 52 PSI. We still had good pressure but we had lost the entire tower at Jacquelyn. Now we have Jacquelyn with no water and a small amount in St. Theresa as a reserve in case there is a fire. At 6:49 PM, water pressure dropped to 36 PSI. If it gets to 20, we have to go under a boil advisory. She got on social media asking the residents to help by checking properties within the City and to report those water leaks as soon as possible. She also asked residents to conserve water in order to help rebuild the pressure. At 7:20 PM, the water pressure dropped below 20 PSI. At 7:25 PM, the clear well was being drained at a high rate. She made the call to allow the pumps to cut off which would temporarily cause*

water to be off to preserve the pump system. If we lose the pumps, we would be in a far worse situation for an extended period of time. At 7:30 PM, there was no water for customers. At 9:45 PM, water was back on to customers at low pressure. At this point we were pulling from the clear well storage at the plant. The team identified over 40 leaks on private property on Saturday. On Sunday, 12/25/22, at 3:00 AM the system pressure was 21 PSI and the air temperature was at 25 degrees. At 8:45 AM air temperatures rose above freezing. At 9:00 AM, the service pumps kicked off. People were without water while we filled the clear well from the ground storage. The service pumps were back on in 15 minutes. The air temperature was 34 degrees. The pressure was low so some people thought we had shut the water off. We continued to produce water the entire time but we couldn't keep up with demand. That is why people saw little to no pressure. At 1:35 PM the call was made to open the valve from ground storage to try to get more pressure to customers. This improved the pressure to our customers. With the help of residents and the City team we were able to identify and isolate about 100 leaks on Sunday, mostly on private property. At 6:00 PM, the pressure was up to 32 PSI. Locating the leaks and people stopping to run their water because temperatures were above freezing helped to build the pressure back up. From 11:04 PM to 12:29 AM, the service pumps stopped to refill the ground storage. Pressure was at 0 PSI during this process. On Monday, 12/26/22, at 6:00 PM, we were back up to 60 PSI with both towers isolated. On Tuesday, 12/27/22, at 6:45 AM, there was a brief interruption of service as the service pumps were switched over. At 10:00 AM we began refilling the St. Theresa tower and Jacquelyn tower was cleaned, inspected and sanitized. On Wednesday, 12/28/22 at 7:15 AM we began refilling Jacquelyn tower. The boil advisory was lifted at 11:00 AM on Friday, 12/30/22. Marie stated that this was an unprecedented event. She has never saw the towers fall like that in the 18 years she has been working at the plant. Chris stated that we have all learned from this event and will change things in the future from that. Councilman Broussard stated that the data was there. The news outlets reported it. We were warned a week before the event that Siberian air was heading our way. People should have prepared their home and businesses for this. Mr. Gene Sellers stated that he went to the plant at 6:00 AM on Christmas morning and Marie started explaining how the system works. He admitted that she knows more than he knows about the system. It would have been a lot worse if she did not know how the system works. Marie stated that they want to produce the best water that we can in the necessary quantity at the best level. People with compromised immune systems are drinking our water. This is our responsibility. Mayor White encouraged each Council member to take a tour of the water plant to learn how the system operates. That will help you get a better understanding of what goes on in our water system.

#### Mayor Roslyn White

- She is looking forward to 2023 with excitement and energy. She wants the public to expect progress on their roads. We are working on that. We will have new businesses coming to town and new events coming to downtown. We will be working towards new technology and working with public safety to build trust within the community.

#### Police Chief Mike Hardy

- Two juveniles that were shot at 3:00 AM this morning. We have arrested the suspect and he is incarcerated in the juvenile detention center.

#### Fire Chief Jude Mire

- Since they have limited the number of medicals they respond to, they are running 60% less.

Councilman Carlton Campbell

- *Wished everyone a Happy New Year. Pray for no more freezes.*

Councilwoman Terry Broussard

- *Although Councilwoman Broussard was not at the meeting, she asked Kathy Faulk to read the following: I would like to take a few minutes to thank you, Mayor, for the way you handled your first crisis during the freeze. You were proactive in your decisions and kept the community informed. You came in on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and into the next week working side by side with the Public Works Director, Water Plant Superintendent, Mr. Gene Sellers and the City workers. Your dedication to the city and this community shows what kind of leader you are. Thank you.*

Councilman Brady Broussard, Jr.

- *Thanked Police Juror Liz Touchet for attending the meeting tonight. He wished everyone a Happy New Year.*

Councilman Francis Touchet, Jr.

- *Wished everyone a Happy New Year.*

Councilman Tony Hardy

- *Wished everyone a Happy New Year.*

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

ATTEST:

APPROVE:

Kathleen S. Faulk  
Secretary-Treasurer

Roslyn R. White  
Mayor