

The Mayor and Council of the City of Abbeville met for a committee meeting on August 18, 2020 at 6:00 P.M., at the A. A. Comeaux Recreation Center located at 300 A. A. Comeaux Drive, Suite 200, 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  
Debbie Garrot, Director, Vermilion Parish Animal Control  
Dr. Paul Whittington, Veterinarian  
Paul Bourgeois, Police Juror  
Wayne Touchet, Police Juror  
Bill Spearman, Police Chief  
Jason Hebert, Police Lieutenant  
Katie Bourgeois  
John Valdetero  
Rachel Trahan  
Jeri Sonnier  
Dianna Ducote  
Ann Garrot  
Rachel Brown  
Shannon Hebert

*Mayor Piazza stated we are here for an Ordinance Committee meeting chaired by Councilwoman Terry Broussard. He turned the floor over to Councilwoman Broussard. She read the first item on the agenda. To consider amending Section 4-21 and 4-26 to allow for an inoculation period of three years for rabies vaccinations. She turned the floor over to Ms. Debbie Garrot.*

*Ms. Garrot stated that until recently there was only one option when it came to rabies vaccinations. That was a one-year vaccination. Now we have adopted a three-year vaccination. The State has approved the three-year rabies vaccination as long as it is administered by a Louisiana licensed veterinarian. Dr. Whittington stated this is appropriate and works great for shelter animals. The veterinarian could decide either the one or three year. Mr. Funderburk asked if the fee needs to be modified. The fee is currently \$5.00. Ms. Garrot stated she would research that and get back with Mr. Funderburk.*

-01 introduced by Ms. Roslyn White and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to recommend to the City Council to modify the existing ordinance to allow rabies vaccinations from 1 to 3 years as long as it is administered by a Louisiana licensed veterinarian. The motion carried unanimously.

*Councilwoman Broussard read the two next agenda items aloud. 1. Public hearing for public input about the ordinance pertaining to animals and 2. Discussion of proposed changes to the ordinance pertaining to animals. Mayor Piazza asked for a motion to go into a public hearing.*

-02 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. to enter into a public hearing. The motion carried unanimously.

*Mayor Piazza stated that we are now in a public hearing and he asked Ike Funderburk to open up the meeting with some discussion.*

*Mr. Funderburk stated 4,000 years ago Egyptians domesticated cats. Here we are today. They had cats for one reason: cats ate rats. Cats have a function in this world. They are natural hunters. According to National Geographic, they stalk and pounce with sharp claws and teeth. They are agile and their tails give them outstanding balance. Domesticated cats are largely*

carnivorous. They are meat eaters. Humans may supplement or augment their diets one way or another at their fiat. But a cat can live on its own with its own cunning instincts. Cats have been with us on a domestic basis for 4,000 years. They were causing trouble here in Abbeville in 1879. "Dogs were taking over the town and the town Marshal went hunting them with his rifle. Cats also proved to be a menace". That is directly from the History of Abbeville that is in the library. That was the solution to the cat and dog problem 140 year ago to take a rifle out and shoot them. Responsible people would not come to the same conclusion today. Because we have a lot of people living in a concentrated area and if you start shooting at animals, you might hit vehicles, houses and people. That is not the rational thing to do. By the way, as law enforcement would tell you, it is illegal to discharge a firearm within the corporate limits of the City. Do we think that only Abbeville has this problem? No, not at all. This magazine is from the Louisiana Municipal Association and this is this month's edition. Their executive counsel, their head lawyer, wrote an article about the problems with dogs and cats. He read aloud from the article as follows: "There must be a shift away from blaming homeless dogs and cats. Over population is a problem created by humans. We have a moral obligation to address it in a humane way." Taking out a gun and shooting them or poisoning them is not a humane way and that is not the methodology that we as governing entities need to approach this. Going back to the article: "There are resources available to assist in this and in revamping their policies and developing efficient ways to deal with the homeless pet population. One of them is Best Friends Animal Society which has the ability to come in and help tailor a plan for the community and also work towards getting grants that can help fund this perceived problem." We are here because every governmental entity has the obligation to provide for peace, safety, health and to protect the property of its residents. To fulfill this obligation, the government may exercise its police powers to balance the rights and interests of all. Likewise, residents have the obligation to keep their lives in harmony with their neighbors in accordance with the lawful restraints put on them by their government. To that end, the Vermilion Parish Police Jury and the City of Abbeville seek to create a cohesive legislation which establishes policies and procedures to regulate the ownership of animals and the humane treatment of non-owned animals while at the same time balancing the rights of the general public. It is for those reasons that this meeting of the Ordinance Committee was called tonight. We have invited members of the Police Jury, animal rights groups and the general public to reason together with us to address the perceived problem. At all times we must be conscience of the laws of nature which laugh at superficial rules created by humans. Our goal tonight is to find practical common ground which serves the best interest of the public instead of an interest of an individual or a special interest group. In doing so he has several things that we may discuss tonight. It will be up to you. Here are the things that he and Mayor have put together as possible points of interest to discuss: What if any limitations should be put on the ownership of domestic animals and house pets? Should there be a limited number of pets per household? Should the owner of household pets be required to pick up and properly dispose of a pet's fecal material when deposited by the animal on public property or the property of their neighbor? Should the owner of household pets have to keep their pet contained in his house or on a leash? Should feeding non-owned animals be a nuisance punishable by either civil or criminal process? Should enforcement of the nuisance provision of the code be a process administered by the City, either criminally or administratively, or a personal cause of action to be brought by the complaining or damaged problem. Finally, should the City adopt a diversion program administered by animal control for non-owned cats, which he refers to tonight as community cats, because they belong to no one. A diversion program causes free roaming cats to be trapped, neutered or spayed, to be identified by ear clippings, vaccinated and returned to the community. The cat would be cared for by a person who has been certified by animal control as a community cat care giver. The cat may continue to run at large but not otherwise be exempted by the nuisance provisions in the code. Those are things that we may discuss tonight but these are some that we thought might be a good jumping off point to try to resolve the issues that we have in our community. He turned the floor back over to Mayor Piazza.

Mayor Piazza recognized Ms. Debbie Garrot again and asked her to state her position with Police Jury. Ms. Garrot stated she is in control of Vermilion Parish Rabies Control. She presented some statistics regarding dogs and cats. On March 6, 2014, three dogs were euthanized that some say should not have been. At that point, the Police Jury decided to change things. Since that time through July 31, 2020 we have taken in more than 4,681 dogs. We have taken in 2,567 cats. Some animals that come in our facility die of natural causes before they leave the shelter. Others have to be euthanized because when we bring them to Dr. Paul, they are in such bad condition that their lives cannot be saved. Our partner, AABA, raised the money, received grants and donations from the public. Those who gave were not from Vermilion Parish. These funds reimbursed the Police Jury every penny of medical expenses

that is paid out for the care of these animals. That total is well over \$100,000. Since January of this year 415 dogs have been picked up and 151 cats have been picked up. She did not have the breakdown from Abbeville month by month but people would be surprised with that number. People say that we are not interested in picking up strays and that could not be further from the truth. In June we took in 44 dogs and 25 were from Abbeville. We took in 33 cats and 17 were from Abbeville. In July we took in 70 dogs and 41 were from Abbeville. We took in 27 cats and 10 were from Abbeville. Our policy is that when we go into a neighborhood and find a stray dog, whether we find it on our own or we find out from law enforcement, we make every effort, if the dog is in good condition, to find the dog's owner. If we find the owner and the owner wants to give up the dog, we have a new policy to work with owners. We put their dog online. We try to do everything for the dog to stay with the owner because they are better off with them. They are then processed through AABA that way they can go from the owner to the rescue. They come to our facility only to be photographed. Cats are not quite the same because people are not usually looking for cats. If we cannot find the owner then they come into our facility and they are processed. Every now and then we have someone who will foster the animal for us because of our limited space. We can house comfortably 70 dogs but right now we are over that capacity. People don't have money right now because of COVID so they are dropping off their dogs. Some people are dropping off their animals down back roads. Some come from other parishes so we return those dogs to that parish. We work very hard with law enforcement. Since she was notified about the cat situation, and you have no ordinance in regards to cats, she moved forward in order to have some kind of peaceful resolution. The complaint was filed against Anne Garrot so Debbie met with her. She worked with Anne and placed some traps to remove some of the cats. There were about ten other people that she spoke to and they all worked together to trap the cats to have them neutered and spayed. We worked to either move them to their facility or remove from that neighborhood because of all the bad feelings that were persisting at that time. These people were open to finding a peaceful resolution. We did not get them all and we all have to work towards that. She spoke to Spaynation in Lafayette and they are working to get a grant for Vermilion Parish for cats so that they can be neutered and spayed at a reduced price. She will approach the Police Jury for their approval and animal control can help in the trapping of the cats and we can transport them to Spaynation. All of this is in the works. There are a total of 23 cats that are gone from 5<sup>th</sup> Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Street and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. Nine of them were killed by a neighbor's dog. We know that because the residents caught the dog. As a citizen of Abbeville, she has been an animal activist for over 30 years. She is very involved with feral cats. She didn't belong to any organization. She did this all on her own with her own money and her husband's money. She went around trapping cats where there were problems, she spoke to the residents, they cared for the cats but they didn't have anybody to spay or neuter them. We would transport them to Lafayette and if they didn't have the money, we paid for it. She brought over 100 cats on her own. The feral cats are very important to her. They did not ask to have life and be abandoned as they are. She understands that they can be a nuisance to those people who do not have an appreciation for them just as she finds birds a nuisance. She doesn't have the compassion for birds as some people do. She understands all of that. She gets it. But she thinks that we need to find a common ground and to take responsibility for these animals and to stop the reproduction so we can get this under control. She believes the lifespan, from her own feral cats, is about 5 years. She has had only one that has lived longer than that. Their life expectancy is not very long even if they are neutered and spayed because they are killed by dogs, coyotes and other animals. The racoons have been killing the kittens. She has a special place for feral cats but she understands that there are people that are not like us and do not feel the same. But she thinks that we have to find a common ground.

Mayor Piazza recognized Dr. Paul Whittington that is here tonight. We really appreciate you being here tonight and for everything that he has done for the Police Jury and Debbie and animal control. He asked if Dr. Whittington had anything he would like to say. Dr. Whittington stated that this is a very emotional issue and he begs anyone on either side to learn more about it. If we can get a grant for Spaynation, that is population control. These animals are not owned but they are being fed. Nine out of ten of the strays are being fed by somebody. At some times it feels like a losing battle because it is emotional. People are mad and he challenges everyone to learn more. Population control is not something we want to think about on the human side but either quit feeding them or start spaying them. Bob Barker had it right. It is important. It is a problem. People drop off kittens and dogs. We need to know that we are doing this with people's support and understanding. No one wants to dart a dog. It is hard. Please hear everybody's voice and quit being so certain about everything. We can't solve this if we all remain strong willed. Spaynation is trying and we just have to bring the animals to them. Pay attention and try to get involved. Care a little more.

Mayor Piazza recognized two Police Jurors in the audience: Mr. Wayne Touchet and Mr. Paul Bourgeois. We appreciate you being here. He asked if either one of them had comments tonight. Mr. Touchet stated he likes the idea of spaying and neutering because the population stops. They will eventually thin out. It is important that the parish ordinance follows the municipalities' ordinances. We need to all get together to get everybody to adopt the same animal control ordinance and at the same time try to implement the spay/neuter program parish wide. Mr. Bourgeois also believes that the ordinance needs to be the same. Maurice has put together an ordinance that addresses everything that was discussed tonight. Their ordinance also talks about fines. The nuisance animals need to be addressed. You need to curb dogs and cats running loose. That is a problem. If the person owns the cat, they should have it under control. They don't use the bathroom where they eat. Cat feces is addressed in the ordinance. Reducing the population is important but you have to stop them from running loose. Maurice's ordinance does this. Them using the bathroom everywhere is the biggest issue.

Mr. Funderburk stated, let's assume the Police Jury and all the municipalities can come together and all adopt the same ordinance, can we put animal control in charge of enforcing that ordinance? Mr. Wayne Touchet stated they would have to get our animal control officers bonded and they would have to be given police power in order to go on private property. Mr. Funderburk stated the ordinance, and he believes State law, already provides for that. Mr. Funderburk added that the animal control officer would be able to give citations. Ms. Debbie Garrot stated that she does have a problem with that because of our personnel. Mr. Funderburk stated maybe we could get one of these organizations to assist in getting a grant for animal control for funds to hire additional officers. Mr. Touchet stated the police usually accompanies the animal control officer now. That is a good way of doing it because the officer has the arrest powers. We would have to send our officers to an academy. It is better to remain the way it is. Ms. Debbie stated that the places that they go, especially in Abbeville, can be very dangerous. Mayor Piazza stated that is where the problem comes in. Our police department respond to almost 1,000 calls a month. Do we want those guys stopping speeders, rapists, drug dealers, murderers and other criminals or do we want them out there concerned with catching cats and chickens? Who will enforce this? If it is our police department, then he has a big problem with that. Mr. Touchet stated they will not send in the animal control officer to places that are dangerous. Mr. Bourgeois stated not all calls require police escort. Mr. Touchet stated that all dog bite calls require the police department. Ms. Debbie stated she will call the police department if they are not needed. She does not want to waste their time. One of the problems with the Abbeville Police Department is that they will send one officer, which is appropriate, but other times there are three units for a stray dog. She tries very hard not to waste their time.

Mr. John Valdetero asked how many community cats are too many? The reason he is asking is because there is an issue in his neighborhood. He has been told that the animals are spayed and neutered. He cut his grass last night and in the front part of his yard he counted 13 piles of cat feces. He has five or six that live under his house that are not his cats. It doesn't matter if they are spayed or neutered. Cats will bang and fight all night long. People love cats, he loves dogs. If he owned or fed everyday 20 to 30 community dogs and they all came at his house to eat and he did not contain them to live everywhere and they left all their feces on your yard and slept under your house and fought all night long banging your pipes, at what point am I responsible to the rest of the neighborhood?

Ms. Rachel Trahan stated she has lived, on and off, on 5<sup>th</sup> Street and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street all of her life. As long as she can remember there were cats in that neighborhood. Her Mama would call them alley cats. At times they would fight and we would just say ok. Some people would feed them and some people wouldn't. We were never cruel to animals that she knew of. Her niece came one time and she picked up an alley cat. Ms. Rachel's Mama fed the cat and put the cat on the airplane and brought it to Dallas to her niece. Her Mama could not stand animals. She does like them now that she is older because Ms. Rachel has a dog and her Mama loves it. Ms. Rachel's problem is that you can't contain cats in your yard. In that neighborhood we are two blocks from the bayou. That said, we have no mice, no rats and no other animals that come from the bayou. She was sitting on the back porch and watching an opossum coming. He noticed the cat so he took off and went back towards the bayou. It knew that was a territory of cats. She would much prefer a cat than an opossum. There was activity done at her house a couple of weeks ago of shooting a cat. That really aggravates her. She doesn't know if it was a b-b gun or a pellet gun. In her eyes, three laws were broken. One was discharging a gun in the City limits, two, it was being cruel to animals and three teaching your children or grandchildren that it is ok to do that is wrong. She knows this because it almost hit her child.

*He was working in the yard and he heard the thump. When she heard him screaming, she went outside. When she got there she looked over the fence and the child was going in the house. The Mom came and apologized. That could have hurt my son. Yes, he is over 40 years old but he is still her child. She does not want him blinded by a b-b gun or a pellet gun and she does not want him hit in the temple by a b-b gun or a pellet gun. That really upset her. He didn't want to call the police but she promises if it was her, they would have been dealt with to the fullest extent of the law. This is ridiculous. She was not aware there was a problem in her area but she does not approve people killing the cats or dogs with a gun or poison. The bottom line is that if that makes you that upset, then sell your house and move. Just sell your house and leave. You have to be happy where you live. You have to be happy for your children to be happy. You should not teach them that it is ok to be cruel to animals. She is not a big animal lover but if you teach a child that if it is ok to shoot a cat then maybe they won't like the dog so they will shoot the dog. Then they grow up to be Antifa. You just don't know how your children will grow up with that. She hopes a decision is made where it is good for everybody involved and everybody can be happy. But, if it is that big of a deal, then sell your house and move. She prefers cats being around. She does not feed them but she doesn't have mice, rats and opossums.*

*Ms. Jeri Sonnier stated she lives on 5<sup>th</sup> Street. Animal cruelty is a felony. She volunteers with several rescue groups not just in Abbeville or Vermilion Parish. She volunteers in Houston too. She has seen what humans do to animals. It is ashamed. Thank God animal cruelty is a felony. If she ever sees any of her neighbors being cruel to animals, as in shooting them with a pellet gun and teaching their child to do the same, she will call the police. Her husband is a police officer in Abbeville. He comes home with horror stories about what humans do to animals. Ike said it, 4,000 years ago Egyptians worshipped cats because of what they do for us. We have the rice mill two blocks away and the bayou two blocks away. Which would you rather, cats or rats? Not mice, rats. That is what we will have if we get rid of our neighborhood cats. She has 4 dogs and 5 cats of her own. Every single one of them is a rescued animal. Every single one of them is spayed or neutered and vaccinated. She heard the talk was for the animal to be picked up immediately and euthanized. So help me God, if one of my spayed or neutered and vaccinated cats is euthanized because it took a poop in somebody's yard. That is wrong. The rice mill is vacant and all those rats are doing in there are breeding. The only thing keeping them from coming into our homes are our cats. If something is breaking pipes under your house then that is a big cat. It is not a cat, it is an armadillo doing that. If a cat owner has the financial ability to care for the cats and dogs they have, then there should be no limit on what they have. If somebody says she can only have two cats and two dogs then that means she has to get rid of three of her cats and two of her dogs. She loves them all and she will not choose. She has the financial ability to care for every one of them. You can't take away my pets if I can afford to take care of them. The community cat care giver is a fantastic idea. She will be the first to volunteer. It is not their fault that they were born. It is not up to us to play God with them. We need to control the population. If you have a feral cat in your yard then take it to Spaynation. Debbie is working to get a grant to pay a reduced fee. The cat won't be able to reproduce but it will control the rat population. That is what she cares about. Her father grew up in the Godchaux Park area so she has been familiar with that neighborhood since she was born. That neighborhood began in the 1920's and we have always had neighborhood cats for the purpose of controlling the rats. Cats don't poop on concrete. Dogs will but a cat won't. She pulled up two separate websites in less than five minutes that gave her at least 40 different ways to keep cats out of your yard. There is holistic stuff, there is electronic stuff, there's plant, there's automatic spray bottles that if it senses the cat, it will spray and the cat will run. There are ways. You can even put chicken wire in your flower bed and cover it. A cat will not walk on that. If you sprinkle red pepper in your flower bed the cat won't go in there. There are ways to keep cats out of your yard without making everybody suffer for it. She has the information available and she will share it.*

*Mr. John Valdetero stated he wanted to respond because he does not believe in animal cruelty. He loves animals. He also wanted to say that he did not say the cat broke his pipes that they banged around on them. He is looking for a way for everyone to work together as neighbors out of respect and without demeaning language. He has a dog and no we don't have mice. He has put flea powder in his yard multiple times. His dog gets fleas from the cats coming and going all day and all night long. Have cats if you want. Have dogs if you want. He loves animals. But, at what point, is it disrespectful to your neighbors to have the responsibility of tens of animals that roam freely. It is disrespectful to other people in your neighborhood.*

*Mayor Piazza wanted to add that this is not a debate. Everybody will get an opportunity to say what they want to say and he will allow them to speak uninterrupted. This is a public hearing. When someone is speaking, please give them the decency they gave you by not interrupting them. He continued with the public hearing.*

*Ms. Dianna Ducote stated it sounds like there is a compromise in play. There are certain areas that are more populated. You don't want to have to move and you don't want the animals maimed. Concentrate on those areas that are out of control. We don't have problems in our neighborhood.*

*Another citizen stated that fleas in your yard can also be caused by opossums. They can have up to 1,500 fleas on them at one time and they just drop them everywhere they go. There are also a lot of dogs that come through that area. She has caught a couple of those and had them spayed or neutered. She inherited several cats in her yard from Mr. Broussard who lived next door to her. When he passed away, they came to her house. The interesting thing about feral cats is that only 25% survive to adulthood. She will not let an animal starve. Right now, it is kitten season. She has to wait until they are old enough to trap and have spayed or neutered. She understands the problems people have. If the cats get on your car, just hang a bag with a piece of twine over your car. She would donate her time to help people treat their yards. We can do that as a neighborhood group. She is not in favor of euthanizing and she would be outraged to see the cats killed. We have to work together on this. Trap, neuter and release has been working for years in lots of communities. It eliminated the cat population at the Lafayette Parish Courthouse. It takes a little while. If only 25% live to adulthood and you are trapping and spaying or neutering the cats, it won't take long to get the problem under control.*

*Ms. Ann Garrot stated that she has lived in Abbeville since 1972. Even though she is from North Louisiana she feels like she is a Cajun. The Godchaux Addition was started in 1921. She bought her house in 1991. She was given a list of restrictions that were in place in 1921. One of the restrictions in 1921 was that you could not have a black person live in the neighborhood. Another was that you could not have caged chickens. She tried to find the list today but was unable to find it. She can't remember what the others were. Right now, we have no restrictions. Godchaux addition looked very different in 1991 than it looks today. Since then people have died and their houses have been sold to new owners. Fences has been erected all over the place which curtails the comradery of the neighborhood. Since 1991 there have always been cats. Some of you here who grew up in that neighborhood know that because you grew up with cats. She has always been a dog person until, for some reason, the cats would go through her back yard on their way to somewhere else. At some point, a few years ago, a cat came and needed help so she fed it and gave it water. Then a few more came and with the help of Debbie Garrot, we trapped them and sent them to Spaynation where they were spayed or neutered and given their 3-year rabies vaccination along with being wormed and whatever other medicines that they administered. No sooner, had she done all that the cats disappeared. Then more cats came and she fed them and gave them water. She started to do some research and found out they were called community cats and actually belong to everyone. Not no one. They live in colonies and they don't feel homeless because they think home as being where ever they are. Feral cats only live three to five years if left on their own without assistance. In all these years that she has lived in this neighborhood, no one has ever complained until recently. No one seemed to mind having a cat walk through their yard, sleep on their car, lay down in their yard or even poop in it. In December she contacted Spaynation and she paid \$600 to have a large number of cats sterilized. Again, they were also given rabies shots, wormed and other medicines that they needed. We also trapped a bunch of cats that were sent to animal control. We did this all in an effort to appease the complainers. Well that didn't work. She is now in the process of erecting a fence to keep the cats in and the people out. She put up a sprinkler system in her front yard to try to direct the cats' attention elsewhere. She has learned that it is a myth that cats can survive on their own if dropped off in a field. That results in a long-pained starvation. She has also taken a shovel and picked up a kitten off of the street that has been run over and killed outside of Johnny's house and then took it to Whittington to have it cremated. Since she has done all of this, the cats are disappearing again. They are disappearing either from harm to them, illness or they would rather live somewhere else. Cats spend a great deal of time cleaning themselves. They each have their own personalities and they create friendships among each other in their colonies. Once they are neutered, they are no longer interested in sex so they don't fight about it. There are only one or two cats that really think they live at her house. In her opinion we do not need an ordinance that would in effect practice animal cruelty. The most she would be in favor of is a trap, neuter or spay and then release program. But she would prefer no ordinance at all. Let each property owner be responsibility for mitigating their*

*own property. There are plenty of ways to block the underneath of a fence and place something to block the underneath of a house on pillars to stop the animals from going there. She knows some people will not like what she said but hopefully we can come to an agreement that no one likes because, legally, that is the best settlement.*

*Ms. Rachelle Brown stated she moved to Indian Bayou about 2 years ago. There were no cats and she was overrun by rats. The first thing she did was get two feral cats and took them to Spaynation. Then she got involved with AABA. In one year, she helped to take in and relocate nearly 20 cats. They came from here. People need to spay and neuter. To spay and neuter is not unreasonable and it is not unreasonable to have an ordinance for that. If you own a cat then spay or neuter. If you want to be a breeder then get a license. Having a penalty for someone who feeds a community cat amounts to cruelty. Don't penalize somebody if they are trying to be compassionate. We show compassion to animals because that is part of who we are. If we lose that compassion for animals then we lose a part of ourselves. Be reasonable and look at ways for it to be cost effective. We can do this.*

*Another citizen stated that people need to educate themselves. Her father owns a pest control business and she has seen rats. She understands that there is fecal matter on the ground but you can do things to prevent that. She would like to see someone's reaction if that would be a rat instead of the fecal matter in their yard. They would be glad to have the fecal matter and not these huge rats. There is a mill that is abandoned and you don't know what will come out of that and what is breeding in there.*

*Ms. Shannon Hebert stated she has lived on Main Street since 1994. She has a house on piers and it has been blocked off and has vents so that no animals can go under it. There are ways to stop them from going under your house.*

-02 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. to close the public hearing and reconvene the committee meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

*Councilman Plaisance stated that it seems to him that the main complaint is the fecal matter in the yards. If there could be some way we could get some resolve to that.*

*Councilman Touchet stated he understands both sides and we can come to a common ground. We need to have an ordinance that really addresses certain things. He does not think that this Council needs to get involved with controlling the number of animals people can have or allowing people to shoot animals. People have property and people have to take care of their property. We can meet in the middle. If we get people from both sides and work with our City attorney to draft an ordinance that will respect the cats and their owners as well as the property owners.*

*Councilwoman White stated she gets a lot of calls about feral cats. We have to also respect other people's property. Sometimes these things happen because humans don't have recourse for their own property. It was not intentional that this Council left cats out of the ordinance and allowed them to run free. We do need to look at the ordinance and make it in line with the parish policy as well as the other municipalities. Government runs better if everybody understands what is expected of them across the board and how to handle a situation. If we all have the same policy in place then people will know who to call when they have a problem. She is in favor of Ike looking at it and coming back with a recommendation.*

*Councilman Broussard thanked everyone for coming because their opinion is very important to every one of us. There is nothing better about local government when it is the people who speak about what they want. There is a reason that we don't have cats in our animal ordinance. This should never be an ordinance about pet owners. This is only about at large, unclaimed animals which are not necessarily good for society. He is glad to hear that we will study this more carefully. This is not to penalize anybody, this is not to go after pets and this is not to do anything that would hurt what animals were intended to do originally. He hopes everyone participates in this discussion going forward so that the City Attorney can get the best language that is fair. We don't know who the cat police will be. To his knowledge, there is no cat police. If animal control says they do not have the staff to do this and if Chief Spearman says he doesn't have the extra officers for cat police, we better find out how this can be enforced before we make an ordinance. Let's not make an ordinance for the sake of making it, let's make one that works for everyone who is interested in this.*

*Councilwoman Broussard thanked everyone for coming. She owns a dog and she keeps her in her place on the property on which she lives. She agrees with Councilman Touchet that we need to keep some kind of common ground and come up with an ordinance that will be satisfactory to everybody. As an animal owner we should all be responsible. If I feed an animal then I am claiming it. Some things should not be tolerated by neighbors.*

-03 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. to authorize our City Attorney to examine the Maurice ordinance and the Police Jury ordinance and have him work with both sides represented here tonight as well as with other City attorneys in the parish to create a uniform ordinance and to bring it to the City Council. The motion carried unanimously.

*Mayor Mark Piazza stated we will make an attempt to draft an ordinance that satisfies everyone, which will probably be impossible. We are bound by the Constitution so he thinks legally we cannot tell somebody how many cats or dogs they can have or any other animals if they are kept well and maintained. It is kind of like trying to tell somebody how many guns they can own. There is a constitution out there and we have to live by it. We will do our best to do this and come back to this group here with some sample ordinances that you will be able to view. We want to make sure it is uniform with the other cities and the police jury. Most of you live in this neighborhood right back here. It is one of our greatest neighborhoods. It is a beautiful neighborhood. Godchaux Addition is one of the best neighborhoods in Abbeville. Believe me, we have a lot bigger problems in other neighborhoods in town. He is not trying to make light of this problem and we will do our best to come to a solution to help everybody.*

*Councilwoman White believes this is such an important problem that we need to address, that she will authorize Kathy to write a check for \$500.00 from her discretionary funds to Spaynation. She challenges the other Council Members to match this donation.*

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

ATTEST:

APPROVE:

Kathleen S. Faulk  
Secretary-Treasurer

Mark Piazza  
Mayor