

The Mayor and Council of the City of Abbeville met in regular session on February 18, 2020 at 5:30 P.M., at the regular meeting place, the Council Meeting Room located at 101 North State Street, 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: Jude Mire, Fire Chief
Bill Spearman, Police Chief
Ike Funderburk, City Attorney
Clay Menard, Public Works Director
Denise Mire, Park Director
Charlene Beckett, Main Street Manager
Tom Carroll, Engineer
Richard Primeaux, Engineer
Joseph Vallee', Municipal Civil Service Board
Ben Rivera & Colton Daigle, Insurance agents
Felicia Williams, Abbeville Parks & Recreation Board
Liz Gremilion, Abbeville Garden Club
Tommy Picard, Christian Vincent, Lawrence Briggs, Chris Samuels,
and James Broussard, Quality Sports Authority (QSA)
Several players from the 11-12-year-old All-Stars with QSA
Carlton Campbell, Former City Councilman
Marilyn Mitchell
Phyllis Tomino

Mayor Piazza asked Mr. Carlton Campbell to lead the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance. Mayor Piazza led the assembly in prayer.

-01 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. to approve to probational appointment of Jeremy Deville to the position of Police Officer with the Abbeville Police Department. The motion carried unanimously.

-02 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to accept the resignations of Jacoby Briscoe and Brittany Hebert, both Police Officers with the Abbeville Police Department. The motion carried unanimously.

-03 introduced by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. and seconded by Ms. Terry Broussard to ratify bills paid in the month of January 2020. The motion carried unanimously.

-04 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Ms. Roslyn White to approve the minutes from the January 21, 2020 regular City Council meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

Mayor Piazza asked if there were any comments from the public on any agenda item.

Ms. Marilyn Mitchell began a discussion dealing with the agenda item pertaining to the renewal of the QSA contract. She wanted to know where QSA's annual financial report is. She wanted to know what is the revenue that QSA has brought to the City. She also wanted to know why does QSA get the fundraiser instead of the people who raise the money. QSA has been having this program for three years at \$75,000 per year. The problem she has is that this is a qualified company that is supposed to improve Abbeville city kids. With the enhancement of improving our kids they say it went from 65 to 185 kids. If you are an established company and you are supposed to improve our City, we have over 1,000 kids in the City. You reached out in the newspaper but you are an established company so you should know how to raise the children's (enrollment) of your program. What have you done for our City? The parks look dead and you go to Erath and it looks like it is booming. Are we dying in Abbeville? We have to have accountability for this money. She wants all children to have opportunity. What is the problem? They should know how to bring revenue into the City. What are you going to give Abbeville? I want to get what I paid for. If I ask you for a reversible jersey, then I want a reversible jersey. If I ask you to buy me some balls, I want the balls I asked for. Give me what I ask for. We are the City of Abbeville and we are dealing with Abbeville kids and that is part of the contract. Read your goals and objectives. QSA gets the gate, concession and the registration. She wants accountability. Where is your annual financial statement? Mr. Tommy Picard stated this program was established in 1959 by Ralph Sellers and Irby Luquette. It has been in existence for 70 years. Everything in the park was built by parents. The City did not have much investment. We bust our butt every night. He has never seen some of these people that are complaining there. They are not there at 2:00 AM in the morning with a rake in their hand when its raining or being there to help bring some of these kids home. He has done all that. In 1974, his first year of coaching, he had 15 on a team. He had six black kids and those six black kids did not walk home. I brought them home. We didn't choose to go to Erath we were forced to go to Erath. We built everything in that park. He borrowed \$60,000 for the recreation center on his name. The minute we finished paying it, the City took it away from us. We operated there from 1993 until 2008 there. We invested over \$800,000 at that park. VC is playing on a field that we built. We can't even play on it in the summer. We built the fence at Luquette field. We got \$40,000 to renovate Theriot field. If you want to see what it costs, come to the gym. We will let you work at the gym. We will let you collect the gate. We do not have anything to hide. If we were stealing there would be no way we would be in existence. Why didn't you go out and get goals at Abbeville High? We got goals for these kids to play. They can't play unless we have the goals. We found someone who agreed to pay for them. Our program was, at one time, the best in the country. We can't bring that back without your support. Enough is enough. He has enough. I get there at 8 o'clock in the morning and sometimes work until midnight. Everyone calls me at any time and I answer the phone. I take care of all these kids right here. My family has suffered and I have enough. I've never seen you, Marilyn, at a game doing anything. You told me the other day that QSA never did anything for you. Jason and Brandon played for us. If it would have been today the way the program was three years ago, you wouldn't have anything. Say thank you sometimes. Tell me thank you sometimes. Every time I come to a City Council meeting; it is the same thing. Without Carlton I wouldn't have anything. They would bring us here and tell us what we did wrong. They never said thank you. Right now, we have spent almost \$50,000 for salaries, people at our gate, people at our score table and people at our concession stands. 90% of those people live in the City of Abbeville. If you don't want us, then no problem. We will continue to exist. We will make it work because our parents will help us make it work. It didn't work over here because somebody didn't help. You tell me why we can't get kids to play. Everyone here, give me 25 kids per person. Terry give me 25 kids from your district. Most of the 185 kids are from your district. We support your district. Enough is enough. Me and my family do not deserve this. If anybody wants to come take it over, you are welcome to come take

it over. We are lucky we have James. We are blessed with Lawrence and Chris. They are involved. They can tell you what the problem is. Ask Lawrence Briggs what the problem is. He can tell you. When you see Lawrence at the gym, he brings his four kids with him. They are with him wherever he goes. This thing will not work unless we get the support of the community. We are based in Erath but we don't do anything with the City Council in Erath. If we walk away, who will take our place? I nominate Marilyn Mitchell to come take my place for one week. Enough is enough. I have been taking this for forty years and I'm not taking this anymore. I need the support of the Council, the Recreation Board and everybody else. If you have 1,000 kids, then give me some. We won't turn anybody away. We had 19 kids that didn't pay this year. We didn't turn them away. I have a lady that since 2008 she has never paid a registration. She has 6 kids and every year they play. Find me some sponsors. If you are not part of the solution then you are part of the problem. I had a father who called and said he couldn't afford to pay. I told him to meet me the next morning at 10:00 AM to discuss it. He didn't show up until 2:00 PM because he was at the casino the previous night. It is not our problem. Our coaches are around their kids. I admire them. You think James wants to be at the gym until 9:00 PM and then have to pick up two kids walking home on the side of the street because somebody left them there? That is not James Broussard's fault. Correct that. James Broussard stated he is here doing this because of Tommy Picard. When he came up with Brandon and Jason, Abbeville was second to none. We are trying to get the parish involved. We work constantly trying to get more kids out. Biddy basketball mandates that you have adjustable goals. It costs \$7,000 to put those goals up. We finally got the money to do that in Abbeville. Biddy basketball is coming back to Abbeville. Biddy Basketball tournaments will be a huge revenue maker for the City. This means more teams will be staying in Abbeville and eating in your restaurants. This thing is growing. Without QSA you won't have Biddy basketball. We have 48 kids playing all-stars. Without QSA there is no license to play Biddy basketball. You might have a league and do something else but you will be stuck playing the same kids over and over. Biddy is about getting the kids out of the City of Abbeville to see what else there is out there and to have fun. That is what this is all about. Councilwoman White wanted to address a couple of concerns expressed by Ms. Marilyn. From Terry and I's vantage point, we came in a little late after this contract was signed. She thinks that the City did it with the best of intentions and there have been some growing pains between that transition of the City hosting their own recreation department to QSA. She knows that she and a few of the Council visited with QSA and expressed concerns over the lack of tournaments in the City of Abbeville and over the lack of practices in Abbeville. That is how the conversation about the goals came up and that is why we are getting goals in the City. She is asking the public to be patient. She thinks this is the right move for the City at this point. We have all learned from the first three years and we will continue to learn and grow the program. She thinks a lot of those growing pains are over now and we can start moving forward. If you have ideas and concerns or interest of sports and how we might be able to improve the number of kids then we are open to hearing that. QSA is also open to hearing that. QSA sent letters with all the kids home from school and they didn't get very many people signing up from that. They are making the attempt and now we are using social media and the paper. There are other ways that, we as a City, as well as QSA are trying to get the word out. She is asking the public to be supportive of the contract with QSA and what the City is trying to do. We are trying to provide more opportunities for kids in a way that is cost effective for taxpayers. Councilman Plaisance stated that he was at the World Series when Babe Ruth's wife came to the game and when Governor Edwin Edwards flew into center field. Those were the days when we had a really good time. He went to all the World Series and Tommy was there constantly. From what he heard here tonight from Tommy and James, he would like to see the City continue with the contract. The potential is there. He doesn't think we will ever get back to where we were at one time but we can, at least, have a program for our kids in the City. If we don't have that, what do we have? He had reservations about the money but, Ms. Marilyn, maybe we need to give it a chance and go a little longer with this program to see where it will go. We need to give Tommy

and his group an opportunity to see if we can't build our program in Abbeville. We have too many kids out in the streets with nothing to do. We appreciate what Tommy has done. Mr. Lawrence Briggs stated if the parents don't want it then it will not work. We can talk about everything else but if the parents don't pay the money, drop off their kids and pick them up then we don't have anything. The parents need to participate. He does what he does out of the love of the kids. He can only do so much as a coach. Mayor Piazza stated that is an important point that you bring out for QSA. QSA has a network of parents that are willing to go out there and do the job to make the program work. Tommy has been doing this almost all of his life. The City made an attempt to do it on their own and we failed miserably at it. Our first director, Jason O'Brien did a very good job and had the kids out there. But unfortunately, he died. Then the next two guys had to be fired. Then we hired Denise who has done a very good job but she had to do the job by herself because she didn't have the support. Since we have had this contract with QSA he has seen a lot of headway and a lot of positive strides. We have come a long way in three years. No, it is not perfect, but it is getting there. Now that we have some new blood with James and the people he has been working with, there are a lot more kids from Abbeville involved in the program. Being able to play some of the games in Abbeville will make a big difference. That is real, real positive stuff. Lawrence Briggs stated that since they moved from Abbeville to QSA we feel safer. When you have outside activity going on during the game and the coaches and referees have to go outside and worry about that and the game is stopped for those people who paid to play ball. At Henry, you don't have to worry about outside activity. You don't need security guards because everybody respects one another. We understand that this is about the kids. We don't have to worry about outside activity. Phyllis Tomino stated that she has been involved with ball since 1995. Tommy was my son's coach. She has never left since then. She is still involved with these kids. She tries to get them off the street. She lives on Kibbee Street so she sees what goes on. She tries her best to get them involved. The problem is that once parents get involved with their kids and their kids are done with the program, they leave. They don't come back and help. They don't care about everybody else's kids. That is the difference. She cares about everybody's kids. She will continue to do it until she can't go anymore. She wants to be there for the kids to get them off the streets and not get into trouble. Councilwoman Broussard stated the worst decision was to let Tommy go. After that we had Jason and unfortunately, we loss him and it hasn't been the same. Looking to the future, will we bring back what we once had or is this arrangement with QSA permanent? Lawrence Briggs stated if it comes back to Abbeville you will have to have a director who actually knows the kids on a personal level. Tommy Picard stated that if you take it over, you can't play Biddy basketball or Pony baseball because QSA has the boundaries of Vermilion Parish. If you don't have Biddy basketball then some people will not follow you. Why doesn't anybody go after football? You went from 400 kids to 60 kids. Nobody asks questions about that. Shakelia Shelvin has been with the program for a long time. She stepped away from the program after Jerry left. The reason is because we have lost our children. We have nothing right here that is tangible for our parents that can't afford to go to Erath. This is the biggest City in our Parish and we don't have anything that is ours. It should not be outsourced.

-05 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to renew the contract with QSA. The motion was put to a vote and the vote thereupon was as follows:

YEAS: 4(Plaisance, B. Broussard, Touchet, White)
NAYS: 1(T. Broussard)
ABSENT: 0
ABSTAIN: 0

Therefore, the motion carried.

Councilman Touchet stated there are more kids that are playing now than when we had it on our own. We were always in the negative when we had the program as far as budget and we did not

have the product to show for it. He would have been ok if we would have had the product and not making money. It is not about making money. We do have issues that we need to deal with. He had never heard any of these complaints before the last meeting. As these issues come about, please reach out. Come to the Recreation Board meetings. Make sure that they know what is going on so they can come to us and let us know what we need to be aware of so that when those problems occur, we fix them. If we see that they are not fixed, then we will have a track record throughout the year so that when it comes to contract time, it will be a better decision that we can make. Can we get better? Yes. If you have concerns, bring it to our attention and let us work with QSA to make it happen. There is not one kid that will not play if they want to. We will find a way for that kid to play. We need to work together. If we work together, this will be a success. Councilman Plaisance stated that the easiest thing to do is complain and the hardest thing to do is to support any effort.

Mayor Piazza stated we received three quotes for the insurance coverages we currently have with Risk Management, Inc. Councilman Broussard and Ike have met with these agents. Councilman Broussard stated that we have some good news this evening. There is nothing better in the insurance industry than competition. Competition resulted in us getting a better number for liability. We have an opportunity to save significant money this year. It is about \$71,000. RMI in Baton Rouge has come in with a \$267,022.47 renewal. Ike stated the other two bids we received were not apple to apples but were both very good.

-06 introduced by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. to renew the insurance coverages with Risk Management, Inc as of March 1, 2020 for \$267,022.47. The motion carried unanimously.

Mayor Piazza stated the other insurances are with Thomson, Smith & Leach. We only received a renewal quotation from them. We did have interest from another agency but they backed out. The renewal quote is \$170,501.98.

-07 introduced by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to approve the renewal offered by Thomson, Smith & Leach for insurance coverages effective March 1, 2020 for \$170,501.98. The motion carried unanimously.

Municipal Board Reports

Main Street report given by Charlene Beckett. The Louisiana Main Street office wrote a grant to the Federal Government. The Main Street communities across the State are able to apply for a \$55,000 grant but it is very competitive. It must be a commercial building, in a Main Street district and it must be listed in the National Register. It must follow certain standards according to the federal government. You also have to enter into a 10-year preservation easement with the federal government. There are some target buildings that fit this criteria so she dropped off the information about the grant opportunity to them. Six buildings would be this year and the other six would be next year. Vacant buildings take a higher priority. We have 14 memorial benches now with the memorial bench project. Two benches have been delivered but not installed and we have one bench on order. The Cajun Caravan breakfast and Downtown tour will take place on Thursday, March 19th at 9:00 AM. The schedule for the spring Sounds on the Square is: March 19th Donny Broussard & the Louisiana Stars, March 26th Willie Tee & Cypress Band with special guest Lynn August and April 2nd The Beau Young Band. The Sicilian Celebration will take place at the Blacksmith Shop Museum & Heritage Center on Saturday, March 21st. The next Abbeville Farmers and Artisan Market will be held on Saturday, March 21st at Magdalen Square.

Keep Abbeville Report given by Charlene Beckett and Liz Gremilion. Charlene thanked Councilwoman White for creating the Facebook page for Keep Abbeville Beautiful. Liz discussed the Louisiana Garden Club Federation cleanest city contest. The district contest will be the week of March 23-27. We think the judges will be here either on the 23rd or the 24th. We have a scheduled cleanup on Saturday, March 14th beginning at 9 AM. We will meet at the City Hall parking lot. We are asking for your support to assist us with this. If we win district, the State Cleanest City contest is the week of April 27-May 1st. We have a big cleanup scheduled for Saturday April 25th at 9 AM. We will meet at the City Hall parking lot. This is a community project. It helps our community. We want it clean. If it is clean, we have more tourist and people that are proud of their City. That is our goal. The route will be the same as last year. Charlene stated the Streetscape Project will actually work in our favor. We can tell the judges that we are doing this to make it handicap accessible and to beautify. Charlene stated there is a new program called Love the Boot. It is a week long project that will focus on beautification and cleaning up. There are some requirements to be involved in the State's Love the Boot Campaign. You have to create a steering committee. The members of our steering committee are: Winnie LeBlanc, Brittany Lopez, Pam Wallace, Patsy Hebert, Marietta Clark, Liz Gremilion and Charlene Beckett. We have had three meetings so far. The Love the Boot campaign is the week of April 20-26th. We have created projects for this week. Using grant funds, we will purchase Litzee Litter books. On Monday, we will distribute water bottles to the 3rd graders and Litzee Litter books to the 1st graders. On Tuesday we will have breakfast with the Lieutenant Governor and distribute canvas grocery bags to 3rd graders. Wednesday is Clean Waterways so we have recruited Judge Edwards to organize a cleanup either in the coulee, drains or waterways. On Thursday we will distribute the Timmy the Tumble Bag books to 2nd graders. On Friday it is National Arbor Day so we will plant a tree at the library. On Saturday we will have our big Great American Cleanup in preparation for the State contest. Sunday will be reduce, reuse and recycle.

Ike stated there is no report for the Abbeville Planning Commission as they have not had a meeting. They had a meeting two weeks ago and the item requiring the Council's attention has been taken care of.

Abbeville Parks and Recreation Board report given by Denise Mire. We are swearing two new board members Thursday at 11 AM. They are Akeem Lewis and Felicia Williams. We have been trying to get the bottoms of the trees trimmed at all the different parks around town. We have Godchaux and McKinley Scott park left. Marlon's crew has been helping us on Friday when they can to get to the higher branches. There are a lot of schools practicing at Comeaux Park. They are the Abbeville High boys and girls, J. H. Williams Middle School's girls' team, Harvestime boys and girls, Vermilion Catholic boys, and Mount Carmel's 6th grade and 7-8th grade. Some teams are beginning their games next week. The gates are really bad at Shelby Chester Field. We have received the quotes and the Mayor has authorized us to have that fixed. Luquette Field was broken into two weekends in a row. We had that repaired. They cut an L-shaped hole in the fence at Sellers' Field. There was no reason to do that because those gates on that field were wide open. That has also been repaired. She has gone around to all the parks in town to create an inventory list for everything in the park and any needed repairs. Vermilion Catholic soccer has been playing their home games at our football field. They have just finished their season. Brandon started on the goals yesterday. Aurris goes to every park every day to pick up trash. There has been so much rain so the grass has been growing. Mayor Piazza stated that he told Marlon to take down the volleyball net at Mckinley Scott Park because it was so torn. He never ever saw one kid playing volleyball out there. Denise has compiled a list and he has it. If you need to do something in your park let him know.

-08 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Ms. Terry Broussard to approve the payment estimate for partial payment number 1 in the amount of \$13,060.00 payable to R. J. Broussard General Contractors, Inc. for the sewer collection system extension for Carolyn Drive. The motion carried unanimously.

-09 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Ms. Roslyn White to award the contract for the abatement of rubbish for 609 N. Gertrude to the low bidder, Tony Landry, in the amount of \$550.00. The motion carried unanimously.

Touchet/B. Broussard
Resolution R20-02

A resolution requesting DOTD to perform drainage work at selected sites on Louisiana Highway 14.

The motion carried unanimously.

Mayor Mark Piazza

- *At the last Police Jury meeting of the Public Works Committee that he sits on, it was brought up once again that the Police Jury has passed a motion to no longer be in the garbage bin business. The garbage bin they provide to businesses will no longer be available to those businesses. This will affect a lot of businesses. The Police Jury thought that it would be cheaper but the businesses he has spoken to say it will cost them more. It is very discouraging to see the Police Jury get out of that business. The first thing that he would like us to do is have Ike come up with a new ordinance governing garbage bins. This would regulate where the bins would be placed, what type of bin they can use, if it has to have some type of enclosure and how will they pick it up. We need to be proactive and get ahead of this. We could possibly consider a permit requirement so we will know where these bins are. This ordinance will be presented at the next committee meeting.*

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

ATTEST:

APPROVE:

Kathleen S. Faulk
Secretary-Treasurer

Mark Piazza
Mayor