

The Mayor and Council of the City of Abbeville met in regular session on October 5, 2021 at 5:30 P.M., at the A. A. Comeaux Recreation Center, located at 300 A. A. Comeaux Memorial Drive, Abbeville, Louisiana, with the Honorable Mark Piazza, Mayor, presiding.

Members Present: Council Members, Francis Plaisance, Brady Broussard, Jr., Terry 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
Lieutenant Jonathan Touchet
Charlene Beckett, Main Street Manager
Allie Horton, Digital Media Assistant
Tommy Picard, Park & Recreation Director, QSA
Gene Sellers, Engineer
Richard Primeaux, Engineer
T. J. Savoy, Airport Engineer
Jason Akers, Bond Attorney
Felicia Williams, Park and Recreation Board member
Bridget Levy, Park and Recreation Board member
Joseph Pillette, member of the NAACP
Marja Broussard, NAACP Lafayette Chapter
Roderick Darby, Soulful Eats
Nikia LeBlanc, Math Depot
Gerald Gaspard, American Legion & Chamber of Commerce
Joseph Hebert
Marvette Johnson
Linda Williams

Mayor Piazza asked Reverend Johnson to lead those assembled in prayer. Mayor Piazza asked Mr. Joseph Hebert to lead the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Councilwoman White recognized and thanked Nikia LeBlanc with the Math Depot and Roderick "Nu" Darby with Soulful Eats for hosting a very successful City-wide cleanup day. Councilwoman White stated that 539 tires were picked up on that day. She is very thankful for Nikia and Roderick. We were able to get cooperation from the Police Jury and we are able to bring tires in. We had over 100 volunteers. She thanked Charlene Beckett and Keep Abbeville Beautiful for their part in this as well as Vermilion Catholic and Abbeville High School who both came out early Saturday and picked up litter. It was a very beautiful event for our community. She presented Ms. LeBlanc and Mr. Darby a certificate of appreciation and a City coffee cup to show the City's appreciation. Mayor Piazza also thanked the Abbeville Garden Club and Charlene Beckett too.

-01 introduced Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. to approve the minutes from the August 27, 2021 emergency special City Council meeting, the September 2,

2021 special City Council meeting, the September 7, 2021 Committee meeting and the September 7, 2021 regular City Council meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

-02 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Ms. Roslyn White to ratify bills paid in the month of September 2021. The motion carried unanimously.

-03 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. to move new business agenda item 3, 4 and 5 up to new business agenda item 1, 2 and 3 because Ms. T. J. Savoy has another meeting she needs to attend. The motion carried unanimously.

Mayor Piazza asked if there were any comments from the public on any agenda item prior to action. He wanted to make sure the public understood what the comment period is used for. It is for comments from the public, not items for discussion and not questions. You will be able to ask questions and make comments during the discussion part of the agenda for an agenda item. This period here is just to make a comment, not ask a question. Ms. Marvette Johnson had questions but not comments at this time and stated she would ask those later during the public hearing. There were no other comments.

Ms. T. J. Savoy presented the 2022-2027 Capital Improvement Plan for the Airport. She discussed the various projects that are planned utilizing grant funds from FAA and DOTD aviation as well as City matches with these grant funds. Some of the projects discussed include the AWOS replacement, LED runway lighting, rehab pavement projects, tree obstruction projects and a concrete loading area. The total estimated cost is \$3,612,200.00 with the City only having to contribute a match of \$170,900.00.

Touchet/Plaisance
Resolution R21-35

A resolution for the Capital Improvement Plan at the Airport.

The motion carried unanimously.

-04 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. to approve plan change order #2 for the Rehabilitation of the Runway and Partial Taxiway project which reflects an increase of \$44,827.72 to provide new solar powered LED markers and increases the contract time by 72 days. The motion carried unanimously.

-05 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to enter into a public hearing to receive public comments pertaining to an ordinance providing for the incurring of debt and the issuance of a three-million-dollar revenue bond, series 2021. The bond is to be used for the purpose of acquiring, constructing and improving recreational facilities and other works of public improvement. The motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING

Mr. Joseph Pillette stated that after speaking to the people in his community, we have seen that we are not informed and there is not much transparency concerning the three-million-dollar revenue bond and the allocation of the bond funds. We feel that we will be paying this bond back because the revenue to pay it back will be derived from tax money. Mayor Piazza stated it will be paid back from sales tax money. Mr. Pillette stated that he feels that, as in many cases, we are left in the dark about that. The whole application for the bond and the entities that helped to

have the bond approved, they had no information concerning them. A lot of people of his community have expressed dissatisfaction and being at a loss to know about this bond and how the funds will be allocated. He has been a citizen of Abbeville all of his life and he knows a lot of the history. We have, he believes, 11 parks in the City of Abbeville. There are 4 parks that he looks at extensively in Abbeville. Those are McKinley Scott Park, Herbert Williams Park, Parker Hebert Park and Mouton Park. He has talked to the people in the community and he asked them if they are aware of the three-million-dollar revenue bond. None of them expressed an idea of the bond and what it was for, let alone the allocations for the funds. We don't see that the funds distributed from this bond issue will benefit the parks in their neighborhood which is the underserved community and the community of color. The funds will not benefit their community whatsoever. When the bond was applied for it said for parks and recreation. Comeaux Park is a splendid facility. He understands that all of the funds of the revenue bond would be allocated to the improvement of this park. There will be no benefit to the parks of the underserved community. We desire to have transparency concerning how this bond was approved and the bond counsel that helped prepare the application. We want to know how this will benefit our community. We understand that the bond will be paid back over a period of ten years. The payment of this bond will come from tax revenue. He is a tax payer and he would like to know how this revenue bond will benefit his community. There are a lot of people who would like to know about it and who were not aware that such a bond was approved and the allocations of it have already been laid out. He would like to have exposure of this bond and the allocation of the bond fund and he would like the people in the community to understand how this is approved and what will be the benefit of it. Over the period of his life, he has seen, in his opinion, that certain parks are upgraded and certain parks are degraded. He would like to see fairness and proper government representation of this City governing body towards the community that we live in. He has expressed his concerns and he thanked the governing body for giving him time to express his concerns. Ms. Linda Williams stated she has lived in Abbeville all of her life except when she served in the United States Army. She remembers when the City said that they will have to tear down the recreation centers at McKinley Scott and Comeaux Park because they didn't have money. Then a few women got together and said once they tear down McKinley Scott, they will find the money for A. A. Comeaux. The black community did not stand up. But it happened just like they said it would happen. When they said, instead of putting Live Oak Manor all over town, we are going to put it in one central location; Herod. We said, once they do that, Herod would be closed. Just like we said it, it happened. We are fed up with what is going on in the City of Abbeville, just like Mr. Pillette said. She should be retired at 70 years old but she works every day. We are tax payers just like everybody else. Our community parks are a disgrace to them. It might not be a disgrace to you but it is a disgrace to them. When it comes to the three million dollars, she like Mr. Pillette and the other concerned citizens see it is not allocated to the parks. She would like to hear the answer. Councilwoman Broussard stated that everybody here knows how she feels. The parks in her district have been neglected from day one. You are absolutely correct about the neglect of certain parks. Ms. Marvette Johnson stated that Mr. Pillette incorporated her question. When we look at what is being presented and when we look at where the money will be allocated, we feel like the money is only being allocated at one specific park. In the paperwork it says the bond will be used for the purposes of constructing and improving recreational facilities and other works of public improvements. If the money is to be allocated to recreational facilities, then why is it only being allocated to one place. This one place will serve only, by the turfing of the fields, the kids who play travel ball. Her concern is that a lot of kids can't afford the travel ball. She is from Abbeville and all of her family lives in Abbeville. Three million dollars is a lot of money to have so that should be able to be spread to other recreational facilities. She does not know what it costs to turf a baseball field but when you are looking at that money why couldn't things be allocated that would help the community as a whole. When we say we want to improve our community and that we love Abbeville, don't we love Abbeville from one side to the other? Don't we love

Abbeville as a whole? Don't we love every part of Abbeville? In order to love every part of Abbeville, we want every part of Abbeville to be beautiful. So, with \$3,000,000 a little love could go in a lot of places. There is nothing wrong with fixing some things here but there should be enough money to fix some things in other places so that we have what we need to be able to do things that are positive with our kids. A lot of times, in order to get things done, it takes money. We can't understand how the kids who can't afford \$100 or a parent can't afford \$100 or \$200 or whatever it costs to do travel ball, why aren't some of those funds going in other places where all the kids will benefit. Councilwoman Broussard stated that she is grateful to the Mayor and Council that we have had some renovations at McKinley Scott Park. Those renovations are still going on. She knows that is not a gym. It had been 1990 since the pavilion was put there. That is a start to improve the park that she grew up going to and playing in. She understands what the concerns of the constituents are. We allocated \$175,000 for that park this year. Mr. Tommy Picard stated he has been here longer than anybody else. Who built Luquette Field? The City or the parents? The parents built that. Who built Delcambre Field? The City or the parents? Parents. Who built Theriot Field? The State because they gave us the money. Who built Badon softball field? Who built Sellers Field? His group in 1995 raised \$550,000. We did it ourselves. We didn't get a penny from the City. The only thing the City did was run some electrical lines from the third base dugout to the pole. Who renovated the building here where we are holding this meeting? A. A. Comeaux Youth borrowed \$65,000, under the name of Tommy Picard, to renovate this building. He asked Councilwoman Broussard how much they were spending in her park. She stated \$175,000. Mr. Picard asked the Mayor if the City ever gave them \$175,000? Mr. Picard asked who built Williams Park? He stated the City built Williams Park. His point is that they come here and they want something, which is fine, we all want it. But you have to take care of it. We pay somebody to take care of these fields. The City never took care of the fields. In his 47 years, we have spent \$2,000,000 here. We never asked for anything. We brought in 8 World Series. No telling how much money that brought into Abbeville. How many tournaments have they had at Williams Park? None. So, you will complain about putting money here. This is a cash cow. We have business people here and they will make money. Do you know where their money will go? To your gym. They will build your gym with that money. He asked Councilman Broussard how much the state estimated one tournament will bring. Councilman Broussard stated \$830,000 economic impact per tournament. Nobody is complaining about the \$175,000 being spent at McKinley Scott Park. The City has not spent one penny in this park. The work was always done by parents. Now, they are just paying us back for the money we put in and we will help you get tournaments here. We will help the restaurants and other businesses. Kelly Rogers had the gas station at the corner. He sold 2,500 gallons more gas in one day because of a tournament. This will generate funds and will help your kids. This is not just for travel ball. We have flag football. We are trying to do our job but we need your support. We can't have people criticizing us and going on Facebook and contacting the guy with USSSA requesting his personal emails and texts. This guy will bring tournaments here. If he gets mad, then he will not come. They will not be getting his personal phone, texts and emails. Do what you want. If you don't pass this tonight, then this place will be a ghost town. Y'all get together and have a fundraiser to pay for these kids to play. It costs money. For one night of Biddy Basketball, it cost \$285.00. He is 70 years old and this is getting old. Coming in here and having to hear the same thing, bringing his family through this and putting all this on Facebook that he is stealing. He doesn't have to steal. He had a job with Chevron and he made money there. His money went so these kids could play. He sponsored five kids to play. How many did y'all sponsor? Councilwoman Broussard stated that she understands the economic impact. She remembers every World Series that was held here, her Mother would go every night. Every time there was a tournament here, she was at the park. But, at the same time, she understands everyone's concerns. There are more parks than just McKinley. Ms. Marvette Johnson stated that they don't know what money is out there and what money is being allocated. When you see the amount of money, it brings about concern. We are not saying

that there is something wrong with turfing the baseball fields and we are not saying that we don't want economic development. We are saying that with the amount of money there is more than just one facility. There are more parks than just McKinley and this park. We have a lot of parks. We should always be able to spread the love. Ms. Linda Williams stated she did not know about the \$175,000 allocated to McKinley Scott Park. What about the other parks in Abbeville? What is happening with them? What about the bathrooms at Parker Hebert Park? This is stinky. Who does he mean by "they"? We are all in this together. We will not stop. We have awakened. Councilwoman White stated that it is important to recognize that there are inequalities in some areas of the community. That is just a fact. She and Councilwoman Broussard have spoke extensively about the conditions of the parks. This was not intentional. All of our parks need work. She has Parker Hebert Park in her district and Councilwoman Broussard has 7 in hers. We have way too many parks. We have said that many times. Since day one, she said that she wanted to do a master plan for all the parks. She has already pledged to do this. There was a discussion between she and Councilwoman Broussard to have money spread every other year in the different parks. She knew how important the pavilion project at McKinley Scott Park was to Councilwoman Broussard so she agreed not to ask for money for Parker Hebert Park so she could get the money for that project. Councilwoman Broussard agreed to support her in her request for next year. Sometimes you have to make concessions and work together to get things done. Will it be guaranteed that we will have that in 2022? No but discussions will go a long way in advocating for that. As for the bathrooms at Parker Hebert Park, there is another pot of money where we may be able to do something with that. She thinks everybody needs more transparency in government and we owe all citizens a plan of how the money will be spent. Look at this Airport Improvement Plan that was discussed tonight. It shows a 6-year plan of how the money will be spent and how it is being funded by federal dollars. That is something we are working on. It takes time to develop a plan. We are in the early stages of the plan and we need community support. She thinks the renovation of A. A. Comeaux Park is important because our schools use it and our community uses it. We can't build a park in everyone's back yard. Maybe we can help with security to get kids to this park, improve parks near them and then close down parks that are not being used. We all have to work together. Tearing each other down is getting us nowhere. We need community input. This is a way to stabilize our park and at the same time bring in revenue. It will give us more taxpayer dollars to put towards projects. If you want to see this on paper, then we owe you that. She is in favor of renovating this park and it is a good solid plan to get people in our restaurants and to get taxpayer dollars coming in to make improvements to our community. This will not be at the absence of improvements to other parks. That will come with the money that this renovation generates in the form of revenues. Mayor Mark Piazza stated that he is the Mayor of our community. He says it that way because some people said my community. This is our community. He was originally reluctant to support his because he knows that we have some issues at some of the other parks. This was not brought to the Mayor and Council by Councilman Touchet and Councilman Broussard as a park improvement plan. This was brought to the Mayor and Council as an economic development plan. This is to help stimulate the businesses of Abbeville by helping to bring in tournaments to the City that will eat at our restaurants, buy at our gas stations and patronize our businesses. That is why we are doing this project. This is not a project to improve the parks. It has been said that nobody knows what we are using the money on. It was in the newspaper. We have spent a lot of money on a lot of parks. We don't have 11, we have 13. He built that skateboard park. He built that splashpad. We have a lot of underprivileged children playing out there. This is not a white park or a black park or an Asian park. This is a park for everybody. You can go out there and see it for yourself. You don't think we have underprivileged children playing in this park? Walk next door. This was never meant to be a park improvement plan. This is about helping to boost the economy in Abbeville to create jobs and to offer a facility for all of our kids to participate in. The City of Crowley just spend \$6,000,000 doing this exact same thing. Some of you know Step Martin, a City Councilman in

Crowley, call him. They had full support in Crowley for that project where they spent \$6,000,000 at one park on baseball fields to bring in tournaments. We are spending half of that for the very same reason. Not one person in this room, that he can think of, expect one time, has ever come to him and said, "Mayor, we need this in our park". No one has asked for a new slide, a new swing set or a new merry-go-round. One time a lady came and asked for a volleyball court. We built it right away and it never got used. One Councilman, right here (pointing to Councilman Plaisance), comes into his office regularly for a park that he has been dreaming about for ten years to do dog parks and fishing ponds and things for our kids to do at our brand-new park. We are getting ready to spend \$150,000 on a walking trail for that park that is on Lafayette Street. That is not a white neighborhood. In that park, in that neighborhood, we have fishing and we are about to begin the walking trail. We have a dog park, benches, tables and chairs. Where did the money come from? He (Councilman Plaisance) went out and raised the money. He understands that there are concerns in our community but he is telling you, not one of you have come to him to say they needed something in the park. McKinley Scott Park has more playground equipment than any park in Abbeville. Go ride around and look for yourself. Every time we have received a grant for parks, he has intentionally made sure it got divided between Councilwoman Broussard and Councilwoman White. He didn't give any money to Councilman Broussard or Councilman Touchet. He made sure Councilwoman Broussard and Councilwoman White got the money to spend in their parks. Councilwoman Broussard stated she spent her grant money on playground equipment for McKinley Scott Park and for Mona Mouton Park. Councilman Touchet stated that the Mona Mouton Park used to be in his district and this Council built that park. All the equipment in there is because of this Council. Councilwoman White stated they put up basketball goals and repaired some equipment in Parker Hebert Park. Councilman Plaisance stated that Mr. Picard set up a meeting for at LeBlanc Elementary so they could go look at a gym. He thinks of this renovation, in his mind, as a Phase I because we are looking forward to, at some point, after this, a gymnasium that kids could use to play basketball. In 2006, when he first ran for office, his wish was a civic center. That too we hope to look forward to in the future following what he calls, Phase I. We need to dream a little bit too. This is for all the kids, not just for travel ball. It is for all the kids to have an opportunity to play on these nice fields. He has traveled with his grandson and it is nice to play on these fields that are upgraded. It draws people to that community and fills up motels, restaurants and gas stations. Go visit Zachary if you can. Zachary is a perfect example of what we are looking at. He is concerned about this because it is a lot of money but he is also encouraged with future development. Dream a little and let's look forward to not only upgrading our parks but also a future basketball gym and a future civic center. He has someone working right now helping him at LaFitte Park to get money for a concert stage. There is so much potential out there. That Park is in Councilwoman Broussard's district. It is a beautiful park. Mr. Joseph Pillette stated that Parker Hebert Park has port-o-lets. That is not a bathroom facility. Who is responsible for upgrading Parker Hebert Park? He sees it being degraded. The other parks that he looked at, there is no access for the kids to get in there and enjoy the park. It stays locked. Mayor Piazza asked which park is that? Councilwoman Broussard stated that McKinley Scott Park is opened every day. She checks that daily. Mayor Piazza stated that every park is open every day. Mr. Pillette stated that he never sees anybody in the park and that is why he thought they were locked. He has seen that we had a building dedicated to black recreation. That was McKinley Scott Park. We had a swimming pool that was dedicated to black recreation. We had a high school, James A. Herod, that was dedicated to black education. Now all this has been degraded. The McKinley Scott building was torn down. Now there is a pavilion there. What will happen in the winter when somebody wants to go there and play basketball? The other parks are depressing to look at. Some of these funds should be dedicated towards the upgrade instead of the degrade of these parks in the underserved community. We do have an instrument to begin to bring justice and change to our community. It is called the vote. We will turn out to vote and maybe we can affect change that will benefit our community then. Ms. Linda Williams stated

when McKinley Scott was torn down, she thinks Mayor Brady was there. Mayor Piazza asked what year was that? Ms. Williams stated it was after 1979. Ms. Williams stated she and some other people were on the board and our name is still on the plaque. What it was is that they were going to tear it down and then a group went to New Iberia. They had a pavilion but they had a building, not a full building like McKinley Scott was, but where they could play table tennis, shoot pool and do different things. That never came to pass. Never came to pass. Mayor Piazza stated that no one in this administration was around back then and this is the first he hears of this. Ms. Williams stated that this came about in the early 80's. Councilwoman Broussard stated according to the minutes, the bids were open on December 19, 1989 to construct the pavilion. The bid was awarded and the project began late January or early February 1990. The project was accepted as complete at the May 19, 1990 City Council meeting. The final payment for the project was approved at the July 3, 1990 City Council meeting. Ms. Williams asked if that was when Mayor Brady Broussard was Mayor. She asked if they talked about the pavilion or the other building they were supposed to build. Councilwoman Broussard stated this is about the pavilion. Ms. Williams stated that she knows what was said and it was never done. Chief Bill Spearman stated there was something that worked in the community in the past that might have gone by the wayside, it is where groups would adopt a park. That might be a solution. Mayor Piazza stated that would be a good idea. Ms. Marja Broussard stated she is not all that is familiar what is happening and Mr. Pillette has briefed her on it. What she sees here and what we see across the country is the African American community is being devalued and marginalized because there are no discussions with them to say what to do with the money. That is what we are hearing. She would suggest that this Council should have community meetings with the African American community. She does not know what the demographics are. She doesn't know in this plan if the demographics are 30% African American in this City and 70% Caucasian. 30% of the contract for the work needs to be done by African Americans. She doesn't know if all those things have been talked about or considered. She goes across the state urging different Councils to hear the voice of the people. You often say its our City but is it really? Would you be able to say I get my fair share? Would you be able to say it is our park? You go to other places and you don't know if the park is in the white or black community because the parks all look the same. Her advice is to engage. She said to Mayor Piazza that she cannot remember the last time she read a newspaper. It is important that you keep the community engaged. The NAACP is an organization with boots on the ground in the community. Mr. Pillette would agree with that and the members would agree with that. She is asking for the Council to keep them engaged. Keep the African American community engaged. If you are serious about this being our City then make it our City. If you are serious about this being our park, then prove it. Not only in what you say but show me that you are seriously considering the African American community. What actions show me that they thought about African American community? Ms. Allie Horton stated that she runs the City's Facebook, website, social media and she works very closely with the Abbeville Meridional and right after we had the original meeting, she posted the plan on our Facebook, shared it to Vermilion Parish updates and it is permanently on our home page of our City website. It is readily available for everyone to look at. Ms. Marja Broussard stated there is a huge digital divide across the country. You have to do more than social media. You have to do more. There is a huge digital divide where African Americans don't have WIFI or internet or digital access as much as their white counterparts. Those of you who are shaking your head, it doesn't change the facts. Facts are facts. She could tell you a whole lot of facts where African Americans are lacking from education to health care. If you say no, then how can you fix the problem if you don't admit it exists? There is a digital divide. We saw it with COVID. Many African American kids did not have access to WIFI to have virtual school. That is across the country. Abbeville is not foreign to this. You guys have an opportunity to make a difference. You have an opportunity to set the standards for the rest of the world to see that we do care about everybody in our community. We do want the voices of everyone in our community to be heard. We do want to work with everyone in our

community. Councilman Broussard thanked Ms. Marja and Mr. Joseph for being here. A City is at its best together with its citizens. We should not use social media to communicate when we can communicate and shake hands. It is important that we already have a Council and a Mayor that is committed to expand broadband because we realize that during the pandemic some kids were learning at their homes instead of at school. This is a City that does believe in inclusion and communication. This is economic development for all the businesses, all the citizens and all the children. We have neighbors, relatives and friends who work in our local restaurants and our motels. Additional jobs are something we should all celebrate. We are all doing this because we believe, like it has done in Zachary, Broussard, Youngsville and Crowley, it will bring additional jobs that were not there before. The oil and gas industry is not coming back to the degree that it was. We have to look at other ways to help all citizens with economic development and jobs for every person who wants to go to work. It may not be a perfect plan but it is a plan that has worked in north Louisiana, south Louisiana and near us. We are trying to do something that we think will work very well to help everybody. Ms. Marja Broussard stated there is an old saying that action speaks louder than words. Anyone can say anything they want but what will be the actions when put to the fire. The actions will determine what happens. Councilman Broussard stated that anyone who would like to have the City agenda emailed to them can have that. It is emailed to the media and the newspaper here is the official journal of the City. There is an email that goes out and you can get on that email list and see the agenda ahead of time. By law, we have to publish the agenda at least 24 hours before the meeting happens.

-06 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Ms. Terry Broussard to close the public hearing and reconvene the regular meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Jason Akers stated the adoption of the ordinance is the final approval process of a \$3,000,000 revenue bond. The bond will be paid out of the excess revenue of the City after paying all other costs of operating and maintaining the City on an annual basis. Your lender is Gulf Coast Bank in Abbeville, a local lender, with a 1.75% fixed interest rate for the life of the bond. It is a ten-year term. The bank has also agreed that they will delay the first principal payment until 2023 so that you can finish paying off the 2012 revenue bond that will mature on March 1, 2022. That gives you some budgetary relief for the future fiscal year. By adopting this ordinance, you are committing yourself and other subsequent councils to budget money each year to pay that bond issue. Right now, you will have a bit of a bump in fiscal year 2022 but it will go down in fiscal year 2023. Each year when you create your budget you will need to budget this. You don't want to skip a debt service payment because that subjects you to a lot of state oversight that you don't want to be a part of. We are really happy with where you are from a borrowing standpoint. You have the State Bond Commission approval and the closing date is tentatively set for October 28, 2021. You would have funds available at that time. Councilwoman White asked because of the way the bond is worded, if we find some other money to be able to put toward the A. A. Comeaux Park project, would we be able to shift some of this bond revenue to other park projects? Mayor Piazza and Mr. Akers both agreed that it could be. Mr. Akers stated that any expenditure has to be for the acquisition or improvement of recreational facilities and other works of public improvement within the City. As long as it meets that purpose then it meets the criteria.

Touchet/B. Broussard
Ordinance 21-07

An ordinance providing for the incurring of debt and issuance of the Three Million dollars (\$3,000,000) revenue bond, series 2021, of the City of Abbeville, State of Louisiana; and providing for other matters in connection therewith. The bond will be used for the purpose of acquiring, constructing and improving recreational facilities and other works of public improvement.

The motion was put to a vote and the vote thereupon was as follows:

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

Therefore, the ordinance was adopted unanimously.

Mr. Richard Primeaux stated the North Hollingsworth Bridge was inspected on 9/13/21 and they found there were some deficiencies enough to bring the rating down to a 6. That means there has to be a load limit on that bridge. One of the spans has a crack in it so they are asking the City to do a load rating on that bridge. Mayor Piazza asked Mr. Primeaux if he is aware that there were some repairs made recently to the bridge. He said he was.

-07 introduced by Ms. Roslyn White and seconded by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. authorize a bridge rating on the North Hollingsworth bridge. The motion carried unanimously.

-08 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to approve the quotation in the amount of \$6,175.00 from Solomon Corporation for repairing/replacing transformers. The motion carried unanimously.

Sealed bids were received for a Glock 9 mm pistol that had been awarded to the Abbeville Police Department. Only one bid was received from Gulfway Sporting Goods, Inc. in the amount of \$155.00. They are a federally licensed dealer.

-09 introduced by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to award the Glock, model 19GEN4, 9mm caliber pistol that was seized and awarded to the Abbeville Police Department to the only bidder, Gulfway Sporting Goods, Inc. in the amount of \$155.00. The motion carried unanimously.

-10 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Ms. Roslyn White to approve the purchase of a zero-turn lawn mower for Sub 1 Fire Station from Abbeville Snapper Sales & Service at a cost of \$9,889.90 to be paid from City Sales Tax Fund. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Gene Sellers stated he and the Mayor have been in contact with Michael Domingue regarding securing additional funds for the LaFitte Park walking trail project. We have not finalized those discussions so we hope to have that finalized by the next City Council meeting so we can award the contract at the next meeting.

Mayor Mark Piazza

- Had distributed a recent report given by Lloyd Campisi for UMR. Lately our Utility System account has run short of money where we have had to move some reserves over to pay some bills. For those of you who don't understand the budget, the Utility System budget and the City Sales Tax budget are two different budgets and the money cannot be used for the same things. The Utility System budget is what funds employee salaries, included Fire and Police, regular bills and health insurance. He noticed that our health insurance for the year was at 80% of budget. It is supposed to be at 65%. The printout from UMR shows that there are currently 438 participants in our health insurance plan. That includes employees, spouses and children. Claims from 7/1/19 through 6/30/20 claims were \$1,996,000. This year we are at \$2,186,000. This a difference of \$190,000. One of the pages shows a bar graph that is the COVID summary for this year. So far, we have had 95*

COVID cases with employees and their dependents. In 2020 we paid out \$66,000 for COVID related illnesses. In 2021 we have paid out so far \$196,000 in COVID related claims. 49% of that were actually City employees, not their dependents. The green bar graph on the next page shows the number of COVID vaccinations. The total number of COVID vaccinations is 90 out of 438. That number is alarming. When we have to make changes to our health insurance plan, that will cost every City employee more money, there is only one group of people that you can blame and the evidence is right here. Everybody will have to pay. Councilman Touchet asked the Mayor when an employee has to go home because of having to quarantine or having the virus is that coming out of their sick leave? Mayor Piazza said yes, it is coming out of their sick leave. The only time we every paid them was the 14 days that was allowed by the federal government in 2020. Of course, that doesn't affect the Fire and Police Department because they have 365 days sick leave. The Municipal employees are having to use sick leave. A few have run out of sick leave so we have asked them to apply their overtime to their compensatory time leave to make up for it. That way they would have some extra days. Councilman Broussard stated that some companies have a higher insurance premium for smokers versus non-smokers and higher premiums for those unvaccinated versus those who are vaccinated. The Council needs to start looking at solutions and not punishing the innocent people.

- Mayor Piazza stated the price of natural gas has doubled. We are so lucky that we have a fixed rate contract with our electrical supplier. All other cities have seen an increase in their electricity bills but not Abbeville. Abbeville has one of the cheapest electrical residential rates in south Louisiana. He does not know of any other City, except Ruston and Vidalia, that has a cheaper rate than us.

Jude Mire, Fire Chief

- Has three on sick leave.
- We repaired the air conditioner at Sub 2. He will come back at the next meeting for the air conditioner at Sub 1. We will have to do a complete change out on that.
- Discussed calls for the last month. There were 112 calls.

Bill Spearman Police Chief

- Discussed calls for the last week. There were 349 calls.

Mayor Piazza left the meeting at this time because he had another meeting to attend so Councilman Touchet took over the meeting.

Councilman Brady Broussard, Jr.

- The Christmas parade is scheduled for December 11, 2021.

Councilman Francis Touchet, Jr.

- We need to be careful when we say we haven't been transparent. Every single thing that has come before this Council has been brought to this table and has been put in front of everyone who could attend as far as these different things. We have been very transparent.
- It is very important that we understand that our community is dying. We have over 50 buildings that are vacant. The problem is that it will not get any better so we have to find a way to get people into this community. Mr. Pillette is here. He is a plumber. He comes to him several times looking for work. People will open up businesses and they will need plumbers and electricians and other things. He cares about this community enough to say that if we don't do something about these vacant buildings, this will be a dying community in the next 10 to 15 years.

- *Our kids will have opportunities. This is the right step in the right direction and we will see the benefits of this 10 to 15 years from now. This will really stimulate our economy.*

-11 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Ms. Terry Broussard to enter into executive session to discuss pending litigation. The motion carried unanimously.

-12 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Ms. Terry Broussard to reconvene the regular meeting from the executive session. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Funderburk explained the executive session was held to discuss pending litigation. He asked the Council to authorize him to inform the attorneys that we have no current interest in discussing the situation.

-13 introduced by Ms. Terry Broussard and seconded by Ms. Roslyn White to authorize the City Attorney to inform the attorneys that the Council has no current interest in discussing the situation. The motion carried unanimously.

There being no further business to discuss, Councilman Touchet declared this meeting adjourned.

ATTEST:

APPROVE:

Kathleen S. Faulk
Secretary-Treasurer

Mark Piazza
Mayor