

The Mayor and Council of the City of Abbeville met in regular session on November 3, 2020 at 5:30 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
Jude Mire, Fire Chief
Richard Primeaux, Engineer
Gene Sellers, Engineer
Steve Moosa, Accounting consultant
Gerald Gaspard, American Legion & Chamber of Commerce
Jonathan Lovett, Abbeville Rotary Club
Norman Levine
Steven Menard, PUSH
Mark Campbell
Ronald Gaspard

Mayor Piazza asked Councilman Brady Broussard, Jr. to lead those assembled in prayer then Mayor Piazza asked for a moment of silence for the young man who shot and killed this afternoon and to ease the suffering of the young man's family. Mayor Piazza asked Councilwoman Roslyn White to lead the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Steve Moosa presented the 3rd quarter financial analysis. This is nine months through September. Sales tax collection is up by 3.7% or about \$117,000 ahead of budget. Water and Sewer revenues are both at \$1.4 million. Last year they were \$1.3 million. We are ahead of budget in water revenue 2% and in sewer 1%. The electric revenue last year was \$3.1 million but this year it is \$3 million. That is a 3% decrease. We had a decrease in the budget so we are only off 1% from budget. This is about \$29,000. If you combine all utility revenue, you are ahead of budget about \$10,000. Kilowatt hours sold is down 7.5% from the previous year. The next page he discussed are expenses. General fund payroll is ahead of budget about \$31,000 which is .8% and we are \$100,000 ahead of budget in the utility fund or about 7.5%. The total payroll budget is ahead of budget about 2.5%. The expenses other than payroll in general fund are \$158,000 ahead of budget which is about 2%. The only department that exceeded budget was the Fire Department. It is most likely due to the increase in retirement funding that occurred in July 2020. The expenses other than payroll in the utility fund are \$300,000 ahead of budget or about 9%. Overall, the City is in good shape thus far.

-01 introduced by Ms. Roslyn White and seconded by Ms. Terry Broussard to approve the minutes from the regular City Council meetings held on September 1, 2020, September 16, 2020 and October 6, 2020 and the personnel interview meetings held on September 15, 2020 and October 6, 2020. The motion carried unanimously.

Mayor Piazza asked if anyone in the public had a comment on any agenda item prior to action. There were none.

Mr. Norman Levine requested to be on the agenda to discuss the television interview with Councilman Francis Plaisance and Police Chief Bill Spearman and to address items discussed during that interview. Mayor Piazza stated that the Police Chief was not at the meeting tonight because of the incident that just occurred in town today. Without him here to make any comments or defend himself, he asked that the conversation be limited to three minutes. Anyone else can make a comment but we have to limit the time since the Police Chief is not here. Mr. Norman Levine stated the problem is the City, the Chief of Police, and the parents don't have control of the children anymore. The Police Station is not doing their job and they do not care for his community and his black people. They don't care. The City of Abbeville is not working together. Nobody has enough time to talk about murders. Councilwoman Broussard stated she is sad and angry. In April the City Council asked the Chief what we could do to assist him. It is not just a District D problem. It is a City problem. Tonight, the Chief is not here to defend himself but she makes a plea to him that the department needs outside help and we need to change the way we are doing things. She has met with the Chief, the Mayor and Councilwoman White to discuss this. This is not going unnoticed by her. The Chief receives his budget and he does not have to answer to us. Mr. Levine stated he will come to every City Council meeting he can to discuss this. This is very important to our community. Councilman Plaisance stated only a small portion of the TV interview was aired. He posted it on Facebook asking for suggestions. Some that he received are very good. He met with the Chief with Ike and the Mayor and we discussed some very important things with the Chief. One suggestion he received was for better enforcement of a curfew. That might help. The Police Chief is an elected official and he is responsible for his department. All we can do is give suggestions. That is what we are trying to do. Councilman Plaisance state that he has enough too. We definitely have a problem in the City. Mayor Piazza stated it is not just about the Chief and the Police Department. He met with the Sheriff and with Drew David last week about this issue. They are willing to help and are capable to help when requested. It is not just 100% on the Chief's back. The Sheriff has a responsibility and he is willing to help. Steven Menard stated that the community leaders have no control over these boys. The kid killed tonight belonged to another group. He suggests getting the State Police in here. These boys have their own frame of mind. Put more officers out there and put more cameras. The community leaders cannot help. Mayor Piazza stated that our hands are tied as to what we can say in public and without the Chief of Police and the fact that this is not a town hall meeting, the Mayor will control the agenda and we will not have this topic on the agenda every time we have a meeting. Mr. Mark Campbell stated the community leaders and pastors are secular and they are doing their own thing. It is not community. We need community. The community is everybody. We need a solution to this killing. He has been here 9 years. He sees inappropriate behavior amongst the adults. We are not coming together. It is not a black thing or a white thing. We need to find a solution to what is going on. We have to put our resources in the right place. Tommy is doing a good job. Through sports and activities, we can curb this. If that kid tonight had been at a basketball tournament, he may not have been killed. We need an afterschool mentoring program. Ms. Denise Boudreaux stated her child was killed in May. You make rules and regulations but you don't do anything with them. What is the point? Curfew is not being implemented. These young men, 13 and 14 years old, are out every night with backpacks. They carry their guns in there. She is not afraid of them but so many other people are. You make your community look bad; you make your race look bad. It is just bad. These district attorneys give these people all kind of lead way. You might as well go to street justice. Everybody is passing the buck. Whose job is it? They say they have to be asked to help but they are too proud to ask. How many children need to die? Ronald Gaspard asked why the Sheriff and the task force are not helping now. Mayor Piazza stated that anytime the Chief or anyone in his department wants to

reach out to the Sheriff and the task force, they are willing to assist. You would need to ask the Police Chief why he has not reached out to them. Mr. Gaspard asked why are we hiding behind the Chief. The Fire Chief is the leader of the Fire Department. If the town starts burning won't you ask him what he will do about it. What is the difference between the Fire Chief and the Police Chief? Mayor Piazza stated the huge difference is that the Fire Chief is appointed and the Police Chief is elected. Because he is elected, the Mayor and City Council are not his boss. He does not answer to us. He answers to the people of Abbeville. Councilman Touchet stated that people need to understand that elections have consequences. The Mayor is correct. Councilman Touchet stated that well before he was on this Council, there was a Police Chief that took the Council to court. It was ruled that once we give the budget to the Chief our hands are off limits. You are about to elect a judge. Elections have consequences. We need to be more proactive. We can only tell the Chief to be proactive. What is it outside of the box we need to do to curb what is going on? Let's get the State Police here and other undercover people here. Let's get community policing in those neighborhoods and let's make sure we have substations there. This would allow us to be active with the community. What is happening here is a tragedy. We have to do a better job of putting the people in place that are going to take actions, not when things happen, but when they are going to happen. Mayor Piazza stated the Sheriff will not come in unless the Chief requests it. Mayor Piazza stated he personally called the State Police and they stated they would not come in unless the Police Chief requests it. They will not do it for the Mayor. He and Councilman Plaisance have sat in his office several times and we have begged Chief Spearman to call the Sheriff and the State Police. He has refused. Councilman Plaisance stated that parents need to take responsibility for their children. It all starts in the home. One suggestion he received from Pastor Bolden is that he will personally organize a group that will target families in the homes. That is a good suggestion. We have to all take responsibility for what is going on out there.

Mr. Jonathan Lovett announced that the Abbeville Rotary Club would like to hold a free event at LaFitte Drive-In Park. It will be a fishing for families event. They will teach people to tie knots, bait a hook and fish. It will be for everybody, not just children. It will be a half-day event. They will provide food. It will be on Saturday, November 28, 2020. It is sponsored by the Abbeville Rotary Club, the Sportsman and Wildlife & Fisheries. They will all be there to set up different stations. We will have an adult at each station.

-02 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Ms. Terry Broussard to allow the Abbeville Rotary Club to use LaFitte Drive-in Park to hold the fishing for families event on November 28, 2020. The motion carried unanimously.

Plaisance/Touchet
Resolution R20-21

A resolution requesting financial assistance from the State of Louisiana under the fiscal year 2020-2021 Local Government Assistance Program and Community Water Enrichment Fund Program.

The motion carried unanimously.

B. Broussard/Plaisance
Resolution R20-22

A resolution surplusing the old portable showers at the VFW Hall and the fence at Palombo Field that were both damaged by Hurricane Delta and allow demolition of same in order to dispose of property.

The motion carried unanimously.

-03 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Ms. Roslyn White to approve the accounting of the 2019 tax roll. The motion carried unanimously.

-04 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. to approve a variance to move a 1999 mobile home to 1720 Society. The motion carried unanimously.

Councilman Touchet stated the owner purchased property one block over from where the mobile home is currently located. He already owned the mobile home and had been renting the space.

Ike Funderburk, City Attorney

- *All hurricane damage claims are being filed with the insurance.*
- *He has received a model ordinance from a national organization that deals with dogs and cats. He will be distributing that to the Council.*

Mayor Mark Piazza

- *There is still time to go out and vote.*

Councilman Brady Broussard, Jr.

- *Citizens of our town do have an avenue to report suspicious activity anonymously. They can call 892-6777 to do that.*

Councilman Francis Touchet, Jr.

- *Asked that the Council give the Mayor feedback on the direction they want to see our Parks and Recreation department going forward. We need to have somebody in here so they can be ready for the spring activities. He is in favor of getting someone but the Council has to make the decision. Mayor Piazza stated that Councilman Broussard is the chairman of the Recreation Committee. It would be a good idea to have a Committee meeting. Councilwoman White suggested that we should do that on a separate night at 5:30 PM to get public input. Councilman Broussard stated that we just had a Parks and Recreation Board meeting. He was there as well as Councilwoman Broussard, Councilwoman White and the Mayor. That was a data session to get the numbers from Mr. Picard. We can definitely have a meeting and we can do that with recreation minded people.*

Councilman Francis Plaisance

- *Commended Councilman Broussard on the outstanding job of the Streetscape project. The sign is absolutely beautiful. Councilman Broussard stated the project took over a decade and it is just an example that things don't happen overnight. The Mayor had a lot input on the finished product. The special spice on that sign is to look on the back of it and see our historic businesses that are part of that. They made our downtown nationally known.*

Councilwoman Roslyn White

- *She attended a presentation in New Iberia that was given by their Mayor. It was entitled, "The Future Direction of our City". It was very well planned and well thought out. This is something she would like to see for our City. It is a new a master plan for the historic main street and it also includes mini master plans for each district of the City. He asks the City Council to match the grant money so the plans can be turned into reality. He works with an architect, the director of planning and the main street director. He had a full*

presentation of all these shovel ready projects with grants lined up to go after them. He started with a budget of \$5,000 from the City and \$5,000 from grants and an inventory of projects and came up with shovel ready projects that would attract more people and tourists. She already asked the Mayor to pull an inventory of our properties. She also spoke to Richard Minvielle at that meeting and they handed him 12 projects to submit for capital outlay grants this year because they have this plan in place. The plans tie into downtown so that everybody buys into the vision for their City. The Mayor of New Iberia did talk about the murders and crime of their City. He has a map displaying every murder that has happened in the City. He goes to the scene and talks to the people. He will incorporate smaller pocket projects called "One block at a time" to push crime out. He feels like it is less likely that someone will commit a crime where something is brightly painted and where neighbors are talking to each other. It was very smart of him to recognize those problem areas and try to implement those into his master plan. She will pass out the information from the presentation to everyone.

- *The overlay of Nugier, North East and Hawthorne have been completed. She thanked the Police Jury and Juror Paul Bourgeois.*
- *The contractor for DOTD is in town to remove debris from State highways.*
- *The Christmas Stroll is scheduled for December 3, 2020.*

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

ATTEST:

APPROVE:

Kathleen S. Faulk
Secretary-Treasurer

Mark Piazza
Mayor