

The Mayor and Council of the City of Abbeville met in regular session on May 3, 2022 at 5:30 P.M., at the regular meeting place, the Council Meeting Room, located at 101 North State Street, Abbeville, Louisiana, with the Honorable Mark Piazza, Mayor, presiding.

Members Present: Council Members, Francis Plaisance, Brady Broussard, Jr., Francis Touchet, Jr., Mayor Pro-Tem and Roslyn White

Members Absent: Councilwoman Terry Broussard

Also, Present: Ike Funderburk, City Attorney
Jude Mire, Fire Chief
Lieutenant Jonathan Touchet
Chris Gautreaux, Public Works Director
Marie Buteau, Water Plant Superintendent
Charlene Beckett, Main Street Manager
Allie Horton, Digital Media Assistant
Richard Primeaux, Engineer
Gene Sellers, Engineer
Tommy Picard, Park Director, QSA
Mike Hardy, Police-elect
Ben Riveria and Colton Daigle, LWCC
Ron Wolfe, Chris Crusta Memorial Airport
Homer Stelly, Vermilion Parish Office of Emergency preparedness
Jason Picard and Keith Roy, Vermilion Parish Police Jury

Mayor Piazza asked Mr. Keith Roy to lead the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance. Mayor Piazza led the assembly in prayer and then asked for a moment of silence for all those suffering in war in Europe and the Ukraine.

Mayor Piazza recognized Mr. Mike Hardy, the newly elected Chief of Police and congratulated him on his recent victory.

Mr. Gavin Laviolette was on the agenda to be recognized for completing his wood duck project at LaFitte Park but he was not at the meeting. We want to congratulate him and thank him for his service to the community. He did a great job on that.

Mayor Piazza asked if there were any comments from the public on any agenda item. There were none.

-01 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. to approve the minutes from the special City Council meetings held on April 5, 2022 and April 19, 2022, the Personnel Interview meeting held April 5, 2022 and the regular City Council meetings held on April 5, 2022 and April 19, 2022. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Homer Stelly stated the property they were originally interested on the east side of the airport has been taken because of the proposed National Guard Armory. The Police Jury is looking for another piece of property to build the safe room. We understand there is a piece of property at

the airport that a company owns that is for sale. It is on the west side of the loop. The Police Jury would like the City to contribute in the purchase of the property so the Police Jury could build their safe room on it. The property would be ideal. Mayor Piazza stated that the Police Jury approached the City years ago before the BMC was even built for Abbeville General Hospital. We had said the loop was available and nobody was using it. That was about 10 to 15 years ago. Since then, we have a major oil company that has moved in, we have the Military Hall of Fame Museum that is now housed there and we have a request for property from the National Guard to build a new armory. They really want to be near the airport. The Council made a commitment to the National Guard to lease them the property on the loop. They also would like us to try to acquire more property since they are interested in 10 acres. We are negotiating with the owners of the Fruit of the Loom building to acquire some property. We have a 6-year capital outlay plan with FAA to develop additional hangars and Mr. Ron Wolfe with the T-Hangar Association is here tonight. FAA has agreed to provide a grant to the City to develop the property to make a taxiway on the property. Now that the Police Jury has received the grant to build their safe room, the City no longer has property that is not committed. Maybe the City could purchase the Technical Industries property in conjunction with the Police Jury. This is the only property that is available at the airport. Councilwoman White asked how many acres did the Police Jury want. Mr. Stelly stated they wanted two acres. Mr. Keith Roy stated the Technical Industries property is about 7.9 acres. They are interested in the structure that is there to be used for distribution. We would need the property to the east side of the building to build the building. They want \$450,000.00 for it. Mayor Piazza stated that we would have to get an appraisal on it and the City would not be able to pay over the appraised value.

-02 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Ms. Roslyn White to authorize the Mayor to begin negotiations on the Technical Industries property along with the Police Jury. The motion carried unanimously.

-03 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Ms. Roslyn White to authorize the Mayor to contract to obtain two appraisals for property adjacent to the Chris Crusta Memorial Airport. The motion carried unanimously.

-04 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Ms. Roslyn White to table the request from Mr. Gerald LeBlanc to discuss drug activity in his neighborhood. This was at Mr. LeBlanc's request. The motion carried unanimously.

-05 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Ms. Roslyn White to table the discussion regarding the Community Basketball Tournament since Councilwoman Broussard was not at the meeting tonight. The motion carried unanimously.

Touchet/White
Resolution R22-11

A resolution to adopt the millage rates for the 2022 tax year.

The motion carried unanimously.

-06 introduced by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. to accept the renewal from LWCC in the amount of \$461,667.00 for workers' compensation coverage and the quote from Provident in the amount of \$399.00 for auxiliary police coverage from May 19, 2022 through May 19, 2023. The motion carried unanimously.

-07 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Ms. Roslyn White to approve the renewal from VFIS in the amount of \$105,360.20 for Fire Department liability, property, equipment and auto insurances from 6/7/2022 through 6/7/2023. The motion carried unanimously.

-08 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Ms. Roslyn White to approve payment of the invoice from Terry's Diesel Repair in the amount of \$5,097.76 for repair of the fire truck at the By-Pass fire station. The motion carried unanimously.

-09 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Ms. Roslyn White to table the selection of projects for the 2021-2022 Local Government Assistance Program (LGAP) and Community Water Enrichment Fund (CWEF) grant programs until the next meeting so additional research can be completed. The motion carried unanimously.

-10 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Ms. Roslyn White to approve the invoice in the amount of \$9,885.00 from Griner Drilling for the 10-inch check valve for the transfer pump at the Water Treatment Plant. The motion carried unanimously.

-11 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to approve the purchase of a sewer camera from Rumfola Sales and Service, LLC in the amount of \$11,234.40. The motion carried unanimously.

-12 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Ms. Roslyn White to approve the quote from Capital Electric and Supply in the amount of \$8,225.00 to change the electrical panel on the Chauteau Lift Station. The motion carried unanimously.

Chris Gautreaux, Public Works Director

- *The water department fixed 14 water leaks last month and changed two fire hydrants. They also completed 11 of the 35 new water sample taps. The sewer crew cleared 28 sewer blockages last month, repaired 6 sewer lines, ran the sewer camera 5 times in 5 different locations and the gas company is doing some repairs and broke some sewer lines that they had to repair. The blue tractor has been in the shop for four weeks. The backhoe that we sent to the Street Department is broken. Councilman Touchet asked if he could find anyone else to fix the blue tractor. Chris stated that he has tried several different avenues. Brandon Briggs will manufacture something in order to fix the backhoe. Each department is utilizing the mini-excavator so everyone has to wait their turn for that. We are waiting on the parts for the fountain in Magdalen Square. Councilman Touchet asked Chris to inventory our equipment and see what we will need. Councilwoman White stated that she and Chris are visiting with each department for them to make a wish list of urgent needs versus long-term needs. Chris will compile a list so we can do a five-year capital improvement plan. We can budget that out for five-years.*

Tommy Picard, Park and Recreation Director, QSA

- *We have a tournament every weekend until June 1, 2022. We have 33 teams coming in this weekend.*
- *He would like to sit down and meet with the Mayor about the usage of the facilities. How will we handle that and what will we charge them? We will need to revisit the prices we charge and lower them. You will make money with the tax dollars instead. We need to charge fees to reserve the pavilions.*
- *The crew has been awesome since he had shoulder surgery.*

- *We received two bids for the remaining tennis courts. They will start that project in two to three weeks.*
- *We will begin using a software program for online field reservations.*
- *The cameras are finished but we will need more.*
- *Nell, with Kaptel, is working to improve the wi-fi at the park.*

Charlene Beckett, Main Street Manager

- *The Sicilian Festival that was held on 3/26/22 went very well. It was held at the Blacksmith Shop.*
- *Sounds on the Square is over. We had the very best weather and it was well attended.*
- *The Daylily Festival is going to be held on June 4, 2022.*
- *We won the district Cleanest City Contest. The State contest will be on May 10, 2022.*
- *We had a very successful Love the Boot Week campaign. Gulf Coast Bank sponsored the canvas bags to be used at the grocery store instead of the plastic bag. We gave those out at the Farmers' Market. We bought thousands of compostable and biodegradable take out containers. They are made with sugar cane fibers. We handed about 100 each of these to some area restaurants. They were all very excited. They gave out water bottles to the VC and Harvestime baseball teams. We will give them to the Abbeville High baseball team. We handed out 500 books to 1st graders in the area and 500 books to 2nd graders on litter. There was a tree planting recently for Earth Day.*
- *We have the garden beds ready for Harmony Park. Four people have adopted a bed.*
- *The crews from the Park were awesome. She had never had a better experience with City workers.*

Councilman Francis Plaisance

- *Discussed the need for a 15 MPH speed limit sign on Rodeo Road near the mobile home park. There is one already at the Stonebridge Apartments but there is not one there. There is some concern about the numerous children that are out in the morning waiting for the school bus. Councilman Touchet stated it was the Headstart that requested the sign a long time ago but obviously it was not put up back then. He asked Chris Gautreaux to please install the sign as soon as possible. It was already previously approved.*

Councilman Brady Broussard, Jr.

- *The Abbeville Rotary Club will be feeding the City employees tomorrow at Comeaux Park Recreation Center. It is the Public Servant Day. We are doing that and recognizing some of the City employees for awards. We are also doing that for the Sheriff Department too.*
- *Thanked Jonathan Touchet for being here tonight.*

Councilman Francis Touchet, Jr.

- *Congratulated the newly elected Police Chief, Mike Hardy. He asked him to get with Mayor-Elect White and the new Council members to hear about their concerns. Until we curb crime, we will not have economic development. We have people in his neighbor that are walking with masks and hoods and they are going into people's cars. He asked Ike if our police department has the right to stop and question people who are walking on the City's right of way. This loitering cannot take place. Ike asked if they are walking on the streets. Councilman Touchet stated they are standing on a corner and they stay on that corner and they do not move. They are on City property. Ike asked if there is a sidewalk next to the street. Councilman Touchet stated they are standing on the sidewalk. Ike stated they are loitering and there is a whole bunch of Supreme Court cases dealing with the rights of someone's right to public assembly. There are certain circumstances, and the police department is trained to be able to identify those circumstances, when they can*

approach and ask for identity. So, to answer the question very simplistically, yes if the facts are right. Councilwoman White asked if someone calls to report a suspicious person would that matter. Ike stated that certainly could instigate a police officer to go there to take a look to see. Councilman Touchet stated there are a lot of kids that are supposed to be supervised that are not being supervised by the adults. They are standing on those right of ways and there are things that are a result of that. We have to be more proactive. Councilwoman White stated that if it is after curfew, then the police have every right to ask for their identification. Ike agreed.

- *He thanked Tommy and Chris for what they are doing in the park. There were a lot of cars in the park and a lot of people in the restaurants. It gave him goosebumps. That is money well spent and we will reap the benefits. We will need a police presence there to make people feel safe. Let's make Abbeville a better place in the next four years. The people have spoken loud and clear and we need to move forward with that.*

Councilwoman Roslyn White

- *It takes a community to curb the crime that is going on in our community. We need neighbors to be diligent and report issues. We need to make sure our officers and dispatchers respond to those situations. We have some work to do but we have a great department and she has no doubt that we will be able to curb the crime but it will take the whole community. It is not just on the police department. The community needs to step up too.*
- *The State Planning team has now landed in Abbeville. On Thursday we will be having a revisioning meeting for the three vacant floors above City Hall. We will ask the community what they would like to see there. We have someone from Denver, Jessie Silversteen, the Kansas State University technical assistance to Brownfield, Scott Nightingale, Chad LaCombe from Acadiana Planning Commission and the State of Louisiana DEQ Brownfield team will be here on Thursday. They will be poking around City Hall. They are trying to get the lay of the land and they will meet with the community to hear their ideas. You can also email your ideas to ideas@iloveabbeville.com or ImagineAbbeville.com or you can come to the public meeting Thursday night at 6:00 PM at the Abbeville Library. Everyone is welcome to come.*
- *Lieutenant Touchet has been doing very well with communicating with us and she appreciates that. She has been passing the information on to the Council when she can.*

-13 introduced by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. and seconded by Ms. Roslyn White to enter into executive session to discuss pending or threatened litigation. The motion carried unanimously.

-14 introduced by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. and seconded by Ms. Roslyn White to reconvene the regular meeting from executive session. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Funderburk reported that we discussed a pending lawsuit against the City entitled Tiffany Warner versus Vermilion Parish Rabies and Animal Control, et al in executive session. We are part of the "and others". He asked that he be authorized to execute an affidavit waiving any potential conflicts that our previous attorneys Borne, Wilkes and Rabalais might have in their representation.

-15 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Ms. Roslyn White to authorize the City Attorney to execute an affidavit waiving any potential conflicts that our previous attorneys, Borne Wilkes and Rabalais might have. The motion carried unanimously.

Ike continued that the second item discussed in executive session is that the City Attorney for St. Martinville has asked all of the municipalities that are governed by a charter to file a "Friend of the Court" brief in support of the position taken by the City of St. Martinville.

-16 introduced by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to authorize the City Attorney to file a "Friend of the Court" brief as requested by the City Attorney for the City of St. Martinville. The motion carried unanimously.

Since Mayor Piazza had left earlier in the meeting, Councilman Touchet declared this meeting adjourned.

ATTEST:

APPROVE:

Kathleen S. Faulk
Secretary-Treasurer

Mark Piazza
Mayor