

The Mayor and Council of the City of Abbeville met in regular session on February 6, 2024 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 Roslyn R. White, Mayor, presiding.

Members Present: Council Members, Carlton Campbell, Terry Broussard, Brady Broussard, Jr., Francis Touchet, Jr., Mayor Pro-Tem and Tony Hardy

Members Absent: None

Also, Present: Bart Broussard, City Attorney
Mike Hardy, Police Chief
Jude Mire, Fire Chief
Chris Gautreaux, Public Works Director
Stewart Head, Electrical Superintendent
Cristian LeJeune, Digital Media Assistant
Bryan Fisher, Code Enforcement Officer
Byron Dozier, Park and Recreation Coordinator, QSA
Gene Sellers, Engineer
Todd Vincent, Engineer
Kim Touchet, Engineer
Arlene Collee

Mayor White called the meeting to order and requested a roll call. Mayor White asked Mrs. Arlene Collee to lead those assembled in prayer. Mayor White asked Mr. Gene Sellers to lead the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor White asked if there were any comments from the public on any agenda item prior to action. There were none.

-01 introduced by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Carlton Campbell to appoint Darren Istre to the position of Firefighter with the Abbeville Fire Department pending successful completion of all post-hire assessments. The motion carried unanimously.

-02 introduced by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Tony Hardy to appoint Chad Edward Chadwick to the position of Firefighter with the Abbeville Fire Department pending successful completion of all post-hire assessments. The motion carried unanimously.

Mayor White began a discussion pertaining to the annual 2% pay increase on the anniversary date for Abbeville Police Department personnel. The \$13,000 pay increase that was implemented in 2023 for all Police Department personnel served as their 2% annual increase for that year. Mayor White would like the Council to grant the 2% on the anniversary date as promised for all current employees but beginning February 1, 2024 all new hires would receive the 2% on their anniversary as per state law which is after three years of continuous service. The City Council sets pay. The 2% that had been given in the past was a hiring policy implemented by the Chief. It is in excess of State law. Chief Hardy wanted to discuss the 5% increase for the TCO. Mayor White stated that it was not on the agenda so it could not be addressed.

-03 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Tony Hardy to grant the 2% annual increase on the anniversary date for current police department personnel and beginning February 1, 2024 all new hires will receive the annual 2% increase according to state law which is after 3 years of continuous service. The motion carried unanimously.

-04 introduced by Ms. Terry Broussard and seconded by Mr. Carlton Campbell to approve the minutes from the December 5, 2023 Committee meeting and the November 21, 2023, December 5, 2023, December 19, 2023 and January 18, 2024 regular City Council meetings. The motion carried unanimously.

Mayor White stated that the 24-hour per payroll overtime cap was lifted for the Abbeville Police Department when Chief Spearman was the chief because he was short-staffed and it was never reinstated. She wanted to know if the Council wanted to reinstate the cap. Chief Hardy stated that he was still short-staffed.

-05 introduced by Mr. Carlton Campbell and seconded by Mr. Tony Hardy to table any action on reinstating the 24-hour per payroll overtime cap for the police department. The motion carried unanimously.

-06 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Carlton Campbell to authorize the purchase of tasers for the Abbeville Police Department at a total cost of \$97,323.60 whereby annual payments in the amount of \$19,464.71 will be made for five years. The motion carried unanimously.

Campbell/T. Broussard
Resolution R24-02

A resolution to adopt the annual Louisiana compliance questionnaire for audit engagements of government entities from the Legislative Auditor to be submitted to the auditing firm of Darnall, Sikes & Frederick, contracted by the City of the purpose of auditing fiscal year 2023.

The motion carried unanimously.

-07 introduced by Mr. Tony Hardy and seconded by Ms. Terry Broussard to surplus a wooden frame house located on City property at 303 Joffre Street, Abbeville, Louisiana and advertise for sealed bids. The motion carried unanimously.

-08 introduced by Mr. Carlton Campbell and seconded by Mr. Tony Hardy to accept the recommendation of the Abbeville Planning Commission to approve the adjustment of the boundary lines at 507 and 507 ½ South Louisiana. The motion carried unanimously.

-09 introduced by Mr. Tony Hardy and seconded by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. to approve payment of partial payment #10 in the amount of \$50,112.50 payable to Shaw Construction LLC for the FY 2021 LCDBG Sewer System Rehabilitation project. The motion carried unanimously.

-10 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Tony Hardy to approve the purchase of two regulators for the electrical substations at an estimated cost of \$87,000.00. The motion carried unanimously.

-11 introduced by Ms. Terry Broussard and seconded by Mr. Carlton Campbell to approve payment of partial payment estimate #4 in the amount of \$46,876.44 payable to Southern Constructors, LLC relative to the New Fishing Pier and Wharf at LaFitte Drive-In Park. The motion carried unanimously.

Gene Sellers, Engineer

- *Presented an easement agreement between the City of Abbeville and James Noel for the Mayor to sign.*

Byron Dozier, Parks and Recreation Coordinator, QSA

- *League basketball has finished and baseball registration is underway.*

Mayor Roslyn R. White

- *Mayor White read the following statement:*

In March of 2022, I was elected by the majority of the residents of Abbeville on a message of honoring our history and culture but with a promise for change for the betterment of our community. I was very clear about what my priorities were. I have listed them below, as printed on my campaign materials...

I will bring new energy to our city. I believe in strategic planning and will prioritize infrastructure and quality of life issues to make Abbeville a safer, more desirable place to live and work.

As your Mayor, I will:

- *Look for creative solutions to neighborhood challenges*
- *Work to keep utilities affordable and reliable*
- *Identify and improve drainage issues*
- *Advocate for street improvements*
- *Work on business retention and recruitment*
- *Help promote and grow tourism*

I will be accessible and open-minded and will work to strengthen our community through compassion and outreach.

I love Abbeville, and I believe together we can move our city forward. Please consider voting for me to be your new Mayor in March 2022.

COMMITTED TO COMMUNITY, DEDICATED TO PROGRESS

I think it's important to remind people of what my message was then, and still is. I have worked tirelessly since day one, focusing on the exact things I promised, which is what voters elected me to do. I am acutely aware of the issues Abbeville is facing because I carry that burden every day. They are much more complex than you can even imagine. It will take time and creative solutions to begin correcting them, but I am a dedicated, determined, hard-working, resourceful person, and I will fight to restore our community and rebuild the pride we once had. ABBEVILLE IS NOT LOST, but it takes TRUST and community support to solve problems.

The complete streets demonstration in downtown has been an experiment to spur a community conversation about what is important. I do not believe we have ever had a more open, inclusive, adaptable, engaging process in our history. It is focused on education and setting goals for our community.

I participate in weekly calls about funding opportunities available for communities. These calls are often by invitation from DOTD and the Federal Highway Administration because of the safety issues we have here as well as the work we are currently doing in Abbeville. No matter your beliefs, your cynicism, or your political views, the FACT is that Abbeville has a high percentage of bicycle and pedestrian related accidents. They are compounded in severity by

the speed and carelessness of drivers in our city. This is a REAL and serious issue. There are many avenues of funding available to correct these hazards and improve safety for all road users, but as a community we must first begin by acknowledging that everyone deserves to be able to commute safely throughout Abbeville no matter their choice, or lack of choice, of their means of transportation.

If you agree, or at a minimum acknowledge the importance of our collective community health, then I ask you to consider advocating for positive change in Abbeville. If we agree to set a higher standard for our community, by requiring for the inclusion of bike, pedestrian, and accessible infrastructure, we will have a better chance of retaining the next generation, attracting new residents and businesses, and we will set a precedent that we value the health and well-being of the children in our community and the people who choose to live and work here. If we prioritize community health, we will be prioritized over other areas when it comes to funding for implementing additional infrastructure improvements beyond the surface of our roads.

Communities that set multi-modal goals to improve bike, pedestrian, and ADA access are prioritized for funding opportunities. Improving walkability and bike access throughout Abbeville can greatly improve the health of our people and our economy. You do not bike or walk? That's ok...but rather than ridiculing those that do, count your blessings that you do not have to. Building more complete streets is not just for those who do not have a vehicle or cannot drive due to age or disability, it is also for members of our community who prioritize health. It is about building an environment that is inclusive of all members of our community. Building connected active spaces will also attract tourism that can foster job creation and business retention.

The conditions of some of our roads are horrible. I agree. But they did not get that way overnight, and they won't all be fixed tomorrow. Improving roads has been a top priority of my administration, and we have set a plan in place to improve 11 miles of roads beginning this year. It will take time because the government moves slower than I prefer, but it's coming. Most of the roadwork will be completed using state funds we have worked to secure these last two years. We have also established a local road fund to ensure roads remain a priority. This helps us leverage local funds for additional road projects.

Another focus has been planning to build connectivity to the public places in our community. This means looking at ways to implement connected, dedicated and shared bike paths and sidewalks throughout Abbeville over time. From downtown to the library to the Christian Service Center, to our schools, parks, hospital, churches, grocery stores and other critical facilities, and then building connections to neighboring communities.

Chronic disease is also a critical issue in our community. We all have family members suffering from heart disease, cancer, obesity, and other illnesses. These illnesses are affecting our youth at a higher rate than ever before. Building a safe, comfortable place for people to be active and social will result in better health for our entire community. We start in the heart of downtown and build out from there.

We should not make decisions solely on how things were in the past or where we are today; rather we should set goals for the future of our community and build a plan to get there. That is what this demonstration has been about. Yes, some of the concepts have proven successful and will be implemented in the first phase of improvements, some are still being tweaked based on the collective feedback received, like testing pull in angle parking because many people requested, so we will try it. Ultimately, we will end up with better roads that will function in a way that fits our community and prioritizes our people over traffic, which will help build a stronger local economy.

I am aware of all of the ranting, ugly comments and letters to the editor in the paper. I choose to not respond to every naysayer, because instead of complaining or fighting about problems, I dedicate my time working on ways to fix them. Not just the problems with our roads, but also all the other problems we have in the city. That is what I do every day. I show up and work on finding solutions to the issues this city is facing. Some people disapproving of the format of a

meeting because it was different than what they assumed it should be, does not mean they did not have an opportunity to complain or be heard. It's a free country, everyone is entitled to their feelings and opinions. But the accusation that they have not been provided multiple opportunities to give feedback is emphatically false.

A two-hour meeting of people with differing opinions arguing at each other without listening, because we are unwilling to hear what the other side is saying, is not a meeting that brings solutions, it just creates chaos without resolution; very similar to open chat forums on social media. I do not believe in wasting hard working people's time. We planned a meeting designed to give everyone an opportunity to give feedback and criticism both constructive and otherwise. I stated clearly that I would stay as long as needed to discuss and answer all complaints and questions, knowing that everyone would have varying issues, some more granular than others. I talked to every person that wanted to speak to me, and I was the last to leave. In fact, some of the most vocal and antagonistic individuals complaining on social media did attend the most recent meeting, stood within three feet of me as I was there offering to listen to alternate ideas. I looked them in the eyes and they did not ask one question or even offer a single complaint in person when afforded the opportunity to directly discuss the project. As I stated that night, and continue to state, I know and respect that there are varying opinions of the concepts we are looking at. I have read and considered all comments and suggestions. In the end, I will present a plan that I believe best reflects all feedback and data while continuing to prioritize SAFETY and traffic calming in areas of need.

The residents of Abbeville have entrusted in me to lead this city, and that is EXACTLY what I am doing, and will continue to do with the strength, grace and tenacity that we should expect from our leaders. It is not a bike path to nowhere, it's not a tree in a road, it's a VISION and a path forward. It's ok that you cannot see it or do not believe it is possible, yet. I have conviction and courage and I will work every day to continue to make a positive difference in Abbeville because THAT is what this city needs right now.

Councilman Francis Touchet, Jr.

- *Commended Mayor White for what she is doing but reminded her that we cannot alienate other governmental agencies and have to be inclusive of them. We need to bring them to the table. Mayor White stated that she had met with the Vermilion Parish Police Jury President today and will be meeting with Police Juror Liz Touchet. She has also met with Marc Turner with the Vermilion Parish School Board.*

Councilman Brady Broussard, Jr.

- *In March the annual St. Pat's Comedy Night for the Abbeville Rotary Club will be held.*

Councilman Carlton Campbell

- *Thanked Mayor White for being open and meeting with those groups who criticize.*

-12 introduced by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Tony Hardy to enter into executive session to discuss pending litigation pertaining to the Abbeville Police Department regarding pay increases. The motion carried unanimously.

-13 introduced by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Carlton Campbell to reconvene the regular meeting from executive session. The motion carried unanimously.

Mayor White explained that the executive session was held to discuss pending litigation as brought against the City by the Abbeville Police Department regarding pay increases. The City Council does not wish to take action at this time.

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

ATTEST:

APPROVE:

Kathleen S. Faulk
Secretary-Treasurer

Roslyn R. White
Mayor