

The Mayor and Council of the City of Abbeville met in regular session on September 1, 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., and Francis Touchet, Jr., Mayor Pro-Tem

Members Absent: Councilwoman Roslyn White

Also, Present: Ike Funderburk, City Attorney
Jude Mire, Fire Chief
Bill Spearman, Police Chief
Jason Hebert, Police Lieutenant
Clay Menard, Public Works Director
Richard Primeaux, Engineer
Gene Sellers, Engineer
Rebecca Broussard, Director of VPOEP

Mayor Piazza asked Councilman Brady Broussard, Jr. to lead the assembly in prayer. Mayor Piazza also asked for a moment of silence to ease the suffering of the individuals around the Lake Charles area that were affected by Hurricane Laura. Mayor Piazza asked Councilman Francis Plaisance to lead the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

-01 introduced by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. and seconded by Ms. Terry Broussard to deviate from the agenda to allow Ms. Rebecca Broussard to report on Hurricane Laura. The motion carried unanimously.

-02 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Ms. Terry Broussard to approve the minutes from the Committee meeting and the special City Council meeting both held on August 4, 2020. The motion carried unanimously.

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

Ms. Rebecca Broussard distributed an informational sheet from FEMA for assistance. This has a number and a website for the public to register to report their damages and request assistance. This is only for homeowners only. We have not been approved for public assistance for facilities. If you can get me some cost estimates then we may be able to get approved for public assistance. Businesses are eligible for SBA loans. Normally in a storm you have to have 25 homes that are not insured and have major damage. We got everybody to report that with their pictures. That is how we got added for individual assistance. She has them coming tomorrow to see if we can qualify for debris pickup. We have to reach the threshold of \$222,000 + of damages to qualify for public assistance. We will probably qualify but we need the paperwork. The repairs for Vermilion from SLEMCO are \$1.8 million dollars. Mayor Piazza told Becky that they did a fantastic job at the Courthouse and kept everybody informed through the whole storm event. Becky thanked Chief Spearman for all the assistance he has provided her office during COVID testing.

Chief Spearman stated that he went to 12- hour shifts rather than the normal 18- hour shifts. The officers from out of town stayed in the houses of the officers who live in town. He parked all the cars on high ground and used the pickup trucks and SUVs to patrol. When the storm was over, they went out and assisted with the cutting of trees. They helped with clearing of the roads. We also blocked roads too. We assessed damages too. We had a little bit of trouble with our generator. There was air in the gas line. We lost some of our radio communications but we were able to use cellphones. He made sure all the officers were paired off in two-man units so that no one was out there by themselves. We had very little damages. The only trouble we had were curfew violations. Mayor Piazza stated that he slept in his office the night of the hurricane. He is able to see down State Street and Concord Street. He saw a patrolman pass several times during the hurricane. That takes a lot guts and a lot of devotion. Please let them know how much we appreciate them putting themselves in that type of situation.

Chief Mire stated they brought everyone in at about noon so they could get everything prepped up. No stations or trucks had any problems. We stopped running calls at about 11:30 PM when the wind was blowing too much. At 6:00 AM Thursday morning, he had 4 crews and each one had a chain saw. Ms. Shirley gave Chief Kelly the names of the streets that had trees on them. The crews each took a part of town. We cut trees all day Thursday and it finally settled down Thursday night. The electricity came back on late Thursday night so we had to run a few calls after that. Over all we made it our exceptionally. We did fine. In past hurricanes we have had other departments that have come to assist us so we will try to reciprocate. Today he talked with a guy from the State Fire Marshal's office and he recommended that we send people to Iowa. We sent 5 guys. He and Jack rode there today. The damage is tremendous. He did not see one electrical pole standing upright. Almost every tree was down. These guys will not have electricity for 6 to 8 weeks. Their guys have been working steady since the storm passed. We sent five guys and they ran their department so they could get some rest. They were tremendously happy that we were there to help. We were blessed.

Mayor Piazza thanked both the police department and the fire department for assisting the crews by cutting trees. We would probably still be out there cutting trees if you did not help us.

Clay Menard stated the largest damage we had was debris. It is still in the right of way and in culverts. We are trying to get the ditches cleaned up. We do have a lot of debris. Bellsouth has a lot of downed lines and downed poles. We actually replaced some of their poles in order to get our power back up. It will take some time for Bellsouth to replace the leaning poles. They are aware of it. The workers did a great job and we are asking for patience from the public. There are two trees down on the back side of Comeaux Park. The sandbagging machine will be in next week. We gave out a lot of sandbags for this storm. He will get the exact count later. Mayor Piazza stated next time we will try to utilize at least one of the debris contractors to assist with those really big trees. Now we are in the situation where we can't pick it up because now FEMA has to look at it before it gets picked up. Now we have to wait on the Police Jury. Clay stated we have to stress to the residents that if debris is placed at the road it has to be separated or it won't be picked up.

Mayor Piazza stated that Councilwoman Broussard has been concentrating on getting her parks cleaned up. Other parks have been cleaned. We didn't have that much damage in our parks. Clay stated the football field fence has been damaged. Mayor Piazza stated debris is the biggest issue. It is such a struggle to get it picked up, get FEMA approval, work with the Police Jury and get it picked up in a timely manner. People are calling about it. We have been through this a dozen times so we know what kind of nightmare this is. We will have to be patient and do things accordingly to allow the Police Jury to do their job. Our streetsweeper is out of commission

because the head operator injured himself cutting the big trees. The other operator also was hurt during the Hurricane. We haven't been able to clean up those streets that we use the streetsweeper on. You need a CDL to operate the sweeper and you have to know how to operate it. We had no issues at our sewer plant and our water plant. The only issue we had was the water tower on the south side of town. It lost power and was inoperable. That is one of the things we need to look into. We don't want a situation where we don't have water. Water is the most critical utility that we have. You can live in your house without electricity but you can't if you don't have water and sewer facilities. The only damage we had to City buildings were the two air conditioners at City Hall that were damaged. That brings us to the biggest dilemma that we have now; our electrical system. We are suffering from two different things. One is the trauma and damage that the electrical system suffered because of the hurricane. We got hit by a Cat 4 hurricane. It is the worst hurricane to hit the gulf coast in 150 years. It is worst that Hurricane Audrey. We are very fortunate. Everybody from the Atchafalaya and West is struggling with their power system. All the way up to Shreveport. Alexandria has outages just like we do. The town of Jena does not have power right now. All the little towns around Toledo Bend will not have power for 2 weeks. Councilman Broussard stated there are parishes that have a 100% electrical outage. Mayor Piazza stated that we are very fortunate. Unfortunately, we have some very impatient people that live in our community. He understands that. The system suffered a lot of trauma and there is a lot of unseen damage. The hotter it gets, the more load you put on these lines then all of a sudden, all these resistors and transformers start heating up. You didn't know it was damaged because it might take two or three days before the damage is realized. That is what is going on. The second thing that is going on that is causing the most problems, is that we have two electrical transformers that are out of commission. One before the storm and the other during the storm. These are large substation transformers. The transformer on the By-pass is down. Fire came out of the top of it. It cannot be repaired. Those are two 5,000 KVA transformers and you cannot run the By-pass on one. That is why the proposal we have before us tonight is to buy a 10,000 KVA. It will double the size so if we lose the other one, we can carry the load on one. Right now, because the 5,000 KVA cannot handle the load, we had to switch the load to Rodeo Road Substation. When we did that and everything started coming back online, like the hospital, Walmart, etc. that are on Rodeo, it started overheating. We had to switch the load from Rodeo Road to Gertrude Substation. Gertrude is already crippled because that is where the backup transformer is and that is what kept going out all afternoon today. All the load we are trying to pick up from the By-Pass is making the lines, fuses, transformers and all those other things that are involved in an electrical system, heat up because of the hot temperatures and the excess load that it is having to carry. These things keep blowing. Harvey is working on Gertrude Substation as we speak. We had a 125,000-amp fuse that blew earlier today. They replaced it with a 150,000-amp fuse and it blew. That was the biggest one we had. They changed all of the fuses. It blew two of them. Harvey sent Rick to CLECO to pick up some 200,000-amp fuses and bring them back to get Gertrude Substation back up and going. We don't carry those parts in our warehouse. We have never used those before. That is what was going on all day long at Gertrude. We have a load there that it can't handle because we had to take the load off of Rodeo Road because we have a transformer out on the By-pass. That transformer is down due to the hurricane. The hospital, right now, is offline and on generator power to take the load off of Gertrude. Yesterday we had the same exact issue because Louisiana Substation is picking up all the load from Riviana Substation. Riviana Substation got energized today. The river crossing that was damaged on South Henry. We couldn't even get there on the road with our electrical crew. Richard Primeaux had to come in and have a temporary road built for the crew to get there to make those repairs so we could get Riviana Substation back online so we could take the load off of Louisiana Substation. That is what was causing those power outages yesterday. Until we get this transformer at the By-pass substation, we will continue to have an overloaded system and outages. We have already ordered the transformer. They have expedited this transformer to get

it here as fast as we can. We have a unique system with a 34.5 and 13.2 voltage system. This is not a common system. That is not the same type of system many others operate on. Transformers with this type of voltage are very rare. This transformer is coming from South Dakota. Some of our substations are different voltages so they can't pickup the load. We hope to have the transformer here in about 8 days. We are paying an extra \$12,000 to have it expedited to us. It is a complex system and it is hard for the public to understand. He will be coming back at the next meeting to buy another transformer for Gertrude to put in place as the spare since we had to use that recently. He knows the public doesn't understand all this and they blame us for this. If there was another way we could fix this we would. We are on a band-aid right now. The good news is that we could be like Lake Charles.

-03 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Ms. Terry Broussard to ratify the purchase of a 10,000 KVA transformer from T & R Electric in the amount of \$137,000 for the Bypass substation. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Clay Menard stated that he had contacted four air conditioner places to request quotes to replace the 5-ton and the 4-ton air conditioner units that failed as a result of Hurricane Laura. Only one vendor gave a quote. Another vendor stated it would be at least one month before he could even install the units. The other two vendors were not sure when they could get a quote to us. Mayor Piazza asked Clay to document all this. We will make a FEMA claim. These are emergency repairs and we can't sit around waiting to repair this. Mr. Menard stated the quote he received from F & R Air Conditioning is \$15,639.00. They can have the units installed and running by the end of the week.

-04 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. to accept the quote from F & R Air Conditioning in the amount of \$15,639.00 to replace one 5-ton HVAC unit and one 4-ton HVAC unit at City Hall that were damaged as a result of Hurricane Laura. The motion carried unanimously.

Richard Primeaux, engineer

- *Eddie Young with Acadiana Shell dropped everything he was doing within 2 hours and he was building the road. He wanted to compliment him.*

Gene Sellers, engineer

- *Gave a report on the Streetscape project. The contractor is 92% complete. The project should be finished in one month. The project will be underbudget.*

Ike Funderburk, City Attorney

- *Contacted our insurance agent, Ben, to report the Gertrude transformer failure, the Bypass transformer failure and the two air conditioner failures at City Hall.*

Mayor Mark Piazza

- *Thanked everyone for their cooperation during Hurricane Laura. We had a lot of employees that worked very hard. Even some of the girls at City Hall. They stayed there 24-7 answering the phones. They did a fantastic job with hundreds of calls coming in. Everyone did a fantastic job. He doesn't know how those guys in the electrical department are still standing. We do not have a full staff in that department.*
- *You learn a little something each time there is a disaster. We have a mutual aid agreement through APPA. Greg Labbe, with LUS, is their coordinator. The crews are more available through him because he is the regional coordinator for LUS and APPA. That is why we got the crews from Georgia and Florida. Those crews from Georgia and Florida*

are cities just like us and they came down here to help. They are not contractors. They are municipalities that come off through mutual aid. When they see that the lights are coming on, they want to get back home. Whereas a contract crew, like Volt, are not in a hurry to go home because they are making so much money it is unbelievable. They would stay here forever. You almost have to kick them out. He didn't realize that with the mutual aid situation. He just found that out yesterday. It is something to think about and maybe, in the future, we will need a combination of both.

- *He thanked the Council for their part. It is not easy to coordinate the meals. They all did a fantastic job.*

Councilman Francis Plaisance

- *Stated the Mayor can add another storm to his already lengthy storm resume'. He thanked the Mayor for doing an outstanding job. Councilwoman White kept everyone well informed. Everybody worked well together. He thanked all the employees and stated that this was truly a team effort.*

Councilman Francis Touchet, Jr.

- *Four people really stood out during the hurricane. Shirley Bertrand at City Hall is unbelievable. She gives us her time and she doesn't have a life in something like this. We better hope she never retires. She doesn't just do this for a storm. She does this for every single outage. She is dedicated and has done this for years. Stewart Head stands out too. We need to find some help for him. He needs to be paid more as well as his crew. We need to do something now. Another person who stood out was Councilwoman Roslyn White. She has helped Shirley at City Hall. She has taken over the communication and keeps people informed. She answers the phones with Shirley and brings her friends to City Hall to help answer the phones. The Mayor was there at City Hall. His leadership is exemplary. It takes a person like him to really lead when things like this happens.*

Councilwoman Terry Broussard

- *She thanked the Mayor, the Fire Chief and Police Chief, Clay and Shirley and everyone else who played a part in helping the City. This storm was a great lesson learned. Thank God we didn't get what we were supposed to. She also agrees with Councilman Touchet that the electrical department needs a raise. She learned a lot during this storm.*

Councilman Brady Broussard, Jr.

- *We are fortunate. There is no substitute for experience. Mayor Piazza's experience in hurricane recovery is unprecedented. We are better for that and we have recovered quicker because of that. He thanked Shirley and her team. We can't do what we do without her. He thanked the Fire Department, the Police Department, Clay Menard and all the Municipal employees. When we have a very senior equipment operator, he should not be on a chainsaw. That is the guy that we pay for his knowledge and skill. This is not our first hurricane and this is not our last hurricane and he would rather spend hurricanes in Abbeville than anywhere else.*

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

ATTEST:

APPROVE:

Kathleen S. Faulk
Secretary-Treasurer

Mark Piazza
Mayor