

The Mayor and Council of the City of Abbeville met in regular session on July 20, 2021 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., 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
Charlene Beckett, Main Street Manager
Allie Horton, Digital Media Assistant
Tom Carroll, Engineer
Richard Primeaux, Engineer
Pastor Steve Delino, Parks and Recreation Board
Felicia Williams, Parks and Recreation Board
Bridget Levy, Parks and Recreation Board
Tommy Picard, Park Director, QSA
Henry Richard, Richard Development
Elray Schexnaider
Robert Bufford
Pastor B. K. Stevens
Katrina Stevens Harris
Gerald Gaspard, American Legion & Chamber of Commerce

Mayor Piazza asked Pastor B. K. Stevens to lead those assembled in prayer. Mayor Piazza asked Mr. Tommy Picard to lead the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

-01 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Ms. Terry Broussard to accept the resignation of Mr. Clay Menard from the position of Public Works Director effective July 30, 2021.

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

YEAS: 4(T. Broussard, B. Broussard, Touchet, White)
NAYS: 1(Plaisance)
ABSENT: 0
ABSTAIN: 0

Therefore, the motion carried.

Councilman Plaisance stated he is very appreciative of the work that Clay has done and he hates to see him leave. He has done a great job. Mayor Mark Piazza stated he worked very closely with Clay on a day-to-day basis and we don't have a more loyal and devoted employee as he was. He will be very hard to replace and very sorely missed. Clay got a very good job offer in Lafayette that he could not refuse. He wishes him and his family the best of luck and success. He felt that we should take action on this immediately, even though he is not here tonight because he is at training. This is a Council appointment and we will have to advertise for this position, we will

have to accept applications, interview and then put someone in place. That will take at least one month. We will be without a Public Works Director for a few weeks and whoever we put in there will have a training period. He will have to do the training since Clay will not be here. Councilman Broussard stated that he does wish Clay and his wife the best in this new position and health and happiness in the next chapter of his life.

-02 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Ms. Terry Broussard to authorize advertisement for the position of Public Works Director. The motion carried unanimously.

Councilman Touchet stated that the Public Works Director position is very critical to the day-to-day operations and he thinks that we need to be very selective and to make sure we have the right qualified person. We can't settle. If we interview people and we don't think they are the right fit, then we won't settle. We need to try to find someone at the salary that we have here than can come in and fill the void so we can continue with the work we have going on in the City.

Mr. Henry Richard with Richard Development was at the meeting to discuss the possible acquisition of property on US 167 at Alan Lane to develop for commercial purposes and the applicability of the City's land use ordinances. Mr. Richard stated they are proposing to do a development to maximize the use of the corner lot that is available. He understands that there are some easements and setbacks that they have to comply with. The current map just received answers a lot of questions. The proposal is for a strip center, car wash and large storage buildings for boats and RVs. The storage would be in the back and the retail center would be in the front. If we can squeeze it in, the car wash would be on the corner. However, it is looking like the car wash will be down the drain now with the map received. There is currently a right of way for the street that is 25 feet on the outside. Additionally, because it is on the corner, there is another 15 feet and he is trying to get that 15 feet down to 5 feet. That way we would have the 25 feet plus 5 feet. On the west and the south, we are trying to get a 5-foot setback. The west will be a no brainer but the south we thought we could get it down to 5 but the utility easement is 15 feet. That request would be down too since the map has answered that. The other request we had was to leave the six foot wood fence up but we understand the requirement is for an 8 foot fence. We would put up an 8 foot fence but he needs clarification of where the fence can go so it doesn't block the utility easement. Councilman Touchet asked if Mr. Richard owned the property. Mr. Richard stated they do not own the property right now. We are looking for a commitment from the City regarding these variances before we purchase the property. Mr. Funderburk stated we don't normally act until we have a complete set of plans that have been reviewed by Richard Primeaux so that he can make recommendations to the Planning Commission and then to the City Council. He understands what Mr. Richard is trying to do. He wants to get an indication from the Council as to what this footprint can look like. He doesn't want to put a lot of money out without the understanding that it would be something that could be workable for him. We can't grant him a variance without a set of plans and we can't grant him a variance because he doesn't own the property. Councilman Plaisance asked if there were any restrictions in that area. Mr. Funderburk stated that would be up to the title examiner to determine that. Councilman Touchet stated we are pro-business and we want to bring economic development to the City. If it is possible and we have to grant variances to bring businesses in, we will do so. Councilwoman White stated that we have some people here tonight that live in the subdivision next to this proposed development and we will have their public comments later. She has been working with Mr. Henry since she received the information from the Tax and Permit Department and trying to get him answers regarding if any variances would be allowable. They went to the Abbeville Planning Commission meeting but they could not answer those questions. We brought him back here to get some answers on what the easement and where, on the south side, he would be able to put that fence line. She asked Richard Primeaux to measure the distance between Our Lady of

Mercy Apartments and if he was granted the 5 foot variance on the west side, what the distance would be between the apartment complex so the Fire Chief could weigh in on whether or not the distance between would be sufficient. Richard Primeaux has come back with 26 feet to 35 feet depending exactly where the line is. This is Mr. Henry's attempt to find out how we stand as a Council before he makes his decision to purchase the property or move forward with an engineer. Mr. Henry stated they have learned a lot through the Planning Commission and today. He has received a lot of the answers that he didn't have on day one. We now know, pretty close, to what the footprint could be. He also received the landscape ordinance and they understand that are ok with that. Mayor Piazza asked Richard Primeaux to explain what he presented to the Council. Mr. Primeaux stated the yellow line on the sketch shows the developable property. The proposed building is going to face Highway 167. The easement on the South side is prescriptive and is depicted on the sketch too. No variance would be able to be granted on that side because we need that easement in order to maintain the electrical infrastructure. On the back side, on the west side, the setback is 10 feet. You would need to grant a 5 foot variance there. On the Alan Lane side, the property is on a corner lot, so the setback is 15 feet. Normally we maintain that setback however there have been times when the Council has dropped it back to 10 feet. That was the only variance that was ever given for a corner lot. We will have to take care of the drainage and the landscaping. Councilman Broussard stated he did attend the Planning Commission meeting and stated that one of the questions regarding quality of life was answered at that meeting. This is boat/RV storage. This is not 24 hour a day boats and RVs coming out. This is not something that happens every hour of every day. It doesn't happen in the middle of the night. Mr. Henry does this in other places in the state, like Houma. It will be a stucco exterior so there will be architectural attractiveness on part of this project. He hopes we study it sufficiently for jobs, sales tax generation in the City and something that would compliment St. Francis Woods not offend them. Mayor Piazza stated the critical aspect is the south boundary and making sure that the 8 foot fence requirement does stay. That is critical to that neighborhood. Stewart needs 15 feet for the easement from the existing St. Francis Woods fence to maintain those power lines. Alan Lane is very narrow so 5 feet is a stretch; Richard is recommending 10. As far as the western boundary goes, the Fire Chief stated that is not an issue. In the east, that is all State right of way so that is nothing that we have any discretion over. Those decisions would be made by the State. Mr. Elray Schexnaider stated he is on the board of St. Francis Woods Homeowners Association which is the neighborhood just south of the proposed development. They have no objections to the development and we hope if you do develop there, you will be an asset to our community. However, as a tightly restricted subdivision, we do have some concerns. You requested a variance on the fence height on the property line but we hope the Council adheres to the 8 foot fence requirement. The 6 foot fence would not provide the right amount of privacy for the neighborhood. The City ordinance does require an 8 foot fence. We recognize that adequate lighting is necessary for the security of the facility but we hope in the design plan of your lighting system that most of the lighting would be directed back into the development and minimize as much reflection on the adjoining property. As far as the setbacks are concerned, there is a utility easement on the south side of the property as has been discussed. We are concerned about the drainage facilities. We certainly don't want any drainage coming into the subdivision. It is prevented by law to begin with but sometimes people overlook that and still drain on the adjoining property. Mr. Henry stated they would contain it all. We cannot drain into the highway drainage system. It will have to be Alan Lane. Mr. Schexnaider asked if Mr. Henry knew yet what types of businesses would locate in the strip mall. Mr. Henry stated they have not yet looked for tenants. It will be office retail and hopefully some food like a coffee shop or sandwich shop. It would not be an all-night operation. Mayor Piazza asked Mr. Richard Primeaux about the lighting of the development. Mr. Primeaux stated any time a commercial development is right up against a residential area we ask for a lighting chart to show the light as it approaches the residential area. At Dominos, we allowed one candle light at the property line.

It worked out very well and the property owners were happy with that. Also, it hasn't been determined yet if the development could drain onto Highway 167. Once he gets the plan then his engineer will be able to determine where the water can be sent. Right now, this is just speculation. Mayor Piazza asked about the access. Mr. Henry stated it is on 167 and Alan Lane for the storage. Councilwoman White stated that she had lunch with Ms. Sandra Marant who lives in the Our Lady of Mercy apartments. She is in favor of the development as long as there is a sidewalk so she can walk from the apartments to the shopping center. Councilman Broussard stated that we all agree that we have seen enough alcohol, cigarette, nail salons and fried foods. This is an opportunity for us to diversify the type of business that provides jobs and sales taxes to our community. He met Mr. Henry at the Planning Commission and he is sure Mr. Elray's comments will be complied with. There will be an 8 foot fence and lighting should not be a problem either. He hopes the Council considers that this is not doing the same thing and this is something that could add jobs and beauty to the entry of our community. Councilman Plaisance asked how many jobs would the development create. Mr. Henry stated he does not create any jobs because he would lease the space out. Whoever leases and occupies the space will employ people. Councilman Touchet stated that we will not cut corners for businesses and we will not disrupt the quality of life for the residential areas that are near them. Mr. Henry stated that he would follow all the rules like everybody else just as he did for other developments that he has built. Mr. Henry asked Richard Primeaux additional questions regarding the placement of the fence. Mr. Primeaux stated that a more thorough discussion could be held with the Mayor and the Electrical Superintendent regarding the utility easement requirements. Councilman Plaisance did tell Mr. Henry that if this project does go through that he is to maintain the fence that is put up. That is not the case in Councilman Plaisance's neighborhood. The fence is not being maintained even though it is the commercial development's responsibility. Ike stated the best thing to do is to allow Mr. Henry to think about what he learned tonight and if he does commit to the development, then he can give us a set of the plans and we can get those to Richard Primeaux to review. That is the best way to approach this. Plans can be adjusted and once you get something down of a piece of paper then you have something to work with. Right now, we just have everybody's own concept of what it could be. Mr. Robert Bufford, a resident of St. Francis Woods, stated he does not foresee a problem with the development. He was concerned about the drainage too from the parking lot. Mayor Piazza stated they would have to develop the parking lot so that it would drain to Alan Lane.

-03 introduced by Ms. Roslyn White and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to approve the minutes from the July 6, 2021 regular City Council meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

-04 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. to deviate from the agenda to approve a request from Tommy Picard to purchase a rebuilt golf cart for the Park for a cost of \$3,700. The motion carried unanimously.

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

-05 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to approve the purchase of a rebuilt golf cart from Specialty Carts at a cost of \$3,700.00. The motion carried unanimously.

-06 introduced by Ms. Terry Broussard and seconded by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. to appoint Katrina Stevens Harris, effective, July 30, 2021, to the Abbeville Fire and Police Civil Service Board. The motion carried unanimously.

-07 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Ms. Terry Broussard to authorize advertisement for bids for the LaFitte Drive-In Park recreational trail project. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Tom Carroll stated there are two options for the trail. One is a concrete option and the other is an asphalt option. Both of them are 8 feet wide and the whole trail is a little over 2,800 feet. With the concrete option we have a one-inch stone base and with the asphalt option we have six inches of stone beneath that. The concrete option estimate is a little bit less than the asphalt. The concrete option estimate is around \$137,000 and the asphalt option estimate is around \$147,000. By the time you award the contract you will be about three months away. The grant amount is \$100,000 and the City has budgeted \$50,000.

**White/Plaisance
Resolution R21-27**

A resolution authorizing the Mayor to execute an intergovernmental agreement with the Vermilion Parish Police Jury to commit to paying one-half of the cost to overlay the entrance road for the Abbeville RV Park.

The motion carried unanimously.

-08 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. to ratify the purchase of transformers from Techline Utility Supply in the amount of \$8,012.50. The motion carried unanimously.

-09 introduced by Ms. Roslyn White and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to approve payment of partial payment #3 in the amount of \$159,779.63 payable to LA Contracting Enterprises, LLC for the Flood Damage Reduction & Drainage Improvements Project. The motion carried unanimously.

-10 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Ms. Roslyn White to adopt the City of Abbeville Social Media and Content Policy to regulate what the City puts on social media. The motion carried unanimously.

-11 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to approve the quotation from HIDCO in the amount of \$12,000 for hauling and disposal of creosote posts. The motion was put to a vote and the vote thereon was as follows:

YEAS:	4(Plaisance, T. Broussard, B. Broussard, Touchet)
NAYS:	0
ABSENT:	0
ABSTAIN:	1(White)

Therefore, the motion carried.

Richard Primeaux, Engineer

- *We are trying to closeout the drainage project. Councilman Broussard complimented the asphalt patching that was completed as a result of the drainage project. It is fabulous. Mayor Piazza stated the contractor did a beautiful job but one of our DUI drivers zigzagged on the shoulder on S. St. Valerie. He asked if we could get that repaired. Richard stated he would look at it and he would ask the contractor if they would do that. If not, then we can see if our crews can fix it.*

Tom Carroll, Engineer

- *On behalf of Gene, Todd and all of Sellers & Associates, he would like to thank Clay Menard for the working relationship they have had all these years. He has done a great job and they wish him all the best on his future endeavor.*

Charlene Beckett, Main Street Manager

- *When Marlon left, she cried and when Clay said he was leaving, she had a heart attack. Those two people, along with Richard Sysak, will do what she asks them to do. It gets completed and if they don't know the answer, they will find it. For her, they will be missed terribly.*
- *She went to a quarterly meeting in Baton Rouge recently and they stressed again the importance of certified local government. In the State of Louisiana, Main Streets have to be certified local government. This is in connection with State parks and the federal government. That is to protect historic properties and to protect historic character. It also creates the historic district. She reports to the state on certified local government (CLG). They don't monitor us but we do report how many properties we have and the improvements we have made. This is important when it comes to the Planning and Zoning Commission which serves as the Historic District Commission. We have received two CLG grants. One of the grants was to do the heritage center at the Blacksmith Shop and the other grant was to do the kiosks at the Blacksmith Shop, the Cultural Center and the one in the parking lot at City Hall. With the CLG money match that we had to do, we purchased two bronze roadside markers. One is for Pastor James Herod and the other for Coach Herbert Williams. Those should be in within the next 3 to 4 weeks. She would have done McKinley Scott but we did not have the funds for that.*
- *We are planning Sounds on the Square this year beginning on the Thursday after the Cattle Festival. It will be on 10/7/21, 10/14/21, 10/21/21 and 10/28/21. We have asked the bands to play that were cancelled earlier in the year because of COVID. She has contacted them but they have not yet gotten back with her. That is still in the planning stage.*
- *They started the litter index today. That is a requirement for Keep America Beautiful to keep our status. We have done two districts so we have two other districts left to do. We should complete that tomorrow.*
- *We mapped out the beds at Harmony Park.*

Jude Mire, Fire Chief

- *Began running full calls on July 1, 2021.*
- *Chief Byron Perry is officially retired. He discussed the number of employees on extended sick leave.*
- *All is good at the fire stations.*
- *Unit 1031 is out at the shop for two weeks.*
- *He discussed the number and types of calls responded to in the last three weeks.*

Councilman Francis Touchet, Jr.

- *We have a lot of empty spaces and we need to find a way to bring businesses to our City. This will be his goal in the future. He will run again for his Council seat. We have to bring people into this City for the future. That has to be our focus in order to continue to fund employee benefits and customer services.*

Councilman Brady Broussard, Jr.

- *Complimented the Farmers' Market Director, Debbie Garrot, on a very successful Farmers' Market. It was well attended and a big success for the vendors that were there.*

- *There are now 12 places that you can go and get a free COVID vaccination. Let's not deny that opportunity to anybody who wants it and council anybody who is unsure of the safety of their future.*

Councilwoman Terry Broussard

- *She is excited about the project at McKinley Scott Park.*

Councilman Francis Plaisance

- *Thanked the Vermilion Parish 4-H and the Abbeville Garden Club for planting 19 trees in the large dog park and one in the small dog park. He appreciates that very much and it is a great asset to the park.*

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

ATTEST:

APPROVE:

Kathleen S. Faulk
Secretary-Treasurer

Mark Piazza
Mayor