

The Mayor and Council of the City of Abbeville met in regular session on January 19, 2021 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
Bill Spearman, Police Chief
Clay Menard, Public Works Director
Allie Horton, Digital Media Assistant
Allen Hebert, City of Abbeville Retiree
Richard Primeaux, Engineer
Gene Sellers, Engineer
Felicia Williams, Parks & Recreation Board
Gerald Gaspard, Chamber of Commerce, American Legion
Bonnie LeLeux

Mayor Piazza asked Councilman Francis Touchet, Jr. to lead those assembled in prayer. Mayor Piazza also asked for a moment of silence to recognize those suffering with COVID. Mayor Piazza asked Mr. Gerald Gaspard to lead the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Piazza welcomed all the Firefighters who were in attendance tonight to show their respect to Assistant Chief Allen Hebert who had recently retired from the Abbeville Fire Department.

Councilwoman White recommended that the Council appoint Allie Horton as the new Digital Media Assistant for the City of Abbeville at a starting salary of \$14.50 per hour, which comes to around \$30,160 annually. Ms. Horton comes highly recommended by her references. Her pay will be hourly and this position will not be eligible for overtime. Any extra hourly work, nights or weekends, for special events will qualify for K-Time. Councilwoman White recommends this position be eligible for benefits. Her office will be at the Vermilion Parish Cultural and Tourism Center in downtown Abbeville. On-site supervisor will be Allison Miller and the City Hall Supervisor is Kathy Faulk. Since she is a new employee, Councilwoman White recommends that we have Nicole keep a record of her K-Time. Ms. Horton has completed all post-hire assessments and has passed those. Due to the nature of her work, she will need a laptop. Ms. Horton has requested that we allow her to provide her own laptop for now since she is familiar with it. Councilwoman White also recommends that we provide a City cellphone so that she can work remotely as needed. We may also need some software programs. The estimated cost for technology hardware and software is about \$2,000. We should authorize this amount to give her the tools she needs to be successful. Councilman Touchet would prefer the salary be \$17.00 per hour since Ms. Horton has a college degree. If we want to keep this person employed here, we have to be competitive. This would be \$35,360 annually. Councilman Broussard stated you get what you pay for. We want them to stay here and make a career here. Councilman Plaisance agreed with

Councilman Touchet however he wanted to make sure Ms. Horton's starting salary would not be greater than the Council/Legal Secretary, Nicole Nguyen. Nicole also has a college degree. She has worked for the IRS and for Ike Funderburk. Councilman Touchet stated Nicole makes more than this annual salary. Councilwoman Broussard agreed that we need to pay our employees what they are worth so that they will stay with us. We don't want them to train and then leave us to go to a higher paying job.

-01 introduced by Ms. Roslyn White and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to appoint Allie Horton to the position of Digital Media Assistant for the City of Abbeville at a rate of \$14.50 per hour with benefits, she will not be eligible for overtime but extra work will be eligible for K-Time and to authorize up to \$2,000 for a City cellphone and other technology needed.

SUBSTITUTE MOTION: Introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. to appoint Allie Horton to the position of Digital Media Assistant for the City of Abbeville at a rate of \$17.00 per hour with benefits, she will not be eligible for overtime but extra work will be eligible for K-Time and to authorize up to \$2,000 for a City cellphone and other technology needed. The motion carried unanimously.

Since the substitute motion carried no vote on the original motion was necessary.

Mayor Piazza presented Assistant Chief Allen Hebert with a certificate of appreciation for his years of service to the City of Abbeville Fire Department. He has served 38 years with the City of Abbeville and has recently retired.

-02 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Ms. Terry Broussard to ratify bills paid in the month of December 2020. The motion carried unanimously.

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

-03 introduced by Ms. Roslyn White and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to table item number one under new business on the agenda, Mr. Andy Veazey to discuss the proposed subdivision of lots in Mount Carmel Heights First Addition, since this agenda item was placed on the agenda in anticipation of another item being on the agenda that was not. The motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Bonnie LeLeux was at the meeting tonight to discuss trash issues near her home. She has lived at 214 North Lyman for forty years and it has never been this bad. She distributed pictures to the Mayor and Council. She spoke with the landlord but he told her it wasn't his responsibility. She has videoed them putting trash and tires. She is asking that the Council do something to these people. Nothing is being done to these people who don't care about their property. Her house value will go down because of this. She doesn't want to move. She has been here 40 years. She has cameras surrounding her house. That is how bad it is. She is asking for help. She called the Police Department because she was told they could issue a citation to them. The Police Department told her it was the City's responsibility not theirs. They could not write out tickets. There was nothing they could do. Councilman Broussard did help her. She called him for 3 months straight every day. She had to get it done. He cleaned it up today. The City Marshal got involved in it. That is how far for it had to go. On Doyle Street people are dumping off tires. All she wants is for them to clean up her neighborhood. Councilman Touchet stated the Police Jury is responsible for picking up trash and everyone pays a tax for that service. Councilman Broussard stated they got Police Juror Ronald Darby involved in this because it is the Police Jury's responsibility to pick up trash. The grab truck could not reach the trash because of a power line right over the pile. The Jury said that they could not do anything with it because the grab truck could not grab it. That is where the City Marshal to involved since they routinely handle City Court

evictions. The Marshal monitors evictions and the possessions of renters and where that goes. When the Marshal is involved it is not dumped next to a street. Ms. Bonnie did a great job exposing holes in a policy and we need to start going after the property owners. They have a vested interest in this problem. The renters may not be from here so we cannot enforce anything with them. She has done a good job pursuing this and it has been cleaned up today. No citizen should have to go to so many agencies to finally get results. Councilman Touchet asked if we could tie something into the connection of utilities. If we don't turn on utilities until this stuff is picked up then they will pick it up so they can rent the place out. We have people who have no respect for anybody and we constantly battle the Police Jury in getting things picked up in a timely manner. Ms. LeLeux stated the City needs to get on the landlord. Councilwoman White stated that we have a huge problem with rental property in this City and with some landlords. We need to prioritize this. It is a crime to litter and we need to prosecute those who litter. We have ordinances in place. Councilman Plaisance stated that we do have ordinances but a lot of these keep doing what they do because there are no consequences. We have to figure that out. Councilwoman White stated a landlord is supposed to make a phone call to the Police Jury when they are planning an eviction so the grab truck can make a special run to pick that stuff up. That has not been enforced at all. Mr. Ike Funderburk asked Ms. LeLeux for the contact information of the landlord of the rental property that is causing some issues. Also, since the landlord converted a shed into an apartment, we can find out if he got a building permit to do that and if he is following codes for a housing unit. If he is not, then we can certainly take action on that. Mayor Piazza asked Mr. Richard Primeaux if a special permit is needed to have an apartment. Mr. Primeaux stated if you are converting a building from one classification to another you do. If it was converted prior to 2007 then there were no code restrictions.

-04 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to ask Ike to research an ordinance that would tie into the connection or reconnection of utilities for rental properties that are not in compliance because trash has been put at the side of the road after an eviction. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Funderburk stated that Murphy Oil came to the Planning Commission meeting requesting for them to approve plans to remodel the Murphy Oil station in front of Walmart. In doing so, they asked to remove three Live Oak trees. That request did not meet with a favorable result from either the Planning Commission nor the Mayor and the City Council. It has however, been resubmitted with some changes. They are going to go from what was planned as an 8-bay fueling station to a 6-bay fueling station. By doing that, they will decrease their footprint and thereby they won't have to take down the three trees. They have requested to only remove one tree and it is the smallest. In consideration of that they will pay the City restitution in the amount of \$3,000. That will go into the tree fund to be used by our public parks. The Planning Commission has approved this request.

-05 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. to approve the action of the Planning Commission to approve the plans submitted by Murphy Oil and to establish remuneration of \$3,000 for the removal of one Live Oak tree. The motion carried unanimously.

Councilman Plaisance began a discussion about hanging wires and posts. There are wires hanging all over the City. When Cox or AT&T does a job, they don't dress up their work very well. Our electrical crew makes everything nice and neat when they finish a job. There are Cox boxes that are partially open and they are still hanging up on the wires. In other places, there are poles adjacent to other poles that should have been removed already. He doesn't know what type of consequences we could have for this but these wires are hanging all over the place and need to

be taken care of. Councilman Touchet stated that each of these companies have a franchise with us and there is an annual renewal. Mayor Piazza stated yes but we would have to ask Ike about the specifics. Councilman Touchet stated his point is that Ike can't get in touch with these people. They don't want to come to a meeting to hear about the complaints from our constituents. The only thing you can hold over their head is renewal. Councilman Plaisance asked Clay Menard about the issue of hanging wires. Clay agreed. Councilman Plaisance stated that he has some pictures but there are numerous places where there are wires hanging and it hasn't been done correctly. He wants to see something done. Councilman Touchet asked if the Public Service Commissioner could help since we can't do anything with them. Councilman Broussard asked if they remember that they were having problems with a constituent that had called AT&T about a pole. It took anywhere from 6 to 8 months to rectify that situation. Councilman Plaisance stated that we have some posts that have been left for 2 years. We told them we were going to take them out but we can't take them out. There has to be something we can do. We are trying to beautify our City. Councilwoman Broussard asked if they could be fined. Mr. Gerald Gaspard stated that we need to find out if we have a renewal upcoming. If you don't like their service then you can kick them out. You should be able to cancel the franchise at any time if you are unhappy and they are not fulfilling their obligations. It doesn't seem right that they can stay here for years and years. Councilman Touchet asked Ike to get the wording of the franchise for these and anybody else that ties into our system. If we have to put something in that franchise, we'll know according to these discussions. Mr. Gerald Gaspard stated that there has to be some way to hold them accountable. Mayor Piazza stated that part of the problem is that they are the only horse in the race here and we can't kick them out. If you do, then no one would have internet service throughout Abbeville. There would be no one else. Councilman Broussard added that the public does not realize that AT&T owns many of the power poles in Abbeville. Those are not our poles. Mayor Piazza stated that we can call about a pole that's deteriorating, cracked at the bottom, broken or one that gets knocked down and if we take it out of our stock, in an emergency situation, its still AT&T's pole. That is State law. They do reimburse us for the pole but not for our labor. Clay Menard stated that is correct. We have two options either wait for them to come and take care of it or we can take care of it and they will reimburse us. Many times, we also have service on that pole. We share the pole with them. We have electrical wiring and/or street lights on them. If you don't take care of it then people lose electrical services and street lights too. Mayor Piazza stated if our electrical guys mess with any of their equipment, then we are liable for it. Clay Menard stated that is correct. We can't touch their wires. Transferring the services is where most of the problems are. We have poles that are standing, we change it out and it takes them forever for them to come to take their stuff off the old pole and put it on the new pole. We have been dealing with stuff like this. This is a problem in every City. It is not just us. Morgan City has the same problems. New Iberia has the same problems. He has spoken to the gentleman from Morgan City several times about what we can do and the bottom line is that there is really nothing we can do as far as how thing are going with them except report it, document it and stay on them to try to get them to rectify their problem.

-06 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. to award the base bid plus alternate number 1 to the low bidder, Glenn Lege Construction, in the amount of \$540,537.90 for the Rehabilitation of the T-Hangar Taxilanes and Apron Areas Project at the Airport contingent upon LA DOTD approval and funding availability. The motion carried unanimously.

Mayor Piazza stated the only item under Old Business is: Update on response from Cox. He feels like we have already covered that topic tonight earlier. Councilman Touchet stated that he still wanted to know why Cox won't answer our calls. Our City Attorney can't even discuss this with them because they don't take our calls. Councilman Plaisance stated they are a monopoly.

Councilman Brady Broussard, Jr.

- *Asked Clay if he had an update on the water leak under State Street that is owned by the State of Louisiana. Clay stated the biggest issue is that DOTD was unwilling to work with us to make the repair because of the main location. We needed to close two lanes to do the work and they were unwilling to do that. They were only willing to close one lane. After several phone and discussions, we eventually got an engineer that listened to us and he understood what we needed. He told us to submit the permit and that he would move it along. We did that last week. We are waiting for DOTD to issue the permit so we can move forward.*
- *We have a brand-new Italian restaurant that will be coming to Abbeville. It will be located at the old Midway and the name of the restaurant is Calabria's. They already have one in New Iberia.*
- *The tennis courts are coming along well. The fencing is complete and now the City is waiting for the contractor to come and get the courts level and painted.*

Councilwoman Terry Broussard

- *We celebrated Martin Luther King, Jr. yesterday. It was nice. She missed the Mayor and Council there but they had a good time. It was a beautiful day and we had a great crowd. It was very, very nice.*
- *We had a meeting with Pastor August Sunday night. She has some brochures for the Council. Pastor August would like to set up a meeting with the Council. He realizes because of the Sunshine Law that he will have to meet with us at different times. It was a very productive meeting with the pastors. He is moving right along with the project. He went in and cleaned up the building. It's going to be a cultural center and a charter school for grades 6-12. He is very excited about this. She will get with the Mayor to see when his schedule is clear so that they can meet with him.*

Councilman Francis Touchet

- *As the Finance Chairman we will be looking at the status of our budget after the first quarter. We need to have a meeting for that. He is very interested to see if we can fit in the unbudgeted item for Councilwoman Broussard's district. It is a project worthy of funding. We will have at least three months of data by then to see where the finances are. He asked Councilwoman Broussard to get the things together to obtain a quote for this project. Mayor Piazza agreed with him. We really need for FEMA to start reimbursing us for some of the larger projects from the hurricanes. He and Clay did reach out to a contractor for a quote. We will reach out to other contractors also to see if we can get a better price. One of the things that the contractor did say is that it was critical to repair the structure and raise the roof prior to doing the concrete and groundwork. We were hoping to do it the other way but he said that if we did concrete work first then the heavy equipment needed to raise the roof and repair the structure would crack the new concrete. Clay agreed that the contractor did recommend that they repair the structure and raise the roof first. Mayor Piazza stated we don't have a price that is separated at this time and we are awaiting that.*

Councilwoman Roslyn White

- *She welcomed the new Digital Media Assistant, Allie Horton, on board.*
- *She is in the quality checking stage of the website. It has been a tedious project. We will probably launch it next weekend but she will not make the announcement until we make sure everything is good and working correctly. She looks forward to sharing that with everyone and to have the project finished this year.*

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

ATTEST:

APPROVE:

Kathleen S. Faulk
Secretary-Treasurer

Mark Piazza
Mayor