

The Mayor and Council of the City of Abbeville met in regular session on September 21, 2021 at 5:30 P.M., at the A. A. Comeaux Recreation Center, located at 300 A. A. Comeaux Memorial Drive, Suite101 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
Kelly Mire, Assistant Fire Chief
Bill Spearman, Police Chief
Lieutenant Jonathan Touchet
Lee Schexnaider, Wastewater Plant Superintendent
Charlene Beckett, Main Street Manager
Allie Horton, Digital Media Assistant
Tommy Picard, Park & Recreation Director, QSA
Gene Sellers, Engineer
Kim Touchet, Engineer
Felicia Williams, Park and Recreation Board member
Marilyn Mitchell

Mayor Piazza asked Former Lieutenant Joey Boneski to lead those assembled in prayer. Mayor Piazza asked Mr. Ronald Gaspard to lead the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Piazza asked if there were any comments from the public on any agenda item prior to action. Ms. Marilyn Mitchell wanted to know about item #3. The proposed ordinance states it is for construction of recreational facilities. Will it be all the recreational facilities? Councilman Touchet stated the projects are addressing Comeaux Park. Ms. Mitchell asked why not the football field and Herbert Williams? She is especially concerned with Herbert William Park and was wondering why that field is not being turfed. Councilwoman Broussard stated that Ike and Pastor August have been in contact because Pastor August would like to purchase that property and utilize that property. He would keep it as a park and would maintain the name. Ms. Mitchell stated she has a problem with that as well. Some of the constituents do not want that.

-01 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Ms. Terry Broussard to enter into a public hearing to received public comments regarding an ordinance to amend and reenact Chapter 5-Buildings; Article IX-signs: Section 5-272-attached signs; (b)(4)(b)(2) to recalculate the size of a secondary sign on a gas station canopy. The motion carried unanimously.

Public Hearing

Mayor Piazza asked if there were any public comments on the proposed ordinance. There were none.

-02 introduced by Ms. Roslyn White and seconded by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. to close the public hearing and reconvene the regular meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

Touchet/White
Ordinance 21-06

An ordinance to amend and reenact Chapter 5-Buildings; Article IX-signs: Section 5-272-attached signs; (b)(4)(b)(2) to recalculate the size of a secondary sign on a gas station canopy.

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

YEAS: 5(Plaisance, T. Broussard, B. Broussard, Touchet, White)

NAYS: 0

ABSENT: 0

ABSTAIN: 0

Therefore, the ordinance was adopted unanimously.

Mayor Piazza stated that item number three was to introduce an ordinance for the incurring of debt and issuance of the three million dollars revenue bond, series 2021. If the proposed language is approved tonight, the ordinance is proposed to be adopted at the October 5, 2021 City Council meeting. Councilman Plaisance stated that he hopes this is the beginning of future development. He has a problem with the word "debt" all the time but he understands that is sometimes a necessary thing. He hopes this is the beginning of more to come and more development. Ms. Marilyn Mitchell asked if a basketball facility would be incorporated into the proposal that was introduced a few meetings ago? Mayor Piazza stated the original \$3 million dollars is basically to redo the infield on the seven baseball fields at Comeaux Park to try and attract baseball tournaments into our community as an economic development benefit. Also in the plan, are parking lots, bathrooms, portable bathrooms that can be used at other areas and tennis courts. Ms. Mitchell thought at the meeting they said they would put a basketball facility. Mayor Piazza stated what Councilwoman Broussard and Councilman Plaisance said is that a basketball facility would be looked at as a future development. It is not in the original proposal. Tommy Picard stated he met with Gene Sellers, Jr. to discuss a gym facility. He had a great idea and it is in discussion about a gym. Councilwoman White agreed that she would like to see a basketball facility here too. She understands that the original proposal is to generate revenue for future development. Councilman Plaisance stated that Tommy set an appointment for us to view the basketball gym at LeBlanc Elementary. We viewed that and Tommy has some designs too. That would, hopefully, be coming in the future. We all want to see a basketball facility here but this debt is designed to bring our baseball fields up to where they need to be for tournaments to be held in Abbeville to generate revenue for the City. We are looking at moving forward with a basketball gym as a future development. Ms. Marilyn Mitchell asked how would we pay the debt back? Councilman Touchet stated that would be paid back from excess revenues. Ms. Mitchell stated if we do not get a contract with USSSA, how will we have tournaments? Where will we generate funds to pay the debt back? Most of you won't be here on the City Council tens years from now so the next generation will have to figure that out themselves. Do we have a contract with USSSA for these tournaments? Mr. Picard stated if we don't do these improvements, we definitely won't have any tournaments. They were supposed to put one here back in July but because we did not have turf, they moved it. Councilman Broussard stated the City of Abbeville has received an economic impact study from the Louisiana Office of Tourism. They have told us that a tournament involving between 20 to 25 teams would have an economic impact of \$800,000 per tournament. These visitors will come to our hotels, our restaurants, our gas stations and other businesses in Abbeville will feel that economic impact. We have that data that can support this. Councilman Touchet that the kids in Abbeville who cannot afford to play travel ball, would

have an opportunity to play on these fields. These will be first class fields. It is not only economic but it is good that we incorporate and get more kids involved because they will be attracted to these fields. We will seek out all age groups that we need to seek out. Ms. Mitchell stated that the kids 13 years of age and up are the problem kids. Councilman Touchet stated that we need to seek out all ages. Councilman Plaisance stated that when we started talking about this, we discussed contracts in advance connected with the borrowing of the money. He thinks that is Ms. Mitchell's question. He asked Tommy where we are with that? Tommy stated that we have two letters of commitment. This is how USSSA works. You sign a contract and they will give you 9- and 10-year-old events. They don't go by USSA they go by registrations. If you commit to USSSA and they don't have enough players then you are stuck with them. You won't have anybody else. If you sign a contract then you are committed to one organization. Without a contract, then anybody can come anytime. You don't want to commit to only one or two organizations. If they don't have enough teams then you are stuck with the contract. We are good where we are. Councilwoman White wanted to clarify that we have a bond issue expiring in March 2022 so the net change in the budget would be nil. So, to answer Ms. Mitchell's question regarding budgeting and paying for the debt, we would continue to budget the debt service to cover this new debt issue. Mayor Piazza added that this will actually be an annual savings of \$100,000 per year. Tommy added that he believes we will also get teams from surrounding municipalities because the tournaments won't be rained out. They played 99% of their games at Comeaux Park because they couldn't use the fields in Erath because of rain. We have 165 kids registered for flag football now.

-03 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to put the ordinance providing for the incurring of debt and issuance of \$3,000,000 Revenue Bonds, Series 2021 on the next City Council meeting agenda scheduled for October 5, 2021 for possible adoption. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Gene Sellers stated bids were received for the LaFitte Park walking trail. We had three bidders. The low bidder was Patriot Construction Company. The bid was for two different surfaces, concrete and asphalt. Their bid for the concrete surface was \$148,425.31. Their bid for the asphalt surface was \$181,745.18. The next two bidders were in excess of \$200,000.00. The low bid is over the budget. He spoke to the agency that has given the City the grant money and they told us that once we receive the bid they will see if we are short and they might be able to get more money to cover that. He recommends that we take the bids under advisement to see if we can get additional funds to cover the shortfall. We are short \$48,000.00. Councilman Plaisance asked if the money is budgeted. Mayor Piazza stated that it is but we are only required to put up a 25% match so there is a possibility that we can get more money so we should try that first. If we don't get it, it is still in the budget, and we can award it as is.

-04 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. to take the bids for the LaFitte Park walking trail under advisement in order to see if more grant money is available to assist with paying the project. The motion carried unanimously.

-05 introduced by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. to ratify the payment of the invoice to Ray Chevrolet in the amount of \$7,698.03 for the repair of a 2015 Chevrolet Tahoe. The motion carried unanimously.

-06 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. to approve the revised accounting of the 2020 tax roll. The original roll that was approved at the last meeting had a computational error that was discovered after approval. The motion carried unanimously.

-07 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Ms. Terry Broussard to approve the quote from Griner Drilling in the amount of \$5,835.00 for the repair of the Barn Lift Station. The motion carried unanimously.

Mrs. Sarah Alrough stated she sent out bids in May for the tree removal, demolition and removal of the structure located at 906 Greene Street. At that time, we only received one bid in the amount of \$49,720.00. It came before the Council and it was decided to table it because it was too much. She and the Mayor spoke to try to do the project separately. She requested bids just for the tree removal. Aross Brown was awarded the contract for that in the amount of \$1,975.00. She then requested a bid for the demolition of the building and she received no bids. At that point, she, Kim Trahan (Vermilion Shell), and the Mayor met. Mr. Trahan went and looked at the property and submitted a bid in the amount of \$26,950.00. The reason why the bid was so large the first time was because of asbestos. Mr. Trahan had someone look at it again and it was deemed that it was not as bad as first thought. That is why the new bid is a lot cheaper. Councilman Touchet asked where will the money come from to pay this? How will we get our money back? Mrs. Alrough stated that we will lien the property. Councilwoman White stated that the property is only worth \$3,000 and \$9,000 for the residential improvements. So, we will never get our money back but we have to clean up blighted property. Councilman Touchet asked why this wasn't included in the Clearance grant program. Councilwoman Broussard stated because this happened after all the properties had been chosen. Mayor Piazza stated that the problem is the asbestos. This was an old place of business. One of the problems that we are running into and the reason we were so appreciative of getting the \$250,000 grant from CDBG to demolish 20+ structures, is because the laws have changed as far as asbestos goes. We didn't used to worry about the asbestos. We used to go and bid it out and then they would tear it down. Now we have to do asbestos remediation. Councilman Broussard added that the house on Maude only was able to be demolished because of the grant program. That has been waiting for more than 10 years. Mrs. Alrough stated that if the City does the demolition, we have to have it tested and abated. If the homeowner does it themselves it is not required. Councilman Touchet stated he understands the asbestos abatement but that is only \$9,000 of the bid. The demolition is the other \$17,000. The property is only worth \$3,000. He cannot vote for something like this. Mrs. Alrough stated because we know it is asbestos the contractor has to have the proper equipment. Plus, this cannot go to the dump. Mayor Piazza stated that the other option that could be a possibility, to get this structure torn down, is to do the asbestos abatement then get with the Police Jury to see if we can get them to come in with an excavator and do a joint venture with them. We have to do the asbestos. The Police Jury is in the same shape as us. Their demolition costs have gone up quite a bit because they cannot accept the asbestos debris at the solid waste plant. Councilman Touchet asked if we can get Vermilion Shell to do the asbestos abatement? Mrs. Alrough stated he does not do that. He contracts that out. Councilman Touchet stated we could get the asbestos abated then look at other things for demolition. Councilwoman White asked if we could deal directly with the asbestos remediation contractor to avoid any markups? That would save us money. Then we could rebid it for demolition only. Mayor Piazza stated that we could discuss is with the Police Jury first. Councilwoman White stated that it definitely needs to be torn down.

-08 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. to table any action to accept the quote from Vermilion Shell & Limestone Co., Inc. for the demolition and removal of the structure located at 906 Greene Street. The motion carried unanimously.

Councilwoman White began a discussion and review of the City ordinances pertaining to election sign placement. Councilwoman White stated that we are going into an election season and she thought it would be a good practice to review those ordinances and to have it on public record to make sure that everyone is aware of what our ordinances are. She attached a copy of the

summary of ordinances for election time. You cannot put the signs on public property and they need to be outside of the right-of-way. If you put the sign on private property, you need to have authorization by the property owner. She has received a few complaints about the signs being on private property without the owner's permission. We need to make sure that candidates are getting permission from the owner before the sign is placed. Once the election is over, you have 14 days to remove any signs. All candidates should be aware of that. It becomes a lot of work for our workers to try and cut around signs on City rights-of-way.

-09 introduced by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. to engage the services of Simpson Sports Engineering, in the amount of \$30,000.00, for engineering services for the turf and lighting project at A. A. Comeaux Park. The motion carried unanimously.

-10 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. to approve payment of the invoice to Delta Fire & Safety in the amount of \$9,553.80 for the repair of the aerial firetruck. The invoice is to be paid from the Maintenance and Operation Fire Department Fund. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Gene Sellers discussed the increase in the scope of work for the 2021 LCDBG Sewer System Rehabilitation project. The water plant produces about 2 million gallons of water every day. In dry weather the sewer plant treats about 2 million gallons of water a day. When you look at the gravity system and open manholes, in dry weather, it is running about one-quarter full. On wet weather days, the water plant is only producing 2 million gallons but the sewer plant is treating 6 to 7 million gallons a day. If you open the manhole on those days, the water is close to the top of the cover. We have miles of gravity system. When we tap into a system, we have to make sure there is enough capacity in there to be able to take the flow that we are adding to the system. The gravity system goes to one of the pump stations then it is pumped into the next pump station further down the line. We want to bring all that water as close to the sewer plant as possible because that is where we have the bigger line. That is the 18-inch water line on Franks Alley. Last year we made an application for LCDBG funding. When we made the application, we requested \$1,000,00, which is the maximum amount we can request. On this application we wanted to be able to smoke test an area to determine infiltration into the system. The next thing was to create another route to bring sewerage from the west part of the City to the east part of the City. We looked at the pump stations that we had and we have the pump station at Loraine Street. It does not cross the river. We wanted to take that pump station and use it to force the water to the east side of the City. We received the grant for \$1,000,000. We also received some additional funds through the American Rescue Plan Act. We went back and looked at the plans and looked at other better options to move the water. We decided to increase the capacity of the St. Paul lift station by 50%. We then looked at the force main route and made some changes there. The proposed changes are a long-term solution on the west side without overloading the east side. We would also add a generator for the sewer plant that would be large enough so it would not have to share it with the storm water pump. It could operate both at the same time. We could put the existing generator at one of the lift stations. The additional work will cost \$500,000. The entire project would cost \$1,500,000. \$1,000,000 is coming from LCDBG and we would utilize \$500,000 of the ARPA funds for the balance. Mr. Funderburk stated we have not yet received the final ruling from the treasury department on how we can spend the ARPA funds. We also have to have a public meeting for the public to come in and tell us their needs.

-11 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Ms. Roslyn White to authorize the increase scope of work for the 2021 LCDBG Sewer System Rehabilitation project and the associated amendment to the project budget subject to the final ruling from the Treasury

Department and the City complying with all requirements of the American Rescue Plan Act. The motion carried unanimously.

-12 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Ms. Roslyn White to authorize the Mayor to execute the engineering agreement with Sellers and Associates, Inc. pertaining to the increase scope of work for the 2021 LCDBG Sewer System Rehabilitation project subject to the final ruling from the Treasury Department and the City complying with all requirements of the American Rescue Plan Act. The motion carried unanimously.

-13 introduced by Ms. Roslyn White and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to approve payment of partial payment number 1 to Glenn Lege Construction, LLC, in the amount of \$103,579.52, for the work completed to date on the North and South Hollingsworth Drive and Cypress Street street milling and overlay project. The motion carried unanimously.

-14 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Ms. Terry Broussard to approve payment of estimate for partial payment #1 in the amount of \$279,888.34 payable to Glenn Lege Construction, LLC for the Rehabilitation of the T-Hangar Taxilane and Apron Areas project. The motion carried unanimously.

Kim Touchet, Engineer

- *Discussed rotor #3 and #5 replacement at the Wastewater Treatment Plant. The request for proposals are due on October 18, 2021 and we hope to have it on the agenda for the October 19, 2021 City Council meeting.*
- *We had no deficiencies with the MS4 permit audit. We are still awaiting the permit. COVID has slowed them down.*
- *We are in the 45-day lien period for the Flood Reduction drainage project. The rail at 2nd Street is delayed due to COVID. The contractor's entire office had COVID so they had to shut down for two weeks. We are waiting to hear from them on the scheduling for the guard rail. The rail will be on south side.*

Tommy Picard, Park and Recreation Director, QSA

- *They will begin tearing down Badon Field when appropriate.*
- *Will start flag football on October 9th. We have 165 kids.*
- *We went look at the trees at the Square and will get somebody to lift the branches.*
- *We will move a trash bin by the splashpad. There are a lot of kids using it and they are enjoying it.*
- *Allie Horton stated she will get the flyer to Tommy soon.*

Charlene Beckett, Main Street Manager

- *She attended a Destination Downtown conference in Starkville, Mississippi. Mississippi had been known for being last in everything. Well, that is not the case anymore. She was very impressed with the things going on there.*
- *Louisiana Main Street has received a federal grant for a second time. It is \$749,000. That is across the State. Historic property can apply and if they receive an award, it would be at least \$50,000. They have to put up \$5,000. The applications are not yet available.*
- *We are repairing the overhang on the Blacksmith Shop.*
- *The Cemetery tour is scheduled for November 12, 2021 at the St. Mary Magdalen Church Cemetery.*
- *The Christmas Stroll is scheduled for December 2, 2021.*

- *There will be a City-wide cleanup on Saturday. The Math Depot, the Christian Service Center, Keep Abbeville Beautiful and Reach have partnered for that. You can meet at the Math Depot at 8:00 AM if you are interested in doing that.*
- *Thanked the Mayor and Council for getting Harmony Park where it is today. We have had so much rain lately.*

Councilman Brady Broussard, Jr.

- *There is a City cleanup beginning at 8:00 AM this Saturday. It begins at Math Depot and ends at the Christian Service Center. Soulful eats will be feeding everyone after.*
- *Thanked the Council for their support at the last meeting where they raised the necessity to increase fines and compliance for people who are not cleaning up our City. He asked why can we not order a contractor to clean and remove house debris that is moved to the City street that does not comply with the Vermilion Parish Police Jury of segregating debris in order to be picked up. Can we send contractors to do this like we do for tall grass and other things? He asked Ike to research this.*

Councilwoman Roslyn White

- *The cleanup day begins at 8:00 AM at the Math Depot. They will do the pledge and safety orientation. We will assign teams to different areas. We have reached out to the schools, Abbeville High and Vermilion Catholic, about their participation for service hours. She will put together a flyer about the City ordinance so we can assist people in how to better maintain their property. The Mayor is allowing the Street crew to assist us on that day and she has made some arrangement with solid waste to assist in removing the debris after the cleanup. It will end at Christian Service Center between 12:00 PM and 12:30 PM. Soulful Eats will serve food. We encourage everyone to come out and assist us.*

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

ATTEST:

APPROVE:

Kathleen S. Faulk
Secretary-Treasurer

Mark Piazza
Mayor