

The Mayor and Council of the City of Abbeville met in regular session on August 20, 2019 at 5:30 P.M., at the regular meeting place, the Council Meeting Room located at 101 North State Street, with the Honorable Mark Piazza, Mayor, presiding.

Members Present: Council Members, Francis Plaisance, Terry Broussard, Francis Touchet, Jr., Mayor Pro-Tem and Roslyn White

Members Absent: Councilman Brady Broussard, Jr.

Also Present: Jude Mire, Fire Chief
Bill Spearman, Police Chief
Ike Funderburk, City Attorney
Clay Menard, Public Works Director
Richard Primeaux, Engineer
Gene Sellers, Engineer
Richard Minvielle, Grant Consultant
Gene Sellers, Jr., Architect
Joseph Vallee', Municipal Civil Service Board member
Gerald Gaspard, American Legion & Chamber of Commerce
Anita Levy, Parks and Recreation Board member
Pastor Crystal Randle

Mayor Piazza asked Pastor Crystal Randle to lead the assembly in prayer. Mayor Piazza led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Piazza stated Councilman Broussard is not here tonight because he is representing the City of Abbeville at the Congres Mondial in Canada. We certainly wish him great travels up there while he is representing our great City for that wonderful occasion that they have there.

Pastor Crystal Randle stated she is the director for Vermilion Parish "A New Chapter PUSH" organization which serves the community. It is making a positive impact. She introduced the president of A New Chapter PUSH, Pastor James Broussard. She also introduced Donovan Davis who takes care of public relations. Mr. Davis stated they will be having their annual Street Crusade revival. This will be at the Ark of the Covenant, located at 210 S. St. Valerie in Abbeville. It will take place from 11:00 AM to 4:00 PM. It will also be a voter registration drive for formerly incarcerated people. Due to the passing of house bill 636, those formerly incarcerated individuals can now vote. This will bring awareness to this new law. PUSH is an acronym for Pray Until Something Happens. Pastor Randle asked for the support of the Mayor and City Council. Mayor Piazza asked Mr. Funderburk if they needed any special event permit since it was at the church. Mr. Funderburk stated they will not need a permit as long as it is on private property.

-01 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Ms. Roslyn White to promote Sarah Although to the position of Director of Revenue from the position of Tax Specialist in the Tax and Permit Department at an hourly rate of \$16.87 per hour (a 15% increase), effective the actual retirement date of the incumbent, Donna Baudoin. The motion carried unanimously.

-02 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. to authorize the open advertisement of the upcoming vacancy of Tax Specialist in the Tax and Permit Department and request a list of eligibles. The motion carried unanimously.

-03 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Ms. Roslyn White to deviate from the agenda to change the wording on number 7 under new business from: *To authorize the City attorney to prepare* a resolution opposing the issuance of a permit to dredge the Vermilion River without completion of all necessary studies to determine the impact downstream, to: *To adopt* a resolution opposing the issuance of a permit to dredge the Vermilion River without completion of all necessary studies to determine the impact downstream. The motion carried unanimously.

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

-04 introduced by Ms. Terry Broussard and seconded by Ms. Roslyn White to approve the installation of the necessary stop sign(s) to make the intersection of South Louisiana at Green Avenue a three-way stop. The motion carried unanimously.

Mayor Piazza made the recommendation to abolish the Utility Committee chaired by Councilwoman White and replace it with the Public Relations and Social Media Committee to be chaired by Councilwoman White. There aren't many issues that need to be brought to the Utility Committee. Most of those issues are handled on a day-to-day basis by him with Clay, Gene Sellers and Richard Primeaux. It would really be great if Councilwoman White could focus her efforts on public relations and social media. At the last conference in Monroe, he and Councilman Plaisance attended a workshop that recommended that all municipalities move forward with social media as a way to communicate with their constituents. Councilwoman White is well versed about social media and she has already implemented the program for the last hurricane. Councilwoman White stated she started a Facebook page for the City and was able to launch it for Hurricane Barry. This helped inform our citizens and let people know about power outages, high water and other items. In that first week we were able to gain an audience of about 1,600 followers. She presented some analytics she pulled from the Facebook page. Currently, as of today, the page has 1,831 likes. That means 1,831 people are viewing our page each time they access their Facebook app. We had 156 new likes in the last 28 days. 1,400 of those followers are women and 395 are men. The Facebook page went live on July 12th and if you look at the last 28 days, July 23-August 19, our posts reached 14,000 people, 4,500 of that is engagements and we had 121 link clicks. 1,000 of the people on our page are from Abbeville, 141 are from Erath, 139 are from Lafayette, 101 are from Kaplan and 89 are from Maurice. There are some people that follow us from other states and countries. You can also see common interest. The people who like our page also like The Daily Advertiser and Tasty, their musical band likes are Koryn Hawthorne and George Strait, and it also shows other analytics like where they shop. The week of launch we were posting all the power outages and all the other things we were aware of. She showed each of these posts. When we had the City-wide blackout, we had 3,300 people we were able to reach. It didn't cost us any money and it helps with the call volume at City Hall. One of our most popular post was when she shared the flyer for the Vermilion Parish grab trucks. The other way we can use it is to promote City events like Sounds on the Square. This past Saturday she created an Instagram account for the City of Abbeville. We are now live on Instagram. Our user name is: Iloveabbeville. Instagram is like a photo gallery for the City. It is another way to reach out to people. We only have 34 followers so far and that will go up. She can tie in any post on Instagram to Facebook. Councilwoman Broussard asked if we could put Pastor Randle's function on our Facebook page. Mr. Funderburk stated we could not because it is not a City function. Councilwoman White stated that we hope at some point to be able to promote other events like

festivals but we are still working on that. The third approach is bringing the City into current real time and online access. We are looking at updating our website. Currently our website is mostly informative. It is used to inform our citizens. They can find our ordinances and pay their bills. It is currently being use as a tool to pass information from the government to citizens. It functions in a one-way fashion. She would like it to be more engaging for citizens and visitors. We could use it as a marketing tool for people who might want to come to Abbeville or who are looking for a unique destination to come. She wants to make the site more dynamic by updating the content weekly. Online media is driven by content and information needs to be current and strike interest to drive participation. She wants to feature that we will have an Economic Opportunity Zone in Abbeville. That should be on our website and we should be pushing that so investors know that this is available to them. She wants to use it to promote our City as being a great place to live. She has been approached to be a pilot community to look at changing the way our website functions and to look at cross marketing the City with the local business community to drive dual promotion.

-05 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Ms. Terry Broussard to approve the accounting of the 2018 Tax roll. The motion carried unanimously.

Plaisance/Touchet
Resolution R19-21

To approve a resolution to authorize the Mayor to execute an intergovernmental agreement with the Vermilion Parish Police Jury regarding repairing and replacement of the existing sidewalk and driveway at 405 Pere Megret (LA Hwy 14).

The motion carried unanimously.

-06 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Ms. Roslyn White to table the request to grant a variance to move a 2017 14' X 49' mobile home to 701 Eaton Drive since this was in Councilman Broussard's district and he nor the requestor was present tonight. The motion carried unanimously.

Councilwoman White gave a report regarding the Coastal Protection and Restoration Committee meeting of the Vermilion Parish Police Jury. She congratulated the Vermilion Coastal Committee on hosting a successful Vermilion Parish Coastal Day on Tuesday, August 6, 2019. She wanted to personally thank the Committee for their Coastal Restoration efforts. The Mayor, Council and Councilwoman White attended a Coastal Restoration meeting on Wednesday, August 14, 2019. This meeting was an overview of current, past and upcoming projects. These projects include barrier reef construction, marsh fill-in and levee restorations. She has invited Mr. Ralph Libersat to give a short summary of his presentation at our next City Council meeting. During last week's meeting, a group of Lafayette volunteers gave an informative, comprehensive presentation on regional watershed and identified potential projects that could help mitigate flooding. Upon these projects was the issue of dredging the Vermilion River. Tonight, Lafayette's City-Parish Council is considering a resolution that declares "the urgent need to dredge the Vermilion River to prevent future flooding" and calls on the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers to help the City-Parish government obtain the necessary permit. They are also considering approximately \$5 million to start the project. She is bringing this to the attention of the Council tonight to make sure we do our part to protect the citizens of Abbeville and all of Vermilion Parish. She wants to make it clear that she is not against dredging. She is not against Lafayette. This is not a Lafayette versus Abbeville issue. This is a regional issue. We empathize with the issues Lafayette Parish is facing because we have the same issues in the City of Abbeville. We have had the opportunity to

participate in calls and meetings with the U. S. Army Corp of Engineers and we appreciate that consideration. She wants to ask the Corps to continue to look at watershed as an entire region and not rush to action in one area before understanding the effects those actions might have. I am asking the Corps of Engineers to do no harm. We want time to review a complete study and modeling on the effects of dredging the Vermilion River prior to moving forward and we want to make sure modeling takes into consideration tides, narrowing of rivers at bridge structures and is inclusive of effects of wind. What effect does an increase in volume of water in any one area have on areas downstream? We want to continue to be a part of the conversation. The issue affects our entire Parish. She encourages all municipalities to voice their concerns. She encourages citizens to let their Representatives, Congressmembers and Senators hear their concerns over rushing a project before we know what, if any, harmful effects it might have. Mayor Piazza added that the Vermilion River affects us all. This is a tremendous concern for him. He grew up on that river and the volume of water coming down the river from Lafayette has increased tremendously. We want proper completion of a study by the Corps before the permits are issued. There is a very well-funded initiative called Louisiana Watershed started by the Governor's office. There is over \$1 billion put towards the initiative state-wide and our own local resident, James Waskom, is in charge of it. He lives right here on the water and his home flooded in 2016. He has assured him that this Watershed Initiative will be tremendous for Abbeville and for Louisiana where the entire Vermilion watershed will be studied from almost Alexandria all the way to Vermilion Bay. Before we just start arbitrarily dredging the Vermilion River in bits and pieces, we need to make sure that the proper studies and recommendations are done. Somebody from the Corps of Engineers will have to come in this office and guarantee us that it will not cause us anymore additional flooding in Abbeville than what has already occurred. Anytime you get a 10- or 12-inch rain in Lafayette, we flood. It doesn't matter if we get a drop of water here, we still will flood. We can't take anymore of Lafayette's water. They will have to learn to control their water and come up with some real smart initiatives on what they will do with it and how they will handle it. We did. We created a retention pond. We spent \$1 million of FEMA money and it works very well. It solved a huge drainage problem right here in Abbeville. If we did it, so can Lafayette. That is the message that we need to send with our resolution. The Police Jury has already approved the same resolution. We are piggybacking off of them. Kevin Sagrera has also sent a letter to the Corps of Engineer's deputy district engineer, Mr. Mark Wingate. We need to follow up on this. We are fortunate to have a leader like Mr. Kevin Sagrera involved in this. He is very concerned about it. He is at the Lafayette Parish Government meeting right now in our defense. He is willing to speak on our behalf at the meeting. This is step one and he would hate to think that we would have to seek some kind of injunctive relief through legal means but if it comes to that, he is prepared to do so. Councilwoman White stated there is a huge push from Lafayette to get the permit now and start the work. You can call your representative and your congressman and let them know you are not ok with this. The study is set to be completed in December. Make sure they hold those permits until after December and after we can sit down as a region and look at what will happen. Mayor Piazza stated that he will not sugar coat this. It is an uphill battle. Lafayette is a big city with a lot of wealthy people. They have a population of about 300,000. It is an uphill battle but we will fight it. That he promises everyone.

Plaisance/T. Broussard
Resolution R19-22

A resolution requesting that the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers delay the issuance of any and all permits to the Lafayette City-Parish Consolidated Government unless, and until all pertinent drainage studies are completed, and then issued only to the extent that it can be ascertained that no damage will be done to the City of Abbeville, its residents and property owners as a result of the permitted dredging.

The motion carried unanimously.

-07 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Ms. Roslyn White to approve pay application number 12 in the amount of \$91,803.62 payable to Minvielle Lumber Company, the invoice to The Sellers Group in the amount of \$2,652.34 and the invoice in the amount of \$5,420.00 payable to JJE Contracting, LLC, all three for the Airport Terminal Renovation Project. The motion carried unanimously.

Mayor Mark Piazza

- *Asked Councilman Touchet and Gene Sellers, Jr. to contact Police Juror Mark Poche' for his assistance with some additional asphalt work needed in the parking lot at the airport.*

Councilwoman Roslyn White

- *This Thursday Shelly Fairchild, from Nashville, will be performing for Sounds in the Square.*

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

ATTEST:

APPROVE:

Kathleen S. Faulk
Secretary-Treasurer

Mark Piazza
Mayor