

The Mayor and Council of the City of Abbeville met for a committee meeting on August 7, 2018 at 5:15 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, Brady Broussard, Jr., Francis Touchet, Jr., Mayor Pro-Tem and Roslyn White

Members Absent: None

Also Present: Ike Funderburk, City Attorney
Clay Menard, Public Works Director

Mayor Piazza stated we are here for our Committee meetings. We have two committees meeting tonight. One is the Streets and Sidewalks Committee and the other is the Ordinance Committee. Both committees are chaired by Councilwoman Broussard. He turned the floor over to Councilwoman Broussard.

Councilwoman Broussard stated she wanted to discuss City wide flushing. They are going to meet with the City of Rayne to demonstrate the machine for culvert cleaning. She would also like to add, in the future, that we hire one person to use the machine. They would be specifically for that. Councilman Touchet stated we received money from FEMA after the 2016 flood. Can we get to a point where we will have a year-round flushing crew? What we are doing now is reacting instead of being proactive. Mayor Piazza stated the way we have been operating, the summer months are very difficult. If you remember, we are an 8-person crew with a superintendent. We operate on two crews, four each. Four is really not enough to split the crew because you always have someone sick, hurt or taking annual leave. The beginning of the summer, he asked Civil Service to put two additional people on to make it a ten-man crew. We would split it between five and five so we could go twice in everybody's district. This was at the request of the City Council. That time period will run out, according to Civil Service, because all you get are two ninety-day periods. Then you have to let them go unless you hire them permanently and full-time. We do not have the funds in our budget to do this. What we normally have done in the past, is that in the winter time when we don't have any grass to cut, we flush culverts. We spend a lot of time from around December to about March doing things like that because there is no grass to cut. Can we do that year-round with two people out of the existing crew that we have? That will make us have two less people than we have cutting grass in the summer time. He doesn't know how we can do that. Councilman Touchet stated when we are not cutting grass then we need to focus on litter control. We will walk streets and pick up litter in the winter time. Mayor Piazza stated that at Councilwoman Terry's suggestion we are going to Rayne and we will establish some training with this new apparatus that is supposed to work really well. Once we get over there and get trained and start utilizing it this winter, it may work so well that we will not need a culvert flushing crew year-round. He doesn't know the answer to that. We will make culvert flushing and drainage a priority. Whether or not we can hire additional people to do that is difficult to commit to right now. Councilwoman Broussard asked if we can pull up culverts on abandoned buildings. Mayor Piazza answered yes. After the Christmas Stroll time frees up and we will go down to one grass cutting crew through the winter. The other guys will go to a four-man flushing crew. Clay Menard stated you have to have a minimum of three people to flush. It is very difficult to do it with two. Mayor Piazza stated we will do the flushing all winter long. The leaves cause problems more in the winter. Right now, our crew is cutting every day, when it doesn't rain, and every other Saturday on overtime just to keep up. It's not like we have a couple of extra guys hanging around doing nothing. We are already working overtime just to keep up with the grass cutting. Clay Menard stated, today, when it started to rain, they went in and bagged sand. He contacted Marlon to tell him that as soon as the rain stops, they need to get back into the two districts to check the culverts and catch basins and the ditches. We could not cut grass anymore because of the rain. We are trying to do that as much as we possibly can because litter is a top priority because a majority of the stuff we find is litter. The Mayor of Rayne told him they had an obstruction and they

had to remove the culvert. The obstruction was a Tonka dump truck. It was embedded in the mud in the culvert. Mayor Piazza stated we hope the new equipment from Rayne will work better.

Councilwoman Broussard stated the next item is on the Ordinance Committee and it is to discuss an amendment to the utility extension ordinance. This was requested by Councilman Plaisance. Councilwoman Broussard turned the floor over to Councilman Plaisance.

Councilman Plaisance stated the extensions for payment of utility bills have always been a problem. After meeting with the Mayor, Ike and most of the Council members, he would like to remove the extension days completely. Extensions would only be given for emergency life threatening medical conditions verified by the treating physician and with the agreement of the Council member of that district and the Mayor or Councilman at Large. The other exception is if the payment is guaranteed in writing by an accredited agency and only for one calendar month. The extensions have become very cumbersome for the Mayor's secretary and the Council secretary. It has become a real issue in Councilwoman Broussard's district for her. After discussing this with her, it would be something that would relieve some of the pressure on her. She could say that we changed our ordinance and therefore we are no longer granting extensions. These extensions have created a lot of problems for our personnel. It would be better if we eliminated them completely except for those two terms. Councilman Touchet asked Mr. Funderburk to explain the changes in simple terms. Ike stated the information in the packet with Section 6-13 (b) says people have until 8:30 AM to pay on cutoff day. We need to change that because the guys are going out at 7:30 AM so we need the payments in before 8:30 AM on cutoff day. (b)I would be eliminated so there are no more three-day extensions. (c) dealt with the two non-consecutive extensions. Since there will be no more extensions granted other than the medical emergency and the guaranteed payments. Everything else will be renumbered. The final change is next to the last paragraph. If someone has multiple accounts, and is delinquent on one, we have the ability to cut off all of their accounts. The way it is written, it says the City shall disconnect all utility accounts. We should change shall to may so we have some discretion. Councilwoman Broussard stated she understands the problems with this but she has some concerns with senior citizens. Not every individual in her district are concerned with their hair, and nails and partying. There are some people that get into situations. That bothers her spirit. Councilman Touchet stated in one year how many extensions can they get. Ike stated you can only have two non-consecutive extensions in a calendar year. This does not include the medical emergency and the guaranteed payments. Councilman Touchet stated there are people who are meeting ends and he wants to have the discretion. If someone is abusing this on the Council then we need to address it. We shouldn't take away something like that because it could be for the good people that need it. They can only get two per year. He always tells Nicole to follow the ordinance. Evidently there has been a bombardment. Extensions are not coming from his district. His point is to stick to the ordinance and we have a safe haven. He wants to be able to help someone who is not in a medical situation that just says something happens. It is not abusing if you stick to the policy. Ike stated we are operating the public fisc. We have a responsibility to the public. Everyone, not just a person who lives on a certain street. We have an obligation to everyone to be good stewards of that public fisc. He does not have any data with him today, but he would be willing to bet that many of the people who get extensions are also people we wind up cutting off for non-payment and we are left holding the bag because their utility bill will probably be greater than the \$300.00 deposit. If they are cut off in this month then they still have another month's usage as their final bill. The purpose of this is to ensure we are getting maximum recovery from the product that we sell to our citizens that runs this City. For any system that you have in place, there will be those who try to abuse it. That is why companies like, SLEMCO, don't have an extension policy. He understands people in his age group are living on fixed incomes. Mayor Piazza stated it has been a conundrum for many decades. We are concerned about offering a service to our customers and a three-day extension is not a violation of the constitution to be compassionate to someone who needs an additional three days to pay their bill. It is a problem and a little bit of a burden on their secretaries to deal with these individuals but they wouldn't be calling if they didn't need it. Councilman Broussard stated when we got a new District Attorney, Keith Stutes, he assembled all of the elected officials in this Parish. We met at the prison. It was a big meeting where Keith Stutes made it perfectly clear that we are stewards for the people we represent and the funds that they give us. He will arrest any elected person. He will arrest any recipient of public property that receives it. Keith made that his motto that he was going to go after fraud and abuse of public property that is not recovered like Ike was describing. The District Attorney was very serious about

this. Our secretary and the Mayor's secretary spend days each month on this issue with extensions. Councilwoman White stated she has not granted a single extension and she does not plan to grant one unless it is absolutely necessary. At this point she will not support the ordinance but, in the future, if we see that there is some pattern or if it becomes an issue in her district, she would like to bring it back up at that point with actual factual data. She could make an educated decision then. She does not feel it is a big enough problem yet.

-01 introduced by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to recommend to the City Council at their regular meeting scheduled for August 21, 2018 to adopt an ordinance to change the payment time on disconnect day from 8:30 AM to 7:30 AM to coincide with practice and to change the word shall to may so we have some discretion. The motion carried unanimously.

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

ATTEST:

APPROVE:

Kathleen S. Faulk
Secretary-Treasurer

Mark Piazza
Mayor