

The Mayor and Council of the City of Abbeville met in special session on December 27, 2017 at 10:30 A.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, Mayor Pro-Tem, Wayne Landry, Joe Hardy and Francis Touchet, Jr.

Members Absent: Councilman Brady Broussard, Jr.

Also Present: Tony Hardy, Police Chief
Jude Mire, Fire Chief
Tracette Hillman, Municipal Civil Service Personnel director
Pastor Haynes
Joseph Vallee, Municipal Civil Service Board Member
Gerald Gaspard, Chamber of Commerce/American Legion
Marilyn Mitchell
Jim Ruiz
Steven Menard

Mayor Piazza asked Pastor Haynes to lead the assembly in prayer. Mayor Piazza asked Chief Tony Hardy to lead the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Piazza thanked everyone for being here this morning. Everyone is concerned about the recent fatalities. They have called this special City Council meeting to make sure Chief Hardy has all the resources available that he would need. There is no limitation to his overtime, personnel, equipment or anything that he needs at his discretion to help him and his police officers do their job.

Councilman Landry stated that he has noticed the additional patrols in his district. He thanked the Police Department for that. We are putting no loitering signs in the Martin Luther King, Jr. area. They need to go into the store and then leave. They are not to hang out so they should be told to leave.

Councilman Plaisance stated that it is unfortunate what has happened. It is a sad day in Abbeville when anybody dies but in particular a 14-year old. The primary goal of this Council is to have maximum safety in our City. He commended the Police Chief and his staff for all the work they are doing and exposure that they have been given. He asked every person in this City to accept the responsibility in their own homes, for their own children and their own relatives. If anybody sees anything that is out of the ordinary, they need to report it to the Police Department. This is the only way we can keep our City safe.

Councilman Francis Touchet, Jr. stated he is a 27-year educator. It starts with our families and taking control of what they need to do at their household. When we have our youth on the street and not doing what they are supposed to be doing and not being under the supervision of their parents, that is when certain things happen. Until we have families that take control of what they need to in their households, we will continue to have this. When these certain things happen and

the Police Officers go to the scene for information, people are not cooperating. The money will help but it will not totally end the violence. Crime needs to be curbed in every respect, especially when it comes to our youth. Let's work with our Police Department and families please take control of what happens in your household. He has five children and he worries about all of them. They need to let him know where they are and where they are going. If people did things like that, we would have a better community and society.

Councilman Landry stated they did have a meeting last night of the community at Ark of the Covenant Church. They discussed the things that Councilman Touchet discussed. The home and the parents. We are also having another meeting on January 6, 2018 at the Boys and Girls Club. We will also have a town hall meeting sometime in January. This murder has taken a toll because it is a 14-year old kid. He is really touched by that fact. He is taking this seriously as a father. He is angry and upset. We have to do what we can to curb this. Abbeville has to step up. We need to talk if we see something. It is time to help.

Councilman Plaisance stated we need to look in the mirror as parents and ask ourselves what are we doing as parents to be responsible citizens by wondering where our kids are and what they are doing. He appreciates what Councilman Touchet said. He did child protection investigation for over 20 years and 80% of the cases involved drugs and alcohol. Many of the parents were not at home with their children. It starts in the home. We need to look at ourselves.

Chief Hardy echoed what everyone is saying. We need the public's help. The money will help but if you know something you need to come forward, especially if it is your kid. No kid should be on the street. If you can't control them then call us. We will take any suggestions. Everybody has to do their part.

Mr. Gerald Gaspard stated the American Legion is community minded. Whatever they can do to help, please let him know.

Ms. Marilyn Mitchell stated the kids are sent to juvenile then they are released. They keep bringing guns into the neighborhood. If we keep doing the same thing over and over then we will get the same results. Who will do something? Chief Hardy stated there are programs after the court system. Some go in and succeed and some don't. They have to want to do better. Mayor Piazza stated there are programs but they are juveniles and the court can only do so much. They are released to their parents. They are their parents' responsibility.

Councilman Plaisance stated the parent should know if their child has a gun. If they commit a major crime at an early age, they can only stay in prison until the age of 21. We need responsible parents. Those kids need great role models.

Mayor Piazza stated Ms. Mitchell is a great role model. Both of her kids are college graduates and one of them has three Super Bowl rings. Maybe we need programs for parents instead of the kids.

Mr. Jim Ruiz stated his retired from college professor. He taught Criminal Justice and he is also retired from the New Orleans Police Department. Murder is not the type of crime that police can proactively deter. When the money goes away, the problem is still there. Police need the help of the community. Murder is a crime where you have a 60% solve rate. In the 1960's it was a 90% solve rate. Murder does not happen in a robbery type situation. A lot of it is domestic. There is a program that is being used in Australia and Canada called the Whole Government Approach. It involves all of the agencies, not just the police, and it requires the other agencies to be just as

proactive as the police. A lot of these kids come from broken homes. That is the reality of it. Once the people get the information from the public who do you pass it to. You have to pass it to someone who will take action. No passing it on is what festers into larger problems. They are out there and they have the guns. People are afraid to talk to the police. It shouldn't be that way. Our police and our public should be together. There should be no distinction between the two. He has information about this approach and would be willing to pass it on.

Ms. Tracette Hillman stated there are no parents in those homes. We need to build a community program for them to talk to someone. They need a role model. This would be a thing of goodwill for the City. The City could fund it. Need something as a positive replacement.

Mr. Steven Menard stated he is with PUSH. He was at the meeting last night. He wanted to know how the City will deal with gangs. The gangs influence the kids in this City. You have gangs coming from all over here. What they do is they go out and talk to these kids. They all come from broken homes. They need love and care. They are starving on the streets. The only ones who give them attention is the drug dealers. Their mom and dad are smoking crack. There is no communication between the community and the police department. We need more sports and organizations for these kids. If we don't then there will be more bloodshed. You don't want what goes on in New Iberia here. We can't stop them from dealing dope. All he wants to do is save a life. We need to generate jobs for these people. More men in the community need to stand up. There are a lot of guns back there. He has been to a lot of candle light vigils. It is something y'all need to come and see. We are gathered in prayer and everyone in that neighborhood is there. That is where you reach out to these kids. They are threatened that is why they won't talk. Keep on going to meetings and find a solution. Put officers on the street that can communicate.

Councilman Landry stated we are promoting "See Something, Say Something". Two of his children were shot. Our police department stayed on top of that to track the perpetrator.

Mayor Piazza stated Sheriff Couvillon stated he has resources on standby and will help if we need.

-01 introduced by Mr. Wayne Landry and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to ratify and authorize the expenditure of overtime, at the discretion of the Chief of Police, above the 24-hour per payroll cap for 12/23/17 through 1/3/18. 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