

The Mayor and Council of the City of Abbeville met in regular session on February 20, 2018 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, Mayor Pro-Tem, Brady Broussard, Jr., Wayne Landry and Francis Touchet, Jr.

Members Absent: Councilman Joe Hardy

Also Present: Jude Mire, Fire Chief  
Tony Hardy, Police Chief  
Ike Funderburk, City Attorney  
Clay Menard, Public Works Director  
Richard Primeaux, Engineer  
Tom Carroll, Engineer  
Ben Rivera, Insurance Agent  
Joseph Vallee, Municipal Civil Service Board  
Gerald Gaspard, Chamber and American Legion

*Mayor Piazza asked Councilman Wayne Landry to lead the assembly in prayer. Mayor Piazza asked Councilman Francis Touchet, Jr. to lead the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.*

*Mayor Piazza stated we do have one item of personnel for Wilson Richard who is on extended leave. He asked Clay to give an explanation of what is going on. Clay Menard stated Mr. Richard was hired to work in the electrical department. He worked approximately three weeks and had an on the job accident. He has been out on workers compensation since then. He has been on workers compensation leave since October of 2017. He has not returned to work and has no time table to return to work. He is still in his working test period. According to Civil Service rules, an employee has a six-month working test period. After six months, they are either retained or they are relieved of their duties. In this situation, Mr. Richard only work three weeks so we haven't been able to evaluate his work. If we do not terminate Mr. Richard and he gets to the six-month deadline then he automatically becomes a permanent employee. Mr. Funderburk stated his absence creates a vacancy that needs to be filled in order for the crew to function properly.*

-01 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to terminate Mr. Wilson Richard immediately. The motion carried unanimously.

*Mayor Piazza asked if there were any public comments for any agenda item. There were none.*

-02 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Mr. Wayne Landry to approve the quote from Solomon in the amount of \$8,660.00 for transformers for stock. The motion carried unanimously.

-03 introduced by Mr. Wayne Landry and seconded by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. to approve the quote from Techline in the amount of \$12,141.48 to purchase poles for stock. The motion carried unanimously.

*Mayor Piazza asked Clay to have the old pole "graveyard" cleaned up.*

*Mr. Funderburk stated at the Planning Commission meeting this morning there were some concerns from a couple of the members because Abbeville High School has submitted a sign application without the final artwork enclosed. They have four different signs designs that are under consideration. We don't get into the aesthetics of a sign. Our job is to make sure the sign is the right dimensions, the right height and situated on the ground in accordance with our setbacks. We make sure it does not obstruct any view of a driver. The Planning Commission tabled any action on the Abbeville High School sign application and ask that he request that we reconsider the portion of our sign ordinance that deals with programmable signs to allow programmable signs with strict guidelines on how they can be used. Instead of someone putting in an application for a programmable sign, then the Planning Commission having to deny it and then the Council has to grant a variance. That is a reasonable approach to programmable signs. As far as which sign Abbeville High School chooses is not important to us. They are all beautiful signs and will beautify that part of town. He suggested to the Council that in keeping with the request from the Planning Commission that they authorize him to come up with some language to submit to the Planning Commission and then to the Ordinance Committee to make some changes to our sign ordinance so that we are more business friendly. He will send the artwork to all the Commissioners. It would be appropriate to grant the variance for Abbeville High School. Mayor Piazza stated the change would allow digital signs that have wording lit. We would still not allow flashing, scrolling or other distracting graphics. The Planning Commission has agreed to this change and it would help them.*

-04 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Wayne Landry to grant a variance form the sign ordinance for Abbeville High School to install a sign. The motion carried unanimously.

-05 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. to approve a Class A/Class R liquor license for Aurora, LLC dba La Rumba located at 1132 Veterans Memorial Drive. The motion carried unanimously.

-06 introduced by Mr. Wayne Landry and seconded by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. to approve partial payment estimate number 3 to Elliott Construction in the amount of \$5,971.28 for the Tee Dud Road sewer extension project. The motion carried unanimously.

**Landry/Broussard**  
**Resolution R18-03**

*A resolution authorizing the Mayor to execute the notice of acceptance, with a punch list, for the Tee Dud Road sewer extension project.*

*The motion carried unanimously.*

-07 introduced by Mr. Wayne Landry and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to approve change order number 2 relative to the Tee Dud Road sewer extension project. The motion carried unanimously.

*Councilman Broussard stated we have a renewal from LMA for general liability, law enforcement officer, errors and omissions and automobile liability insurance. We have a five-year history prepared for you. Insurance does go up and we have great value in that policy with first dollar coverage. We have worked with this company very well. We are keeping increases in line with*

our active safety program. Mr. Funderburk stated the five-year analysis shows our premiums fluctuate up and down from year to year. It is cyclical and is based on our claims experience. We have first dollar coverage and that is what we need and this is the only place we can get it. That takes us out of the loop when it comes to handling claims. Councilman Touchet asked if we know why there was a \$32,600 increase in our premiums. Where are the claims coming from and is there anything we can do? Mr. Funderburk stated the increase is connected to claims. Councilman Broussard stated there is an elevated claims experience that is taken into account. We had tried to get another quote from Ben Rivera but because of our claims experience the other company declined to quote. We did see a spike in the claims and we will have conversations to reduce the number of claims. Mr. Funderburk stated our increase in premium is due to the increase cost of general liability insurance. That is the bulk of the increase. Mayor Piazza stated it is obviously claims but we don't know if it is a specific department. LMA owes us an explanation. Mr. Funderburk stated we got hit with a very large judgement that there is a reserve for. Mayor Piazza stated in the future when we have a large increase we really need our agent here to explain why it increased. It takes at least three years of favorable claims before our premium decreases. The incidences of claims have been reduced but we are talking about hundreds of thousands of dollars awarded for a couple of claims. Councilman Landry asked Mr. Funderburk if some of these things are unpreventable. Mr. Funderburk stated municipalities are treated very differently from other entities. If there is a trip hazard then we have to be placed on notice that it is there. We have a situation where someone fell and injured his leg on the grate. We have had a couple of these. The grate was absolutely functional. It was just old. We have a lot of old grates. If we really wanted to be proactive we would go out and change every thing but that is cost prohibitive.

-08 introduced by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Wayne Landry to accept the renewal from Louisiana Municipal Risk Management Agency for general liability, law enforcement officer, errors and omissions and automobile liability insurance, effective 3/1/18. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Ben Rivera was present to discuss the auto physical, airport liability, boiler and machinery, inland marine and property insurance renewals. The inland marine, airport liability and boiler and machinery stayed flat. We were able to add \$520,000 of sewer lift stations to boiler and machinery without any increases in premiums. Auto physical coverage has increased due to the increased value of autos on the policy and property insurance has increased due to market losses across the country.

-09 introduced by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to accept the renewal from Thomson, Smith & Leach Insurance Group for auto physical, airport liability, inland marine, boiler and machinery and property insurances, effective 3/1/18. The motion carried unanimously.

### **Broussard/Plaisance**

#### **Resolution R18-04**

*A resolution authorizing the Mayor to execute an amendment to the cooperative endeavor agreement with the Abbeville Cultural & Historical Alliance.*

*The motion carried unanimously.*

*Mayor Piazza stated he is excited about this resolution. It is an ongoing process twelve years in the making for the Alliance Center and the Cultural Center. It looks like we are finally going to bring the Welcome Center downtown where it belongs. It will be fully staffed with a full-time*

*employee that is very knowledgeable about the tourism business. The Welcome Center will no longer be on the by-pass. More tourist visit downtown than they do the by-pass. Ali Miller has agreed to relocate and the Vermilion Parish Tourist Commission has agreed to allow her to relocate to our Welcome Center. She will be the full-time person. She will not be a City of Abbeville employee but will be employed by the Vermilion Parish Tourist Commission and the Alliance. We will contribute \$10,000 annually to the Alliance for this employment. We will continue to provide a part-time employee to assist Ali. We will work out the arrangement and discontinue the arrangement for rent on the building. Now we will have a full-fledged fully funded Welcome Center. The center has been remodeled, the roof has been repaired, the bathrooms have been remodeled, we now have public restroom facilities that are available to the public from outside, we have new carpeting on the way and we have new paneling for the display. All this has been a twelve-year plan. It goes way back to Mr. Russell Gaspard and Mr. Ronnie Mayard. They had this vision to bring the Welcome Center and tourism to downtown Abbeville. Sometimes the wheels of government turn very slowly so it has taken years to make this project happen. Grants have been available but have taken years to acquire. Now we are finally to a point where that vision and that dream has become a reality. When they first approached him, he thought it was an excellent idea but it has taken a long time to put it together. It will be a tremendous benefit to have this in our downtown. Councilman Broussard complimented Ronnie and Russell for that vision and for the Mayor's commitment and determination for that project. Data says that for every one tourist that comes on the by-pass two come to our downtown area. This is where the tourist want to be. It is logical to have the Welcome Center where most of the tourist come. We will be getting a brand new Dafford mural on that building. Mayor Piazza stated it has been a joint effort that includes the Giant Omelette Celebration, the Louisiana Cattle Festival, the Historical Society and the Art Council. He wanted to thank them for everything they have done.*

Richard Primeaux, Engineer

- *The demolition of the Hebert Fire Station is almost complete. Only the slab remains. That should be removed tomorrow.*
- *The repair on the John Hardy bridge has begun and is progressing.*

Tom Carroll, Engineer

- *The Rodeo Road/Airport Road drainage project has begun. They did one crossing today and will do the other crossing tomorrow.*

Councilman Francis Touchet, Jr.

- *Asked Clay about the project on Putnam. Clay stated the Louisiana One Call has been called in and they are securing the materials to begin the project.*
- *Asked Chief Hardy, in light of the recent school shooting, to send someone to the school superintendent to see if they need anything from us to help them. This would include all public and our private schools too.*

Councilman Wayne Landry

- *He agrees with everything Councilman Touchet said. It is truly getting out of hand. He admires those kids taking the buses to the State Capitol. It is an eye opener.*

Councilman Brady Broussard, Jr.

- *Back in 2017, we rolled out an ornamental bench program for the City. The first three benches are in route and will be here by the weekend. This is one more step towards beautification.*

Councilman Francis Plaisance

- *Evangeline Parish schools were all off today because of threats that were made against the students and the schools. He asked Chief Hardy if they have a plan in place for all the schools in the City of Abbeville for protection of the kids for a sudden incident like what happened. Are there buttons that the principal can press that would get the Police Department there quicker? Are there Resource Officers in every school? Chief Hardy answered there are Resource Officers, except in the elementary schools. Councilman Touchet wants to make sure all schools in the City of Abbeville are getting the same benefits as public schools. Chief Hardy stated he and someone from the Sheriff's office met with them last year in reference to this. We came up with a plan and any time a school encounters a problem they have certain phone numbers that they call so we can move out where we need to be. The schools contact us personally not the police station. Councilman Plaisance stated there needs to be a quick response button in all of the schools. Some type of alarm system. Can we install that in all the schools? It may help save a life. Mr. Jim Ruiz stated we need a better choice of strategy. By the time the police get there it is over. It would be better to have some type of device that locks the doors from the inside where it cannot be penetrated. You can blow the door off if you want to, but in most instances, they are looking for an easy shoot. Councilman Touchet stated that he and Representative Bob Hengens partnered together three years to enact a State law that every classroom that has kids in it has to be locked from the inside so that no one can get into the classroom. That is State law. That should be happening whether you are private or public because it is State law. Mr. Ruiz did not mean a lock he means something that bars the door. Councilman Touchet stated that is not something that we can determine, it is the school boards call. Our Vermilion Parish School system has trained our kids and teachers. They know what to do with the drills and they have everything down pat. Is there something more we can do to help with that endeavor? Chief Hardy stated he would meet with them tomorrow morning. Mr. Jim Ruiz stated giving teachers guns is not the answer. Councilman Broussard stated they are not suggesting that.*
- *The Real Santa House is coming to Abbeville at the Red Barn. It is the only one in the United States. It has been on Facebook. It is a national thing and they have selected Abbeville over surrounding cities.*

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

ATTEST:

APPROVE:

Kathleen S. Faulk  
Secretary-Treasurer

Mark Piazza  
Mayor