

The Mayor and Council of the City of Abbeville met for a committee meeting on September 4, 2018 at 5:00 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  
Gene Sellers, Engineer  
Joseph Vallee, Municipal Employees Civil Service Board  
Gerald Gaspard, American Legion & Chamber of Commerce  
Jude Mire, Fire Chief

*Mayor Piazza stated we are here for our Committee meeting. The committee is the newly established Park Committee chaired by Councilman Francis Plaisance. He turned the floor over to Councilman Plaisance.*

*Councilman Plaisance provided an update on the LaFitte Drive-In Park. The sign has come up and there is a lot of interest in the park. Some people think we are having another drive-in, which is not the case. Other people have talked about having movies in the park there. There is a lot of potential at the park. There is not much left to do except to open the park. We would need to set up the daylight hours and also possibly have a custodian during those hours to monitor the activity. There a couple of things that not have been done. One is the barrier for driving in the park. The electrical department brought the poles there but they have not been able to set them and put the cable between them. At some point, the back of the park may need some lighting because of the dark area back there. We have applied for a grant for a walking trail. He discussed the map that he had distributed that details where the walking trail will be. It would also include a canoe launch and a fishing pier. There are plenty of fish in the pond. We were able to stock the pond with blue gill and 1,000 chinquapins. Wildlife and Fisheries has informed him that the pond is ready to be fished. In the early fall, Wildlife and Fisheries will be bringing in several Florida Bass and catfish. There are plenty of wood ducks in the pond too. He also distributed a photograph of a concrete picnic table. The idea would be to have the concrete table and base. We would get private companies to commit to that. He has two firm commitments already. The DeGraauw family would like to sell the other 13 acres that would provide access on the southside of the park. This would provide access to future projects planned there like the sewer drying beds and the Fire department training tower. He has been working on this since 2014. We sold property to Technical Industries for \$180,000 a few years back. \$80,000 of that money was used to purchase the additional property at the retention pond. The purchase price of the property was \$89,500. We still have \$100,000 of those proceeds in the general fund. Purchasing this additional property would enhance the park. We are already utilizing a portion of the property that the DeGraauw's allow us to use. The trees could remain. There is so much potential at the park. He is working to try to get a pavilion donated for the park. It would be a permanent stage to have some concerts there. The concerts could benefit clubs, churches, etc. It is not a park for sports and it is not an RV park. It is a park for families. It is the most beautiful park in Vermilion Parish. You can do so many activities in that park. It is a work in progress. This park is a piece of Abbeville's history. David Ashley still has the old projector that he is willing to donate to us. Mr. Gene Sellers stated he spoke to Peggy Ashley about the access road and he has the permit to give to Ike. Councilman Touchet stated that he needs some clarity on this. What does it mean "Just about ready to open"? Councilman Plaisance stated people could do church events and picnics. It is just a wide-open park that the public can just enjoy and fish. Councilman Touchet asked if we have contacted our insurance company to see what our additional rates would be to open the park. He wants hard numbers. He doesn't have a full picture of what it will cost to get it started and what it will take to continue. Councilman Plaisance stated the only numbers we have are*

what we have expended already. The custodian could be decided later. Councilwoman White asked about when the grants will be awarded. Mr. Sellers stated we applied and have received favorable responses although the grant has not yet been awarded. Councilwoman White stated she recalls a letter from our insurance company that discussed the structural integrity of the pond. Mr. Sellers stated that is why we are trying to apply for a grant to install a fishing pier. You can use the banks to fish. It is shallow along the banks. It might have to be excavated. Councilman Touchet is concerned about a liability situation with this. Mr. Funderburk stated three years ago our insurance company safety engineer wrote us a letter suggesting that we fence in the pond. That was before there was any additional development. He can have another conversation with RMI about this. Councilman Plaisance would like him to come and visit so he can ask why other parks in the area do not have to have a fence around their pond. Councilman Broussard asked the Mayor to comment on the additional property that is available for purchase for City needs, not recreational needs. The Mayor could explain why that property is important to the City with the appraisal that is included in our packet. Mayor Piazza stated he first wanted to address the fishing issue. That is a big deal and it could have the potential to be a tremendous liability. The banks of the pond are steeply sloped where it could be hazardous for kids to fish on the bank. That is why he went out to Grand Chenier to take pictures of their fishing piers at the Wildlife Refuge. Fishing piers are the answer to the problem. There would be no fishing from the bank. We would also have a boat launch. We need to tell the insurance guy that we will not allow fishing from the bank. We cannot open the pond for fishing until we have the pier built. Mr. Sellers stated the estimate for a fishing pier is \$250,000. Mayor Piazza stated he spoke to the Mayor of Grosse Tete and he has just received a \$400,000 grant for a fishing pier, boat launch and a walking trail. They just completed it and opened it up. We should go look at it. It was built with three grants. One was from Water Conservation. One was from Wildlife & Fisheries and the other was from Parks and Recreation. They combined all these to get the project done. Mr. Sellers stated the conversation that Richard Minvielle had with the State regarding the walking trail was very positive. Mayor Piazza stated it may be at least two years down the road before we can open the pond. Councilwoman White asked about the purchase of the additional property available. Mayor Piazza stated that he was asked by the Council to get the appraisal. To buy additional property is not his idea, it is Councilman Plaisance's. It would be very nice to have the parking area that we are already mowing. We do not have a need for this woody area. Councilwoman White asked if the right of way that was discussed is on the additional property or if it is on the existing property. Mr. Sellers stated is in on the existing property. Mayor Piazza discussed the expenditures for Lafitte Drive-In Park so far. If you take out the original purchase of the retention pond property, since it was from FEMA, we have spent \$160,000.00 at Lafitte Drive-In Park. We owe it to the public to let them know what we will do it. Councilman White asked if the \$100,000 could be used to develop the park instead of purchasing more land. Mayor Piazza stated we really have already spent the \$100,000.

-01 introduced by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. to table any action to purchase the additional property at Lafitte Drive-In Park at this time. The motion carried unanimously.

Mayor Piazza stated the other issue is that we have to answer the question of when we will initially open the park, the rules and times, what will be done, if we need personnel and how we will keep them out of the pond. We need the committee to study that and report back to us.

Mayor Piazza stated that Councilwoman Broussard had asked for an expense report of all City parks since 2012. Of course, Comeaux Park is our big park. We added a skateboard park, new bathrooms and resurfaced the tennis court so the expense there is higher. We spent very little at Godchaux. We spent about \$5,400 at McKinley Scott Park. We spend almost nothing at Parker Park. We spent about \$20,000 at Williams Park. We spent \$30,000 at Magdalen Square. Most of that is to preserve and protect our beautiful oak trees. The other small parks like, Mouton, Motty and Lafayette, are lumped into Comeaux Park because their expenditures are so small.

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

ATTEST:

APPROVE:

Kathleen S. Faulk  
Secretary-Treasurer

Mark Piazza  
Mayor