

The Mayor and Council of the City of Abbeville met in regular session on September 4, 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, Terry Broussard, Brady Broussard, Jr., Francis Touchet, Jr., Mayor Pro-Tem and Roslyn White

Members Absent: None

Also Present: Jude Mire, Fire Chief
Bill Spearman, Police Chief
Ike Funderburk, City Attorney
Richard Primeaux, Engineer
Gene Sellers, Engineer
Corey LeBlanc, Architect
James LeBlanc, Parks & Recreation Board
Austin Landry, Boy Scout
Joseph Vallee, Municipal Civil Service Board
Gerald Gaspard, Chamber and American Legion

Mayor Piazza asked Councilman Francis Plaisance to lead the assembly in prayer. Mayor Piazza asked Austin Landry to lead the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

-01 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. to approve the minutes from the Council Personnel Interview held on August 7, 2018, the Committee meeting held on August 7, 2018 and the City Council meetings held on August 7, 2018 and August 21, 2018. The motion carried unanimously.

Mayor Piazza asked if there are any comments from the public about any agenda item. Mr. Joseph Vallee asked about the bird boxes that will be discussed.

Mr. Austin Landry was planning his Eagle Scout project by placing bird boxes for migratory birds at LaFitte Drive-In Park. He is with Troop 85. He was requesting permission. He is working with a wildlife biologist about the proper way to build and place the boxes and how to put up the traps so the snakes won't steal the eggs. This project helps the environment by giving a place for the wood ducks to hatch and preserve birds for observing. It also will provide more ducks for Louisiana.

-02 introduced by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to allow Austin Landry to place the bird boxes as he discussed in order to complete his Eagle project. The motion carried unanimously.

-03 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Ms. Terry Broussard to approve the purchase of a new bush hog for the airport from Langlinais Tractor at a cost of \$13,096.20. The motion carried unanimously.

-04 introduced by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to approve the accounting of the 2017 tax roll. The motion carried unanimously.

-05 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. to approve payment number 1 in the amount of \$13,627.75 payable to Minvielle Lumber for the renovations to the airport terminal building and the additional expense in the amount of \$1,050 to remove the abandoned tank and backfill the area. The motion carried unanimously.

Prior to the discussion of the City taking over the operations of the Vermilion Oaks Country Club, Councilwoman White wanted to make a comment. She stated, "Although by definition it may not be unethical for me to participate or vote on this issue, I do think that my close proximity to Vermilion Oaks Property makes it inappropriate for me to participate in the discussion or the vote. I do not want my personal affiliation to influence this Council in any way, so I therefore recuse myself from this item".

Councilman Touchet stated he does not want the discussion of the Vermilion Oaks Country Club to be difficult. He would like the Council to discuss and also for the public to give their feedback. In no way, whatsoever, does he feel that we have the amount of money to be able to purchase the Country Club. We can only look at some type of lease. That is the angle he would want the Mayor to pursue. Before we even start that, this property is not in the City limits. He would like to know the process of taking that property and bringing it into the City limits. We would have to get permission from the family. He asked Ike to discuss this. Ike stated he has sent an email to the Mayor and Council outlining some of the issues that he saw. One of those is whether or not we could annex the property. There is a case that is a few years old that deals with the boundary of a municipality. The boundary was a body of water. That was the boundary of the City. The boundary of the other property that wanted to be annexed was on the other side of the body of water. So, there is a question if our property line and their property line are adjacent to one another. We don't know if they are contiguous. He needs to research this further. Mr. Gene Sellers stated that some of the golf course is already in the City limits. He can furnish a plat showing that. However, it doesn't cross the coulee. Mr. Louis Garrot stated holes 6, 7, 8 and 9 are in the City limits. Mr. Gene stated to get it annexed first you have to get a petition from all owners. The signatures are then certified by the Clerk of Court. Then we prepare an ordinance with the new property description of the City. Ms. Sandra Marant asked if the green fees would be enough to offset the cost to maintain the course. Golf courses have to be taken care of very specifically. It can be very expensive and it would be ashamed if it became another liability for the City. Councilman Touchet stated that the first point is getting it annexed. The second point is the possibility of a lease in which the City would take over some type of operation. Before you can do that there are four pieces of information that we will need. What is the cost of keeping up the grounds and the maintenance costs of the entire property? What are the overall insurance expenses if the City puts that under our liability insurance? What are the sources of revenues? What in one year will those revenues bring? What is the cost of maintaining the utilities for the property? He is concerned about providing a golf course for two reasons. One is for the citizens of Abbeville to utilize but most importantly for the youth of these different high schools in this parish to have some place to play. Before we decide to do anything, we will have all our facts lined up. This is just a discussion tonight and hopefully we can pass something tonight to allow the Mayor to have more discussions to get more information. Councilman Broussard asked if an Attorney General opinion would be needed regarding the utilities there since another company offers those there and not the City. Councilman Touchet stated this would be no different than any other building in the City that does not have our utilities. Councilman Broussard was more concerned about the utilities if we were to annex the property. Ike stated that is one thing that would be attractive to the City to get the utilities but it would not require an attorney general's

opinion. We may have to get an attorney general's opinion regarding the annexation as discussed earlier but we may be able to resolve that without doing that. Councilman Plaisance asked that the Mayor contact at least three previous owners to get a run down on the costs and income of running the facilities. He would like to know if there was a profit or loss. He would like the total cost of operation of the Country Club. He would love to see the City open it but we need to be very careful regarding the cost of operations. It is a huge undertaking. We are looking to see if we have enough revenue to give the Police and Fire Department a raise so we have to be very careful before we jump into something that might be just over our heads. Councilman Touchet stated that he is not concerned about opening the pool or the club house. He is talking about minimal cost to get it open. Mayor Piazza stated that he guarantees that before any contract is signed, Councilman Plaisance will have all the facts and figures in his hands from the previous owners. We will not do anything until we know that we can make a profit over there. Councilman Plaisance asked if Councilman Touchet had researched outsourcing the operations. Mayor Piazza stated that he grew up at the Country Club and spent a lot of time there as a child. He hates to see it closed and we need to make every effort to get this place back opened in some type of fashion. The Country Club and the golf course is an important part of our infrastructure. It is just as important as an airport. It is something that attracts people to Abbeville and they come down here to play and eat at our restaurants and buy gas at our gas stations. It is important to the business economy of Abbeville. He has two big questions about this project. How much will it cost to get the course back in playing condition? We will have to seek professional advice for this. If we enter into a lease with the family, bringing the course back to being playable is a cost the City will have to absorb right at the beginning. We will have to come up with those funds to get it playable again. It won't be cheap. The second big question is how do we get around Civil Service when it comes to hiring people to cut grass, maintain the operations, apply the chemicals, run the inside, take the bookings and sell refreshments, etc. We have a Civil Service system we have to deal with. We have to create positions for every one of those positions, hire them and pay their retirement benefits, insurance and everything else that goes along with it. The other possibility would be to outsource it some kind of way that we get someone who is interested in starting a business like Don's Lawn Service does to take care of all the grass. He assumes all those liabilities, insurances, payroll and chemicals and all the other stuff like that. How much would something like that cost is another huge question. Councilman Touchet stated the Mayor knows how he feels about Civil Service. If this is something that the Council feels we can do, then we need to look at all the figures. We can be very creative. We have someone that is sitting at A. A. Comeaux Park that could very well be sitting at the golf course and taking in green fees or whatever. She is Civil Service. Mayor Piazza stated remember that the country club golf course's busy days are Saturday and Sunday. Councilman Touchet stated we may have to hire another person to do such a thing. We can work those things out. We have to worry about the cost to restore it and operate it then we can worry if it will maintain itself and pay for itself so we have something offered for our citizens of Abbeville. Ms. Marilyn Mitchell stated the money the City has right now has to be given to the Police Department and the Fire Department. Why should we spend money on a Saturday and Sunday pleasure when we have Police officers and Firemen working seven days a week and barely taking home \$1,000 a month? We have money to spend and splurge then spend it on them first then use it at the country club. We barely can use the parks. The youth is not being involved in anything. Who will use the country club? How much money will it cost? We need to get the children off the streets. We need to find something for those kids to do. If you can't fix the parks you already have, how will you fix the country club? It will cost a fortune to do that. Councilman Touchet stated that is why we will be very transparent with everyone about what this will take for us to get involved in. For us to give Police, Fire and Municipality employees a raise, you have to be able to draw sales tax dollars. You have to be able to increase revenue with people buying things. If we incorporate that into the City, then that is sales tax dollars that we are getting more of. Nobody knows more than this Council and the Mayor what it takes to give employees a raise

and that is something that you can never take back once you give it to them. We need to focus on their needs but we are not making any decisions. We are only seeing if this is feasible. We should not let it take any money away from us. It needs to sustain itself. Councilman Broussard stated he hopes the Mayor talks to multiple greens superintendents. As a golfer, the golf course is only as good as its course condition and its greens. If the numbers make sense and we venture in that direction, he cannot see that that course will be in playing condition until June 2019. We have to keep that in mind if we enter into a lease agreement. How far in advance will we have to pay for the lease before we can actually open the course? We have some golf experts out there and they know that this will not be a golf course anytime soon. Green Superintendents will understand the time and costs. He can't wait to see the numbers so we can make a good decision as Ms. Marilyn is asking. Mayor Piazza stated that Councilman Broussard just gave him a good idea. It would be helpful to form a small advisory committee of some professionals in the community. They could give us some ideas and help us with this research. Councilman Plaisance stated we must never lose sight that we have first responders and we really need to try and find a way to have their salaries increased. They do an outstanding job for us. Mayor Piazza stated the way our budget works we have a certain amount of money in the general fund and the utility system fund which goes to pay salaries and give raises. Unfortunately, those resources are very limited. However, our sales tax fund, which is what we use to build parks, purchase property and those types of things has a pretty healthy surplus. We can spend that money without affecting salaries because we cannot use that money for salaries. That is prohibited by the sales tax law whenever it was voted on. That is not money that we would have the ability to pay salaries with or give raises. We can use it to build an airport, a fire station or a park but we can't use it to give raises. He wanted to make sure everyone was clear on that.

-06 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to authorize the Mayor to form an advisory committee to research operational costs for the golf course. The motion was put to a vote and the vote thereupon was as follows:

YEAS: 4(Plaisance, T. Broussard, B. Broussard, Touchet)
NAYS: 0
ABSTAIN: 1(White)
ABSENT: 0

Therefore, the motion carried.

Richard Primeaux, Engineer

- *We are at the ½ way point of the contract time for the fire station. We will make the deadline.*
- *We are painting the inside of the Event Center. Mayor Piazza stated we will have to make some guidelines for using the facility in the near future.*
- *Councilman Broussard asked about the bridge. Mr. Primeaux stated the settlement is complete. They will make one final transition. This is all warranty work.*

Gene Sellers, Engineer

- *We were supposed to receive bids for the sewer extension for the carwash but everyone forgot about it so we extended the date to receive bids to two weeks.*
- *We did some surveying on Ulmer Road in accordance with the drainage study we reported on at the last meeting. The culverts go from 15 inches to 12 inches to 6 inches and we recommend changing those culverts for a half of one block. We will also adjust 4 or 5 inlets. The cost for material is about \$5,500. The City crew can do the labor.*
- *We completed the plans for the electrical control system at the sewer pump station and the stormwater pump station at Franks Alley. We will request quotes.*

-07 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Ms. Terry Broussard to authorize the work on Ulmer Street to change the culverts and adjust the inlets at a material cost of \$5,500 with the City crew doing the labor. The motion carried unanimously.

Mayor Mark Piazza

- *We had good discussions tonight.*
- *We are thankful that we will not get Hurricane Gordon. We don't wish it on anybody else. He hopes our friends in Grand Isle, Mississippi and Alabama are not too heavily damaged. He was at the OEP meeting this morning at 10:00 AM and they chose not to issue a declaration. There is no emergency declaration by the parish so there is no need for the City to issue one. We did hand out sandbags today for those who were concerned.*

Bill Spearman, Police Chief

- *We have delivered the signs in the bars for the Smoke Free Louisiana. We are waiting for some for the park. Since we don't have a sign, we are issuing warnings. Mayor Piazza stated he just gave the signs to Denise on Thursday or Friday. There will be a sign placed at every recreational field and concession stand. Chief Spearman stated the main problem is Magdalen Square. Mayor Piazza stated we will put a sign on the garbage receptacle in the Square.*

Jude Mire, Fire Chief

- *We have joined with six departments in the parish to apply for a grant for gear. We have received it. We will receive 22 sets of gear. This will save the City about \$45,000.*

Councilwoman Roslyn White

- *Asked the Mayor to find out about the upcoming downtown bridge closures. Someone from Mr. Gene Sellers' office will find out.*

Councilman Francis Touchet, Jr.

- *It is so hard for us to determine which right of ways for us to cut. We need to have a discussion with Clay regarding this. Could we put something on mailboxes for those right of ways that we are not supposed to cut? Those guys are having issues because they see grass that is not cut and then the homeowner calls and complains about them cutting it. Mayor Piazza stated you would be surprised how many people don't cut their front yards to the street. It looks so nice to cut the whole street when we are cutting so our guys cut it. That is a tough one to figure out.*

Councilman Brady Broussard, Jr.

- *September is a good time for our citizens. We will begin Sounds on the Square September 27th. Our Main Street Director, Charlene, has put a good line up together for four weeks.*
- *The brick work improving Magdalen Square continues now. It will be finished soon. It is good to preserve our historical sites.*
- *Extended condolences to the family of Reverend Michael Wright who passed away. He was a great man of God and an educator. He will be missed.*

Councilwoman Terry Broussard

- *Wished the football players of Vermilion Parish a successful and safe season.*
- *She thanked Ms. Marilyn Mitchell for her comments.*
- *About a month and one-half ago she inquired about an increase in pay for Police and Firemen so that is on her list too.*

- *She thanked the audience for being here tonight. Thank you for taking an interest in the City and attending our meetings.*

Councilman Francis Plaisance

- *It is very exciting driving down the By-pass these days. They just started on Kentucky Fried Chicken. You go down a little and you see Sassy Suds Carwash coming up. A little further, we have Councilman Touchet's project at the old tourist center being renovated. When you get to the airport you have a new terminal coming up. That is exciting for Abbeville. He likes to see all of this progress. He thanked everyone who is involved in those projects.*
- *Abbeville High School, Vermilion Catholic, ULL and LSU all won this past weekend.*

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

ATTEST:

APPROVE:

Kathleen S. Faulk
Secretary-Treasurer

Mark Piazza
Mayor