

The Mayor and Council of the City of Abbeville met in regular session on January 15, 2019 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, Brady Broussard, Jr., Francis Touchet, Jr., Mayor Pro-Tem and Roslyn White

Members Absent: Councilwoman Terry Broussard

Also Present: Jude Mire, Fire Chief
Bill Spearman, Police Chief
Ike Funderburk, City Attorney
Clay Menard, Public Works Director
Charlene Beckett, Main Street Manager
Denise Mire, Parks Director
Richard Primeaux, Engineer
Gene Sellers, Engineer
Corey LeBlanc, Architect
Joseph Vallee, Municipal Employees Civil Service Board
Tommy Picard, representing QSA
Ben Rivera, candidate for State Representative
Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Hollier
Mr. Jim Ruiz

Mayor Piazza asked Reverend Maurice Hollier to lead the assembly in prayer. Mayor Piazza asked Mr. Ike Funderburk to lead the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Piazza stated that Councilwoman Broussard was not here tonight due to a family emergency.

-01 introduced by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to ratify bills paid in the month of December 2018. The motion carried unanimously.

-02 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. to approve the minutes from the Committee meeting held on December 4, 2018. The motion carried unanimously.

-03 introduced by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to ratify the appointment of Sergeant Trent Guidry and Patrol Officer Peyton Hardy to the Abbeville Police Department. The motion carried unanimously.

-04 introduced by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. to approve the appointment of Timothy Bourque to the Abbeville Police Department. The motion carried unanimously.

-05 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Ms. Roslyn White to accept the resignation of Joshua P. Hebert effective January 11, 2019 from the Abbeville Police Department. The motion carried unanimously.

Mayor Piazza asked if there were any comments on any agenda item. There were none.

Mr. Ben Rivera stated he is a candidate for State Representative for District 47. He has been an insurance agent in Abbeville for over 10 years. He has volunteered in Vermilion Parish for over 9 years. He meets many people through his profession and volunteer work. Those people all tell him the same thing that they need help. The most common concerns are jobs, agriculture and the high cost of insurance. People in Vermilion Parish want oil and gas jobs to return. A few years ago, our parish government and our chamber of commerce voted not to sue the oil and gas industry because we know of the damage that would bring to our community. It has. The projected oil and gas revenue for the Vermilion Parish School Board is just over \$850,000. A few years ago, it was over \$2,000,000. In 2008 it was over \$8,500,000 in revenue. Think about what that does on the strain for our school system. It shouldn't be that way in Louisiana and Vermilion Parish when we have plenty of oil. We need to bring legacy lawsuits to an end and lower our severance tax to compete with the severance tax of our neighboring states. The losses have also impacted our agriculture industry. Every year the farmers have to fight to keep tax exemptions on large equipment and to keep state funding for research stations. We need to protect research stations and look for things in cross over industries. A perfect example is a crawfish peeling plant where they take the peelings of the crawfish, dry it and crush it. It is used as a protein supplement. That process should have been here. We have to look for opportunities like that to remain an agricultural community. The State of Louisiana has the second highest auto rate in the country. With an insight of what causes our high rates, we can look for a solution. He is passionate about our way of life and he cares about the people here and doing what is best for all of us. That is what made him run for State Representative. Over 70% of the population of District 47 lives in Vermilion Parish. We need a voice from Vermilion Parish to stand up for our needs and concerns. He will work to bring back jobs in the oil industry, support agriculture and reduce the burden that auto insurance places on all of us. He asked for everyone's vote on February 23, 2019. He will have a campaign kickoff Thursday at 5:00 PM at the Riverfront Reception Hall.

Mr. Tommy Picard announced that the National Biddy Basketball Tournament will be held on March 29, 2019. This is a fundraiser for QSA. The games will be held at Henry Elementary and LeBlanc Elementary. We are working on having them in Erath. We are not doing the games in Abbeville because of the need for adjustable goals. You have to have adjustable goals. We went to all the hotels here and got prices. The hotels really need to work with us. We will send out a pamphlet listing all the hotels and restaurants in Abbeville. We will sell program ads too. We will have opening ceremonies at Erath High School. We will play Round Robin Saturday and Sunday and they will start bracket play Sunday afternoon. They will play until Wednesday. We have 12 USSSA tournaments lined up at the QSA park. The City of Abbeville will benefit since Erath has no hotels and restaurants. We will have two additional biddy tournaments. One will be February 8, 2019 and the other tournament will be held sometimes in March. We had 300 kids in the basketball program. Councilwoman White asked Mr. Picard to be sure to include the Abbeville RV Park in his lodging literature.

Councilman Brady Broussard, Jr. gave a recreation report. QSA had 300 kids enrolled in basketball. Many were from Abbeville. We had 150 people playing in the Vermilion Basketball Academy. That makes basketball a hugely popular sport for the kids year-round. There were 400 kids enrolled in baseball, 200 enrolled in soccer and 76 enrolled in football. In 2019 we will add things for individual families and children, not team sports. We will have disc golf, pickleball,

shuffleboard, horseshoes and corn hole, free of charge. That adds to those things we already have like, ping pong, tennis, skateboard, aerobics and the Boys and Girls Club. The Club provides services for every child at only \$20 per year. There is a wealth of recreation available. It is active and growing. That is a credit to the recreation board and our Park Director, Denise Mire. She works with park accessibility. It is a lot of pieces of the puzzle that makes this a success. Our recreation board members are Anita Levy, Reverend Steve Delino, Chuck Sonnier, Lawrence Williams and James LeBlanc. If you have any questions please reach out to our Park Director, Denise Mire. She can be reached at 337-898-4242. Councilman Plaisance complimented Councilman Broussard and the Recreation Board for these new programs. This is more family oriented and he is proud to see what they are doing out there.

Chief Bill Spearman requested a special meeting of the committee to discuss pay raises for the Abbeville Police Department. One of the problems we have in Abbeville is our salaries. We need to figure out some way to raise revenue to get a raise to keep up with the current cost of living and other agencies around us. He has new ideas that he is putting in place to obtain and retain new officers. That will only go so far. Councilman Plaisance stated we see a growing concern over officers being shot. Chief Spearman has prepared a booklet of data for the Council to look at. It has facts, figures and costs to hire people. Councilman Touchet stated that he understands that there is a need for the Police Department but there is also a need for others. There is no money in the budget when it is all said and done so there will have to be other revenue sources that we will have to pursue. Mayor Piazza stated there is a lot of discussion that has taken place and it needs to be brought to all the Council members. He would like the committee meeting within a week. Chief Jude Mire stated he appreciates being included in this and he can present information about why the Fire Department needs a pay raise too. Mayor Piazza stated he is not in favor of dishing out raises just to dish out raises to be a nice guy. He completely understands the need and necessities in the Police Department and we need to have the same understanding from the Fire Department. This is why he has prepared a list that he will ask the Fire Chief to present it to the Council. This will be questions from other cities. He listed several cities in the area with similar populations. We want to know what their total budgets are and what their overtime budgets are. He wants to know how much they are spending on their Police Departments and Fire Departments over there; not just salaries. That makes a big difference. He wants to know the number of Fire Stations and what their ratings are and how many full-time firefighters, part-time firefighters and volunteer firefighters they have in these municipalities. It is not about if the Fire Department is doing a great job, we have a great Fire Department and we have a great Police Department. He thinks we have one of the best Fire Department's in the State. He would love to be able to say the same thing about the Police Department. Giving raises is not just about having a great department. Its about how we compare to other municipalities. We can't be the highest paid department in the State because we cannot afford it. Abbeville is a poor town and we have to operate that way. If he will go to the taxpayers for a tax or an increase in utilities and he will stick his neck out, then you guys will have to present some evidence to this Council that says why you need this raise. Councilman Touchet stated we also need to gather that type of information for our Municipal employees. We better hope that we get more people in the Electrical Department when hurricane season comes because we will not have lights if we don't have people that can get up there and fix these problems. We have issues also. Councilman Touchet asked if any municipal employees were included in the four meetings that were held previously. Councilman Plaisance stated not yet, but they will be in the future. Councilman Broussard stated Abbeville is a City that serves as an example of doing more with less. You look as recently as 2012 with 183 employees, we have saved the taxpayer money because we are running with 159 employees now. We are saving money through attrition, providing the same services and we all have to do more with less. But does an employee need a decent wage? Absolutely, positively. That is why we want the data necessary to make the right decision to take

that case to whoever we need to take that case to. That's a hot button Chief Spearman and thank you for bringing it to us. We can't make the best decision without the best information. Councilman Touchet stated one factor that has not been mentioned is that we have the best health insurance for our employees than any other municipality. You have people who are coming back after they left because of how the other place looked but the health insurance benefit cannot be compared to us. That benefit costs the City money so we have to take that into consideration also. When you pay people more then retirement, taxes and other things go up. Mayor Piazza stated that is why we have to look at the total picture. We will look at all this in fine detail. Mr. Jim Ruiz stated the starting officer in Abbeville makes \$9.69 per hour. This is \$20,160 per year plus the \$500 per month State supplemental pay makes their annual salary \$26,160. The USA average is \$64,490. The Louisiana average is \$43,665. The Vermilion Parish Sheriff is paying \$2.00 per hour more than Abbeville. Running overtime is dangerous. Police fatigue is related to accidents and conduct. They need adequate restful sleep. Without sleep, this can lead to counterproductive behavior. You need to balance the money against the possibly of incidents happening. Please take that under consideration.

-06 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. to approve the annual Main Street contract. The motion carried unanimously.

-07 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Ms. Roslyn White to table the discussion regarding the naming of Charles Campbell Street since Councilwoman Broussard was not here tonight. The motion carried unanimously.

Touchet/B. Broussard
Ordinance 19-01

An ordinance to amend Section 5-83 (C) to require Council approval for a 45-day extension to be granted on a demolition permit.

The motion was put to a vote and the vote thereon was as follows:

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

Therefore, the ordinance was adopted.

Touchet/B. Broussard
Ordinance 19-02

An ordinance to amend the Code of Ordinances to add Division 3 – Part-Time Police, Section 2-51 through 2-56.

The motion was put to a vote and the vote thereon was as follows:

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

Therefore, the ordinance was adopted.

-08 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to amend the application for the use of the Event Center to remove the one million dollar insurance requirement and instead list the City as an additional insured. The motion carried unanimously.

Plaisance/White
Resolution R19-01

A resolution to authorize the Mayor to execute a cooperative endeavor agreement/intergovernmental agreement with Vision of Hope and others to utilize property to be used as a parking lot for McKinley Scott Park.

The motion carried unanimously.

-09 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to ratify the payment, in the amount of \$6,500.00, to the Maurice Volunteer Fire Department for a used LUCAS device. The motion carried unanimously.

-10 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Ms. Roslyn White to approve the surplus list from the Abbeville Fire Department. The list included several air packs, air bottles, air pack masks and radio antennas. The motion carried unanimously.

-11 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. to approve the payment of application number 5 in the amount of \$24,697.22 payable to Minvielle Lumber Company and the invoice to Louisiana Testing & Inspection, Inc in the amount of \$802.50. Both of these are for the Airport Terminal Building Renovation Project. The motion carried unanimously.

-12 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to approve pay application number 9 in the amount of \$46,157.50 payable to Minvielle Lumber Company for the Hebert Fire Substation No. 2 project. The motion carried unanimously.

-13 introduced by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. and seconded by Ms. Roslyn White to approve a Class A beer and Class R liquor license for ADT Louisiana, LLC dba Pizza Hut located at 720 Veterans Memorial Drive. The motion carried unanimously.

Gene Sellers, Engineer

- *The UV System Upgrade project at the Wastewater Plant is nearing completion. The work should be completed by the end of this month. The manufacturer will test the system on February 4, 2019.*
- *The electrical transfer project at the Franks Alley Sewer Pump Station/Stormwater Pump is about 60% complete.*

Jude Mire, Fire Chief

- *He received a packet for our property insurance rating. He and Jack Harrington are working on it. We have until March 1, 2019 to return it. They will come and rate the City for our fire insurance rating hopefully in April, May or June.*

Councilman Brady Broussard, Jr.

- *Prayers for Councilwoman Broussard's sibling who is ill this evening.*
- *Go Saints.*

Councilman Francis Touchet, Jr.

- *He thinks that Stewart Head needs to be a part of the next committee meeting we will have regarding pay raises.*

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

ATTEST:

APPROVE:

Kathleen S. Faulk
Secretary-Treasurer

Mark Piazza
Mayor