

The Mayor and Council of the City of Abbeville met in regular session on July 16, 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, 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  
Clay Menard, Public Works Director  
Tracette Hillman, Municipal Civil Service Director  
Richard Primeaux, Engineer  
Gene Sellers, Engineer  
Corey LeBlanc, Architect  
Reverend Wayne Landry, Former Abbeville City Councilman  
Reverend Osborne Taylor  
Debbie Garrot, Vermilion Film and Visitors Commission  
Joseph Vallee', Municipal Civil Service Board member  
Gerald Gaspard, American Legion & Chamber of Commerce  
Thomas Vallot, Security Patrol Agency  
Calvin Broussard

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

-01 introduced by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to deviate from the agenda to move Mr. Thomas Vallot to discuss security from Presentations item #2 to item #1 under New Business and to add item #9 under New Business, as requested by Councilwoman Broussard, to allow the discussion of a fallen tree on Schlessinger Street to determine if the City is responsible. The motion carried unanimously.

*Mr. Gregory Ellison with U. S. Representative Clay Higgin's office was scheduled tonight but he was unable to attend because he was called away on an emergency.*

*Mrs. Debbie Garrot discussed the upcoming movies for the rest of 2019. She was requesting permission to show a Halloween movie on October 26, 2019 and a Christmas movie on December 7, 2019, after the Christmas parade. The movies have not yet been chosen.*

-02 introduced by Ms. Roslyn White and seconded by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. to approve the showing of a Halloween movie in the Square on October 26, 2019. The motion carried unanimously.

-03 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Ms. Roslyn White to approve the showing of a Christmas movie after the Christmas parade on December 7, 2019. The motion carried unanimously.

-04 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Ms. Terry Broussard to ratify bills paid in the month of June 2019. The motion carried unanimously.

*Mayor Piazza asked if there were any comments on and agenda item prior to action. There were none.*

*Mr. Thomas Vallot discussed his proposal for security for the City. Mr. Vallot stated he knows how to prevent criminal activity because of his 35 years of experience in the field. His proposal would provide security for every residential area in the City by being visible. He would put someone from 10:00 PM to 6:00 AM every night in four different zones in Abbeville. The Police Chief doesn't have the personnel to keep someone in one position every night. He would have four security officers and four cars positioned in the City by dividing them up by zones 1, 2, 3 and 4. The cost would be five cents per hour. Councilman Plaisance asked Mr. Vallot how the City would pay for it. Mr. Vallot stated he would suggest to put a \$12 per month fee on everybody's utility bill. Councilwoman Broussard was not in favor of putting this fee on the utility bills. Most people live on a fixed income and she will not put that burden on her constituents. Councilman Touchet asked what the monthly cost is to the City. Mr. Vallot stated it would not cost the City anything because it will cost everyone else \$12 per month. Councilman Touchet stated we would need a fixed number in order to put it in our budget. Mayor Piazza asked what the monthly fee will be. He wanted the total number for the month that the City would have to pay Mr. Vallot. Mr. Vallot stated it would depend on the number of utility customers. Mayor Piazza stated we have about 5,000 customers. Mr. Vallot stated then it would be \$12 per month times 5,000 customers. That would be \$60,000 per month. Councilman Plaisance stated he has a problem with this because the utility customer would see the \$12 per month on their bill and it would say security. His constituents would then ask him why they have to pay this if we already have a police department. Mr. Vallot stated the police department can't do what he does. Councilman Broussard stated the City of Abbeville was created by the State legislature. We are a special charter municipality. That means we don't make up our rules. They were made up for us in the creation of our City. In those instructions to us to create this City, we have an elected Chief of Police. He is elected by the general public for law enforcement across our City. We give him over \$3,000,000 per year to do that job. He asked Mr. Vallot if he had talked to the Chief of Police about getting on his staff to implement that. Mr. Vallot said no and he doesn't need to be on the Chief's staff. Councilman Broussard stated that Mr. Vallot is asking us to create another law enforcement department. You are asking to be an independent contractor for law enforcement. The citizens of Abbeville have already approved more than \$3,000,000 per year for Chief Bill Spearman to run his department and fight crime. To ask the citizens to disregard that and add more to that would be difficult. We recently had a vote by the public to give employees of the Police department and other departments a little bit more money. He is not sure this is legal and Ike would have to weigh in on that. Utility proceeds are dedicated in our budget for specific reasons and one of those reasons is not law enforcement. Councilman Touchet also questioned the legality of this. He cannot vote on this unless it would be legal. Councilman Plaisance stated we just asked the public to support a tax and they will not want to pay more for this. Councilman Touchet stated we would have to strip the Police Chief of the \$60,000 per month from his budget next year. That would be \$720,000 less per year. He is reluctant to do this for this service. He thinks the constituents would say that the Chief has enough money and he needs to deal with what he has. He doesn't want to ask the public for more money. Mr. Vallot asked if there would be any overflow from the new tax that could be used for his service. Councilwoman White stated*

*the new tax is dedicated funds for salaries only. Councilman Touchet added that sales tax dollars fluctuate so if we do have any overflows, we have to be able to save that in case there are months that we don't collect as much as we anticipated. We have to sustain the raises. Councilwoman White stated that she has had conversations with Mr. Vallot about video surveillance in the parks. That idea appeals to her and she is in favor of any extra security we can have. But, this idea of having four people every day per year for \$720,000 per year, does not compute to her. How many officers could we hire for that same amount of money? Councilman Plaisance stated he cannot go to the people and ask for more money when we just passed a tax. He will not vote for that. Councilwoman Broussard stated we do have crime out there so maybe we can come up with something for the future. Your services are needed and would be appreciated. We cannot go to our constituents and we also would need to get a legal opinion. Mr. Vallot stated he wants to help the community so please look at doing something. Money is always found when you really want to do something. Mayor Piazza stated that our charter calls for an elected chief of police who is in total control of law enforcement in Abbeville. That includes parks, cameras and everything else. If the Chief wants to hire you, Mr. Vallot, for security at the parks then that is up to the Police Chief not the Mayor and City Council. The Chief has to have that money in his budget to do so. If he wants to hire you, Mr. Vallot, he can hire you right now. He does not need our permission. He has to find the money in his budget to do that. If he requests that we increase his budget then we would look at that at the end of the year. Right now, in this budget and in next year's budget and the following year, there is no extra money to give the Chief, outside of the more than \$3,000,000 we already give him. We just passed a tax to do that because we didn't have a surplus. If we would have had a surplus, we would have given them a raise out of the budget. Mayor asked if the Council wanted to make a motion at this time. No one wanted to. Mayor Piazza stated the Council does not want to make a motion at this time and they have all made their positions clear.*

*Mr. Gene Sellers stated DOTD recently received bids for the Sidewalk Streetscape project. We first made an application to DOTD in 2011 for this project. They received bids for the project last week. When we first made the application, we made the application for \$500,000. As we started developing the project, we saw that the cost we had anticipated to do from Main Street all the way to Highway 82 would be about \$500,000. The State agreed to pay 95% of that which is \$475,000 and the City was obligated to pay \$25,000 or 5%. As we worked to final design, we noticed that the cost of the project would be more than \$500,000. So many years had passed until we got to final design. So, we decided to divide it into a base bid and an alternate bid. With the base bid, we could go so far with the \$500,000 and we would not have to accept the alternate bid. We have been going back and forth with the State regarding the revisions they required us to make. We asked the State to bid the base bid plus the alternate. When they received the bids, the low bidder on the base bid was one person and the low bidder plus the alternate was another person. The rule by DOTD is that if it is not the same low bidder for the base plus the alternate then you cannot award the alternate bid. The low bidder was Glenn Lege Construction LLC. The bid was \$550,943.06. It is \$50,943.06 above the grant amount. The base bid includes Main Street all the way to Pere Megret, around the Park and along Jefferson Street when you turn the corner going to Concorde, just past the bank and about 20 feet into the old Midway Restaurant. That is where the base bids terminates. The alternate bid starts at that point and comes to Highway 82 at the Courthouse. DOTD has authorized us to award the base bid. This would mean that the City would have to pay \$25,000 plus the \$50,943.06 that is overbudget. However, when the decision was made to remove the brick pavers, the Mayor asked them (the State) if we went over the budget, if the State would allow us to ask for the shortfall. Yesterday, Mr. Sellers took a chance and went to the State and asked them if they would participate in the additional costs from the bid. That afternoon, we got the answer that they decided to participate in the additional costs. They cannot do 95% - 5%, since they have to follow the new rules which are 80%-20%. The State*

*agreed to pay \$40,000 of the shortfall and the City would pay \$10,943.06. The City's total cost would be \$35,943.06. Councilman Broussard stated the base bid will provide 16 handicap accessibility points throughout the Downtown area.*

-05 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to award the base bid for the Downtown Abbeville Streetscaping Project to the low bidder, Glenn Lege Construction, LLC in the amount of \$550,943.06. The motion carried unanimously.

-06 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to appropriate the additional \$10,943.06, in addition to the \$25,000 that is already appropriated, as the City's share for the Downtown Abbeville Streetscaping Project. The motion carried unanimously.

-07 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to authorize the Mayor to sign the grant amendment for the Downtown Abbeville Streetscaping Project. The motion carried unanimously.

-08 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to approve the final payment in the amount of \$2,500.00 payable to Minvielle Lumber Company for the Hebert Fire Substation number 2 project. The motion carried unanimously.

-09 introduced by Ms. Terry Broussard and seconded by Ms. Roslyn White to approve a special event permit to hold the Funday for the Kids 2019 at the first pavilion a A. A. Comeaux Park on July 28, 2019 from 11:00 AM to 6:00 PM, waive the permit fee and reduce the insurance requirement from \$2,000,000 to 1,000,000. The motion carried unanimously.

-10 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. to approve a variance from the mobile home ordinance to move a 2018 mobile home to 1918 Society Street. The motion carried unanimously.

-11 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to approve pay application #11 in the amount of \$94,671.59 payable to Minvielle Lumber Company and the invoice in the amount of \$2,693.25 payable to The Sellers Group, both for the Airport Terminal Renovation Project. The motion carried unanimously.

*Councilwoman Roslyn White announced the official City of Abbeville Facebook page. We used the Facebook page last week in the state of emergency to get information out. She secured some very nice photography from someone she knows at no charge. In one week, we were able to reach 48,000 people and we had 3,085 views of the page. We already have an audience of 1,600 following us. We made over 50 posts during the Hurricane. We were able to reach 47,800 people. We had 17,000 engagements. In the last two days, we received 1,500 new likes. If you go on the page you can see we used it in the last week regarding situations with power outages and flooding to keep the citizens informed. To find the page, open your Facebook app and at the top search, City of Abbeville, Louisiana-City Hall. We will use it for festivals and anything that is happening as well in case of emergencies. We want to let people know what is going on and keep them informed. Councilman Broussard stated this is an outstanding job by Councilwoman White. It introduced the City during a critical time. Mayor Piazza commended Councilwoman White on the Facebook page. Mr. Joseph Vallee' stated that he evacuated to Beaumont, Texas and was able to see what was happening in Abbeville with the page. Councilwoman White stated she made a handle, @ILOVEABBEVILLE. She will eventually create an Instagram page. It is her intention to continue updating the page. If you have anything that is happening in the City limits, please let her know.*

**Touchet/Plaisance**  
**Resolution R19-18**

*A resolution to ratify the Mayor's execution of a mutual assistance intergovernmental agreement with the City of Kaplan and the Town of Erath during the emergency situation created by Hurricane Barry.*

*The motion carried unanimously.*

*Mr. Calvin Broussard discussed a tree that fell at 614 Schlessinger during Hurricane Barry. He is trying to figure out if the tree belongs to him or the City. He recalls when his Father had a liquor store there, he ordered a sign and he hung it in the tree. Elray Schexnaider was the City's engineer at the time and he came and told Mr. Broussard's Father to move the sign because the tree was City property. Mr. Broussard's Father then talked to Judge Marcus (Broussard) and Judge Marcus told him if the City engineer told you to take it down, then you need to take it down. Since the storm did the damage, Mr. Menard and all the City workers came saying that the tree is not City property. We want to know whose property it is. Mayor Piazza asked Mr. Broussard if he is wanting the City to pay the damages. Mr. Broussard stated he wants someone to remove the tree and pay for the damages. Mayor Piazza stated that is two different issues. Mayor Piazza asked if Mr. Broussard had filed a claim with the City's risk management department for the damages. Mr. Broussard stated Mr. Ike came out today and he spoke with Clay Menard yesterday. He (Clay) stated to Mr. Broussard that he cannot tell him anything because he needs to go to the Courthouse and get some records to see who owns the property and where is the City's right-of-way. Mayor Piazza explained to Mr. Broussard that the proper procedure would be to file a claim. You can come to City Hall tomorrow to file the claim. Councilwoman Broussard stated that she would like Mayor and Council Members to request a second opinion on that situation. She would like someone else to handle that. Councilman Touchet asked Clay if he went out there and put the measurement. Clay stated that he met with Mr. Broussard yesterday and he told him that he had no idea where the City right-of-way was on the property. He didn't have any maps or documentation. He had to come to City Hall to see if we had that. If we didn't have that readily available, he would like to look into that, further. This morning he was able to get to City Hall to view the maps. He never, one time ever, mentioned to them that this tree didn't belong to the City or that the tree belonged to them. The determination has not yet been made. Mr. Funderburk stated that we have been threatened with litigation and he has the beginnings of an opinion that he has not yet completed. This is a work in progress as far as this is concerned. Any report that needs to be given to you, needs to be given in executive session. Just to let Mr. Broussard know, we are not ignoring the situation and we are addressing the situation, even as we speak. If you file a claim, we will process it as quickly and expeditiously as we possibly can so a determination can be made as to whether or not there is any responsibility on the part of the City.*

*-12 introduced by Ms. Roslyn White and seconded by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. to award the contract for demolition of the structure at 411 E. Vermilion Street to the only bidder, Vermilion Shell, in the amount of \$12,795.00. The motion carried unanimously.*

*Mayor Piazza stated this property has asbestos so the cost is higher. In the future we can try and get separate bids for the asbestos abatement and the demolition.*

Clay Menard, Public Works Director

- *We are still assessing the City properties after Hurricane Barry. All buildings are ok. City Hall did have a little damage inside. The entrance sign on Highway 167 did sustain some damage. We gave out more sandbags than we ever did before.*

Mayor Mark Piazza

- *We should look into pricing a sandbagging machine. All crews filled sandbags for two days straight. They couldn't keep up. We had to ask the residents to bag their own sandbags. The crews were exhausted. He asked Clay to get some prices on a sandbagging machine and maybe we can use the next LGAP grant to purchase it. We gave out nearly 3,000 sandbags.*
- *All the City crews did an exceptional job. We have never had a hurricane where we were as prepared or where they worked as hard as they did for this event and the way they maintained the system. Stewart and those guys worked tirelessly all through the night. They were up for hours and days. We did have numerous outages City wide but no one stayed without power for longer than a couple of hours. We only had big outages and they were put back on right away. We have never had a hurricane where we had electricity the whole time. Larry and Timmy's crew helped with the sandbagging. Timmy had a generator on standby in case he needed it for the sewer lift stations. He was prepared for that. He complimented the Police Jury for being out there first thing yesterday morning with their grab trucks. After Richard finished sweeping the streets, you can't even tell we had a hurricane. It is so clean and they did such a great job in a 24-hour period. Clay agreed that all departments did work hard and they worked very well together.*
- *He complimented the Fire and Police Department. The Fire Department were on standby and we were lucky that we didn't need them. Chief Spearman worked double shifts the entire event and they did a great job.*
- *He complimented the citizens of Abbeville. He did not get one complaint about the curfew and when he rode the streets, there was no one around. People actually paid attention to the curfew.*
- *Called Kevin Sagrera to commend him. He did a great job as parish president. He has the entire parish to be concerned about. In a state of emergency, the parish president is the number one head guy and he has to make all the difficult decisions concerning a shelter, evacuations and providing for all those things. It is a tremendous amount of responsibility and he did a great job.*

Bill Spearman, Police Chief

- *Presented a letter from a police officer who has resigned. Mayor Piazza asked Chief to present this during personnel in the future because it was too late to deviate from the agenda.*

Jude Mire, Fire Chief

- *Before the storm hit, we had the insurance adjuster check the roof at the Fire Station on Maude Avenue. They did find some hail damage so he is waiting to see how much they will pay.*
- *One of the antennas on top of the water tower did fall for the hurricane. Someone is coming with a drone tomorrow to survey it. He will get with the insurance after that.*

Councilwoman Roslyn White

- *Commended all the City employees on a job well done during the hurricane. It was a very interesting experience to see from the inside how everything is done. It was very impressive.*

Councilman Francis Touchet, Jr.

- *He has been on the City Council for 17 years and every of these storms, you look back to remember what happened then and to what is actually happening now. Its about a leader. Its about a person who thinks beforehand. Our Mayor thought about all this before we did. He secured the linemen to get here before the storm in case they were needed. He put them in hotels. He knew we could not take a chance with our electrical system. That is what it takes when you run an organization. That is why he is adamant that we have a Mayor that has to worry about the entire City and every department. We need to think about that when you have a good leader that you compliment them and take care of them. He is so impressed with Mayor Piazza. Even he was out there taking care of things. Another person who really needs to be commended is Shirley Bertrand. She did an outstanding job with organization and calls coming in. There was a human being that answered the phone. That was impressive. Also, when your lights were restored, the customers also received a call back to make sure the lights were back on. With this situation, our City is in great shape. He commended the Mayor for his leadership, for Shirley for what she does and for our two Councilwomen, Terry and Roslyn, who helped answer the phones at City Hall. They did what they had to do. He is happy that he is a Councilman in the City of Abbeville because he knows he is around good people who really care about the City. Mayor Piazza added that these superintendents, especially in the electrical department, run around crazy and it is dangerous work. We have to have one coordinator that is working with that person so you know where the crew is and where they need to be sent. You can't have phone calls coming in from every direction. Shirley does such an excellent job of coordinating the crews.*

Councilman Brady Broussard, Jr.

- *The icing on the cake of the Streetscape Project for Downtown is that the State of Louisiana will overlay the entire downtown historical area at no charge to the City at the completion of this project. You will see not just handicap accessibility but beautification downtown.*
- *He wanted to say the same things that have already been said about the City employees. This starts at the top and goes all the way to the bottom and it doesn't exclude anyone. Our electrical department is amazing. In Acadiana, there are electrical companies who pulled their employees out of the field when our employees were in the buckets and turning people's electricity back on. Other electrical companies' employees were waiting until the next day when the winds would be less. You cannot say enough about a City employee like that, a superintendent like that, a public works director like, Shirley Bertrand, the Mayor and two Councilwomen who were answering the phones here. It is an amazing story and a blueprint for hurricane recovery. He could not be prouder to work with them.*
- *The citizens need to know how these employees are every day. Before the hurricane arrived, Mr. Larry Moore, Jr. fixed a high-pressure water line on third street. Under great pressure, he fixed that live water line without cutting the water off to a major supermarket in our town. He recognized Larry who was in attendance at the meeting. We have these types of emergencies downtown. The water was shooting 10 feet into the air. Larry, your crew is outstanding and they did an outstanding job. It is not the first time and it will not*

*be the last. This is service beyond expectation. He certainly appreciates it. Mr. Larry Moore stated he could not do it without his crew. He has a great team.*

- *He recognized Police Juror Ronald Darby who called him today to say that he will pay to overlay two blocks of South Lyman in his budget for the citizens of Abbeville. When you see him, please thank him for that.*

Councilwoman Terry Broussard

- *Everything has been said and she would like to commend the policemen, firemen, the Mayor, and all Council Members.*
- *She thanked everyone who attended the meeting tonight to see what takes place in your government. You get it here right and you don't hear the negative hearsay on the street.*
- *She had to cancel last Saturday's school supply drive. She will have one every Saturday until August 8<sup>th</sup> at Super One Foods. Last year we were able to distribute to each school in Abbeville and she hopes to do that again.*
- *Barry had her scared but she was around people who supported her and encouraged her. She was with a very humorous Councilwoman and we were serious about what we were doing but every now and then we had to laugh about something. I never thought I would spend the night at City Hall, but she did.*

Councilman Francis Plaisance

- *He worked with the State of Louisiana for 25 years. They would assign us to different areas. He has never seen a team working as good together as this team here in Abbeville. From the Mayor, City Council Members and all the staff of the City. This is a gigantic family here. They work extremely well as a team. He wanted to thank everyone for that.*
- *Cake & Ice Cream Festival is July 27<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM at A. A. Comeaux Park.*

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

ATTEST:

APPROVE:

Kathleen S. Faulk  
Secretary-Treasurer

Mark Piazza  
Mayor