

The Mayor and Council of the City of Abbeville met in regular session on October 6, 2020 at 5:30 P.M., at the A. A. Comeaux Recreation Center located at 300 A. A. Comeaux Drive, Suite 200, Abbeville, Louisiana 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
Jude Mire, Fire Chief
Kelly Mire, Assistance Fire Chief
Jason Hebert, Police Lieutenant
Clay Menard, Public Works Director
Mike Mouton, Airport Manager
Richard Primeaux, Engineer
Gene Sellers, Engineer
Brac Salyer, Louisiana Dept. of Wildlife & Fisheries
Ena Darby, owner of Royal Fit Nutrition
Betty Perkins

Mayor Piazza asked Councilman Francis Plaisance 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 Ms. Terry Broussard and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to deviate from the agenda to add a resolution to declare a state of emergency due to Hurricane Delta as new business item number 6. The motion carried unanimously.

-02 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. to approve the probational appointment of Nicholas Witt and Travis Lange to the positions of Firefighter with the Abbeville Fire Department pending successful completion of all post-hire assessments. The motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Ena Darby introduced her business Royal Fit Nutrition. It is a home-based business and is located at 1400 Charity Street. They provide health meal replacement shakes and energizing teas in a great atmosphere. Their goal is that every person who comes in their door will feel like a king or queen and leave feeling like royalty. They have been in business for two months and it has been amazing. We appreciate your support and we want you to come and visit. Please stop by and invite your family to come by. It is exciting to provide something for Abbeville that helps people to get healthier.

-03 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Ms. Terry Broussard to approve the minutes from the regular City Council meeting held on August 18, 2020, the Committee meeting held on August 18, 2020 and the emergency Special Meeting held on August 23, 2020. The motion carried unanimously.

-04 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to ratify bills paid in the month of September 2020. The motion carried unanimously.

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

-05 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to approve a special event permit, without any fees, for the Junior Auxiliary to hold their Here Comes Santa 5K and Fun Run to be held at Magdalen Square on December 12, 2020 from 7:30 AM to 11:00 AM. The motion carried unanimously.

Mayor Piazza began a discussion to determine if trick or treating would be allowed this year. He distributed a flyer from Lafayette in order for the Council to see what our surrounding parishes are doing. The Police Jury has already made a determination to allow trick or treating in the parish for Halloween. It will be up to the Council if we allow it in Abbeville city limits. Mr. Funderburk stated if we choose to not allow trick or treating, it would become an enforcement problem. It is acceptable to allow it as long as no one is creating mischief and they continue to behave within the COVID parameters. We don't want to get in the business of regulating Halloween.

-06 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to allow trick or treating within the City limits of Abbeville from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM as long as all COVID protocols are followed. The motion carried unanimously.

Councilman Touchet stated that he has been receiving complaints from local businesses about food trucks from out of town parking and selling their food in the City. This is hurting our local businesses. He believes the ordinance needs to be cleaned up and would like to place a moratorium on any new permits until that is completed. Mr. Funderburk stated we only allow 5 permits per year and we only have 2 issued. Those two are from Abbeville. If someone comes in and doesn't have a permit then the ordinance needs to be followed. The trucks can only park on private property with the permission of the owner. Permits are issued each year on a calendar year basis. They have to be renewed annually. It is a question of enforcement. They have to have the permit on board or they need to be told to move out.

-07 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. to place a moratorium on issuing any more food truck permits until the ordinance can be modified. The motion carried unanimously.

-08 introduced by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. and seconded by Mr. Francis Plaisance to approve the flood damage reduction and drainage improvements projects, FP&C Project No. 50-M01-16-01, and to authorize advertisement for bids upon concurrence of Facility Planning and Control. The motion carried unanimously.

Councilman Plaisance began a discussion regarding an IGA with the Police Jury and the Drainage Board for the purpose of constructing fishing piers at LaFitte Drive-In Park. He recognized Mr. Brac Salyer with Wildlife & Fisheries. They have completely stocked the pond. We have applied for a fishing pier grant and a walking trail grant. We have received \$50,000 for the walking trail. Clay came up with a tremendous idea that would involve very little money but we would need some help from the Police Jury and the Drainage Board. Both of these entities have already adopted the IGA. This is what this resolution is about. The Drainage Board would like for this to happen as soon as possible because when they bring in the excavator, they will be able to clean

Youngs Coulee. There is a shed that is in it. Mayor Piazza asked if the Drainage Board would be able to get the shed out before Friday. Clay Menard stated they said they would get it out as soon as they get the cylinder on the excavator but they did not say when that would be. Mayor Piazza stated their equipment is the only one who can reach it. Councilman Plaisance stated that is the same issue with the fishing pier. Mayor Piazza stated this will not cost anything. They will use their equipment and we already have the material stockpiled at the City Barn. We have all the concrete, bricks and dirt as needed. Mr. Brac Salyer stated the piers will allow handicapped access. Right now, there is no way an individual in a wheelchair can access the pond as it is now. This will also give us more fishing access for future events. We only have the west side now for fishing. We would have the ability to have people spaced out more. This would also allow the parents to watch their children from the picnic tables. Right now, they have to walk all the way around the dog park. That is a significant distance. The piers would be on the north side. The pier would approve the aesthetics of the park. We already have something really nice going with the park. There is nothing like this in Vermilion Parish. It is similar to Girard Park in Lafayette where kids can go out and fish. His goal is to make the best fishing opportunity for kids to come catch a fish, take it home and cook it. It is nice that we have these governmental agencies coming together to be able to cut costs for this. The pond is very well stocked. We had a great event planned but the event had to be cancelled because of COVID. When we can have that event, we will stock the pond with an additional 1,000 of catfish to make sure the kids catch a fish. Mayor Piazza stated that we have the material on hand at the City Barn. It is so much on hand that we can't even get rid of the stuff. This is an opportunity to get rid of something that we had a company picking up at one time. We don't have any more room to put anything else now. What is being constructed at this time is a base of what will potentially be a fishing pier at some time. It is the construction of the base. Councilman Plaisance also stated tonight that they (the Drainage Board) will level off the drop while they are there. Mayor Piazza stated we have so much rip rap material at the Street Department. The ideal place for the public to fish is near the oak trees where we have already put the park benches. The bank is steep and the water is shallow so we have to get the public out further in order to fish. If we would try to do pylons and a wooded pier, it would be extremely costly. You would have to work with a lot of heavy machinery. Councilman Plaisance and Clay came up with the idea to use this rip rap that we already have as a base to walk out into the pond. We will not have to use pylons. Councilwoman White thinks this is a great solution to a problem by using some materials we already have on hand. It is also great to have all three governmental entities agreeing to work together. However, she does not think that this is an appropriate use of taxpayer funds especially right now. Every one of those agencies are supported by tax dollars. This project is not in our budget. This is not her priority and she does not think it should be the City's priority. We have tennis courts that need to be redone and we have a lot of other parks. She has no problem with us coming up with a plan and presenting the plan and putting it in the budget for 2021 once we know how much this will cost us. She is not in favor of approving this and starting construction without even seeing it on a map of the property to know where it will go. She has asked for that repeatedly to see it laid out on the map so we all will know where it will be so we know what we are approving prior to construction. It has never been directly answered or documented. She wants a dollar amount not that "this will cost not so much". She wants to know what that dollar amount will be. You are talking about 66 cubic yards of dirt and 190 cubic yards of rip rap. How many truck loads is that and how much labor and equipment is that? She wants to know that before she spends her tax dollars on that. We need to know what this park is costing us. The 2020 grass mowing is almost \$30,000. This information needs to be public. This project needs to be well planned and documented. The park is owned by the public and they all need to have a say so in how it is developed. For that reason, she is not in favor of this. Councilman Plaisance stated that Councilwoman White has never asked to see the book that details the plan for that park. The detailed plan is in this book. It also documents all the expenses that have been incurred at this

park. All the photographs are in this book. He has been working on this project for 7 years. It is a wonderful project for this parish. You are right, taxpayers are paying for this. People have shown interest in this park and are anxious to see it opened. To begin with, he has been putting his own discretionary funds to continue working on this park. He went out to Raising Canes five times to get them to sponsor this park. Councilwoman Broussard has helped to sell the benches that are in the park. That did not come from the City's money. Yes, we are maintaining the grass. It is the most beautiful park in Vermilion Parish and it should be opened to the public. We have applied for grants for a walking trail and a fishing pier. Mr. Gene called this afternoon to assist us with these piers. I don't agree with what Councilwoman White is saying because he is still waiting for her to contact him to look at this book and to see what has been done at the park, step by step. Wildlife and Fisheries have spent their own money to clean out all the fish and then to stock it. All we have paid for is \$600 to stock bass in the pond. This park is a gold mine. We could charge admission and have events in this park. It is his passion. This is the first step we are taking to allow people to fish there someday. You can fish at other City parks in other cities but we cannot fish here. Any time Councilwoman White wants to know anything about this park she can have the courtesy of asking him and he will explain it step by step. Councilman Touchet stated the biggest thing is that Councilwoman White is asking at what point will free go away. Lafayette has a lot of sales tax dollars and a recreational tax. What are the next steps? The public is looking at this. Does the next step cost? Where will the money come from? Is it something that we have to be prepared for? Councilman Plaisance has done an excellent job of pursuing donations but at some point, in time, those will run out. We will have to have a plan then. Do we have a plan for after the base? What is the cost of that? We will have to have personnel at some point. Is that within our budget? Do we need to budget those? He brings up these points to clarify what he has heard tonight. We have to have this discussion because it is the taxpayers' dollars we are dealing with and we have to be able to answer to them. Councilwoman Broussard stated that she applauds Councilman Plaisance's effort. Anything she can do to help with the park she will. She does appreciate his work. Moving forward we should designate one park in the budget each year. She has a park in her district that is neglected. Mayor Piazza stated there is not anything wrong with that. Councilwoman Broussard you have 4 parks in your district and Councilwoman White has 1. Councilwoman Broussard stated she understands that but there is only one in her district that has been highly neglected. Councilwoman White stated she agrees with rotating each year from park to park. We should prioritize the park that has the need. Mayor Piazza stated that it sounds good but you have so much upkeep that is required for Comeaux Park. It will take up the majority of your budget. You have tennis courts, baseball fields, football fields, skateboard parks and you will have a splash pad. There is not enough money to go around. Councilwoman Broussard stated how is she supposed to feel when her park is looking dilapidated. Mayor Piazza stated that McKinley Scott Park has more playground equipment than any other park in the City. You have a Park Committee that Councilman Plaisance is the chairman of and a Recreation Committee that Councilman Broussard is the chairman. We still have not yet established what we are doing with our recreation department when it comes to recreation and the employee that we moved to City Hall. We don't even have a parks and recreation director in this building anymore. That is something that he is waiting for some guidance from the Council as to what exactly they want to do here. He has some Council people saying they want to go this way and others wanting to go this other way. He can't make that decision for you. You need to get the Parks and Recreation Board involved, and the committees involved to work together to see what we want to see for the future for our parks and where the money will come from. We can establish a plan. He agrees with Councilwoman White. He doesn't think the public wants to see us dumping a lot of money in LaFitte Park however he does think that Councilman Plaisance has done an excellent job of raising the money himself for that park. He hasn't really come to the Council for a lot of money. We have a walking trail that we are looking at that may cost us a lot of money because all we got from the State was \$50,000. We have fishing piers that we are

talking about. We have boat ramps for kayaks. There are a lot of visions that we have of this park and others that we have been talking about with no source of revenue to finance. He recommends that the committee heads in those two committees start having some meetings and let's get together to have some vision of the future here regarding what we want our recreation department to look like and what we want our parks to look like. We have been piecemealing things. Right now, we are spending a lot of money on a splash pad and tennis courts that are in Comeaux Park. None of the other parks are getting money. We need to get our committees involved and start having this discussion at committee other than a City Council meeting. That is the reason for the frustration because we haven't had enough discussion on exactly what we want to do, where we will be and how we will plan for the future. Councilman Broussard stated the Mayor has done a great job driving each park for each and every one of us and he has told us time and time again that he does not see a single human being in some of these things we call a park. If we have too many parks for our budget why are we keeping it as a park when there is nobody in it? This guy has reported to us that is what he finds. It is ridiculous for us to keep recreational equipment and fencing and gates and a padlock. Let's turn that into green space and not a park. Then we will have more money for the parks that are being used. We have 13 parks. Some of our parks have been abandoned by the public. They choose not to use it anymore. Let's not keep spending money on places that are not being used. He hears from the community about the great finances of the drainage boards and if the City of Abbeville can take some of that to be used then he does not see that as a bad thing because it does not commit us to further development. Having the drainage board use their manpower, fuel and equipment and we are using some of our excess material, it doesn't guarantee the next level of developing. This is a phase. He does not want those fish to die from boredom. One day, it has been the wish of the Mayor, to have children fish there. We are all looking for solutions for our young people who are walking around with guns. Let's put a fishing pole in their hand. We talk about solutions so let's do something about it. If this is something the Mayor believes is valuable and we have at least one Council member who has devoted so much time to do it, having the drainage board to do something in that direction does not commit us to spend one dollar beyond that. He doesn't know why we would turn our back on that. Councilman Touchet stated it does put a lot of political pressure when we begin something then stop. He will agree with the IGA tonight because it is free. He will get people who will ask when it is coming and he will have to say that we don't have a plan. He is tired of not having that answer. Councilman Plaisance stated he has been telling people for nearly 7 years that the park is under development. It took time to get through different phases like the benches, the dog park and other things. It is a gradual process and the public understands that. Councilman Touchet asked if Councilman Plaisance would agree to not committing to any other development until we have a plan for development and for revenue. Councilman Plaisance said he would agree to that. Councilwoman White stated she needs the plan of where the pier will be.

Plaisance/Touchet
Resolution R20-18

A resolution authorizing the Mayor to execute an intergovernmental agreement with the Vermilion Parish Police Jury and the Gravity Drainage District No. 2 for the purpose of constructing fishing piers at LaFitte Drive-in Park. The motion was put to a vote and the vote thereupon was as follows:

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

Therefore, the motion carried.

Plaisance/Touchet
Resolution R20-19

A resolution declaring a state of emergency for Hurricane Delta.

The motion carried unanimously.

Mayor Piazza spoke to Greg Labbe the regional coordinator for APPA and we are on the list to get electrical crews for the hurricane. Stewart has also reached out to a contractor too. We now have the new sandbagging machine. They love the new machine. They have 1,000 bags ready to go. They have ordered more sand and bags. The Police Chief has everything lined up and the Fire Chief will do the same. We already had a lot of this from Hurricane Laura. Councilman Plaisance will get the hotel rooms and Councilman Touchet will line up the food. The state of emergency allows us to make expenditures as we need.

-09 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Ms. Terry Broussard to allow the Fire Chief to utilize \$15,000 from the Maintenance and Operation Fire Department Fund to pay for new radios. The motion carried unanimously.

Jason Hebert, Police Lieutenant

- *We just put up four more cameras. That makes a total of 13. We hope to put up a few more.*

Councilwoman Roslyn White

- *Mrs. Betty Perkins is here tonight about debris pickup in the City. She was told by Ed Ziegler that we should see a significant difference in the City by Sunday. She turned in the list of her streets. All but four still had debris on them. They did not do a good job of removing the debris. The contractor has 90 days to remove all the debris from the parish. She has made several phone calls. Mrs. Perkins was concerned about the debris being piled up along the huge drainage ditch near her home from Motty Park. She has flooded before and is concerned about flooding again if the trees go to into the ditch. Mayor Piazza asked Clay to check on this and see if Marlon or Richard can do something about it.*
- *The overlay of Nugier, North East and Hawthorne were supposed to happen this week but she believes that will be postponed because of the hurricane. She would also like to see Nugier and North East be made into a one-way street after the overlay. She will work with the Police Chief on that. The streets are so narrow and you cannot pass two cars on it.*
- *She asked Clay to be sure to please remove all hazards as much as you can.*

Councilman Brady Broussard, Jr.

- *Spoke to the corporate office and the field office and there is a reasonable explanation. They started at one end of the parish and they are doing a clean sweep to move to the other end of the parish. They have not missed Abbeville. A truck can be sent to a hot spot but that does not help the clean sweep. A Police Jury grab truck will be following after the contractor passes in case they miss something. Their system is clean sweep and that works. He did not ask for a hot spot truck.*
- *We have a hurricane coming. Put the heaviest pieces of debris on top so you won't have a big mess in your street or your yard.*

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

ATTEST:

APPROVE:

Kathleen S. Faulk
Secretary-Treasurer

Mark Piazza
Mayor