

The Mayor and Council of the City of Abbeville met in regular session on October 20, 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
Jason Hebert, Police Lieutenant
Clay Menard, Public Works Director
Shirley Bertrand, Billing Manager
Stewart Head, Electrical Superintendent
Richard Primeaux, Engineer
Gene Sellers, Engineer
Gerald Gaspard, American Legion & Chamber of Commerce

Mayor Piazza led those assembled in prayer then asked for a moment of silence for all those suffering after Hurricane Delta. Mayor Piazza asked Mr. Gerald Gaspard to lead the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

-01 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Mr. Brady Broussard, Jr. to deviate from the agenda to discuss two ordinances dealing with debris that will have to be waived, temporarily, due to some actions by the Police Jury. The motion carried unanimously.

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

Plaisance/White
Resolution R20-20

A resolution requesting financial assistance from the State of Louisiana under the fiscal year 2021-2022 Capital Outlay Program.

The motion carried unanimously.

Councilwoman Broussard stated she had received a telephone call from Mr. Tran. His home was severely damaged by Hurricane Delta and he was requesting connection of utility services, temporarily, to a camper. The home is located at 1821 Franks Alley. Mr. Funderburk stated he and Clay visited the property this morning. They are living in the house with generator power. They have two trees down and one is on the house. They have not yet purchased the camper. The family members at the meeting stated that Mr. Tran is working offshore right now to make money to purchase the camper. They own the lot in back of the residence and have access to that from E. Lafayette Street. They would put the camper at 1814 ½ Lafayette Street. Ike stated that

he and Richard came up with a formula that would allow them to connect utilities, temporarily, to a camper to allow them to complete the emergency repairs to their home. This time period would not exceed 60 days and any repairs would have to be in accordance to FEMA guidelines. They would have to come in a get a permit once they get the camper then the 60 days would start.

-02 introduced by Ms. Terry Broussard and seconded by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. to grant a variance to allow utility connection for 60 days to a camper for Mr. Tran at 1814 ½ E. Lafayette Street in order for him to repair his home damaged by Hurricane Delta. The motion carried unanimously.

-03 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Ms. Terry Broussard to authorize advertisement for bids for the rehabilitation of the T-Hangar Taxilanes and Apron Areas project subject to LA DOTD funding availability and their review and approval of the plans and specifications. The motion carried unanimously.

Mayor Piazza stated that we have put the runway project on hold until spring because the runway is utilized a lot right now. It will not be utilized as much in the spring. We will have to close the runway to complete the project. The contractor has agreed and FAA has also agreed. We hope both of these projects run concurrently.

-04 introduced by Mr. Francis Plaisance and seconded by Ms. Roslyn White to waive the demolition permit fee for Hurricane Delta related demolitions. The motion carried unanimously.

Mayor Piazza stated this would encourage the citizens to clear up the damage from Hurricane Delta and would hopefully move the process along. The demolition permit would still be required however there would be no fee charged.

Mr. Funderburk stated that he attended the Vermilion Parish Police Jury meeting last night. At that meeting they accepted a recommendation from their public works committee that exempted tree removal contractors from having to remove the trees that they are cutting. This would allow the contractors to stack storm related tree debris on the right of way so it could be picked up by the debris pick up contractor hired by the Police Jury. We have a couple of ordinances that need to be waived during this time period. This is the provisions of 15.5-11 and 15.5-13 in so far as they relate to licensed contractors' removal of tree storm debris. This would be for 90 days.

-05 introduced by Mr. Francis Touchet, Jr. and seconded by Ms. Terry Broussard to waive ordinance Sections 15.5-11 and 15.5-13 for 90 days as discussed above. The motion carried unanimously.

Mayor Piazza stated he feels like Hurricane Delta was not quite as bad as Hurricane Lili but it was just as bad as Hurricane Rita as far as damage and wind. This is one of the third worst storms we have had in 20 years. There are a lot of damages out there. Pre-storm we were able to put the new transformer at the By-Pass electrical substation. This transformer was damaged by Hurricane Laura. We are still waiting for the spare transformer for Gertrude Substation. All of our transformers are working properly at this time but we do not have a spare. It has been ordered and will on the way to us within 6 to 8 weeks. Yesterday morning two voltage regulators blew up at Pete Noel electrical substation. We were able to use our new sandbagging machine for Hurricane Delta. Everyone is very happy with the number of bags it was able to produce in one day. It was very beneficial. Once the storm is in the gulf, it becomes difficult to secure electrical crews to assist us. It has been really hard this year because the predictions have been so far off. When you call up a crew to come, the clock starts when they leave their house. Stewart

does a great job making contact with these crews. We are very fortunate that the American Public Power Association regional coordinator for mutual aid response is Greg Labbe who works at LUS and is a member of LEPA. He is right there in Lafayette. This association is for public power (municipalities) organizations only. He coordinates these crews coming from Texas, Alabama, Georgia, Florida and others who come and help all the municipalities. Mayor Piazza stated that he is also constantly on the phone with Kevin Bihm of LEPA to reserve and request crews. We always try to secure a couple of crews and possibly secure a contract crew like Volt. We had crews from Volt and Georgia Power lined up and they were on their way. He wanted to let everyone know how this comes about for crews to come and help us. Once the emergency declaration was declared Vermilion OEP started having meetings about the storm. It is at those meetings that a lot of those decisions are made about evacuations. These decisions are made by the Parish President and the OEP Director with the assistance of all the municipalities in the parish. We meet regularly once the storm enters the gulf and all the way throughout the storm. All of that goes on behind the scenes. It is a very valuable resource of information that Councilwoman White has developed with our website and our Facebook page. A lot of people use social media. Starting at 4:00 PM on Friday, October 9, 2020, we began manning the telephones 24-7 at City Hall. Shirley and her crew at City Hall did a fantastic job. That is so important that when people call City Hall, they don't get a recording. They talk to a person. It is an invaluable resource to have this at City Hall. Shirley is always there and she has been doing it even for regular power outages. The storm lasted a lot longer than he thought. It drug on and on into the night. The hurricane made landfall around 6:00 PM but it was well after midnight before we were able to get out. He was able to go out in the wee morning hours to assess the damage. He saw police everywhere. They did this for both storms. He asked Jason to pass along to the Chief and other personnel how much we appreciate them being out there. Stewart Head is the first guy out there. He goes out to see if we have power at our substations. We were fortunate for Hurricane Delta because we did have power at Pete Noel Substation. For Hurricane Laura we did not have power at Pete Noel for an entire day. Having power at Pete Noel expedites the restoration process. That is where the power comes into the City. If Pete Noel is out of power then the entire City is without power. Stewart and the crew deserve a pat on the back for being here and doing a great job. We really appreciate that. On Saturday morning, Mayor Piazza received a call from Kevin Bihm with LEPA. He wanted to know how bad it was. Mayor Piazza told him that it was bad. Kevin asked if we needed some more crews. Mayor Piazza stated that we needed more crews. We were lucky then because there was a crew from Austin, Texas that were on their way to North Louisiana but they had already been turned around because North Louisiana did not need them. That crew showed up here late Saturday. By Saturday afternoon we had 5 of the 7 substations energized and activated. We had about 40% of the City up by then. He and Stewart have an understanding of the process that the Mayor wants. During an emergency the Mayor makes the ultimate decisions. His process is that if Pete Noel is activated, the very next substation to be energized is the By-Pass substation. We do this because all the businesses are on the By-Pass and we want to make sure that our citizens have ice, water, gas and food and everything else they need because they are home with no lights. From there, whatever is hooked up, to the By-Pass substation will be able to come on. The next substation we concentrate on is Gertrude because the hospital is on Gertrude substation and they have to have secure power. By law, the hospital has to have two secure sources of power. If the City is not one, then they have to have two generators. From there we work our way south. We like to get Robies on since it is one of our big major stores and we like to get Walmart on. By the end of the day Saturday you had everything on except the Riviana and Louisiana substation. Those feed the 4160 on the other side of the river. He knows these that are restored first are mostly businesses and the residences are the ones calling us up and screaming but without the businesses we have no water, no food and no gas. We were lucky to get those additional crews in. Lining up food and hotel rooms for these crews is no easy task. Councilman Touchet and Councilman Plaisance have been doing this for years. They do a fantastic job. Also, on Saturday

the debris contractors had to be mobilized. If you tried to drive down some of our streets, there were power lines and poles down and trees down. Our emergency vehicles and our utility crews cannot pass down these streets until they are cleared. Richard Primeaux mobilized the contractors and they worked through Monday clearing debris from our streets and right of ways. The debris was piled up at Comeaux Park. They did a great job. The Fire Department assisted us with this too along with our Street crew. He asked Clay to describe this process. Clay stated Shirley would call in the locations. We would handle the small items with our equipment and the manpower of the Fire Department. It worked very well. If something was too big, we would call Richard Primeaux for the contractors to take care of that. Mayor Piazza stated the City workers did a great job. Mayor Piazza stated we had about 90% of the power restored within 48 hours. We beat every co-op in South Louisiana like SLEMCO. We have a lot of debris. The Jury is out there picking it up. We appreciate what the Jury is doing. Councilwoman White stated the Jury has agreed to go on private property as long as the owner signs a hold harmless agreement. They will pull the large debris to the road so the grab truck can pick it up.

Richard Primeaux, Engineer

- *Appreciated compliment Mayor Piazza made regarding the debris contractors.*

Ike Funderburk, City Attorney

- *He has filed claims for the Hurricane with our insurance company. He and Clay met for 4 hours with 4 adjusters yesterday. They spent two days going through our locations and documenting all the damages that we have. They were very thorough. We will see what their report is. We will continue to send invoices as need be.*

Mayor Mark Piazza

- *He distributed a report provided by LEPA for the month of September 2020. This shows our electricity rate in comparison to others. We are cheaper than CLECO and Entergy. We are very competitive with SLEMCO. That speaks very highly. These are multimillion-dollar co-ops and we are just one municipality. Our rates are in line with them if not better.*
- *He has been getting a lot of complaints because of our ordinance and our process. Our permit department has two people that are fairly new to the department. They are doing an excellent job. They are following our ordinances to the letter of the law. In Section 8-65 it says: Additionally, the City will undertake the cutting, destruction of noxious weeds and grass or other unhealthful or noxious growths upon property on a monthly basis without notice required by Section 8.6. If the property owner liable has been notified pursuant to 8.6 at any time during the immediate previous six months and has failed to do the work themselves. What this says is that, after we send them two letters, whether they have cut their grass or not, because we have sent them two letters, they are never going to get another letter. We will automatically send someone to cut their grass and then send them a bill. The permit department is doing exactly what they are supposed to be doing. If the Council is ok with this then he is ok with it. If the Council feels like maybe we shouldn't do it unless they receive a letter then maybe we need to revisit this ordinance at another time. Think about it. He wanted to let the Council know about the complaints he has been receiving regarding this issue.*

Councilman Brady Broussard, Jr.

- *He wishes the public was here to see what Abbeville has done in response to a major hurricane. It was a remarkable response and they should be happy with their City employees who did this response that made this Council and Mayor so proud. We are still in a state of emergency and recovery and we will be in recovery for some time. All employees need to be complimented. This municipality did the impossible.*

- *He has had some residences call him with concern about skateboarders going into the private rice mill. He asked Jason Hebert to look into that and he asked Mayor Piazza to speak with the owner of the rice mill to request that he secure the building. We do have a skateboard park.*
- *He has a compliment for a police officer who found children swimming in a private swimming pool of a resident. The officer could not have been better with his response to those children and trying to educate them. Please carry that compliment to the Police Chief.*
- *We have all heard complaints about gunfire and we have the criminals walking around at night. It is the Police Chief that can implement a curfew.*

Councilman Francis Touchet, Jr.

- *He has been getting complaints from Walmart, the hospital and from Mula's Pharmacy about Cox. They are not responsive to these businesses. We have lost enough businesses in this City. We need to hold Cox accountable. They are allowed to operate in our City with a franchise agreement. He asked Ike and the Mayor to reach out to Cox and invite them to a City Council meeting to discuss this issue. Mayor Piazza added that when we lose internet at City Hall, we lose our phone service so he asked that another option be researched. Councilwoman White added that we also need battery backup for the phones too.*

Councilman Francis Plaisance

- *It was a great team effort and the Mayor sat here and complimented everyone for what they did. He would like to compliment the Mayor. He is our captain of the ship and he has plenty of experience.*

Councilwoman Roslyn White

- *FEMA will open a drive-thru disaster recovery center at the LSU Ag Center located at 105 W. Port Street. It will be open from 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM Monday through Saturday. It will be open beginning October 21, 2020 until November 11, 2020.*
- *Complimented the Mayor for calling the additional crews. The Mayor has a part on almost every post on our Facebook page. She appreciates his guidance on that.*
- *This is the first major storm with a lot of damage that she has been through since she is on the Council. Working with the City team is amazing. She had to work with Richard Primeaux and the contractors to clear out some road debris. The debris contractors did a really good job and she learned a lot that day.*
- *There is a big tree still protruding into the road at North St. Charles and Chevis. She asked Clay to see about that.*
- *Whittington Veterinarian Clinic is having an Anything Over Rice Cookoff this Saturday, October 24, 2020 from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. The proceeds go to Animal Aid.*

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

ATTEST:

APPROVE:

Kathleen S. Faulk
Secretary-Treasurer

Mark Piazza
Mayor