

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS**  
**ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH COUNCIL**  
**TUESDAY, JANUARY 24<sup>TH</sup>, 2012**  
**CHAIR LUCIEN GAUFF**  
**VICE CHAIR JACLYN HOTARD**

The Council of the Parish of St. John the Baptist, State of Louisiana, met in Regular Session in the Joel McTopy Chambers, LaPlace, Louisiana on Tuesday, January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2012, at 6:30 PM.

**CALL TO ORDER:**

**PRESENT AT ROLL CALL:** Lucien Gauff, III, Councilman-at-Large, Div. A, Jaclyn Hotard, Councilwoman-at-Large, Div. B, Art Smith, Councilman District I, Ranney Wilson, Councilman District II, Lennix Madere, Councilman District III, Marvin Perrilloux, Councilman District IV, Michael Wright, Councilman District V, Larry Snyder, Councilman District VI, Cheryl Millet, Councilwoman District VII

**ABSENT:** None

Councilman Snyder led the Prayer. The Boy Scouts of America, Troop 312, led the Pledge.

Legal Counsels Billy O'Regan & Jeff Perilloux were present.

**Natalie Robottom - Presentation - St. Charles Catholic High School State 3A Champions**

Natalie Robottom, Parish President, presented the St. Charles Catholic High School 3A Champions with a plaque for their accomplishments. Most of the High School Seniors from the championship team were present. Coach Frank Monica graciously accepted the plaque on behalf of himself, the school and all of the team players and thanked everyone for all of the support that the school has been given.

**Natalie Robottom - Presentation - Coach Frank Monica - Achievement of 200 Victories**

Natalie Robottom presented Coach Frank Monica with a plaque for his achievements of 200 straight victories. He is only one of 44 coaches in the state that hold that title. He commented how he didn't do this on his own. He thanked his wife, family and all the team players who are there all the time giving their all to the school and the football program.

**Natalie Robottom - Presentation - West St. John High School 1A Runner-Up**

Natalie Robottom presented the Coach from West St. John High School with a plaque for the West St. John High School 1A Runner-up football team. He commented that his players couldn't be there because most of them had a basketball game to attend. He commented how proud he was of the accomplishments the kids on the team had made and how they are all really good, smart individuals. He also commented to watch for him

cause they were coming back for the win.

**Natalie Robottom - Confirmation of Department Directors**

Administration request that this item be carried over to the next agenda.

**Consent Agenda**

**Items:** Approval of Minutes January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2012, Regular Meeting; Civil Service Board - Tulane Appointment - Lisa Tregre-Wilder; Councilman Wright - Appointment of Damon K. Davis to the Recreation Board; Councilman Madere - Appointment of Moya D. Smith to the Animal Advisory Control Board; Councilman Smith - Appointment of Ray Edwards to the Animal Advisory Control Board; Councilman Snyder - Appointment of Janice M. Mitchell to the Economic Development Board; Councilman Perrilloux - Re-appointment of Desiree Berger to the Animal Advisory Control Board; Councilman Perrilloux - Appointment of Rodney Nicholas to the Economic Development Committee; Councilman Perrilloux - Appointment of Burnell Charles, Jr. to the Planning & Zoning Commission; Councilman Perrilloux - Appointment of Derrick Jones to the Recreation Board; Councilman Gauff - Appointment of Carol Flannigan to the Animal Advisory Control Board; Councilman Perrilloux added - Appointment of Jaclyn Hotard & Cheryl Millet as members and Lucien Gauff & Lennix "Tweet" Madere as alternates to serve on the River Region Caucus

Mert Miller, 501 Rienzi Dr., stated, "I saw the re-appointment of one Animal Advisory Control board member and we have some new people in there and I was associated with Animal Control a couple of years ago and I would hope that they do a better job then the previous board members did who never attended meetings, didn't volunteer and that kind of stuff. So I know it is kind of a patronage kind of thing but the animals in our parish deserve the board to make decisions for the shelter. It is their responsibility and I would hope that they have a little more say in what goes on at the animal shelter. So I wish them luck. I hope they do a good job and put in the time and patience that is required for all of our animal friends. Thank you."

Councilman Snyder asked, "I would like to direct this question to Mr. Miller. You say you live on Rienzi? That is in District VI. Are you on the Animal Control Board now?"

Mert Miller stated, "No sir I am not."

Councilman Snyder asked, "Do you have any intentions on getting on there?"

Mert Miller stated, "I would but I think District VI is filled already."

Councilman Snyder stated, "No it is not. We will talk."

Councilman Madere stated, "I think all of the other council members and myself, what I did when I took office was I went and tried to evaluate each and everyone on the advisory boards that I have to appoint and I still have two of the advisory people to speak to. When I spoke to the

one that was on the animal advisory board he did tell me and he was honest that he didn't make very many meetings because of his job change and the lady that I appointed, Mrs. Smith, when I talked to her the one thing I spoke with her about was constantly going to the meetings. I have every confidence that she is going to do that. Also as the councilman representing District III whoever I appoint to any board I think it is my job to make sure that they do attend these meetings and if I find out that they are not attending these meetings then I can make a change. I think maybe in the past we just appointed and didn't check but I will check to make sure that these people do attend and do what they are supposed to do on the advisory board. Thank you."

**MOTION:** Councilman Perrilloux moved and Councilman Smith seconded the motion to approve the amended consent agenda items consisting of Approval of Minutes January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2012, Regular Meeting; Civil Service Board - Tulane Appointment - Lisa Tregre-Wilder; Councilman Wright - Appointment of Damon K. Davis to the Recreation Board; Councilman Madere - Appointment of Moya D. Smith to the Animal Advisory Control Board; Councilman Smith - Appointment of Ray Edwards to the Animal Advisory Control Board; Councilman Snyder - Appointment of Janice M. Mitchell to the Economic Development Board; Councilman Perrilloux - Re-appointment of Desiree Berger to the Animal Advisory Control Board; Councilman Perrilloux - Appointment of Rodney Nicholas to the Economic Development Committee; Councilman Perrilloux - Appointment of Burnell Charles, Jr. to the Planning & Zoning Commission; Councilman Perrilloux - Appointment of Derrick Jones to the Recreation Board; Councilman Gauff - Appointment of Carol Flannigan to the Animal Advisory Control Board. Councilman Perrilloux added - Appointment of Jaclyn Hotard & Cheryl Millet as members and Lucien Gauff & Lennix "Tweet" Madere as alternates to serve on the River Region Caucus. The motion passed unanimously.

**PUBLIC HEARING ON ORDINANCES:**

**11-59** (Tabled 01-09-12) (Public Hearing Held) An ordinance to re-zone the Wilbert B. Chauff Lot per Cob 12, Folio 317 from R-1 to C-1 at 2916 Highway 44, Garyville, St. John the Baptist Parish, Louisiana (N. Robottom)

**MOTION:** Councilman Snyder moved and Councilman Smith seconded the motion to remove Ordinance 11-59 from the table. The motion passed unanimously.

Angelic Sutherland, Director of Planning & Zoning, stated, "This request was approved previously by the Planning and Zoning Commission based on the St. John Parish Code of Ordinances Section 113:79 it is the re-zoning guidelines and criteria. The re-zoning of this tract would extend the C-1 land use from the adjacent property to the east to this property. Administration recommends approval although parking appears to be an area of concern the parking issues will be addressed at the permitting phase rather than at this re-zoning phase."

**MOTION:** Councilman Smith moved and Councilwoman Millet seconded the motion to approve Ordinance 11-59. The motion passed unanimously.

**11-60** (Tabled 01-09-12) (Public Hearing Held) An ordinance amending St. John the Baptist Code of Ordinances, Section 113-120(a) to read as

follows: Zoning Board of Adjustment change in members (N. Robottom)

**MOTION:** Councilwoman Hotard moved and Councilman Smith seconded the motion to remove ordinance 11-60 from the table. The motion passed unanimously.

**MOTION:** Councilwoman Hotard moved and Councilman Wright seconded the motion to approve Ordinance 11-60. The motion passed unanimously.

**12-01** (Public Hearing Held) An ordinance creating the Department of Communications of the Parish of St. John the Baptist, providing for the appointment of a Director who shall be responsible for developing, coordinating, and implementing communication strategies between the general public, businesses, civic associations, the media, and the Parish as well as promoting citizen involvement in parish government, including providing for opportunities for citizens to learn about Parish government programs, services, and operations. (N. Robottom)

Natalie Robottom stated, "This ordinance was introduced by administration for the creation of the Department of Communications. In accordance with the home rule charter the council can create a department with 2/3's vote of the council. After having someone in the position of Public Information Officer since I think 2004 we have grown in terms of the need and importance of that position. I think it is extremely important that we have someone whose job is specifically to reach out to our residents and businesses in the event of emergencies as well as to communicate with organizations and civic groups. I think it is very important that also within the communications department that we establish protocol for responding to tracking and recording responses and questions from our residents and sharing those responses with the council. This is something we have not fully completed. It is a vision that I have and have discussed with you and some of the council members. We do think that it is important to close the loop when we receive calls we get them throughout the parish but there is not a centralized tracking mechanism and there is not always a response. We do think that they should work very closely with the council office because many times you get calls as well. We may be working on the same things and if we can keep the lines of communication open we will all be aware of what is happening. Again this is the request, I think I have had some discussions with you before, it is a new department however the roles and responsibilities of the Public Information Officer as well as the receptionist, as well as someone to deal with constituent services is a goal of mine to have that as a department."

Mert Millet, 501 Rienzi, stated, "I agree with Mrs. Robottom for communications. I would like to say that we have a lot of elderly people in the parish who tune into Channel 15. I find that the information on that channel is somewhat dated and doesn't get updated as to when the parish will be closed for certain holidays and I have seen the same thing for road closure I guess for a couple of months now. So if this will help to update channel 15 on a weekly basis I think that would help, it would help me and I am 54 years old. I'm not 80 and I'm not shut in my house. A lot of people watch channel 15 to find out what is going on with the parish government. If this is going to help I am all for it. Thank you."

Councilwoman Millet stated, "I have an issue with a new directorship. I think it is a great thing that we have a public information officer. I think the officer does a great job for us but putting another directorship here is making our administration top heavy enough already. A position is great but making it a director I just can't support that right now at this time because her salary right now would be a different amount."

Natalie Robottom stated, "Actually it is going to be the same."

Councilwoman Millet stated, "This time next year it may be different. So if we create a directorship we are opening the door for something else versus just a position as public information and that is my reasoning for that."

Natalie Robottom stated, "For clarification purposes there was no change in salary. The budgeted amount is intended to remain what it is as I think we forwarded some of that information to you. It doesn't add any additional staff because that person is serving currently as a special assistant so there is not an increase in number, there is not an increase in salary based on request from some of you all to eliminate the positions of special assistants we decided to look at creating job descriptions and in this case it was a department that was an intention when it was appointed in 2004 was to make it a department and we are following through with that. So there is no increase in anything. It is the same thing. It is an addition of a department and of course all the department heads are not guaranteed any salary that is based on what they bring to the table, the qualifications and experience and their work history. So that is how I determine the salary that I recommended for our directors. If you look at the numbers that you received some of them were decreased in comparison to what some of the previous directors received because it was based on their experience, education and qualifications at the time of the hiring."

Councilman Madere stated, "I support Mrs. Robottom because anything that can improve communication between the general public and the government is important as far as information or when you have any type of storm situation or any type of emergency in the parish. Any type of communication that we can use that would improve this I think is well worth whatever it is that we are going to spend. Any job that you have regardless to what it is eventually down the road there will be an increase in salary. The issue here is not money. The issue here is developing the way that we can communicate better with the public and so that the public can better understand what is going on with the government and any emergency situation that may come up. Just to give an example, on 29<sup>th</sup> Street they repaired a fire hydrant and the people weren't made aware of it and they were surprised to wake up and find their water off. So anything that can improve communication even something as minor as this is important. So I think it is well worth the effort to communicate with the public."

Councilman Smith stated, "I guess I am the one that was really pushing to get rid of some of the special assistants."

Natalie Robottom stated, "Not just you, there were some others."

Councilman Smith stated, "A special assistant is a temporary position

and we have come to appreciate the job that the communication person has done. I am glad that she is putting a title to it and if we have to create that department then so be it. It makes it legal. It gets everything out of the way and we can get rid of all of the special assistant titles. She does a good job and we need to create that department because communication is the key to everything that we do up here. So basically I am going to support it."

Councilman Wright stated, "I am not opposed to the idea of creating a department of communications however I think as a council I want to see more information, more ground work for this department. So I would like to make a motion to table this item to give us more time to discuss it."

**MOTION:** Councilman Wright moved and Councilwoman Millet seconded the motion to table Ordinance 12-01. The motion failed with 5 nays (Snyder, Smith, Madere, Perrilloux, Gauff) and 4 yeas (Hotard, Wright, Wilson, Millet).

Councilman Wilson stated, "There was an incident that happened this weekend. There was a murder in Belle Point and for the first time in all of the years that I have served the Department of Public Safety, Paige, the administration and the Sheriff's office did a good job of letting the people know in that area that the man was on the loose, he was a murderer, etc. Paige called me herself personally. I had already gotten the information from another source but in all those years I had never seen that and that was good that we were telling people get inside, close your doors, lock them and I think they did a good job."

Councilwoman Millet stated, "I really don't want to make the wrong impression here. I have no problem with the Public Information Officer. Paige does a fantastic job for us and she is always Johnny on the spot. I received the same call you did Sunday. My concern is creating another directorship, not the position that she has and not the way it is working. I just worry about creating a directorship because it takes six members to remove a director. That hand ties Mrs. Robottom. It hand ties us and as her public information officer she does a great job. Creating the department is what I am against, not the position."

Natalie Robottom stated, "The reason we are actually moving, as I said it was my understanding and that was the intent when the position was allowed in 2008. Additionally there is not a current position for a public information officer. There wasn't one. She was a special assistant as was the previous public information officer. In response to your request to eliminate special assistants that were intended to be temporary, my intention is to continue to have someone serving in the position that she is for longer than six months or a year. It is a permanent position. Based on the charter, what you have instructed us and the information that we have received these are not permanent positions. She cannot stay in it regardless if she is doing a good enough job. So there were options here. It is not a civil service position. This position requires this individual to work weekends, nights and holidays. It should not be a civil service position. There are not many options. We are convening a charter review commission to allow me the opportunity to appoint my own that would not require your approval to remove or approve but at this point there are not many options. I made the decision based on some of your questions on whether

or not special assistants can be temporary or permanent and based on that she cannot remain in that position. She is a permanent hire. She is someone I would like to have continue on because there is a need. You know maybe when the charter was created in 1985 there wasn't twitter, facebook, email, texting and making robocalls. There is now. That is a job. There is a mechanism. We already talked about what we would like to see happen. We heard Mr. Miller say there are a lot of people who watch channel 15. We have already started to develop a survey for all of our residents and what we do right now is we use every avenue to communicate. We text, we facebook, we email, we call you, we use channel 15, we use the newspaper but we need to find out how do our residents best receive information and in order to do that we have to put out a survey. So we want to make sure that we are using the avenues that they generally use and that again requires more than what we have right now. We have a receptionist in our office who reports to the finance department. That makes no sense. It is not unusual to have a communication department. We have looked at other parishes. That is what they are called. They are called communication departments. There were only very few departments when the charter was written. Times change we created an economic development director, we created a recreation director, we created a health and human services director and a purchasing director this is not uncommon. There is not a mechanism. You are either civil service or you are a director and given those choices I am opting for a director and that is my request."

Councilman Gauff stated, "I think communication is the heartbeat of our parish. The more information we can get out to our constituents the better off we are. I am in favor of this communication department. I think we should provide our parish president with the opportunity to have the tools that she thinks she needs to move our parish forward. We are going to put our trust in what you believe you need to get the parish where we need it to be."

Councilman Wright asked, "Besides a director, right now the only plans are to have a director of communications, are there any other employees anticipated on being in this department?"

Natalie Robottom stated, "Right now under her control will be our receptionist which like I said right now reports to the finance director which has absolutely no relationship whatsoever to finance. The other is we would like to create a job description. A civil service job description to deal with constituent services. There is not a mechanism right now in this parish to track calls that come in, who they were sent to and what the response was. I have talked about it with some of the council members. You don't have one either. We get notepads. You get a message on a pad. If we give it to somebody it is gone. There needs to be a system. I have been in other parishes and at the state level there is a tracking system so you will know how many times they called, what the response has been, where the call was directed. Many times there are programs that you can generate a letter to the caller to let them know the status of their complaint. That is a goal. We are not there yet. We have never been but I am not interested in staying where we are. I am interested in moving forward and that is a part of doing business and that is why I am proposing what I am proposing but of course all of those any additional job descriptions requires approval by the civil service board and this council. It goes on the scale and it has to be advertised for. That is a civil service

position. So before I can do any of that it will have to come back to you. Is it needed? Yes it is."

Councilman Snyder stated, "I can see the scope of this position broadening because we are in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and communication is vital. The world has become so small because of communication. I think we need to give our parish president, like he said, every tool she can to keep us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and get ahead of some of the parishes. I see us lagging behind a lot of times in other parishes. They do things first and then we do it. Almost like copycatting, that is illegal in some cases. Paige did a good job over the weekend. I really enjoyed the communication I got from you Paige giving me the heads up on things because I locked my doors after I got the call. So I am in support of it. Thank you."

Councilwoman Hotard stated, "I think what Mrs. Robottom has presented here is basically a house keeping issue. We have had a public information officer for some time now and obviously in some way, shape or form we have supported that because we have all been in communication with the public information officer. So this is just an attempt to realize that this is something that we do want to have permanently by virtue of the way the position is now it is not allowing us to do that. So this is just the step in actually saying okay this is the direction that we want to go in. I was open to allowing people some more time to look at it. I think that is what we have done here in this debate and discussion has allowed us some opportunity to throw some dialogue around and we realize that this is something we obviously need on a permanent basis because we have all been in communication like when Paige called this weekend and even not with Paige just a communication department. We understand the importance of communication. So I do support you on this as we have spoke about it previously and as we have all said communication is the key to a lot of things and we have had someone serving in this capacity prior to tonight. This is just a formality basically that you are asking for us to do."

Councilman Madere stated, "A communication department is vital I think. Once again like you said for the entire community for an example just the fact that we communicated and discussed this whole issue right here it brought us to the point where we understand definitely that we all need to communicate. Not just us as a council but us as a whole community and a parish. This is a prime example of how communication solves problems."

Councilman Wilson stated, "Mrs. Millet made a good point. If this passes we always have the budget that we can go to as far as raises and pay. I would like to see it actually as her doing it without doing a department but if that is what it is going to take then I guess I will do it. We are just going to have to control it with the budget come December."

**MOTION:** Councilwoman Millet moved and Councilman Madere seconded the motion to approve Ordinance 12-01. The motion passed unanimously.

Natalie Robottom stated, "Mr. Smith asked me if I wanted to ask you all to waive policy to do that. Obviously we had a unanimous vote. It is up to you."



Councilwoman Hotard stated, "I don't know. Maybe legal can tell us. An ordinance takes five days. Do we have to wait until after the five days have passed to actually do it?"

Jeff Perrilloux, Legal Counsel, stated, "We can do it now and put it contingent on the five days."

**MOTION:** Councilman Smith moved and Councilman Wright seconded the motion to suspend the rules to name a director. The motion passed unanimously.

Natalie Robottom stated, "I actually had not considered it or talked to anybody about it. We were actually just going to follow through with the process of adopting the ordinance and coming back next week. Obviously throughout the discussion everybody knows what the plan is and I do recommend Paige Braud, who has been in the position for a year and a half thus far, who understands the workings of the parish, she works with all the departments, she works with all the media, she is in a constant learning phase. She has worked with other parishes and we are going to continue to grow and offer what St. John Parish has to offer our residents. So my recommendation is Ms. Paige Braud as Director of the Department of Communications."

**MOTION:** Councilman Wilson moved and Councilman Wright seconded the motion to appoint Ms. Paige Braud as Director of the Department of Communications, contingent on the five day waiting process for all ordinances. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES:**

**12-02** An ordinance providing for the issuance and sale of \_\_\_\_\_ Dollars (\$\_\_\_\_\_) of Water Revenue Refunding Bonds, Series 2012, of the Parish of St. John the Baptist, State of Louisiana; prescribing the form, fixing the details and providing for the rights of the owners thereof; providing for the payment of said bonds and the application of the proceeds thereof to the refunding of certain bonds of said Parish; awarding said bonds to the purchaser thereof; and providing for other matters in connection therewith. (N. Robottom)

**12-03** An ordinance granting approval for the Parish President to purchase immovable property and improvements described as 161 Belle Grove Drive, LaPlace, LA 70068 by Act of Cash Sale from Melissa Guillory, funded by the FEMA Severe Repetitive Loss Program, and to execute the Act of Cash Sale and all other documents necessary for the Parish of St. John the Baptist to acquire title to the property. (N. Robottom)

#### **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

Councilwoman Hotard stated, "This evening the finance committee met and we adopted several items under the finance committee. I would like to ask that the council accept the recommendation of the finance committee."

**MOTION:** Councilwoman Millet moved and Councilman Smith seconded the motion to accept the recommendations of the finance committee. The committee approved to accept the recommendation of legal counsel and reject all the bids for the hydraulic truck excavator, approved to grant administration authorization to execute the Certificate of Substantial Completion with LA Contracting Enterprises for the St. Peter's (Reserve Area) Drainage Improvements Project, approved to grant administration authorization to advertise for bids for inflow and infiltration repairs, approved to grant administration authorization to advertise for bids for telemetry for lift stations, approved to grant administration authorization to award the Office of Fire Services' Medical Insurance Policy (Humana through the Massad Group, approved to grant administration authorization to award the Office of Fire Services' Dental Insurance Policy (through the Massad Group, approved to grant administration authorization to award the Office of Fire Services' Life Insurance Policy (Hartford Group), approved to grant administration authorization to award the Fire Department's Package Insurance Policy (through Riverlands Insurance Services, Inc.), approved to grant administration authorization to award the Civil Defense Commercial Property Insurance Policy (Great Lakes Reinsurance through Riverlands Insurance Services, Inc.), approved to grant administration authorization to execute Change Order No. 4 in the amount of \$2,985.00 with J.A. "Jack" Julius, Jr., Inc of Marrero, LA for the Central Library Addition in LaPlace, approved to grant administration authorization to execute Change Order No. 5 for a 45-day contract extension with J.A. "Jack" Julius, Jr., Inc of Marrero, LA for the Central Library Addition in LaPlace, approved to grant administration authorization to execute the Cooperative Endeavor Agreement with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development for Utility Relocation Assistance Funding under Utility Agreement Number 08396, approved to grant administration authorization to execute a two-year federally-funded contract with the Strategic National Stockpile Cities Readiness Initiative for emergency preparedness in St. John the Baptist Parish, and approved to accept the recommendation from administration to execute the construction change directive for the library (J.A. "Jack" Julius Jr. Inc. \$7,435.75). The motion passed with 7 yeas and 2 abstaining (Hotard & Millet).

**DEPARTMENT/ENGINEER REPORTS:**

**Art Smith/Lucien Gauff - Update on Persimmon/Red Bud project - estimated time of completion**

Natalie Robottom stated, "We do have the engineers present as well. The Persimmon Street Project is nearing completion. The pumps have been installed and will be tested when Entergy turns the power on the week of January 31<sup>st</sup>. Pricing is forthcoming to replace faulty check valves identified at the site. The estimated time for completion of this project is mid-February. If there are any specific questions I know some of you have been out to the site. We are nearing completion but Mr. Brian Nunes with Shread-Kuyrkendall is here if there are any specific questions."

Councilman Gauff asked, "My question deals with time. What kind of time constraints are we on or how much longer?"

Natalie Robottom stated, "Mid February."

Councilman Gauff stated, "Mid February okay. It is really just to let the residents of Persimmon Street and the River Road area know because they have been somewhat inconvenienced having to use Fir Street and Pine and other avenues to get around. So we just wanted an update."

Councilman Smith stated, "Since we have a new communications director maybe she can let the residents know basically what it going on and to keep them up to date on a daily basis as to when they can use the streets and when they can't. That has been their main problem is that they are not informed. They come out some days and it is open and some days it is not. We need to use Channel 15 so that the people can be aware of what is going on. They are not against the project or anything of that nature. It is just knowing what is happening and when they are going to be able to get back to a normal life."

Brian Nunes, Shread-Kuyrkendall, stated, "As far as opening the road the contractor is planning on laying asphalt. He was actually planning on doing some today but the weather stopped him. The pre-cast tops for the valve fit and the pumps are in there so those will be in place when they start putting asphalt there. Really all we are waiting on now is for Entergy to turn on the power so that we can test the pumps. We just didn't want a whole lot of traffic going back and forth before we had everything tested and had all of the bugs worked out but asphalt will start coming down within the next few days. On the 31<sup>st</sup>, Entergy turns on the power, we can test the pumps then we will be ready to open everything up."

Councilman Snyder stated, "In previous meetings Councilman Haston Lewis had some questions about getting water off of Persimmon Street and getting it to the levee over there. I assume that is what you are talking about with the pumps and LP&L that was the issue. So this has been addressed?"

Brian Nunes stated, "Yes sir that has all been addressed and we are all hooked up to the force mains that carry the water over the levee right now. We just need to turn it on."

Councilman Snyder asked, "So how do we get LP&L to turn it on? Can't we just give them a call?"

Brian Nunes stated, "It is all hooked up. They are ready to turn it on right now. They just wanted to make sure that our electrical engineer, I am sorry the electrical contractor had all the wires hooked up on the platform and he is right on schedule with all of that. We just gave Entergy a date of the 31<sup>st</sup>, so that they wouldn't be waiting on us."

Councilman Snyder stated, "Okay thank you sir."

Natalie Robottom stated, "The next item is Red Bud. They are actually in the same area, two streets over and there is an initial project design for Red Bud that we are actually reconsidering however in the interim we have had crews, engineers and surveyors go out to shoot the elevation in the area, which they have done, they have also cleared some of the excess vegetation and they are actually in the process of evaluating the culvert situation under the railroad track. It is our understanding and they are going to proceed with that that the two

culverts on both sides of the rail road are larger than the one under the rail road. Obviously if that is the case then there is going to be a need to replace that with the same size culvert because at this point it is serving as a bottle neck. We just did that on W. 5<sup>th</sup> Street. Traditionally that is something that has been done. Clearly we want to make sure that is not the problem that would be one of the immediate fixes but there are also some options and some previous projects that had considered using the natural flow of the water from Pine towards Persimmon and pumping to the four pumps that are on Persimmon Street but it is premature to say whether or not we will do that. We do need to evaluate the culverts under the tract and of course that will require permitting shall we have to go in and change that through the rail road but since the changes have been made there has been an increased flow in the water. We have not had an extensive rain to test it but clearly if the culverts under the tract are smaller than the ones on either side that is part of the problem."

Councilman Smith asked, "Mrs. Robottom when the engineer does get back with you is it possible for us to hold like a little town hall meeting to up date the residents as to what is happening so that if we had told them about a project but we are going to make some changes..."

Natalie Robottom stated, "I don't think they were ever aware of the other one because it was never finalized. It was conceptual but they are aware because we have been out there working and they are pleased with the work that has been done. Clearly they can see a difference already with just cleaning out the ditches and blowing out the culverts. They know they are looking at elevation and they can see the flow of water already. We are not done. We are not going to stop. We were out there Mr. Gauff and Ms. Hotard during Tropical Storm Lee. It is a problem. It is a problem that we have witnessed first hand but there is a process for determining what the best solution is and we are working through that process. Persimmons Street is going to be fixed by mid-February which will be a huge addition. That was a big problem. That project has been underway it was delayed slightly because of the high water levels on the river that delayed it initially but we have worked through a lot of those problems and we are close to finishing. Again most of those residents are very pleased that we are doing work in that area."

Councilman Smith stated, "Very pleased that we are doing work. I just wanted to communicate to them when we make the changes of just what we are doing."

Councilman Gauff stated, "We do want to keep the residents in that area informed. You are correct. We haven't had a whole lot of rain or rain fall but we did promise that we would keep on course with Red Bud. So until we received some information like this, which is really good news, we are going to keep asking. So thank you."

#### **Larry Snyder - Cambridge drainage concerns**

Councilman Snyder stated, "I know this is a hot topic. As I was reading the information on some of the money that we have spent for drainage in the parish there wasn't a penny spent in Cambridge. All over the parish there was money spent. Not one dime was spent in Cambridge. We have a major flooding problem on the North/East end of Cambridge and until we

put a few dollars there we have people that when it rains or when we have a wrong direction of wind they can't get out of their houses. My request of the administration is that I would like to get a study done on what can we do to help the drainage back there. We need something remedial nothing to the extent of a levee, cleaning ditches, checking valves, small pumps just to help out until we get this big comprehensive plan going in the parish. That is a concern because in reading the flood plan, the master plan for drainage improvement. It states that and this is going into the next agenda item, that if we do some improvements, even remedial improvements, we can help lower flood insurance once the paper work is done. Once you go back to FEMA and you get all the upgrades to them, it may take a year, but if we do nothing then we have people back there that are going to move out, they are going to lose their homes, we are going to get more abandoned property because they can't afford the flood insurance, at one time of the year \$2,500.00 in some cases for flood insurance back there. Now for new construction, here we go again, if we look at the master plan for the drainage improvements, we can't do any more new construction back there in Cambridge because anytime someone wants to do a new building project they need to come with a flood plan that is going to improve the flooding back there now not make it as it is and build something. Until that is done we can't even approve a building permit for people back there according to the strategic plan we have all been privy to. Now I am asking administration, I need some kind of study whereas my people back there can get some relief from rain water and some tidal flooding, realizing that tidal flooding can be prevented with just a check valve. That is all it takes is a check valve in the right place, maybe under the Interstate. Now I know we can handle most rain water but the tidal flooding is what is getting us. I think we need to look at that and I think we need to get an independent study because the people that work here now have their hands full with drainage problems here now. Thank you."

Councilman Gauff stated, "I would like to say that I think there is a need for it. I think we are improving the South side and all the water is going to drain to the North side. So any issues they have we may compound the issues that they have so I am all for whatever we need to do to help the people of Cambridge and the drainage."

Natalie Robottom stated, "That is another one of those areas that we did observe during Tropical Storm Lee. Actually the whole North side, I think that the one that was on TV was River Forest but some of the same things, the flood water back up, it wasn't rain, the Lake backed up came through the catch basins, flooded the streets and people could not get out of their homes. Of course all the way through Foxwood, it went all the way to Reserve and that was a Tropical Storm, it wasn't a hurricane. We did pull some of the records Mr. Snyder and I think previously based on one of the home owners meetings and there wasn't any major projects done in Cambridge, there was a proposal during the bond issue to consider I think flap valves on Interstate 10 but as the project expanded it exceeded the funds available to do that. We have asked the current engineer firm that has studies on what was done or proposed to try and research and see exactly what went into that plan or proposal even though it was pulled off the table. There are some specific roads that there are questions about. We did pull history for work orders they were all isolated though you know calls in where they had to blow out culverts and clean catch basins and clean ditches. It

wasn't a comprehensive plan but based on the meeting there are certain areas that are worse than others and we can clearly start there and they didn't attribute it just to the tidal flooding. They said that they have problems there on a regular basis so we probably have to get some cameras out there and a study just to see how the drainage is or is not working and we talked about this whenever we are doing major projects the only way to fund that through this parish is through bond projects. Fortunately the previous council was wise enough to pass a bond issue, they did select projects that were a priority at that time and we are in the process of completing those. This council will have an opportunity to do the same thing. We have had Mr. Hugh come in and speak to you about the availability of bond money. We did want to try to get through this but what I was hoping that you would do as new council members is kind of feel through your district. Cambridge is a big area. You are right there has not been a project done in that area but there were projects done in that district and those projects are generally selected by you all. So giving you the opportunity to go out and evaluate the needs in your area and if that is the one that you are most concerned with clearly we can start doing some things now to assess and see what might be needed. There may be some interim steps that we can do to help with the problems that aren't due to the water coming from the lake but we are going to ask that all of you do that. Please take the time to find out what are the major projects in your area. The projects that we are doing now were selected by your prior council members and the parish president and you will have an opportunity to do that too. Just know that we don't have money just sitting around to do major projects. It will have to be bonded. At this point we are looking at, if we had to do it today which is probably not going to happen, there is 11 million dollars available but as we wait over the next year that is going to increase. So we will have that amount of money and this council can say you know what these are the projects that we would like to see taken care of but in the interim we can clearly start looking at what is happening at the rear of Cambridge."

Councilman Snyder stated, "That is exactly what I am asking for Mrs. Robottom because I think if we do a little pro-active work and get that study done then we will know what we have to do when the money does become available. Thank you."

Natalie Robottom stated, "There is one currently going on, it is specific to the rear of River Forest but it is all tied to the lake and the water coming in from there. It isn't quite done yet. We are anticipating the report in January but it is all related to the same issue and that is the lake backing up, coming backwards through the catch basins. As we work to clear all the canals and let the water drain out when the wind is blowing that is just how easily it comes in. Now that they are nice and clean there is nothing to inhibit the flow so yes we solved one problem but it also makes it clear for when the wind shifts for that water to flow back in and it does come back through the catch basins. You can see it coming out flooding the streets. It isn't coming from the sky. It is coming out of the system and that is what is happening and that is elevation. So we definitely need to take a look at that area. There is a plan for Foxwood. We are working on something for River Forest."

Councilman Snyder asked, "So you have my request right?"

Natalie Robottom stated, "Yes."

**Larry Snyder - Discussion relative to flood insurance cost**

Councilman Snyder stated, "I think I made my point with the flood insurance."

Natalie Robottom stated, "And we did get a reduction, in 2010 there was a 10% reduction by doing just what you said by following up and maintaining there was a 10% reduction in flood insurance rates but there is a process. It is generally over five years but we can work towards doing some other things to help decrease the flood insurance rates. Phyl who works out of Planning & Zoning is the person responsible for that and she is going to continue to work on that. It is a process. It isn't automatic but we have actually experienced a 10% reduction and that was in 2010."

**Lucien Gauff - Update on REGALA Gym Completion**

Councilman Gauff stated, "I have been going to the gym on Saturdays and I notice that we are using the gym. There have been over 200 parents in the gym on Saturdays. So I would just like to let all of the public know that the gym, how far we are in the completion of it."

Natalie Robottom stated, "We have actually been, it has been signed over to us, they were painting some hand rails and we actually need to add some signage for safety reasons because there is an upstairs area and kids seem to think that is a play area and under the stairs so we definitely need to take care of that. The handicap entrances that the electrical or the computer connection was being worked on to make sure that when you pushed the button the doors actually opened. There are a few minor things with regards to I think maybe the leveling of one or two of the doors but overall the gym is finished. What we would like to do is to go ahead and finish there was a plan also to do some landscaping in the area, we are very fortunate and I think we are going to benefit from an Entergy efficiency grant to purchase some additional appliances for the concession stand that would have to be made in the United States and Entergy efficient products but we are going to be finalizing the gym. Actually I think we place an order for the furniture that is scheduled to be delivered in about three weeks."

Councilman Gauff asked, "So are we looking at a ribbon cutting in about 3-4 weeks?"

Natalie Robottom stated, "We were hoping to get the furniture in so that it would be complete when people come to see it that it is complete and that is what we are hoping for but it was signed and the furniture has been ordered. It was all designed off of a state contract to fit those rooms so we had somebody come out and draw to scale what was needed and those requisitions have been signed."

**Marvin Perrilloux - Update on Foxwood drainage/flood protection**

Councilman Perrilloux stated, "Mrs. Robottom, I just need an update for Foxwood residents and I, of where we are at on that project. I see you have something here but just to bring them up to date on the flooding

in Foxwood."

Natalie Robottom stated, "Sure that one requires permitting because it is in Wetlands. We received notice today that the permit was going to be out for public comment beginning today and they did forward us a copy of the public notice. So once that permit is out on public notice they receive comments, which we don't anticipate a problem, the design has been worked on, I think it is almost complete. There is going to be a requirement to purchase or acquire some property because where the levee is going is actually on some private property. We have had discussions. The property owners are very agreeable to working with us. We obviously would have to come back to you for any type of plan to purchase property from them. There is a certain amount of money available for acquisitions in the grant however we have had some very receptive conversations with the property owner that he may be willing to work with us to do something over time because for the value of the property that amount is not available in the grant for the purchase but we feel very comfortable that this project will be moving forward."

Councilman Perrilloux stated, "Great so we should look for something to be done this year then?"

Natalie Robottom stated, "Yes."

Councilman Wilson asked, "Mrs. Robottom, are there any plans with this landowner to build a little further north on that property?"

Natalie Robottom stated, "Actually no there were initial plans. It was in phases but depending on the alignment of the levee that would put the property on the outside of the levee protection."

Councilman Wilson stated, "I mean we worked on that 12 years ago to get that levee to run with the levee at LaPlace Park and those people were supposed to participate in the pumps."

Natalie Robottom stated, "They did and those pumps sat on the grounds for years. So there has been some improvement there. This alignment from Foxwood is going to connect to the LaPlace Park Levee and again what we are talking about is protecting more of the property but there are some wetland issues. Mitigation is going to be required. In addition to acquisition of the property you know whenever we are interfering with wetlands we have to pay and put money in a mitigation bank because we are destroying the wetlands and we are getting close to that. I do think we will have an agreement. It is a concern for us. There are some other things that have to be done. Obviously you can see from Belle Terre the roadway is lower than it should be. Again during the storm you can see the water coming out of the catch basin flooding the street, across the canal that is another group of residents that can't even get to their houses. They have to park off of Belle Terre. So again we are fortunate there was never a million or so dollars to fix that but through Gustav/Ike we do have funding for it. We do have to work on acquisition but we do have a land owner who is in agreement with us and will work with us whether we can purchase all of it upfront or do it over time. So I think we are going to have a good project there as well."

Councilwoman Hotard stated, "I just have some brief comments about the



*Foxwood project and you will know Mr. Perrilloux this is something that has been long in the making and I appreciate administration kind of seeing this through to completion. Actually I believe Natalie was here previously when there were some things that we tried to do to remedy the problems that they have had in Foxwood. Some of them helped a little bit, some of it didn't help at all so that is how we finally got at the point that we are now and luckily for us we are right at the end now through the permitting process and that they have opened it for public comment I guess because there was some wetland mitigation you have to allow the public the opportunity to speak their piece about the wetlands. I don't foresee any problems. I have been in contact with the engineers so I don't foresee any problems there. So hopefully once that process is closed we can move forward with the land acquisition and the construction of that project which will help New Era and Sugar Ridge which they didn't have the magnitude of problems that we had in the back of LaPlace Park and Foxwood but it is actually going to cover that entire area. So thank you for staying on top of it."*

**OLD BUSINESS:**

There was no old business.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Natalie Robottom - Resolution - R12-04 - A Resolution naming the check signers for the Parish of St. John the Baptist**

*Natalie Robottom stated, "Obviously whenever there is a transition and new people there is a requirement to approve the check signers and we have to make sure that the bank has the appropriate signers. My request is that you approve the following Parish President, Natalie Robottom, Chief Administrative Officer, Theresa Rodgers and Chief Financial Officer, Randy Vincent as check signers for the parish."*

**MOTION:** Councilwoman Hotard moved and Councilwoman Millet seconded the motion to approve Resolution R12-04 - A Resolution naming the check signers for the Parish of St. John the Baptist as follows: **Parish President** - Natalie Robottom, **Chief Administrative Officer** - Theresa Rodgers, **Chief Financial Officer** - Randy Vincent. The motion passed unanimously.

**CORRESPONDANCE/COUNCIL BRIEFS**

*Councilman Wright stated, "I just want to congratulate our St. John football teams. You made the state of Louisiana and St. John the Baptist Parish very proud. So I just want to commend you guys for that again. I also want to thank Riverlands Estates. I just had my first town hall meeting with them. I was gracious to be able to attend and I appreciate your support. For the rest of District V, I'm coming and I'm on my way."*

*Councilman Snyder stated, "I would like to pass on that I was at the gym last week and I saw some real basketball. Some championship basketball those coaches and our director Mr. Jones did a good job this weekend. A lot of parents were back there and a lot of excitement was back there. Also I would like to extend my condolences to a friend of mine, he lost his wife, Mrs. Mary Ellen Fleming from Garyville,*

everybody called her Boo and everybody called him Huey P. She was his right hand lady for the last 54 years. I really hurt for him but he has a lot of kids and they are a really tight knit group so he has that support. To all the victims in the parish the past couple of weeks, a month, even those on both sides the ones that caused the problems and the one that got killed, the parents, the children that they left behind. We need to pray for those people. Keep them in your prayers when you are asking the almighty for favors. Thank you."

Councilwoman Millet stated, "I want to thank administration for the gala that they put on. Unfortunately I was unable to attend the gala due to the death of an immediate family member. I heard from a lot of people that it was well attended and well put together and I want to give kudos where they are due."

Councilman Smith stated, "I want to say thank you and also I am inviting the rest of you, my council members, to a town hall meeting we are having in Pleasure Bend, which seems to be a forgotten community for quite a long time. It is going to be Friday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, at 7:00 PM at the old Fire House back there, the fire station. Previously we used Fred's Bar but a lot of residents don't go to the bar so we had to find another place and we are going to use that fire station to have the first town hall meeting back there in quite a while. Also I attended a town hall meeting this past Saturday to revitalize Milesville. I want to thank the Pastor and she has a couple of her parishioner's with her. There are some interesting facts that Milesville has with it. The first black sheriff in St. John Parish came from Milesville. It was a free community. They are doing some things and we are going to look at doing some things for them. The town hall meeting was really good. It really brought some facts out and these people really want to get this community back on its feet. We are going to have a few town hall meetings around the community just to get people informed and do some things to make ourselves proud again. I just want to say thank you and I hope you guys can attend if you are free."

Councilman Gauff stated, "I would like to send out my prayers and thoughts to the Robinette family wishing them condolences on the death of Mr. Lanard Robinette. That is family and friends. Many of you know him. He has touched a lot of people in this community. So we send our best to their family. I would like to say that it seems that parish president Robottom has issued a challenge to all of us to get out and represent our constituents and come up with the best or possibly the worse things in our areas and let's try to make a difference. Let's try to represent our constituents in a good way so that we can move forward and be successful in our term. Thank you."

Councilman Madere stated, "I wanted to say the same thing about Mr. Robinette but you beat me to it. He served us well in the educational field and also in government. Once again we lost a true soldier. I present my condolences to his family and I stopped by and spoke to his wife personally myself. Also I would like to reinforce my dedication to the people in District III. I am working hard each and every day trying to improve the community working on some of the things that I told them in the campaign. I am doing it in phases, phase 1, 2, and 3. Also they see me everyday going through the community to find out exactly what these type of projects are, I am going to write them down and we are

going to get them done. Thank you."

**PRESIDENT'S REMARKS**

Natalie Robottom stated, "I would like to also take this opportunity to extend my condolences to all the families. I actually worked with Mr. Robinette and he was a member of our civil service board. When I was in the school system we worked together. I am not familiar with the Fleming family but also the families of the individuals who were involved over the last month in the killings and as a community understanding that it is not just their families that are impacted by this. It sends a ripple effect throughout the community. Unfortunately we tend to think that it's isolated but it isn't isolated. At some point it comes across the boundaries and as a community we need to take a look at what can be done starting early. This is not a law enforcement issue. This begins with moral and character and our ability to make sure that our kids have something constructive to do. We are going to be calling on you to help us with the quality of life issue which is recreation and we need to start early. We need to start early and we need to be committed and we need to provide quality programs for the residents of our parish. It is unfortunate to see the types of things that are going on but as leaders of the community we all need to be involved in solutions to what has happened so early on in our community. My commitment is there and I know yours will be as well. As I mentioned, I think as you get familiar with the people in your district, some of their concerns that may have been long term versus short term. We do want you to take your time. There is a lot that you are challenged with. We still have we didn't want to bombard you; I know we had a very long orientation but we have some more information that we would like to share with you. We would like to discuss some of the existing projects. We gave them to you on a list but we need you to understand what those are. What the time frames for those are and also letting you know the kinds of things that we are looking for you to bring to us. Some things we can do in house that wouldn't require bonding but some of the larger projects are going to require bonding. So you know if you take your time, most of the people in your community they have been there so they know what projects have been on hold or have been problematic and they will be able to help you with that and again knowing that we are not going to have dollars to fix everything at one time. You are going to have to prioritize but we will be coming to you as well with regards to road improvements, which we do in house, some of the drainage things that we can do in house and we previously have had contracts for but not wanting to bombard you I am sure you are getting a lot of calls from constituents who are eager to pass some things on to you but just know some of it we may have looked at already. There may be some things on the table and some of them may not but it is through a collaborated effort we are going to put together some additional projects to continue to move St. John forward. Again I want to extend my congratulations to our Comet's, Coach Monica and the Ram's for their successful seasons. Thank you to all who attended the

Inaugural Gala last Friday. It was a very special night for many of us and we enjoyed spending the evening with all of you. The River Region Chamber of Commerce is hosting a Reverse Trade Show on January 26, 2012 from 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the National Guard Readiness Center. The Center is located at 4120 W. Airline Hwy. in Reserve. The trade show will offer area businesses a unique opportunity to maximize connections with procurement professionals from large business/industry and government agencies. It's a great opportunity to market new products, services and technology. It's an excellent way to get your name out and let customers learn about your company. It's an opportunity to meet top executives and business decision-makers in a positive environment. Register online at [www.riverregionchamber.org](http://www.riverregionchamber.org) or contact the Chamber at 985-359-9777. Public Meetings have been scheduled to receive comments and ideas for St. John the Baptist Parish's Land Use Plan. Meetings will be held on January 30 at the Reserve Library, January 31 at the West Bank Community Center, February 6 at the Garyville Library, and February 7 at the St. John Community Center. We invite all residents to attend to give their ideas and receive information as we plan the future of St. John Parish. St. John Parish Health and Human Services will be scheduling appointments for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program on January 27. Please call 985-536-1024 to schedule an appointment. Applications will be completed by appointment only. The State has made changes to the income guidelines, please visit [www.sjbparish.com](http://www.sjbparish.com) or call the Health and Human Services Department for more information. The Health and Human Services Department began their Free Tax Preparation Program on January 17. IRS Certified Preparers will be available to assist with tax preparation for low to moderate income taxpayers. Assistance is available by appointment only on Thursdays and Fridays from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. through April 17. Please visit the Health and Human Services page at [www.sjbparish.com](http://www.sjbparish.com) for more information and the required documents. Mr. Willie Clement will be holding another Veterans Festival meeting scheduled for Thursday, February 2 at 4:30 PM at the SELA War Veterans Home located at 4080 W. Airline Hwy in Reserve. For more information call Mr. Willie Clement at 985-536-4725. Rising Star Baptist Church will be holding their first town hall meeting for 2012 at their church located at 620 Cardinal Street in LaPlace. All are invited to attend on February 2 at 7:00 p.m. The Mississippi River level has dropped below 11 feet and high water level restrictions have been lifted. Thank you for your patience and cooperation during this matter. As the end of the month approaches, I would like to remind all of you February is Black History Month. We will make a proclamation at the next council meeting joining our nation in celebrating Black History Month."

There was no executive session.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

Property/Casualty Insurance Agent - 1) Claims, any/all property,

casualty, and Workman comp claims 2) Claims, procedures and disposition  
3) Coverage's, any/all material changes

Cable Franchise Agreement

Any and all pending legal matters

**ADJOURNMENT:**

At 8:06 PM, Councilwoman Hotard moved and Councilman Smith seconded the motion to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously.

\_\_\_\_\_  
COUNCIL CHAIRMAN

\_\_\_\_\_  
Council Secretary