

OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS
ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH COUNCIL
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 27th, 2011
CHAIR RONNIE SMITH
VICE CHAIR CHERYL MILLET

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, December 27th, 2011, at 6:30 PM.

CALL TO ORDER:

PRESENT AT ROLL CALL: Lucien Gauff, III, Councilman-at-Large, Div. A, Cheryl Millet, Councilwoman District VII, Jaclyn Hotard, Councilwoman District IV, Haston Lewis, Councilman District I, Steve Lee, Councilman-at-Large, Div. B, Darnel C. Usry, Councilwoman District V

ABSENT: Danny Millet, Charles Julien & Ronnie Smith

Councilwoman Usry led the Prayer. Councilman Lee led the Pledge.

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

Consent Agenda

Items: Approval of Minutes December 13th, 2011, Regular Meeting

MOTION: Councilwoman Usry moved and Councilman Gauff seconded the motion to approve the consent agenda items consisting of Approval of Minutes December 13th, 2011, Regular Meeting. The motion passed with 4 yeas, 2 abstaining (Hotard & Lee), 3 absent (Julien, Smith & Danny Millet).

PUBLIC HEARING ON ORDINANCES:

11-53 (Public Hearing Held) An ordinance for re-subdivision of tract BZ-1-1A of Whitney Plantation into tracts herein designated as BZ-1-A2, BZ-1-A3 and BZ-1-A4, Wallace, St. John the Baptist Parish, Louisiana (PZS-11-1021) (N. Robottom)

Mike Henderson, Director of P & Z, stated, *"The applicant is requesting to re-subdivide a piece of property on the West Bank, the Whitney Plantation, as you can see the next ordinance is going to be to provide for a residential development and we recommend approval."*

MOTION: Councilman Lewis moved and Councilman Gauff seconded the motion to approve Ordinance 11-53. The motion passed with 6 yeas and 3 absent (Julien, Smith & Danny Millet).

11-54 (Public Hearing Held) An ordinance to rezone Whitney Plantation newly created tract BZ-1-A4 from C-1 to R-1, located in Sections 16, 17 & 18, T-12-S, R-18-E, Wallace, St. John the Baptist Parish (PZR-11-1009) (N. Robottom)

Mike Henderson stated, *"Again this is complimentary of 11-53 and it is*

an effort by the applicant for re-zoning the property in his attempt to establish a residence in that area."

MOTION: Councilman Lewis moved and Councilman Gauff seconded the motion to approve Ordinance 11-54. The motion passed with 6 yeas and 3 absent (Julien, Smith & Danny Millet).

11-55 (Public Hearing Held) An ordinance to add the nomenclature "Walter Stevens, Sr." to the existing Historic East Street in Garyville. (N. Robottom)

Natalie Robottom, Parish President, stated, "We received a request from Mr. Stevens' son, Walter Stevens, Jr. Mr. Stevens was well known in the community and he has made a request for us to add his father's name as a life long resident of Garyville and we are recommending your approval."

MOTION: Councilwoman Hotard moved and Councilman Gauff seconded the motion to approve Ordinance 11-55. The motion passed with 6 yeas and 3 absent (Julien, Smith & Danny Millet).

11-56 (Public Hearing Held) An ordinance authorizing approval for the Parish President to accept the transfer of immovable property by Act of Donation, a copy of which is attached hereto, from John Tran, and to execute the Act of Donation and all other documents necessary for the Parish of St. John the Baptist to acquire title to the property. The property is described as ONE CERTAIN PIECE OF PORTION OF GROUND, together with all the rights, ways, privileges, servitudes, appurtenances and advantages thereunto belonging or in anywise appertaining, situated in the Parish of St. John the Baptist, at LaPlace, in FAGOT SUBDIVISION, shown on a plat by S.K. Landry, C.E., dated April 7, 1964, and according thereto said portion of ground is designated and measures as follows: Begin at the Southwest corner of Fagot Subdivision and measuring thence in a Northerly direction along with West line of Fagot Subdivision a distance of 92.50 feet, more or less, to the center line of the Louisiana Power & Light Company right of way; thence in an Easterly direction along the center line of the Louisiana Power & Light Company right of way a distance of 112 feet, more or less, to the West line of Fagot Court, thence in a Southerly direction a distance of 75 feet, more or less, to the Southwest corner of Fagot Court; thence along the South line of Fagot Court in an Easterly direction to the West line of an unnamed street, a distance of 38.36 feet to the North line of the Louisiana & Arkansas Railroad; thence along the North line of the Louisiana & Arkansas Railroad in a Westerly direction a distance of 380 feet, more or less to the Southwest corner of Fagot Subdivision, the point of beginning. (N. Robottom)

Natalie Robottom stated, "The parish received a request to donate this property from Mr. Tran. After having Mr. O'Regan take a look at the property and making sure that there were no liens or ties to it the property is situated across the street from the Elm Street location where the utilities building is. It runs under the power lines as do all the property along the rear of the building that is sometimes used for parking. After reviewing the request and verifying that there were no issues surrounding that donation the parish is recommending acceptance of that donation to the parish."

Councilwoman Hotard asked, "Is this the entire piece that Mr. Tran owns? Do you know? I am only asking because in the past there were some maintenance issues with a piece of that property right in that area and I don't know if this is the same piece and maybe it will allow the parish to maintain it."

Natalie Robottom stated, "Actually we have a copy of what that property is. I am not familiar with any complaint or maintenance issue but we do have copies of that. We were not aware of a problem that existed but clearly if it is donated to the parish then we would be maintaining it."

Councilwoman Hotard stated, "It was in between, right behind Fagot Subdivision, there is the rental place."

Natalie Robottom stated, "That isn't the same. That is coming along the tract towards Elm Street. I think that the property that you are referencing goes to Railroad Avenue and Airline."

MOTION: Councilwoman Hotard moved and Councilman Lee seconded the motion to approve Ordinance 11-56. The motion passed with 6 yeas and 3 absent (Julien, Smith & Danny Millet).

11-57 (Public Hearing Held) An ordinance to amend the Home Rule Charter of St. John the Baptist Parish with respect to the compensation received by Council members, whereas, the St. John the Baptist Parish Home Rule Charter, Article III, Section A-2 sets forth the compensation of the Parish Council members. The purpose of this ordinance is to authorize a referendum during the next general election with the following proposition: Council Members compensation (H. Lewis)

Natalie Robottom stated, "Without no opposition to changing the compensation for the council. However after reading through the ordinance it would appear to be problematic in that there is a requirement for 75% of the meetings. There are only two meetings in a month. Which it appears that if both of those meetings are not attended then the council will not be paid. Again I am not sure who had an opportunity to review it. There does appear to be some inconsistencies in it. Administration will be calling for a charter review to review the entire charter and to make recommendations for change but if legal counsel has an opinion on that there were a couple of things in that which appeared contradictory and without having a lot of information on it just for your protection I am just advising that you have some discussion."

Councilman Lewis stated, "I would like for Mr. Perilloux, I had him look at the ordinance. Would you explain it to them so that it can be understood a little bit better."

Jeff Perilloux, Legal Counsel, stated, "Mr. Lewis I believe that Mr. Daley drafted that ordinance so I saw it for the first time tonight. I am not really in a position to answer a whole lot of questions on the actual language in the ordinance. However I think Mrs. Robottom's concern is something that probably should be addressed before you all vote to put it as a referendum item."

Councilman Lewis stated, "I thought I went through the right steps to get it done. It is kind of hard to believe that there is something wrong with that after the steps I went through. I don't know all of the laws that is why I went through Mr. Daley."

Councilwoman Millet asked, "Mr. Daley prepared the ordinance for you?"

Councilman Lewis stated, "He is the one who prepared the ordinance."

Councilwoman Millet stated, "Well I am sure if Mr. Daley approved that ordinance then it would be combed up."

Councilman Lee stated, "As the person making the second on the motion. I totally agree with Mrs. Robottom. I recognize the second paragraph under item number two. I thought this was something that was cleared up probably 10 years ago we had a charter amendment change a number of years ago and I thought it was one that was cleared but in this ordinance it clearly discusses that you must attend 75%. We have known for twenty years it was an error and we the council I know we said it to the public and I swear I thought the public recognized that was one that was an error but."

Councilman Lewis stated, "Steve according to what I read what Mr. Daley is doing is replacing that with the new part if you read at the bottom he is replacing that part with another part if you read the whole ordinance. If you read the entire thing."

Councilwoman Millet stated, "And I did. He is taking that out and acknowledging the fact that it is included in the new ordinance."

Councilman Lewis stated, "It has to go to a vote of the people to do that. He cannot do that on his own. That is why he put that in there so that he could have that removed. We cannot remove it. It has to go to the vote of the people."

Councilwoman Millet stated, "This ordinance is requesting that this go to the people in the next election to make the adjustments."

Councilman Lewis stated, "We can't do it."

Councilman Lee stated, "I wanted to make that clear to the public that this council is not voting to give the new council a raise or this old council going out a raise. It is merely that we feel it needs to go to the public. I certainly stand here and say that I think that this new council coming in and council's in the past certainly it is an area that should be looked at. I like what Mrs. Robottom did. She addressed it. Her and her administration said that they recognize it as a short coming. They are going to have a review committee. I will remove my second if you want to remove your first just knowing that it is really something that the council should bring to the public. I totally support that but it can be done any meeting, at any time prior to a request for an amendment change."

Councilwoman Usry asked, "Are council members going to be on the committee?"

Councilman Lewis stated, "I don't think it is a good idea. When you want to draw that up you surely don't want any of us on there."

Natalie Robottom stated, "I think our intentions are based on the president's advisory committee review. They looked at the charter. They looked at all the functioning of the parish. Obviously the charter was approved in '84 or '85 there have been a couple of amendments since then but after working with it and seeing that other charters have been developed there are some deficiencies in the charter as it was originally written which is why it was amended a few times but rather than making individual changes to it we thought we would have a comprehensive review looking at the entire charter because there are items in there that are somewhat conflicting. At the time they seemed reasonable in 1984 but times have changed and that is no longer the case. This council by charter is allowed to add departments and you have. So there are things that the council has since found to be more beneficial and we just thought we would do the whole thing together. Compensation could be one of them. I think it is important that you have council members on the committee as well as administrative representation and members from the public who are familiar with the charter, attorneys more than just it is not an administrative task. A charter review commission where we are going to have everyone take a look at what the charter says, what the intent is, take a look at some of the charters that have been adopted since that one and see how things have worked. We have had an opportunity to have this one in affect for a number of years. It obviously worked very well initially and really set the ground work for where we are now but clearly there are some items in it that I think former council members as well as the current ones coming in might want to see changed but it will not be something that administration is doing. It will be a committee and I think it is important to have council representation on that committee."

Councilwoman Millet stated, "As a council member Mr. Lewis, I thank you for bringing this up. It is something that needs to be addressed. No council has had a raise since the initial 1984 or twenty years. Other offices have received it. Time is valuable and this ordinance doesn't include the incoming council. It will be for the council after this. So if we don't take care of them this time will we take care of them the next time? This is something that has been going on for quite sometime and I support your ordinance."

Councilman Lee stated, "Listening to the conversation here. We are all on the same page obviously. Perhaps we may be better off with a simple motion coming from you to request administration to address and include council compensation in the charter review. That may be satisfactory."

Councilman Lewis stated, "Since I am going out the door, I don't need to leave them with nothing really."

Councilman Lee stated, "Well whatever but we know what we are trying to do here it is just a sticky, it isn't the first time we have run across issues. Mrs. Robottom says she is going to address it."

Natalie Robottom stated, "There is no disagreement that it needs to be addressed along with many of the other items that we have talked about as being in the charter that needs revision whether it is addressed in

isolation or with an entire charter review is a decision the council will make but we will be addressing the entire charter and possible need for changes to improve the functioning of government."

Councilwoman Millet stated, *"In that case Mr. Haston this is in your court."*

Councilman Lewis stated, *"I will pull it."*

Councilman Lee stated, *"I will remove my second. We have given direction and administration has graciously admitted this is one of the items that they are going to address also. To me we have accomplished what we wanted to do Haston and I am with you on that."*

Councilwoman Millet asked, *"Will this be on the election coming up or will this be on another election?"*

Natalie Robottom stated, *"Well there are two. There is one in March and one in April."*

Councilwoman Millet asked, *"No I am just asking. I don't want to see the next council after the next council get this."*

Natalie Robottom stated, *"It has to be done prior to that new council so we actually have time. We are not trying to take that long. We started some initial reviews under the PAC and obviously would like to address some of the concerns as I met with all of the new council members I think we discussed reviewing the charter and looking at some of the changes that some of you have spoken about. So this is not something that we are trying to delay. We would like to establish a commission and begin the work on that as soon as possible."*

Councilman Gauff stated, *"I think it is important that we do maybe isolate this topic and make it one that would not fall under the rest of the charter and may be this would help expedite us getting a ruling on it. So make a motion or even if I make a motion for us to look at the compensation of the council individually from the rest of the charter then at least it is brought to light and maybe then it won't drag on for another term or terms after that."*

Councilwoman Millet asked, *"So you are saying to keep this ordinance in effect to bring it to the voters?"*

Councilman Gauff stated, *"Yes I would like to bring it to the voters but I would like for it to be separate from the rest of the home rule charter that administration is going to review."*

Councilwoman Millet stated, *"It is separate now."*

Councilman Gauff stated, *"No what I am saying is that we are going to look at the entire charter, get the group together to look at the entire charter. I don't want to tie this into the rest of that."*

Councilwoman Millet asked, *"So you want to keep this as a separate item?"*

Councilman Gauff stated, *"Yes I don't want to tie it into the rest of*

the charter and keep this ball rolling."

Councilwoman Millet stated, *"Well the way to keep that ball rolling would be to go ahead and pass this ordinance that way this is already on the roll."*

Councilman Gauff stated, *"But not as it is written."*

Councilwoman Millet stated, *"As it is written."*

Jeff Perilloux stated, *"May I just address you? I have had a chance to look at Mr. Daley's ordinance in more detail and the portion that involves the 75% was in fact in the old charter language. That is being deleted in the new charter language that Mr. Daley has drafted as far as the proposal that he put before the voters and the 75% attendance is deleted from the new ordinance. So I think it addresses Mrs. Robottom's concern."*

Councilwoman Millet stated, *"In that case, according to legal opinion this new ordinance addresses the 75% issue and does keep it separate as Mr. Gauff was requesting correct?"*

Councilman Gauff stated, *"That is what I am proposing that we look at it separately. Even though the rest of the charter needs to be addressed, we get the team together or administration gets her team together. I guess I just don't want this to be delayed or not looked at or given the intention to."*

Councilwoman Millet stated, *"Which is what Mr. Lewis intended with this ordinance."*

Councilman Gauff stated, *"Right from the beginning."*

Councilman Lewis stated, *"Well then I make my first."*

Councilman Lee stated, *"If you make the motion I see no damage after listening to our attorney. If you make the motion I will make my second again."*

MOTION: Councilman Lewis moved and Councilman Lee seconded the motion to approve Ordinance 11-57. The motion passed with 6 yeas and 3 absent (Julien, Smith & Danny Millet).

11-58 (Public Hearing Held) An ordinance requesting a re-zoning of Lot 1 of the Guy Donaldson Tract to show the change in current zone of Zone C-1 to Zone C-3, situated in Section 47, T-11-S, R-6-E, 944 La. Hwy 44, Reserve, St. John the Baptist Parish, Louisiana (C. Julien)

Councilwoman Millet stated, *"This was introduced by Councilman Julien and he isn't here."*

MOTION: Councilman Gauff moved and Councilman Lewis seconded the motion to table Ordinance 11-58. The motion passed with 6 yeas and 3 absent (Julien, Smith & Danny Millet).

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES:

11-59 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)

11-60 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)

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Councilman Lee stated, *"The finance committee met this evening at 6:15. We had a very short meeting. There were two items both of them dealing with the new REGALA Gym. One was a substantial completion; the other was a final change order. I ask at this time one of my fellow council members make a motion to accept the actions taken by the finance committee."*

MOTION: Councilman Gauff moved and Councilman Lewis seconded the motion to accept the recommendation of the finance committee. The motion passed with 4 yeas, 2 abstaining (Hotard & Lee) and 3 absent (Julien, Smith & Danny Millet).

DEPARTMENT/ENGINEER REPORTS:

Haston Lewis - Update on Persimmon Street/Red Bud/SJA drainage

Councilman Lewis stated, *"I thought I was going to see this job finished, especially Red Bud, before I left office. You remember a while back I asked the engineer, the money was there and everything was ready to go and I got the go ahead sign, but later on I checked to see that the Red Bud project was on hold and that worries me. Let me tell you why it worries me. We are bringing a lot of water into that area. It is going to be pumped over the levee but the people in the Red Bud area we are not doing anything for them at all. I think it was part of the project in the beginning and it became the third part of the project where either we have money trouble or permit trouble or whatever but it looks like District I seems to always have a permit problem. I don't know why. We are not getting the work done over there. I don't even know how to go talk to those people. I walked all through that area about 6 or 7 months ago for culverts and everything else and thought for sure that was going to be in the project. Then I find out it is not in the project. I don't even know where to get the money. I didn't even see a drawing of it. I asked for drawings. I have been all over there. If I had known what I know now I would be running again to tell you the truth because I wouldn't leave them like that. It would help them out a lot for insurance and everything else. You go far back in that area you are going to see nothing has been done in there. No drainage no work at all in that area. It is a shame for us to leave it like that and take 2/3 of the other part of the project and straighten it and leave those people hanging over there that is not right. I have a problem with it. It is very bad. I might be gone but I hope the next council does something about that area and makes sure that that project is done. Right now it is on hold and I know we have a money problem anybody can tell me what they want but there is a money problem there."*

Natalie Robottom stated, *"We have absolutely no intention of leaving that community unserved. We were actually there first hand during the*

last storm and noted the problem that you are referencing however in discussions with both the project engineer, the bond management company and our capital projects team we asked that the engineering firm go back and make a design considering the information we obtained after Tropical Storm Lee. We met as recently as last week and the proposal that was submitted attempted to drain water into an area that didn't have a ditch and we were concerned about adding flow to an already difficult area to drain. So we asked for and we never stopped on hold is that we are still trying to get the engineering that meets the needs of that community but also takes into account what actually happens. So there is a survey request right now after this last rain this weekend. The water does not drain. There is a natural flow to the water that drains westerly and then northerly toward the track. It does not drain under the track. It doesn't move. So we have asked for a survey to determine the elevation of the existing culverts and ditches as well as to possibly pass a culvert cleaner through that area to see if there are any obstructions that are causing the water not to drain. However as we mentioned last time there was a combination of three projects St. Joan of Arc, Persimmon and the Red Bud project and the estimate was put together at about three million dollars however once the projects were designed and submitted only a large portion of the money was accounted for in the Persimmon Street and St. Joan of Arc project. Additionally, after looking at the plan for Red Bud it actually was working against the natural flow of the drainage. We asked all the engineers to go back and revisit that including the bond management company and the parish drainage engineers and the company that was assigned the project to look at something that would help in that area that was one not wasteful but accounted for the fact that we were trying to or attempting to pump water against the natural flow in that area. The project has not been dropped and we will not drop it. We are going to continue to make sure that drainage flows in the Red Bud area however we are going to do something that makes sense and is cost efficient."

Councilman Lewis stated, "I went in the area to tell you the truth with the engineer, I even went one day with Mr. Gauff and Art in there. We looked at the whole thing. I walked through there with Mr. Carmouche. I went through the area. I checked it all out. There is no if's in there. I even called NY and they said that everything was going to be taken care of and it didn't happen. I mean if they left it out in the drawing they must be intending to leave it out in the drawing if it was part of the project. I mean it isn't something new. They are the ones that came up with those ideas not me. I didn't come up with no ideas. I don't do any engineering work for the parish. All I do is check what they do and I really check it. They can believe I go into the area. I talk to them. I look at the drawings. I even get a copy of every bodies drawings and it was never on the drawings. I don't see how it is going to ever happen."

Natalie Robottom stated, "Actually they did submit an additional design and plan for Red Bud that included two additional pumps, a crossing over the river, a purchasing of some property all going from the park across the levee. So there were numerous discussions with all of our engineers and again we are revisiting it now. We were presented with three different options at our last meeting last week and we are pursuing those."

Councilman Gauff stated, "Mr. Haston I am just here to say I will not

let the people in that area down. I have talked with administration. They have assured me that they are working diligently to service and to provide drainage to this area and I will make sure that they do what they are trying to do or what we are trying to do in that area. So I am just here to say that Persimmon and Red Bud and those areas won't be forgotten. I rode around with administration during Tropical Storm Lee and we saw that there is a need for work in that area and they have promised that we will give them the service that they need."

Councilman Lewis stated, "You know the old saying, You don't get paid for starting you get paid for finishing and we need to finish it."

Haston Lewis - Update on Ben Canal, Company Canal and Bayou Becnel

Councilman Lewis stated, "The only thing I can tell you is I have been trying for three years for permits and I can't get them. For some reason we haven't gotten them yet. You know this is my third parish president maybe that is the reason why."

Natalie Robottom stated, "Actually I think 22 or 23 permits have been secured based on information we received from the Lafourche Levee Basin they recommended additional permits and this council approved the contract to go out and seek those. Mr. Savoie, through his parish engineering contract, has been working on the Becnel Canal permit but I think the initial attempt was to dredge or excavate. There is some resistance to that from the Office of Coastal Management. However we are going to proceed with the clearing and snagging of trees and vegetation from it and that should be an easier one to get. They are not necessarily in favor of dredging and excavating many of the canals. We have been successful with the permits that we obtained. We added I think 6 new ones based on information from the Levee Board and those are in the process. If there are handled as the previous ones were we should have them shortly."

Councilman Lewis stated, "You see why those canals are so important over there is you have Company Canal which is all of Goldmine and Granade Plantation. Since they put in 3127 it is like a levee between there. All the water is staying in the field. The same thing is happening at Bayou Becnel and Ben Canal, Castle Estates is beginning to rise now in the back that water comes up about two to three feet and sooner or later it is going to start getting in their houses and they are already paying high with flood insurance. That is why I am pushing so hard for drainage. A lot of people with flood insurance that isn't cheap, the more you help with the drainage the lower you get your cost down for flood insurance. You might not get rid of it completely but you can get the cost down. So this is very important that we get those drainage areas open."

Haston Lewis - Update on the Farmer's Market on the West Bank

Councilman Lewis stated, "That is on hold."

Councilwoman Millet stated, "From my understanding, we had a ground breaking ceremony on that."

Natalie Robottom stated, "There is a requirement to fence in the area prior to doing any additional work and that is part of the Cooperative

Endeavor Agreement. We have solicited quotes for that fence to be installed and will move forward with that. We also solicited quotes for the foundation and the remainder of the grant or the grant itself won't be rewarded until 2012 however we do have funding available through Economic Development and this project is proceeding."

Councilman Lewis stated, "Let me tell you something concerning all these projects to be fair with you. I think the key person that we need and I find it to be at least a headache to me I don't know about you all but we need a Chief Financial Advisor. Somebody that is going to keep us up with what is going with these projects that we don't have. You know I have sat on this council before and we had a chief financial advisor. We haven't appointed one yet. It is part of the charter and that is one part of the charter that we should make sure happens because you would be surprised how much information this chief financial advisor could give us and we are not getting quite enough information. We need to have this person bad and I hope the new council makes sure that this person is in there in the beginning because there is some information that we don't have with how we spend the money and what is going on. The first thing Mr. Lucien and John asked me when I first came on man how have you been around here staying on this council, how have you been making it? I said there is only one thing you have to watch, watch the money. If you don't watch the money there isn't anything else to watch that is the only way you are going to get something done. You can't do anything without any money. That is what we are not doing, we are not watching the money close enough then we could keep up with the projects of what is going on whether we got the money or we don't have the money."

OLD BUSINESS:

There was no old business.

NEW BUSINESS:

Hugh Martin - Resolution - R11-55 - A Resolution ordering and calling a special election to be held in the Parish of St. John the Baptist, State of Louisiana, to authorize the levy of special taxes therein; making application to the State Bond Commission in connection therewith; and providing for other matters in connection therewith

Hugh Martin, Bond Attorney, stated, "The resolution before you calls for an election to be held on April 21st of this year at which there will be five propositions on the ballot. If all five of these propositions pass the taxes in the parish will not go up. The preface for which some of them could be used would change or parts of them would change but the tax millage would not go up at all and it would all be covered by Homestead Exemption. The first two propositions are simply renewals of existing taxes. The first one is for a renewal of ten years for the operating public building for mentally retarded persons in the parish. That is a building that has been in operation for many years and serves the community. It is a 1 mill tax that is just being renewed. The second one is a similar 1 mill tax for the senior citizen center for renewing that for an additional ten years. So there is no change there in those taxes just a simple renewal and the citizens have been paying that tax for some time. Now the rest of it involves some changes in how some of the money would be authorized to

be used. Thirdly the parish has a tax for the road lighting district for 4.83 mills, that tax operates street lights, lights in parking areas and so forth. You have to buy the power from the power company to operate those lights and these taxes pay for those expenses. Because of the increases that we have had in set valuation over recent years in the parish it is now possible to reduce that millage which is now at 4.83 mills to reduce it my 1 mill to 3.83 mills and that 1 mill that gets reduced can then be authorized for another purpose. Similarly we are now levying for retirement of a bond of indebtedness that we have that has built sewers, buildings and roads and what have you over the years. We are levying 14.5 mills currently to pay that debt service. There if you wish to reduce that millage and not impact the payment of your debt in other words you will still have enough money coming in to reduce your debt in according with the terms of the bond issue. You could reduce that by 2 mills to give you a total of 3 mills that could be used for other purposes. The proposals under this election would authorize 3 quarters of a mill to be levied for maintaining operating and improving animal control facilities for the parish. Which now in your budget you have to scrape money out of your general fund to do that as I understand. So that would use up 3 quarters of one of these 3 mills available to be changed. The next proposition would authorize 2.25 mills of that 3 mills that is being reallocated if you want to look at it that way to maintaining, operating and improving recreation facilities for the parish. So the parish has built facilities for recreation but has not provided operating money for recreation. So it would be possible then to transfer 2.25 mills to that purpose to give you a funding source for operation and maintaining. So if all of that passes there is no tax increase. There would be in affect the size of bond issues that you could issue in the future without having a tax increase. So if this was approved you would be reducing the millage that saved bonds by 2 mills currently if you didn't do that you could have a bond issue of about 21 million dollars without a tax increase. After this is all said and done and if approved by the voters that would be reduced about \$11,365,000.00 at this time. Now in future years the assessment continues to grow as you know it will as a lot of industrial exemptions on the tax roll that do expire over the next 8 years that will increase that and also you will be retiring existing debt so that you can gradually build up the capacity for additional debt in the future. That is just part of an overview of what all of this does and I would be happy now to stop and see if there are any questions."

Natalie Robottom stated, "As you all know and are a part of Mr. Hugh has been working very closely with us to retire debt, to refinance some of our existing bond debt and reducing the amount of the debt payment which is why we are able to free up some of these funds. These throughout the last several years all of this would have been required for our debt payment but because our interest rates are so low right now we have had the opportunity to refinance some bonds and pay off some debt and we are continuing to do that. Mr. Hugh is working on something right now and he thinks this is in the best interest of the parish. It is the lowest as it has ever been with regards to interest. At the time we needed the projects we had to go with what the interest rates were but because they are low now we are refinancing a lot of the debt. Historically and based on information from our auditors we have problem funds. Recreation has been one many of our new council members and a lot of elected officials committed to the voters that they wanted

to work on recreation and my commitment is there as well. There has never been a steady funding source. The parish has allocated video poker dollars to recreation however we know there has been a decline over the last several years and it has never been enough to cover the costs of parish wide recreation. Please understand when I say recreation it is not just the two sports that we have. We are talking about our walking paths, our boat launches, our adding additional sports, addressing the seniors as well as our children and we think it is critical that we have some type of funding mechanism for that department. As well as animal control, there has been a consistent need for providing some type of service throughout the parish fortunately we were able to use bond money for the building but you know we are not quite there. We are taking money from public works to fund some of these projects but yet we need money in public works. So what we have worked with Mr. Hugh, as well as our auditing firm and all of our parish administration. We have had conversations with existing as well as incoming council members and we think it is really important that the voters understand there will be no increases. All of these things will be accomplished by utilizing the dollars that we have but understanding that there has to be a mechanism for funding the services that we provide. We think animal control as well as recreation warrants that. This is a start we think in the right direction. We are going to continue to review our debt situation and refund when necessary and reduce the cost of our debt but understanding that we need a comprehensive program when we compare to our neighboring parishes and we look at what they provide they also have dedicated funding sources. If it is taxes or millages there is a fund that provides for these services and that is what we are asking the people of this parish to fund the services that they are requesting be funded."

Councilwoman Usry asked, "How much is a mill generating now?"

Natalie Robottom stated, "I think it is about \$353,000.00. As Mr. Hugh stated eventually those mills will be worth more as the evaluations and assessments of the properties go up so overtime we are looking for the amount generated per mill to be increased. So again any opportunity that we can to fund the services that we provide will be beneficial in the long run."

Councilwoman Hotard asked, "With that once the mills are generating more, do you think that we will look towards rolling back some of our mills?"

Natalie Robottom stated, "That is always an option Ms. Hotard but I think we need to make sure that we can cover the cost of the services that we provide. That is our priority. When we do that and obviously our residents receive a very small sometimes not even noticeable change in their rate however there is a huge impact to parish government. So before making any recommendations along those lines we meet with our auditing firm as well as Mr. Hugh, who is an advisor to us and I think our goal should be to make sure that we provide funding for the services that we are required to provide."

Councilwoman Hotard stated, "I want to also thank the administration. I know you have been working very closely with Mr. Martin and our recreation fund balance and our animal control fund balance they have been problematic for us since I have been here for 8 years those funds

have always operated in a deficit and we have had to transfer from other areas. So just being pro-active and aware of those things and putting this together I really have to commend the administration on doing that and these have been two areas that have just caused us problems and this is a solution here."

Natalie Robottom stated, "And obviously this council will vote on that but we will need all of your help in making sure that it passes. There are five items on there. Obviously ARC, the Senior Citizen Program those require renewals in order to continue the services at the level that they are being provided. These others street lighting it was a recommendation from our auditing firm. Obviously we want to make sure that we can continue to provide what is necessary but we are suffering in taking money from other departments to cover the cost of some of these and we have to work on making sure that it is very clear that these are not new taxes. These are existing dollars that are being rededicated to improve the financial situation of the parish."

Councilwoman Hotard stated, "I think we will come together the council and the administration to get the message out to the public for these but I definitely believe that the public recognizes that this is a responsible move on the part of the administration and the council to address two areas of our budget that we have gotten some little remarks in our audit in the past so this is a responsible way to address that without having to raise any taxes. So I do believe the confidence of the voters is there. So I don't think that this will be a problem. Good job."

MOTION: Councilman Lee moved and Councilwoman Hotard seconded the motion to approve Resolution R11-55. A Resolution ordering and calling a special election to be held in the Parish of St. John the Baptist, State of Louisiana, to authorize the levy of special taxes therein; making application to the State Bond Commission in connection therewith; and providing for other matters in connection therewith. The motion passed with 6 yeas and 3 absent (Julien, Smith & Danny Millet).

CORRESPONDANCE/COUNCIL BRIEFS

Councilman Gauff stated, "Just have a safe and happy holidays. Happy New Year to everyone."

Councilman Lewis stated, "I hate to tell you all good-bye. This is my last meeting and I appreciate sitting here with every one of you on this council and administration. I hope you understand my frustration sometimes but you got to realize I represent people that have a lot of needs and I know you all have the same thing in your districts too. So I try to work hard. I told somebody I didn't run for the position, I ran for the job. It is a job of here and I tried to do my job and I appreciate everything you have helped me with. I thank you again."

Councilwoman Hotard stated, "I would just like to hopefully everyone had a very Merry Christmas and I wish everyone a Happy New Year. Have a safe and prosperous New Year."

Councilwoman Usry stated, "I'm starting this project too late but I would like the parish and I hope that Michael follows through with this to dedicate the sunken gardens to wounded warriors. We honor our

veterans and we pay special attention to them and the parish comes together and now we have the parade and everything but the wounded warriors, and I don't know if we have any in the parish really, but I think it would be nice to dedicate it. It is a peaceful area and I would like to hopefully get it dedicated to the warriors. I don't know what steps need to be done to get it accomplished. As I reflected on the past four years these things came to mind. Our term began and indeed we had a historical term with three parish presidents and three councilmen at larges in Division A but we set our goals and we were able to achieve them. Big goals we had at first were the drinking water in LaPlace and the intake pump in Edgard and it took much longer than we ever expected but that was finally achieved. First we passed a millage which enabled us to take on other projects and we built the animal shelter, the Airnasium, the gymnasium. We remodeled buildings, we refurbished water tanks, we restructured the Lions water plant. We improved drainage areas in some parts of the parish and other parts are still needed. We approved measures for the bike paths on the levee and though I am saddened that not all of the goals have been completed I know the plans are there for that to be accomplished. The administration building needs to be built. The courthouse remodeled, streets need resurfacing, canals still need cleaning and we desperately need a hurricane protection levee and pumping stations. Drainage issues need to be addressed in River Forest and Indigo Parkway. The future plans for water and sewer plants are also needed. These issues will always be with us because they are the nature of the beast. They are part of our daily lives and as the parish grows, so do these issues. We obtained many grants which enabled us to complete many projects and hopefully the success we had early in our term with obtaining those grants will continue in the next council's term to help free up money for other projects. I had a roller coaster ride and much was accomplished. I enjoyed serving the constituents of District V St. John the Baptist Parish and also with you the council members. I extend my best to Michael Wright the councilman elect of District V along with all the other newly elected council members. I wish Natalie and the next council much success. I may be leaving but I will be watching your progress as you achieve your goals. I want to thank my parents, friends old and new and Christina, my personal assistant through my term and finally I big heartfelt thanks to my husband who had to share the past four years of my life with him serving St. John Parish. Thank you very much I enjoyed it."

Councilman Lee stated, "I promise mine will be short and sweet as I said some of the comments that Jaclyn made about myself and my fellow council members last week would be tough to out do but I do want to make a couple of comments. First a simple heartfelt thanks to all the people of St. John Parish. Six terms I have served St. John Parish and it has truly been a labor of love. Nothing professionally that I have ever done has been any more gratifying. I gave the parish my best. I wish the new council well and I suggest that each and every one of you pray for wisdom because it is a large portion of the job. You are going to be hit with tasks and questions and people everyday of your life for the next four years and if you are like myself and the council people that I have served with you want to help them all. Do the best you can. Be compassionate but ask for wisdom. Put your constituent's first, treat them with the respect they deserve and deal appropriately with those that deserve less than respect. I have served with every parish president elected, like Mr. Lewis I believe. I believe the new council

will be well served with not only a well intended hard working, very talented parish president. I am asking you to make every effort council members to work with Mrs. Robottom and her staff because only together can St. John Parish flourish and reach its full potential. I think that we have the nucleus with this new council and administration young and energetic to make St. John continue to move forward and be as good as it can be. Thank you very much."

Councilwoman Millet stated, "I would personally like to thank Mr. Lee and let him know that I am going to miss his wisdom, his advice. Mrs. Usry I am going to miss my rides across the river. Mr. Lewis I am going to miss visiting you across the river. You all have served the parish well in your term of service and I personally want to thank you for that. I didn't have that opportunity last week and I would like to take that now. So thank you very much for all of your sacrifices because we all know there are a lot of sacrifices involved in serving the public. It is our desire which is why we ran for office and we all know what it took to be up here. So I thank you."

Councilwoman Usry stated, "Happy New Year!"

PRESIDENT'S REMARKS

Natalie Robottom stated, "I would also like to thank all of you guys for everything that I have learned the first time being here as CAO and then as President. It was two totally different opportunities but I am always learning and always looking to learn from those around me. I think Mr. Lewis I understand your concerns and I don't mean to take them lightly but what I can assure you is that your concerns are our concerns. Your concerns will be this new council's concerns. We are here to serve. How we go about doing that may be different but as Mr. Lee has said our sincerest desire is to help the people that we were elected by and we are going to continue to do that. We are going to rely on the wisdom of some of our veterans. We are also going to rely on those of you that are leaving and wish you the best of luck. We have had an opportunity to meet with some of you before leaving to make sure that we are aware of some of the projects that you felt were not yet completed and made commitments that we are going to continue to work towards those. The one thing about government it is a little bit slower than all of us would like. No matter how hard we work and how many hours we put in there are processes and procedures and things that end up taking us longer. Our goal is to be much more efficient and to get things done quicker, to establish policies and procedures that will allow us to not have to create every time we get started on a project but that is going to take all of us working together. I feel very comfortable based on our meetings, our orientation and following some of the campaigns that that is the desire of this council and we are committed to working together and we are going to build on what these council members as well as the ones before them have laid for us in terms of a foundation to continue to move forward. Again we want to wish all of you the best of luck in whatever you choose to do. Thank you very much for your service. It is a sacrifice. If people realize it

or not it is a sacrifice. You are away from your families, your jobs, you do get calls and visits all hours of the day and in every trip you take even though they may start with 'I know this is a party' and 'we are not going to discuss business', there is some discussion of business, so you are never really free from it. So understanding that this has been a commitment. We appreciate everything that you have done. We can't always please everybody but what we can do is do our hardest to do what is right by the people. To use the wisdom that we have been giving and the desire to do what is best for the people of St. John the Baptist Parish and that is our commitment to you. I would also at this point we have some good news for those of you who watched the Saints game last night that was a huge victory, division champions, Drew Brees now holds the record for passing and we are on our way to the Super Bowl again which would be great. LSU will be in the BCS. We have one of our locals, Stefan Francois, who actually played recreation ball here in St. John Parish. He is a graduate of ESJ. He played with my son and he will be playing in the national championship game on the 9th. So we want to wish them the best of luck and wish LSU the best of luck as well. We also want to remind everyone although this is in passing our last meeting of the year the next one is January 9th and all of the newly elected council members and parish president will be sworn in on January 9th across the river on the West Bank. We do have invitations here that obviously all of our current council members should receive a copy and I think we have distributed them to all of the newly elected council members if you haven't gotten yours we do have them for you. An invitation is not necessary but if you wanted to share those with family and friends we do provide those to you. It will begin with a mass at 10:00 AM at St. John the Baptist Church in Edgard. The inauguration ceremony will begin at 11:00 at the courthouse, followed by a council meeting at Noon as per the charter. There will be a brief reception at the Firehouse or community center on the West Bank that day understanding that the BCS is that night. So the gala has been postponed to January 13th, which is a Friday. It will be at the community center on the East Bank beginning at 6:00 PM and going on until 9:00 PM. So that is a little unusual but we thought it was best not to attempt to do everything in one day especially with the game. All of this information is available on our website. We have given information to both newspapers and we welcome the public to come out and join us in celebrating. The River Region Chamber is hosting a reverse trade show on January 26th from 3:00 - 7:00 PM at the National Guard Readiness Center, 4120 W. Airline Hwy., Reserve. You can register online at www.riverregionchamber.org or contact the chamber at 985-359-9777. We do want to note that due to continued high water levels in the Mississippi River the levee restrictions are still in place and there is no excavation, no vehicular traffic, including four-wheelers and dirt bikes, until the level of the water recedes below 11 feet at the Carrollton gage. They are issuing tickets to violators. So we want to encourage you to stay off of the levee for safety purposes until the water level recedes. Also a reminder, it was the case for Christmas and

it will be again for New Year's. Garbage pick up will begin at 3:00 AM on Saturday 12/31/11 to account for the holiday. That schedule is posted on Channel 15. You can contact IESI at 985-536-2750 if there are any questions and the time change is on the calendar and I think they also place it in the newspaper. Also a reminder that our offices will be closed on Friday, December 30th and Monday, January 2nd in observance of the New Year's holiday. We are looking forward to completing a lot of these projects. We are going to continue and make efforts to keep all of our council members informed as to our projects. I think we added a project worksheet into the orientation binder. We discussed at our capital projects meeting recently that we are going to take minutes. Obviously you only hear about what happens when you come to the meetings and ask for changes but we meet on these projects on a regular basis and we will be forwarding to you minutes from those meetings to keep you abreast of some of the discussions and plans as those are coming. We are constantly in a mode of improvement. We welcome your suggestions and recommendations. We do want to make it easier and more efficient for all of what we are doing but also we want to improve communication. So we are looking forward to a Happy New Year and a very prosperous 2012 and wishing everyone a safe and happy new year's holiday. Thank you."

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 7:39 PM, Councilwoman Usry moved and Councilman Lee seconded the motion to adjourn. The motion passed with 6 yeas and 3 absent (Julien, Smith & Danny Millet).

COUNCIL VICE-CHAIRMAN

Council Secretary