

PUBLIC NOTICE

CITY OF JEANERETTE

JEANERETTE, LA

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL

MEETING-BOARD OF

ALDERMEN

Wednesday October 16, 2024

Proceedings of the Mayor and Board of Aldermen of the City of Jeanerette, State of Louisiana in the Ward 8 Recreation Center. 803 Hubertville Rd, Jeanerette, Louisiana 70544 to discuss the following topics in special session.. The Mayor called the meeting to order and led the prayer, Alderwoman Moore led the Pledge of Allegiance. Those present were: Mayor Carol Bourgeois Jr. Alderwoman Mari-ah Clay, Alderwoman Charlene Moore, Alderwoman Christia Simmons and City Clerk Susan Colden. City Attorney Lucretia Pecante, Alderman Garland Bourgeois, and Alderman Ray Duplechain were absent. Mayor Carol Bourgeois Jr. determined that a quorum was present. The Mayor stated that item 7 on the agenda should state specific potential future funding sources that will be addressed by Senator Allain.

5. Public Comments- Speaker Cards were received from Mr. Clarence Clark and Ms Catherine Withrow for items 6 & 7, The Mayor said those individuals may speak when the item is addressed.

6. Discussion of Jeanerette Public Sewer System Project-Planning and Construction-Mr. Nick Sonnier first reviewed the project scope for the board, and said he would answer any questions. Clarence Clark of 727 Wattigny St. came forward to ask if the City was going to need a new sewer plant why wasn't this built earlier rather than pouring money into the current facility? It would have been cheaper if handled earlier? He also mentioned inflow and infiltration issues that he saw. Nick address both questions. Regarding replacing the plant earlier, he stated that until recently the amount of grant money available was not enough. Senator Allain agreed that he felt that this is the case. Mr. Clark then reviewed the history of the project. Todd Vincent of Sellers and Associates said that a lot of this is driven by the goal to remain in compliance with the DEQ discharge requirements for your system, he also stated that the requirements have gotten more restrictive. Discussion also included the design of the current plant and how it was not built for current requirements and how the new outflow to the wetlands would allow a lower permit level. The idea to upgrade the current plant and outflow to the wetlands was discussed and how it would require a higher flood wall and retention basin to contain the Inflow during high rain events. Mr. Todd also addressed the design was used at the time of the grant application and the decision to shift to wetland assimilation to handle the entire flow of the city. Alderwoman Moore asked how much it would cost to rehab the old plant and Mr. Sonnier replied about 7.6 million and the new plant is about 9.2 million. The new plant will use a similar method to our current method. Mr. Clark asked if the other property that the city owns by the plant that is a wetlands property could be used, the engineers said that property is not large enough and does not flow into the other wetlands. The Mayor recognized Cathrine Withrow of 501 Catherine Street in Jeanerette. Ms. Withrow recounted her struggles with her sewer line collapse. She then questioned the costs and also stated that she was surprised that the city was not in compliance and wondered about the cost of the fines. The Mayor said we are not actively paying any fines but we are responding to DEQ on our efforts to get compliant. Ms. Withrow then stated she is disappointed that each time she hears the updates the problems and costs keep getting bigger. Senator then explained the rate study and what the current funding sources are. He also said regardless of the scope of the project there will be some rate increase to maintain the sustainability of the system was required by the water sector which Mr. Sonnier said is \$8 and some change. Depending on the project and funding the amount could increase by another \$8 and there would have to be an increase in water rates as well. The discussion centered on the initial increase and the following yearly increases. Senator Allain asked how much saving on maintenance would the city have with a new plant? Ms Withrow said for the next 3 years there will be no savings because we will be paying to repair and build the new plant. She questioned who is going to pay for this. Mr. Todd stated if you do nothing DEQ will be on your doorstep very soon and then you will have to pay for the entire bill on your own and then the rates will really increase. Council Lady Brown asked about the negative reports she is seeing on wetland assimilation. Mr. Todd responded that DEQ would be monitoring the quality of the treated water into the wetlands that the plant will be treating the sewage. Ms. Withrow asked about payoff and life expectancy, Mr. Todd pointed out DEQ figures 20 year payoff and USDA uses a 40 year scale. Lady Brown asked if the wetland assimilation would contaminate nearby wells. Mr. Todd stated that the wetland is contained on all sides. She then asked what is the benefit of building new versus refurbishing the old system. Mr. Todd explained that the current plant is approaching 50 years old and the maintenance costs are high and the flood elevation is sue because even with the current levy it is lower than the 100 year flood elevations according to FEMA and would require a concrete flood wall to be made. Then Senator Allain spoke that right now the state is in a budgetary deficient. So if you decide not to do the project but find 2 or 3 years down the road it is necessary he is not sure if the funds will be available. The board moved from public comment into regular session. Alderwoman Simmons asked for example, for the water plant the city has spent \$360,000 because we are finished with grant funds, and we have \$128,000 in CWEF available and have yet to see it. There has to be a better method to get the funds to the city because the water sector stated those funds can be used to purchase the property, but if we don't get them in time the city has to pay out of pocket. There was a discussion on land cost, which can only be the appraised amount. Next comment was from Clarence Clark questioning if the proposed executive session would violate the open meeting law. Senator Allain said he has said everything that he intended to say was he hopes you do not make a decision before it is determined all the grants you will be receiving. The Mayor said the agenda was put together under the direction of the Senator's legislative assistant but we can certainly stay and let the Senator discuss the possible funding in regular session. The Senator re-emphasized the realities of how difficult it might be to obtain this funding in the future and then what costs would the public have to bear? Alderwoman Moore said that the city doesn't have the money for the match and the Senator said I understand the 20% match is hard but in the future without these funds they may be looking paying 80%. The Senator also proposed while we are waiting for the DRA grant can there be a few scenarios drawn up. The Senator had to leave the meeting, the Mayor asked that before adjournment if there could be a brief moment of silence to mark the passing of Mr. C J Bertrand, who worked with Sellers and Associates and was active to help inspect roads for repair.

8.Adjourn On motion by Alderwoman Moore and second by Alderwoman Simmins voice vote of all yea the meeting was adjourned.

/s/_____
Carol Bourgeois Jr., Mayor
ATTEST: /s/_____
Susan E. Colden City Clerk

The Daily Iberian:

Nov. 2, 2024

MINUTES 10.16.24