

**CITY OF OPELOUSAS
OPELOUSAS, LOUISIANA
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
JUNE 11, 2013**

The Council of the City of Opelousas, Parish of St. Landry, State of Louisiana, convened in a regular session on this 11th of June 2013 at 5:00 p.m.

With Mayor Donald R. Cravins, Sr. presiding, the meeting was called to order.

The Mayor requested the City Clerk to call the roll and the following Council members were PRESENT: Joseph Charles, Julius Alsandor, Louis Butler, Jr., Blair Briggs, Reginald Tatum, and Jacqueline Martin. ABSENT: None.

A moment of silent meditation was observed. Alderman Julius Alsandor led the Pledge of Allegiance.

On a motion by Alderman Blair Briggs, seconded by Aldermen Joseph Charles and Louis Butler, Jr., and unanimously carried, it was resolved to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting held on 05/14/2013, with the following corrections: *correcting page 2, paragraph 2, "A substitute motion was offered. On a motion by Alderman Reginald Tatum and seconded by Alderman Blair Briggs, it was resolved to approve the creation of the Corrections Division without approving the salary increases and to approve the transferring of one employee from Dispatcher to Corrections." should read "A substitute motion was offered. On a motion by Alderman Reginald Tatum and seconded by Alderman Blair Briggs, it was resolved to approve the creation of the Corrections Division with the hiring of three (3) Corrections officers at a rate of \$11.25 per hour and one (1) dispatcher at a rate of \$9.50 per hour without approving the salary increases and to approve the transferring of one employee from Dispatcher to Corrections."*

On a motion by Alderwoman Jacqueline Martin, seconded by Aldermen Reginald Tatum and, Louis Butler, Jr., and unanimously carried, it was resolved to adopt the agenda,

PRESENTATIONS

Presentation for recognition of the Employee of the Month. The Employee of the Month chosen for May 2013 is Ms. Josie Poole-Larkins. Ms. Poole-Larkins has been employed with the City of Opelousas Code Enforcement Department for eight years. She has two daughters.

Discussion by Alderwoman Jacqueline Martin regarding swimming pools at the Parks Department. Alderwoman Martin stated that there was a discussion with some gentlemen regarding the Parks and the pools but they met earlier with Ms. Laura Balthazar and were pleased with what they heard. However, they still have some suggestions. Alderwoman Martin would like to defer this discussion until a committee can be formed and will come back before the Board at a later date.

Presentation by Ms. Leigh Harris, Executive Director of "Keep Louisiana Beautiful, Inc.," to the "Keep Opelousas Beautiful" Program. Ms. Harris stated that she was there today to take an opportunity to publicly recognize an organization here in the community. She pointed out that "Keep Opelousas Beautiful" is one of forty-five Louisiana communities that are a part of "Keep Louisiana Beautiful" and they are all a part of their parent organization "Keep America Beautiful". Their mission collectively is to promote personal, corporate, and community responsibility for a Louisiana that can be as clean as they believe it is beautiful. They are recognizing individual affiliates monthly for specific work they have done. In the short time they have been affiliated, "Keep Opelousas Beautiful" has gotten a number of grants—national and state, engaged the community, worked with youth, held trash bashes, done cigarette litter prevention, and received a national grant partnering with Lowe's to beautify a portion of the community by planting trees that Lowe's offers. Ms. Harris presented the award to Mr. Raymond Duplechain, Ms. Roseanne Mitchell and all of the other "Keep Opelousas Beautiful" volunteers.

Presentation by Mr. Charles Pope regarding a proposed residential development consisting of thirty (30) single family homes, most of which are three (3) bedroom homes, with Olympia Investment Partnership. Mr. Pope was not in attendance.

Presentation by Mr. Bill Rodier, Executive Director of SLEIDD. Mr. John Lamke introduced Mr. Rodier, the new Executive Director of SLEIDD—the parish's economic development arm. He pointed out that since Mr. Rodier has taken over as director, he has met with the Mayor. Mr. Rodier stated that he wanted to introduce himself to those who had not met him yet. He wants community leaders' feedback on what is important to the community and what should be prioritized as part of the four-month economic development strategic plan for the parish. He stated that his door is always open and he would love to hear their thoughts and get their feedback. Mayor Cravins pointed out the importance of a good, quality education system to generate economic growth. Mr. Rodier pointed out that, from an economic development perspective, there are strengths that we have that can be capitalized on quickly and also weaknesses that, if not addressed, will prohibit our economic growth. Mr. Rodier stated that he is a huge proponent of education and if they don't get this right then they are really going to be in trouble in the future. He is committed to provide assistance, guidance, input, and integration to help move that process forward.

Discussion regarding request by Mrs. Linda Walker for payment in the amount of \$924.60 to pay Civil Service Board attorney fees for June 2013 invoice. On a motion by Alderman Reginald Tatum, seconded by Alderman Blair Briggs and unanimously carried, it was resolved to approve the request by Mrs. Linda Walker for payment in the amount of \$925.00 to pay Civil Service Board attorney fees for June 2013.

Discuss request for VARIANCE of property located in an NMU (Neighborhood Mixed Use) Zone at 409 S. Academy Street to open a Night Club (Vincent Thomas, Sr. – Darlene Fruge/Mark Richard). A public hearing regarding this matter was held by the Planning Commission on 06/03/2013. The Commission denied the request.

Ms. Laura Balthazar stated that this was previously the Manhattan Club and because it had been closed for a number of years it was no longer grandfathered into the neighborhood for a new club to open. Mr. Johnathon Major spoke on behalf of the Night Club. He requested that the Council allow him to open the club.

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Mr. Sidney Jones who resides at 911 E. South Street stated that the clubs are a nuisance because cars block the driveways and the music is loud. He stated that individuals who want to open the club don't know the impact it has on the community. Ms. Shirley Guillory who resides at 632 South Street stated that they should give them a try because we already have clubs there. She stated that they have no problem with a new club.

Mr. E. J. Foreman who resides in back of the Manhattan stated that he is against it but not totally. He pointed out that they have problems now because driveways are always blocked.

Ms. Lillian Thompson Charles stated that she has property on High Street. She no longer lives there but owns the property. She pointed out that her family had to pick up trash every Saturday, Sunday, and Monday mornings.

Mr. Mark Richard stated that he will have outside security and agreed with Williams Funeral Home to pick up trash in the parking lot. He stated that this will be a Blues & Zydeco Club catering to the older crowd.

On a motion by Alderman Julius Alsandor and seconded by Alderman Joseph Charles, it was resolved to DENY the request for approval for VARIANCE of property located in an NMU (Neighborhood Mixed Use) Zone at 409 S. Academy Street to open a Night Club (Vincent Thomas, Sr. – Darlene Fruge/Mark Richard).

YEAS: Joseph Charles, Julius Alsandor, Blair Briggs, and Jacqueline Martin.

NAYS: Louis Butler, Jr.

ABSTAINED: Reginald Tatum.

ABSENT: None.

THE MOTION PASSES.

Discussion regarding the request for suspension of the 2 ½ percent cost of living increase for the fiscal year 2013-2014 and request to go before the Municipal Civil Service Commission for approval. Mayor Cravins stated that there was some talk earlier about reducing the number of hours employees worked from 40 to 36 hours. He thought that was not a good idea because it would put people into a position where they would make too much to get public assistance but not enough to make a living. He stated that rather than doing that he would concur that they allow people to work their forty hours and suspend the 2 ½ percent raise until whatever time that the revenues become available. He pointed out that this can be put into effect at any time during the fiscal year—it does not have to start with the fiscal year. Alderman Reginald Tatum stated that, since the City suspended the 2 ½ percent increase last year and they are contemplating doing it again this year, he feels that they are going backwards instead of forwards. He wanted to know what would happen if the City keeps suspending the increase and the employees decide to file a lawsuit like in the past. Ms. Karen Frank stated that the City does not have to give back all of the suspended increase at one time but as long as it is given back. Mayor Cravins stated that they should clear up the issue of how much is owed and then put it back on the agenda. Ms. Frank stated that the City would owe \$400,000 if all employees are included or \$80,000 for municipal civil service employees only. Mayor Cravins stated that they need to clarify who gets it and who is entitled to it. Alderman Julius Alsandor stated that this has been an ongoing battle before they even were on the Council. Mayor Cravins stated that they are asking the Council to look and the law and determine who is entitled legally to this increase. Alderman Blair Briggs stated that the first order of business is to find out where we are currently financially. He pointed out they have not discussed the budget in over a year. He suggested that they have a budget meeting and bring in the CPA to find out what it is going to look like when they put the budget together and then make a decision. He made a motion that this item be tabled. Alderman Alsandor stated that they have met two or three times with all of the department heads concerning the budget and they know where they stand financially. Mayor Cravins suggested that the motion to table the issue be withdrawn. Mr. E. J. Foreman, Water Plant employee, stated that something needs to be done and that it would also be foolish to give the increase and then go back and take it back. **NO ACTION TAKEN ON THIS MATTER.**

Presentation by Attorney Pride Doran regarding litigation cases involving David Manuel and Kirt Carmello. This item will be handled in Executive Session at the end of the meeting.

Presentation by City Attorney. Attorney Garrett Duplechain stated that he had no business to discuss.

Engineer's Monthly Status Report. Mr. Kenny Boagni spoke on behalf of Mr. William Jarrell in his absence. He stated that in reference to the McCarthy Lane Project, they will probably be able to open the road in about a month or so. He stated that Burr Street is in design and they should be able to bid that project out by the end of the summer. Regarding the North Park Pavilion Project, they are still waiting on responses on the Environmental Review. Regarding the Generator Project, Mr. Jarrell has gotten the plans back from the electrical engineer and the project is progressing. Mr. Boagni stated that he knows nothing about the Re-roofing Project. Regarding the Water Storage Tank Project, the tanks are coming up and the pipes have been laid down. This project should be finished soon. Alderman Reginald Tatum inquired about the Heather Street Bridge Project. Mr. Boagni stated that he knows nothing about that project. Mr. Kim Fontenot, Interim Public Works Director, stated that CLECO is about 10 – 12 days away from moving the overhead electric lines and once that is done, the E.B. Feucht, the contractor who was awarded the contract, will come in with their overhead crane to remove the Stans.

At this time, Mayor Cravins stated that he wanted to correct something. He pointed out he had forgotten but, in fairness to Mr. Watson and his crew, they did talk about closing both pools last year; however, the North Park pool did open last year. Alderman Julius Alsandor pointed out that it was decided and not budgeted for this year. Mr. Watson stated that they voted to not put money in to operate the North Park pool for this year.

The Class of 1985 put together a program at the Library for several retired teachers and they were presented with a key to the City. Ms. Laura Balthazar presented those teachers present today with a plaque and a small token of appreciation from the City for all of their hard work and dedication.

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CONSENTS

On a motion by Aldermen Reginald Tatum and Joseph Charles and seconded by Alderman Julius Alsandor, it was resolved to ratify the provisional hiring of the following employees in the Police Department (Corrections Division) at a rate of \$11.25 per hour:

- a. Lydia Johnson (transfer), effective 05/26/2013
- b. Mary Fontenot, effective 05/26/2013
- c. John Russell Dumes, effective 05/26/2013
- d. Alice Mayfield, effective 06/10/2013

On a motion by Aldermen Reginald Tatum and Joseph Charles and seconded by Alderman Julius Alsandor, it was resolved to ratify the provisional hiring of Gloria Davis as dispatcher in the Police Department at a rate of \$9.50 per hour, effective 06/10/2013.

A roll call vote was taken to approve the Consents Section with the following results:

YEAS: Joseph Charles, Julius Alsandor, Louis Butler, Jr., Blair Briggs, Reginald Tatum, and Jacqueline Martin.

NAYS: None.

ABSENT: None.

Mayor Cravins announced that on June 18, 2013 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon at the Opelousas Civic Center, there will be a comprehensive overview of the free services provided to small and large businesses operating in the State of Louisiana who wish to do business with government agencies. This event is sponsored by University of Louisiana at Lafayette and the City of Opelousas. This seminar is free of charge.

Sgt. Kenneth Edwards stated that he retired on 01/31/2013. He pointed out that he accumulated leave in 21 ½ years and that he has submitted several requests but he has not received payment yet. Mayor Cravins stated that the next step would have to involve the attorney.

On a motion by Alderman Joseph Charles, seconded by Alderman Julius Alsandor and unanimously carried, it was resolved to go into Executive Session at 6:25 p.m. to discuss the presentation by Attorney Pride Doran regarding litigation cases involving David Manuel and Kirt Carmello.

On a motion by Aldermen Reginald Tatum and Julius Alsandor, seconded by Alderwoman Jacqueline Martin and unanimously carried, it was resolved to go back into Regular Session at 7:30 p.m.

On a motion by Alderman Reginald Tatum and seconded by Aldermen Julius Alsandor and Joseph Charles, it was resolved to settle the lawsuit for the case of Kirt Carmello vs. the Opelousas Police Department—an offer was made in mediation that the City settle the claim for \$100,000.00 (\$25,000 from Insurance Company) and \$75,000 from the City to be paid in two (2) installments annually of \$37,500.00. A roll call vote was taken with the following results:

YEAS: Joseph Charles, Julius Alsandor, Louis Butler, Jr., Blair Briggs, Reginald Tatum, and Jacqueline Martin.

NAYS: None.

ABSENT: None.

In the case of David Manuel vs. the City of Opelousas, there were several trains of thought on this issue as to what settlement might be considered. Suggestions from Mr. Manuel's attorneys included that the City settles the case for \$76,000.00 (including \$20,000 from ORECD Grant that he owed to the City); next discussion was that the City offer \$56,000; the final offer was for \$50,000. The City Attorney will review the depositions in the case and try to resolve the issue by the July meeting. **NO ACTION TAKEN AT THIS TIME.**

There being nothing further to come before the Council, on a motion by Alderman Blair Briggs, seconded by Alderman Reginald Tatum and unanimously carried, it was resolved that the meeting be adjourned. The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

ATTEST:

CITY CLERK

MAYOR