

CITY OF OPELOUSAS  
OPELOUSAS, LOUISIANA  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
AUGUST 23, 2011

The Council of the City of Opelousas, Parish of St. Landry, State of Louisiana, convened in a special session on this 23<sup>rd</sup> day of August 2011, at 4:00 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 and Alderman Joseph Charles led the Pledge of Allegiance.

On a motion by Alderman Blair Briggs, seconded by Alderman Louis Butler, Jr., and unanimously carried, it was resolved to adopt the agenda, with the following changes: *deleting under the RESOLUTIONS Section, Item No. 5, "A PROPOSED RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF OPELOUSAS AND THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL SUPPORTING THE APPLICATION OF CHERRY MEADOWS L.P. FOR DEVELOPMENT OF 48-UNIT HOUSING WITH FUNDING PARTIALLY THROUGH THE LOUISIANA HOUSING FINANCE AGENCY WITH PRIVATE FUNDING THROUGH THE SALE OF TAX CREDITS"; and Item No. 6, "A RESOLUTION AND/OR ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO ENTER INTO AN OPTION TO SELL AND A SALE OF CITY-OWNED PROPERTY SITUATED PARTLY ON CHERRY STREET WITH THE PURCHASER BEING CHERRY MEADOWS L.P. WITH THE SALE BEING CONCLUDED FOLLOWING THE ADVERTISEMENT AND DELAYS SET FORTH BY LAW"; adding under the RESOLUTIONS Section, Item No. 6-A, "A RESOLUTION TO HAVE DELINQUENT WATER ACCOUNTS THAT ARE OWED TO THE CITY OF OPELOUSAS TURNED OVER TO A COLLECTION AGENCY FOR PAYMENT"; Item No. 6-B, "A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO ENTER INTO AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT WITH THE ST. LANDRY PARISH GOVERNMENT FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROVIDING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR THE CHILDREN OF ST. LANDRY PARISH TO ATTEND SCHOOL".*

**RESOLUTIONS**

*A RESOLUTION TO HAVE DELINQUENT WATER ACCOUNTS THAT ARE OWED TO THE CITY OF OPELOUSAS TURNED OVER TO A COLLECTION AGENCY FOR PAYMENT.*

On a motion by Alderman Blair Briggs and seconded by Alderman Julius Alsandor, the following Resolution was offered for adoption:

RESOLUTION NO. 24 OF 2011

A RESOLUTION TO HAVE DELINQUENT WATER ACCOUNTS THAT ARE OWED TO THE CITY OF OPELOUSAS  
TURNED OVER TO A COLLECTION AGENCY FOR PAYMENT

WHEREAS, the City of Opelousas provides water and sewer services to its citizens on a daily basis; and  
WHEREAS, these accounts are billed on a monthly basis and due by a specified date based on billing cycles; and  
WHEREAS, some of these accounts have been delinquent for a period of ninety (90) days or longer;  
THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Opelousas hereby authorizes the billing department to turn over such accounts that are ninety (90) days or older in delinquency to a collection agency to obtain payment.  
The above resolution having been submitted to a roll call vote was adopted as follows:  
YEAS: Joseph Charles, Julius Alsandor, Louis Butler, Jr., Blair Briggs, Reginald Tatum, and Jacqueline Martin.  
NAYS: None.  
ABSENT: None.  
Done and signed this 23<sup>rd</sup> day of August 2011.  
ATTEST:

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CITY CLERK

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MAYOR

*A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO ENTER INTO AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT WITH THE ST. LANDRY PARISH GOVERNMENT FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROVIDING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR THE CHILDREN OF ST. LANDRY PARISH TO ATTEND SCHOOL.*

On a motion by Aldermen Julius Alsandor and Joseph Charles and seconded by Alderman Blair Briggs, the following Resolution was offered for adoption:

RESOLUTION NO. 25 OF 2011

CITY OF OPELOUSAS  
OPELOUSAS, LOUISIANA  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
AUGUST 23, 2011

A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO ENTER INTO AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT WITH THE  
ST. LANDRY PARISH GOVERNMENT FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROVIDING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR THE  
CHILDREN OF ST. LANDRY PARISH TO ATTEND SCHOOL

WHEREAS, Article VII, Section 14 (c) of the Constitution of the State of Louisiana provides as follows: "For a public purpose, the state and its political subdivisions or political corporations may engage in cooperative endeavors with each other...", and WHEREAS, the St. Landry Parish Government and the City of Opelousas share a common interest in providing the children of North East Elementary a safe environment to attend school and to rid the premises of snakes, rats and any and all other forms of vermin which are hazardous to the children of St. Landry Parish;

WHEREAS, the St. Landry Parish Government and the City of Opelousas wish to enter into an intergovernmental agreement for the public purpose of providing a safe environment for the children of St. Landry Parish to attend school; and,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Board of Aldermen of the City of Opelousas do hereby authorize Mayor Donald R. Cravins, Sr., to enter into an intergovernmental agreement with the St. Landry Parish Government for the purpose of providing a safe environment for the children of St. Landry Parish to attend school.

The above resolution having been submitted to a roll call vote was adopted as follows:

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

NAYS: None.

ABSENT: None.

Done and signed this 23<sup>rd</sup> day of August, 2011.

ATTEST:

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CITY CLERK

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MAYOR

***PUBLIC HEARINGS***

*A PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE PURPOSE OF AMENDING THE CITY OF OPELOUSAS OPERATING BUDGET OF REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING SEPTEMBER 1, 2010 AND ENDING AUGUST 31, 2011.* Pursuant to an advertisement in the Daily World, a Public Hearing was opened at 4:09 p.m. for the purpose of amending the City of Opelousas Operating Budget of Revenues and Expenditures for the Fiscal Year beginning September 1, 2010 and ending August 31, 2011.

City Clerk Karen Frank stated that she changed the format of the budget using the same numbers from the previous budget. The document contains the budget message which explains the items in the budget in reference to the utility funds, sales tax, and the general fund. It also gives the original, amended, proposed, and actual. There is also a forecasted budget included as well the percentages of change for each fund in the budget. The only things that may have changed was two funds that had grants come in and the Parks Department budget changed which gave a different ending fund balance in general fund. Alderman Blair Briggs questioned where the beginning balance surplus funds had come from. This difference came from the Parks Department. Alderman Briggs stated that two weeks ago, the budget of the current year showed a beginning balance of a \$259,000 surplus. Ms. Frank stated that the funds from the CLECO contract had to be used to absorb the \$711,000 negative fund balance. Ms. Frank stated that in March 2011 Ms. Dana Quebedeaux with the Auditor's office did inform the Council that there was a negative fund balance in general fund of \$711,000. Ms. Frank explained that what they received was revenues versus expenditures and the fund balance was not included in that. When the fund balance was put in, that's when it showed the negative \$711,000. Alderman Reginald Tatum asked where in the budget were legal fees for the City Attorney other than his monthly retainer. Ms. Frank stated that these fees come out of the Internal G Fund. She stated that they do not adopt budgets for the Internal G, Internal A, and Workers' Comp funds because they don't generate any revenues. These funds come from general fund, water and sewer. Ms. Frank explained that litigation claims are paid from the Internal G Fund. Dr. Rosemary St. Clergy addressed the Council. She asked if any of the other budgets are ever discussed in the City Council meetings so that the public can know about it. Ms. Frank stated that they mainly discuss the larger funds—general fund, sales tax, and water and sewer. The other funds are very small with little transactions, where the only revenues may be interest earned in the bank, no expenses. Dr. St. Clergy suggested that it would be a good idea to have a number of what was paid out in attorneys' fees—not settlements—but just an amount for attorneys' fees regardless of who the attorney is. Mr. Bobby Ardoin, reporter for *The Advocate* asked how

CITY OF OPELOUSAS  
OPELOUSAS, LOUISIANA  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
AUGUST 23, 2011

much the City paid out in attorneys' fees for this budget that they are getting ready to amend. Ms. Frank stated that the attorneys' fees are not a part of the amended budget. Mr. Ardoin stated that he is aware of this, but he would like to know how much did the City pay out. Alderman Briggs requested that Ms. Frank have those figures for the next meeting. She stated that she would try to get that to him now. Mr. Ardoin asked whether or not the City was in serious financial jeopardy. Mayor Cravins stated he does not think they are in serious financial jeopardy, but they certainly have to operate very cautiously. He pointed out that a lot has to do with the decline in sales taxes, retirement fees, and fuel costs. Mayor Cravins stated that the City is no longer in a position to subsidize the additional expenditures of the departments. Ms. Frank stated that each department took a 2 ½% cut back in March to alleviate some of that deficit; but each department may have to take more cuts down the line. She also stated that the purpose of having quarterly budget meetings is to see the trend of which departments may go over their budget for that fiscal year. Ms. Tina Macias, reporter for *The Daily World*, asked if it was the Public Works Department that was overrun in its budget. Mayor Cravins stated that it was not Public Works, but that it was the Water Department. At the current rate being charged for water services, the City was losing almost \$600,000 in revenue per year. This deficit was being subsidized by the sales tax fund. There were over 500 citizens that had been using water without a connection which was causing the City to lose over a million dollars in revenue over the course of the last few years. This problem has since been corrected. Mayor Cravins also stated that the upcoming rate increase for water services will allow the Water Department to become self-sufficient and therefore removes that liability from the General Fund. Alderman Reginald Tatum asked which fund did Consultant fees come from. Ms. Frank stated that those fees are labeled as Professional Services and come from different funds. Alderman Tatum also wanted to know what would be the ramifications if the Council does not amend the budget. Ms. Frank stated that they are required by law to amend the budget; however, she is not sure of all the ramifications that would happen, but the amended budget is already spent. The revenues that are listed are pretty much what they have. Included in the budget, there is a forecasted report for each one of the funds that will document where they are as of July 2011 and what is expected for the next month. It is just a matter of amending the budget to reflect what has actually taken place so that they are within the five percent by law. Alderman Blair Briggs asked if they are required by State law to adopt an amended budget with a positive ending balance. Ms. Frank stated that some municipalities are actually finishing in the red; fortunately, the City had the funds from CLECO and could actually finish in the black. Ms. Frank stated that she does not understand what would be the purpose of not amending the budget because the money has been received and they have expended the money. The numbers are accurate unless some departments have bills that they have been holding. Alderman Tatum stated that he is not sure because there are parts that Ms. Frank is explaining but he just doesn't see those certain parts. He stated that it is just like a checkbook, and if that number from the amended budget is off, then they are starting off the new budget a negative. Ms. Frank explained that the \$792 starts off as the new fund balance. She commented that it is up to the Board of Aldermen to hold the department heads to what the City has in its budget. Mr. Paul Gennuso addressed the Council. He stated that it is obvious the City is not collecting the same amount of taxes it used to collect and asked why the City still had the same number of employees that they can't afford to pay. He commented that if the City had to let somebody go, then that's what they should do. Mr. Gennuso stated that the Council keeps questioning the budget but they are not actually addressing the problem—they are patching it. Ms. Frank stated that the auditors are not due in house until November 2011 and the audit is due to the State by February 28, 2012. Ms. Macias asked what would happen if the City is in the red. The Mayor stated that they would do what is necessary. The Public Hearing was closed at 4:58 p.m.

On a motion by Alderman Julius Alsandor and seconded by Alderman Louis Butler, Jr., and Alderwoman Jacqueline Martin, the following Ordinance was offered for adoption:

ORDINANCE NO. 8 OF 2011  
AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE OPERATING BUDGET OF  
REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR  
BEGINNING SEPTEMBER 1, 2010 AND ENDING AUGUST 31, 2011

BE IT ORDAINED by the Board of Aldermen, of the City of Opelousas, Louisiana in general session convened that:

SECTION I. The attached detailed budget of Revenues for Fiscal Year beginning September 1, 2010 and ending August 31, 2011, has been and the same was hereby amended to serve as an Operating Budget of Revenues for the City of Opelousas, Louisiana, during the same period.

SECTION II. The attached budget of Expenditures by departments for the Fiscal Year beginning September 1, 2010 and ending August 31, 2011, has been and the same was hereby amended to serve as a budget of expenditures for the City during the said period.

CITY OF OPELOUSAS  
OPELOUSAS, LOUISIANA  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
AUGUST 23, 2011

SECTION III. The amending of this Operating Budget of Expenditures has been and the same was hereby declared to operate as an appropriation of the amount therein set forth within the terms of the budget classification.

SECTION IV. Amounts were available for expenditures only to the extent included with the 2010-2011 budget.

Said Ordinance having been introduced on July 12, 2011, by Alderman Julius Alsandor, notice of public hearings having been published, said public hearings having been held, the title having been read and the Ordinance considered, a record vote was taken and the following results were had:

YEAS: Julius Alsandor, Louis Butler, Jr., Blair Briggs, and Jacqueline Martin.

NAYS: Joseph Charles and Reginald Tatum.

ABSENT: None.

ABSTAINED: None.

The Ordinance was declared adopted on this 23<sup>rd</sup> day of August 2011.

ATTEST:

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CITY CLERK

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MAYOR

*A PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE PURPOSE OF ADOPTING THE CITY OF OPELOUSAS OPERATING BUDGET OF REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING SEPTEMBER 1, 2011 AND ENDING AUGUST 31, 2012.* Pursuant to an advertisement in the Daily World, a Public Hearing was opened at 5:00 p.m. for the purpose of adopting the City of Opelousas Operating Budget of Revenues and Expenditures for the Fiscal Year beginning September 1, 2011 and ending August 31, 2012.

Alderman Julius Alsandor stated that it is obvious that they do have a Council that will be diligent to watch over the budget and be extra cautious on what they approve. He stated that many times they look for blames but now is the time to look for fixes, for solutions and remedies. Ms. Frank stated that they went over a lot of the proposed budget in the last public hearing. She pointed out that each department head worked very hard and they came to about \$1.8 million just in cuts in general fund alone. She stated that everyone was made aware that at some point down the line, they may have to go back and cut even more than what they have cut out of their budgets. She stated they understand that may mean very well personnel this time because what everybody did was cut everything else that they could without touching personnel. She thinks it's a good budget—they are in the black. Ms. Frank's suggestion was to have a quarterly meeting with each department manager in the Budget Committee Meeting to go over their budgets line by line. She pointed out that the Board can amend that budget every month if they choose to. She stated that they just recently stopped having public hearings for budget amendments in the last couple of months. It can be done whenever the Board calls a meeting. Ms. Frank pointed out that it is not set in stone that if you adopt the budget today that you can't amend it tomorrow. It can be amended as soon as September 1<sup>st</sup>. Ms. Frank elaborated on some of the cuts made to the budget: overtime is almost eliminated in several departments; no capital outlay expenditures in this next fiscal year; each department has reduced their budgets by at least five percent with several of them cutting ten percent or more; car allowances have been cut. Alderman Alsandor commented on the statement regarding cutting of car allowances for the Aldermen. He stated that they cannot reduce their car allowances because it is considered compensation and this is a State statute. Alderman Blair Briggs stated that the real problem is personnel—that is what eats up this budget—and it is inevitable that they are going to have to face this problem. He is personally not comfortable with the current cushion in the budget because the City has completely depleted their reserves and they have no money for any improvements as far as streets, major water lines or sewerage, or any lift stations. Ms. Frank stated that street and water improvements are normally done through bonds; however, the City is still paying on all those bonds. Dr. Rosemary St. Clergy asked if the City's ability to get a bond was based on their financial stability. Alderman Briggs stated that this is another reason to cut. Alderman Alsandor stated that credit also needs to go to the Department Heads. Cuts to personnel were the last thing the Department Heads even thought about bringing up. Mr. Paul Gennuso pointed out that the retirement system is what is eating up a lot of the City's budget and there is another projected increase coming. Alderman Tatum asked how much of the \$266,620 was for the North Park Pavilion. She stated that it was about \$135,000. Mr. Ken Vidrine asked whether or not the City was going to pay one half of his sick leave for his upcoming retirement. Mayor Cravins stated that he didn't have a problem with that. Mr. Briggs wanted to know if any of that money was included in the Parks Department budget. Ms. Frank pointed out that if the Board approves to pay Mr. Vidrine the half then they would have to go back and pay the others who received one third the same as Mr. Vidrine. Dr. Rosemary St. Clergy stated that this issue has been discussed at other meetings and they

CITY OF OPELOUSAS  
OPELOUSAS, LOUISIANA  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
AUGUST 23, 2011

need to make a decision on it. Alderman Tatum asked if Mr. Vidrine had put in his budget for the payment of one half of his sick leave upon retirement. Mr. Vidrine stated that he had not. Alderman Alsandor stated that this was passed in a proposed budget in 2006 and those budgets are changed yearly. So next year it can be changed again. However, he feels that because it is a municipality statute law right now, Mr. Vidrine and the two other employees that just retired should be paid the half. No motion was made on this recommendation because it was not on the agenda. Mr. Vidrine stated that the difference would be covered under the salary line item because the person who replaces him will start at a lower salary. Fire Chief Lee Cahanin stated that the Fire Department made some deep sacrifices and there are some ripple effects that are taking place but they are doing a good job of controlling that. He commented that it bothers him that it was said in this meeting in public that come January some of his people might lose their job. He wants to be able to assure them that this is not going to happen. He stated that if the employees pick up the paper and decide that they do not have the backing that is necessary for them to have a career here in Opelousas then they are going to start leaving us. Chief Cahanin stated that if it takes more sacrifices to keep this City running then they have to do that; but to hang over our heads our employees that they might not have a job come January—right after the holidays or right when they are making a decision to buy a new house or a new vehicle—then he thinks that is unfair and they ought to respect their employees more than they did with that statement. Police Chief Perry Gallow stated that is obvious that there are some concerns regarding the budget for the entire City and they have sacrificed tremendously in the cuts they have made in the Police Department. He knows that not much has been said about cost of living increases; however, they have been able to manage their budget to give their employees a 2 ½ percent increase for the 2011-2012 fiscal year. Chief Gallow stated that these men and women go places where others run from and to not compensate them when the money is there within their budget would not be a good thing. He stated that the service they provide to the City of Opelousas is critical and morale issues can create deficiencies. He asked that the Council consider this.

The Public Hearing was closed at 5:42 p.m.

On a motion by Alderman Julius Alsandor and seconded by Alderman Louis Butler, Jr., the following Ordinance was offered for adoption:

ORDINANCE NO. 9 OF 2011  
AN ORDINANCE ADOPTING THE OPERATING BUDGET OF  
REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR  
BEGINNING SEPTEMBER 1, 2011 AND ENDING AUGUST 31, 2012

BE IT ORDAINED by the Board of Aldermen, of the City of Opelousas, Louisiana in general session convened that:

SECTION I. The attached detailed estimate of Revenues for Fiscal Year beginning September 1, 2011 and ending August 31, 2012, be and the same is hereby adopted to serve as an Operating Budget of Revenues for the City of Opelousas, Louisiana, during the same period.

SECTION II. The attached estimate of Expenditures by departments for the Fiscal Year beginning September 1, 2011 and ending August 31, 2012, be and the same is hereby adopted to serve as a budget of expenditures for the City during the said period.

SECTION III. The adoption of this Operating Budget of Expenditures be and the same is hereby declared to operate as an appropriation of the amount therein set forth within the terms of the budget classification.

SECTION IV. Amounts are available for expenditures only to the extent included with the 2011-2012 budget.

Said Ordinance having been introduced on July 12, 2011, by Alderman Julius Alsandor, notice of public hearings having been published, said public hearings having been held, the title having been read and the Ordinance considered, a record vote was taken and the following results were had:

YEAS: Julius Alsandor, Louis Butler, Jr., and Jacqueline Martin.

NAYS: Joseph Charles, Blair Briggs, and Reginald Tatum.

ABSENT: None.

ABSTAINED: None.

**The Motion FAILED and the Ordinance was NOT ADOPTED.**

ATTEST:

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CITY CLERK

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MAYOR

Alderman Julius Alsandor announced that Mr. Merrick Siverand was in the hospital and he asked Mr. Kim Fontenot to elaborate on that Mr. Fontenot, Public Works Director, announced that Mr. Siverand was admitted to the hospital

CITY OF OPELOUSAS  
OPELOUSAS, LOUISIANA  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
AUGUST 23, 2011

Thursday night with stomach pains. He had been coming to work all week with stomach pains but finally had to go to the hospital. He was placed on a breathing tube and slipped into a coma; but as of today, the news is better—he has regained consciousness, and his blood count is up and his kidneys are functioning properly now. A specialist has been called in to rule out some diseases.

Alderman Julius Alsandor announced that on September 1, 2011, the City would be operating on fifty percent of the previous year's budget since the proposed budget was not adopted. The departments will operate on this budget for six months.

There being nothing further to come before the Council, it was unanimously moved, seconded, and carried that the meeting be adjourned. The meeting was adjourned at 5:45 p.m.

ATTEST:

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CITY CLERK

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MAYOR