

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS**  
**ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH COUNCIL**  
**TUESDAY, MAY 11<sup>TH</sup>, 2021**  
**CHAIRMAN KURT BECNEL**  
**VICE-CHAIR MICHAEL WRIGHT**

The Council of the Parish of St. John the Baptist Parish, State of Louisiana, met in Regular Session in the Rudolph Sorapuru Chambers, Edgard, Louisiana on Tuesday, May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021, at 6:30 PM.

**CALL TO ORDER:**

**PRESENT AT ROLL CALL:** Lennix Madere, Jr., Councilman-at-Large, Div. A, Kurt Becnel, Councilman District I, Warren Torres, Jr., Councilman District II, Tammy Houston, Councilwoman District III, Tyra Duhe-Griffin, Councilwoman District IV, Robert Arcuri, Councilman District V, Tonia Schnyder, Councilwoman District VI, Thomas Malik, Councilman District VII, Michael Wright, Councilman-at-Large, Div. B

**ABSENT:** None

Councilwoman Houston led the Prayer. Councilman led the Pledge.

Legal Counsel Christopher Cortez was present.

**PUBLIC COMMENT - AGENDA ITEMS ONLY (3 minutes per citizen)**

There was no public comment.

**Tammy Houston - Presentation - DENKA - Belle Pointe Park Airnasium - Jorge Lavastida, Plant Manager, Tricia Thompson, Human Resources Manager, and Marvin "Butch" Perrilloux**

*Tricia Thompson, Denka's Human Resources Manager stated, "On behalf of Denka Performance Elastomer, it's my honor and privilege to be here tonight to present and partner with St. John Parish for the Airnasium, by helping with the community and the beautification of it for the children and citizens of St. John the Baptist Parish. The Council, Michael Sanders, Parks and Recreation Director thanked Denka for their kind donation for the Airnasium flooring at the Belle Pointe Park."*

**CONSENT AGENDA:**

**ITEMS:**

Approval of Minutes - April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021, Council Meeting; Jaclyn Hotard - Re-appointment of Dr. Henry Hardy to the South Central Planning and Development Board; Jaclyn Hotard - Re-appointment of Carl Monica to the South Central Planning and Development Board

**MOTION:** Councilwoman Houston moved and Councilman Madere seconded the motion to approve consent agenda items consisting of Approval of Minutes - April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021, Council Meeting; Jaclyn Hotard - Re-appointment of Dr. Henry Hardy to the

South Central Planning and Development Board; Jaclyn Hotard - Re-appointment of Carl Monica to the South Central Planning and Development Board. The motion passed unanimously.

**REPORTS:**

**President's Report:**

**Tom Malik - Finance Committee Report**

Councilman Malik stated, "Yes sir Mr. Chairman. The finance committee met prior to the regular meeting, and it consisted of all Council members. The Finance Committee approved the following Resolutions R21-63, R21-64, R21-65, and R21-68."

**PUBLIC HEARING AND ADOPTION ON ORDINANCES/NEW BUSINESS:**

**21-07**(Public Hearing Held) An Ordinance Approving the re-subdivision of a portion of Reine Subdivision and Lot 21C of J.R. Troxler Subdivision into Lot 21C-1 of J. R. Troxler Subdivision, located in the area generally bounded by Jaubert Lane, E Airline Highway, and Somerset Street, LaPlace, as shown in a survey prepared by Stephen P. Flynn, P.L.S. on May 16, 2019 (PZS-21-1271)(R. Pastorek & J. Hotard)

**MOTION:** Councilman Arcuri moved and Councilman Wright seconded the motion to approve Ordinance 21-07. The motion passed unanimously.

**21-08**(Public Hearing Held)An ordinance approving the re-subdivision of Lot SJ-1A of Reine Subdivision, Lot 21C-1 & Lot 27B of J. R. Troxler Subdivision, and a portion of the Marcel Jaubert Tract into Lot SJ-1A-1 of Reine Subdivision, Lot 21C-2 of J.R. Troxler Subdivision, and Lot MJ-1 of the Marcel Jaubert Tract located in the area generally bounded by Jaubert Lane, E Airline Highway, and Somerset Street, LaPlace, as shown in a survey prepared by Stephen P. Flynn, P.L.S. on September 26, 2019(PZS-21-1263)(R. Pastorek & J. Hotard)

**MOTION:** Councilman Wright moved and Councilman Arcuri seconded the motion to approve Ordinance 21-08. The motion passed unanimously.

**21-09**(Public Hearing Held)An ordinance approving the re-subdivision of Lots 21C-2, 22, 23, 24, & 25 of J.R. Troxler Subdivision into Lot 21C-2A of J.R. Troxler Subdivision located in the area generally bounded by Jaubert Lane, E Airline Highway, and Somerset Street, LaPlace, as shown in a survey prepared by Stephen P. Flynn, P.L.S. on December 23, 2019(PZS-21-1264)(R. Pastorek & J. Hotard)

**MOTION:** Councilman Arcuri moved and Councilman Wright seconded the motion to approve Ordinance 21-09. The motion passed unanimously.

**21-10**(Public Hearing Held)An ordinance approving the re-zoning of Lot 21C-2A of J.R. Troxler Subdivision from the Commercial District Three(C-3) and Residential District One(R-1)to the Industrial District One(I-1)zoning district located in the area generally bounded by Jaubert Lane, E Airline Highway, and Somerset Street, LaPlace, as shown in Exhibit 1 attached(PZR-21-1203)(R. Pastorek & J. Hotard)

**MOTION:** Councilman Arcuri moved and Councilman Wright seconded the motion to approve Ordinance 21-10. The motion passed unanimously.

**21-11** (Public Hearing Held) An ordinance approving a re-subdivision of a portion of the Elias Madere Tract into Lots 1-EM, 2-EM, & 3-EM of the Elias Madere Tract located in the area generally bounded by E 12<sup>th</sup> Street, E 13<sup>th</sup> Street, Eric Street, and Duhe Drive, Reserve, as shown in a survey prepared by Stephen P. Flynn, P.L.S. on December 10, 2020. (PZS-21-1269) (R. Pastorek & J. Hotard)

**MOTION:** Councilman Houston moved and Councilman Madere seconded the motion to approve Ordinance 21-11. The motion passed unanimously.

**21-12** (Public Hearing Held) An ordinance approving the rezoning of the Fabian Sorapuru Tract from the Commercial District One (C-1) and Residential District One (R-1) to the Residential District Two (R-2) zoning district located in the area generally bounded by Odel Barre Court, Highway 18, and E. 13<sup>th</sup> Street, Edgard, as shown in Exhibit 1 attached (PZR-21-1214) (R. Pastorek & J. Hotard)

**MOTION:** Councilman Madere moved and Councilwoman Duhe-Griffin seconded the motion to approve Ordinance 21-12. The motion passed unanimously.

**21-13** (Public Hearing Held) An ordinance approving a conditional use permit for a pawn shop at Lot A, Caroline Plantation, which has a municipal address of 509 W. Airline Highway, located in the area generally bounded by W. Airline Highway, Main Street, and W. 5<sup>th</sup> Street, LaPlace, as shown in Exhibit 1 attached (PZR-21-1217) (R. Pastorek & J. Hotard)

Councilwoman Houston stated, "Mr. Pastorek, Resolution R21-01, it's for the... is it a recommendation or is it/ is it a resolution that we passed that limits how many alternative financial institutes that we allow?"

Rene Pastorek stated, "The resolution was passed by the Council in January. It sets up a what's called 'tech-savvy' by Planning and Zoning Department to study these uses, you know in further into some potential ordinance begin further uses. The resolution also set-up interim regulations establishing these criteria as well as the Parish Council approval needed to begin operations in such uses."

Councilwoman Houston asked, "So, this is just to begin operations, we have not put them in place yet?"

Rene Pastorek stated, "So these interim regulations are in place as per the resolution."

Councilwoman Houston stated, "That prohibits this type of business."

Rene Pastorek stated, "Within those criteria, establishes criteria as well as the need for Parish Council approval."

Councilwoman Houston asked, "And the criteria is what? Is it 1,000 ft.?"

Rene Pastorek stated, "The criteria states that there should only be one (1) such use within a 1,000-ft. of another, as well as it should be limited to than no more than, no closure than 300 ft. to residential property."

Councilwoman Houston asked, "So, how close is this one up for approval tonight?"

Rene Pastorek stated, "This site is 96 ft. from a residential property, as well as within a thousand-foot radius there are five (5) other existing establishments."

Councilwoman Houston stated, "So in essence we would actually be going against our Ordinance if we allow this?"

Rene Pastorek stated, "Against interim regulations, yes."

Councilwoman Houston stated, "I guess we'll set precedence."

Councilman Arcuri stated, "One thing I'd like I'd just make a couple of points. The 1,000 ft. radius of the existing businesses there are all cash payday loans. There is one pawn shop that is located right next to the Sheriff's office just about, so this would be the second one in the parish. The other thing I want to mention is the 300-foot radius of residences in back of this particular commercial C-3 site is a railroad track. So, it divides this site from the residences. The other deal I talked to the owners, and I was worried about payday loans because most of these cash places that within the 1,000 ft. radius are payday loans and they are telling me they will not be making payday loans. We have local owners for that, so that's why I would encourage anyone we could if anyone has questions of the owners, can we ask them if anyone has questions to come up and they can answer?"

I am Stewart Smith, I'm one of the partners of Pawn Depot. LaPlace would be our 6<sup>th</sup> location, we have 5 other locations in the general New Orleans area. And this is Bubby Guidry, he's a partner as well."

Councilwoman Houston stated, "So you picked this particular spot, why? Did you do a study on it, did you think it would allow you more customers, why did you pick this site?"

Stewart Smith stated, "Well first and foremost, LaPlace is a...when you look at the density per population in the State of Louisiana, it's 16,700 and this is through 2016 census. LaPlace is approximately 30,000, so we feel like there is a need for an alternative for the customers there's one other pawn shop. Just to reiterate, we do not offer title loans, payday loans, signature loans, we're strictly a collateral based pawn loan."

Councilwoman Houston stated, "No, when I said, I didn't mean LaPlace I just mean the location knowing that it was in close proximity."

Stewart Smith stated, "Yeah it was available and at the time we were not aware of any ordinances, we bought the property before January before the ordinance was in."

Councilwoman Houston stated, "Before the resolution?"

Stewart Smith stated, "Resolution, yes ma'am."

Councilwoman Houston asked, "How big the how large will the..."

Stewart Smith stated, "About seventy-eight hundred square feet."

Councilwoman Houston stated, "Well, you said you bought the property before we actually voted on the resolution?"

Stewart Smith stated, "Correct."

Councilwoman Houston stated, "I just don't want us to be the victim of we set precedence. If these are our rules, then I think we have to live by them, that's just my opinion."

Stewart Smith stated, "Okay. If I get a given opinion that when that as far as alternative financial institution, you get long tail to that, I feel like that would not, we would offer a different product than the payday loans which is conducive to a cycle of debt and I feel like that collateral loan or a pawn loan is a completely different product. So, I think it's unfair to classify us as a...with the payday lenders."

Councilwoman Houston stated, "Well you do know that that's not my classification, I did not classify a pawn shop as an alternative financial institute."

Stewart Smith stated, "Yes ma'am."

Councilwoman Houston stated, "So I just want to make that clear."

Stewart Smith stated, "Ok!"

Councilman Malik stated, "You know I spoke with some of the property owners, who really are not objectionable to a pawn shop coming in. And the language, potentially negative impacts, you know if we were talking about is a business and the business itself is either ethical or not ethical, it's the owners or the managers, Mr. Guidry, who is a local resident as another a number of other interests in the parish, and the quality of work that he's always put forth is there...you know he does a lot of stuff with the industry, as well as the community. Now, I don't see a problem with it. I understand that there's a bit of a time twinkling on, but to you know like I said; it's if you know Mr. Guidry who I think is an ethical businessman will run his business in that same manner."

Councilman Torres stated, "Just to piggyback on what Mr. Arcuri said with the 300 feet, you got a railroad track you got a drainage canal and let us hope nobody's coming out a resident and going there I think they got fence there also. So, it is kind a...even 300 feet you got to look at the big picture. And, with my concern is how we got five of these lawn things in one area, that we going to go against if we would go against this project. And I like the, I'll go to the pawn shop by the Sheriff office on a regular basis and I don't have no problem with it."

Councilwoman Duhe-Griffin stated, "I did go back and forth with myself and I reached out to a few of my residents, as well, and a few people did have concerns about the school. I have visited Ory school and we cannot even see I can't even see any buildings, there's another lot that I think is also behind the school, there was a concern about that. I/you only see the children does not have the children would not have access to it on John L. Ory's campus if that was a concern. I do know I think, I called Mr. Arcuri last night just to answer some questions for me, I think you said the street behind it is not even really, directly with the school. My residents also, they approved it they are okay. They said that they would enjoy going to another pawn shop, except with the existing

one and they actually have to go to Kenner, because they visit the one that you have in Kenner, a lot of our residents go to the one in Kenner. So, I'm going to side with my residents today."

Councilman Arcuri stated, "Mr. Becnel I just want to add one thing. The area where the other building was you know a previous car wash as a lot of people know. And it sat vacant for probably a year and a half maybe two years, so it is it was a I don't want to call it blighted, but it was just time for something to happen there and I'm glad someone is investing money and I believe y'all going to put up a what 8,000 square foot building?"

Stewart Smith stated, "Yes sir."

Councilman Arcuri stated, "And I've seen the other buildings you'll have and they are steadily completed. So, hopefully y'all can get things running, you can get it going. Thank you."

Councilwoman Houston stated, "I just want to go on record and say that I always welcome business to the area. And I don't oppose this business, but I do as a Council person, I do think that I need to look at the fact that resolution...that resolution was passed. So, just know that it is not to stop your business cause we [Inaudible] but I have to vote my conscience. So, I just had to put that on record."

Councilman Madere asked, "Mr. Rene, could you come back up? At the Planning and Zoning meeting, did any residents show...show up complaining?"

Rene Pastorek stated, "I have never received no complaints..."

Councilman Madere stated, "No written complaints or anything about it? This is a difficult one, cause we did pass a resolution. Okay and you know we tried to make sure that our citizens follow the rules and regulations that this council puts forward, and we basically have them stay the same way. But I understand how this could be a very difficult vote right here because I know Mr. Guidry, him, I know him and I've been looking for something to come to place I didn't know what was coming looks like they was tearing it down and it's in the same situation it was in, they purchased the land before this resolution passed so that's what make it sort of a toss-up you know and all the things all the other council members said is you know about the railroad and everything you know is a great point. You know but um, I'm not going to make up my mind until I get ready to vote on this one cause it's a, it's a tough one. Cause definitely want business in there and I think it's a nice location you know. The only problem is that like I said, Ms. Houston said this resolution because it's a tough one, I can't tell another citizen about doing something according to our code and then do this. I know so, it's a tough one there."

Councilwoman Schnyder stated, "I know we keep saying we passed a resolution back in January, but some of the concerns we had was the 1,000 feet within existing financial institutions and we established that its not's the same as the one that we have within those 5 institutions. And also, the 300 feet with the residential property there is a train track and other things separates the residential areas. So, it's not like we're going against what we really voted for, cause it's really not the same everything's not the same we voted for what they're actually doing. So, I'm kind a I'm always for a new business. You know it's ethical business-like

*Mr. Malik, I did my home...I checked with the Sheriff department on his fears on pawn shops in our parish, it hasn't been an issue, from my understanding that the pawns are reported to sheriff daily, whereas they can do a background check whether it's stolen or whatever it hasn't been an issue. So, I'm always in support of new business in our area."*

*Councilman Malik stated, "Just one more word Mr. Councilman Chair, thank you. I think if you consider the totality of the circumstances that are going on, in good faith they purchased a piece of property and there was some-an ordinance was passed and I very much appreciate you sticking to your guns. And I wouldn't want to see you do anything else. But I think that, that fairness is a big deal and in that we have, to have some flexibility and keep ordinances as such as a living document. Thank you, sir."*

*Councilman Madere stated, "Okay uh Ms. Schnyder just said something, pawn shops also you know also help the police department. So sometimes they recover a lot of stolen property, being reported in you know so you do have a plus side you know and you got to be able to you know make more sides to it you know and also our ordinance and the fact that they purchased before our ordinance ever went to affect. You know they wasn't aware of it anyway, it's probably because they weren't aware of our ordinance, they may have went somewhere else to another location. So that's another thing to you know, down this scale see which way it goes."*

*Councilman Wright stated, "Thank you. Can I just you know, I kind appreciate the resolution and that was passed, and I know there was an attempt to clean up Airline Highway clean up St. John Parish, you know we hear it on the streets all the time there's carwashes and convenient stores on every corner. So, I don't necessarily think the resolution was looking to target, but I think it was you know looking to maybe restrict, you know I met with one of the owners last week - I apologize didn't meet with the second one, and my only request was; if this does pass, please keep it esthetically, please because it is the owner in my district that did make that commitment. So, you know only to the wishes of the council."*

*Councilwoman Houston stated, "Yes once again, I just think we're just setting precedence. Someone else can come up and they can ask us of the same thing, how do we say no. But, once again I respect the fact that it is a respectable business that I trust what Mr. Mike said that he had a conversation with him and I'm sure it's going to be grand and be meticulous but, you know I just have a problem with going against something that we've already passed. But that's just my opinion."*

**MOTION:** Councilman Arcuri moved and Councilman Malik seconded the motion to approve Ordinance 21-13. The motion passed with 7 yeas (Arcuri, Becnel, Duhe-Griffin, Schnyder, Torres, Wright) and 2 abstaining (Houston & Madere).

**21-14**(Public Hearing Held)An ordinance amending ordinance 20-46 relative to the annual operating budgets for St. John the Baptist Parish General Fund, Special Revenue Funds, Enterprise Funds, and Capital Project Funds for the fiscal year beginning January 1, 2021 and ending December 31, 2021(J. Hotard)

**MOTION:** Councilman Malik moved and Councilwoman Houston seconded the motion to approve Ordinance 21-14. The motion passed unanimously.

**Jaclyn Hotard - Resolution - R21-62 - A Resolution ordering and calling special elections to be held in(i)the Parish of St. John the Baptist, State of Louisiana, to authorize the renewal of special taxes, the rededication of a special tax and the issuance of general obligation bonds therein and(ii)Road Lighting District No.1 of the Parish of St. John the Baptist, State of Louisiana to authorize the renewal of a special tax therein; making application to the State Bond Commission and providing for other matters in connection therewith**

**MOTION:** Councilman Malik moved and Councilman Wright seconded the motion to approve Resolution - R21-62. A Resolution ordering and calling special elections to be held in(i)the Parish of St. John the Baptist, State of Louisiana, to authorize the renewal of special taxes, the rededication of a special tax and the issuance of general obligation bonds therein and(ii)Road Lighting District No.1 of the Parish of St. John the Baptist, State of Louisiana to authorize the renewal of a special tax therein; making application to the State Bond Commission and providing for other matters in connection therewith. The motion passed unanimously.

**Jaclyn Hotard - Resolution - R21-66 - A Resolution requesting "RIVER PARISH COMMUNITY COLLEGE" directional signs to be installed at 3799 West Airline Highway, Reserve, LA 70084, near the intersection of West 10<sup>th</sup>/REGALA Park Road and Airline Highway and near the intersections of 464 Rosenwald Street and Airline Highway in Reserve, LA**

**MOTION:** Councilman Torres moved and Councilman Madere seconded the motion to approve Resolution - R21-66. A Resolution requesting "RIVER PARISH COMMUNITY COLLEGE" directional signs to be installed at 3799 West Airline Highway, Reserve, LA 70084, near the intersection of West 10<sup>th</sup>/REGALA Park Road and Airline Highway and near the intersections of 464 Rosenwald Street and Airline Highway in Reserve, LA. The motion passed unanimously.

**Jaclyn Hotard - Resolution - R21-67 - A Resolution in support of:(1) declaring the week of May 9<sup>th</sup> through 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021, "Flood Safety Awareness Week;" (2)encouraging citizens of St. John to purchase flood insurance;(3)stressing the requirement to obtain building permits in advance of construction in the floodplain, and(4)emphasizing the importance of making improvements to individual hurricane preparedness plans; all of which may better reduce the occurrence of death and injury as a result of severe flooding during the 2021 Hurricane Season**

**MOTION:** Councilman Wright moved and Councilwoman Duhe-Griffin seconded the motion to approve Resolution - R21-67. A Resolution in support of:(1) declaring the week of May 9<sup>th</sup> through 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021,"Flood Safety Awareness Week;"(2) encouraging citizens of St. John to purchase flood insurance;(3)stressing the requirement to obtain building permits in advance of construction in the floodplain, and(4) emphasizing the importance of making improvements to individual hurricane preparedness plans; all of which may better reduce the occurrence of death and injury as a result of severe flooding during the 2021 Hurricane Season. The motion passed unanimously.

**INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES:**

**21-15** An ordinance amending Ordinance 21-14 relative to the annual operating budgets for St. John the Baptist Parish General Fund, Special Revenue Funds, Enterprise Funds, and Capital Project Funds for the fiscal year



beginning January 1, 2021 and ending December 31, 2021 (J. Hotard)

**CORRESPONDENCE/COUNCIL BRIEFS:**

**ADJOURNMENT:**

At 7:50 PM, Councilwoman Houston moved and Councilwoman Schnyder seconded the motion to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously.

/s/Kurt P. Becnel  
COUNCIL CHAIRMAN

/s/Jackie Landeche  
Council Secretary