

Spring Bayou Lake Commission Meeting August 19, 2019

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Jimmy Landry at 6:00 pm in the Police Jury Meeting Room in the Marksville Courthouse.

Chairman Landry led with the Pledge of Allegiance and an Opening Prayer.

Secretary Terry Laborde called the roll of committee members. Present were Chairman Landry, Vice-Chairman Rayford Laborde, Secretary Terry Laborde, Commissioner Artha Hale, Commissioner Roland Dugas III, Commissioner Philip Lamartiniere, Commissioner Jules JK Bordelon, Juror Mark Borrel, Juror Trent Clark, and Police Jury President Col. Charles Jones. Absent were Commissioner Dr. LJ Mayeux and Commissioner Mayor Kenneth Pickett. Other guest included Ronald Coco, Bill Jupp, Mike Ducote, Scott Laborde, Jacques Goudeau, James Franks, George Isreal, Bobby Bordelon, Van Moreau, Mickey Desselle, Gerald Creador, William Desoto, and Earnest Kimble.

Chairman Landry began with a discussion on the Spring Bayou Capital Outlay Request where the Avoyelles Police Jury included a request of \$250,000 in their Capital Outlay submission. The request was for maintenance and improvements to the Little River dam/weir and control structure. The request was approved during the 2019 Legislative session and now moving to the governor's desk for his signature prior to going to the bonding commission for funding. The Avoyelles Police Jury must do a 25% match, a percentage of the total amount will be allocated for the management of the project, and the funds will be released on a request basis instead of a lump sum. After questions whether the Police Jury had the available funding for the 25% (approximately \$60,000) match, President Col. Jones explained the parish entity has the money for all the required matching percentages for each grant in process at this time. Commissioner Dugas questioned if a personal donation of \$60,000 by a citizen could be dedicated to the Spring Bayou project. Juror Borrel and Jacques Goudeau responded that this question should be directed to District Attorney Charles Riddle, but they felt the money had to go straight in the Police Jury's General Fund account. Later in the meeting, Col. Jones told the commissioners that the Capital Outlay Program process has four steps in a long process and may extend for years. He stated that an individual cannot make a donation to the Police Jury for a specific program and the donation must go into the general fund as was previously stated. He said there are eight projects in process at this time and the money for matching funds for each is set aside in phases.

Discussion ensued to the high water level in Little River and the Spring Bayou complex while water levels in most major rivers and bayous in the immediate area have declined. Commissioner Dugas requested the Police Jury shoot elevations at Wolf's Prairie and the Little River dam to determine if there are difference in elevation which would mean obstructions downstream are blocking the flow of water. Commissioner Dugas presented a motion for Pan American Engineers to shoot the water level elevations. Commissioner Lamartiniere added a second and the motion was unanimous. During discussion it was noted the flow of water downstream is slow. Mickey Desselle added that the water flows across roads on his property. George Isreal added that the water level in Little River next to his property had only dropped 1.4 feet from the 45.3-foot level of a few months ago.

James Franks added that it was not possible to navigate down Bayou Jeansonne and Bayou Natchitoches.

Giant Salvinia, originally from South America, was the next topic. Giant Salvinia will fold and compress in upright chains. Chairman Landry and others from the audience spoke of the invasion of the floating aquatic invasion in the complex and other bodies of water in Louisiana. Chairman Landry summarized his phone call to LDWF Biologist Jody David who indicated the spraying by LDWF may not be as effective as the newly discovered “beetle”. The beetle has proven to be effective eating the waxy floating vegetation, but draw backs include its problems with the cold temperatures and drowning if it falls off the leaves. The previous problem of underwater hydrilla was controlled by the sterile grass carp; however, grass carp do not eat the Giant Salvinia. It has been found in sloughs as this year’s unusually high water has prevented them from drying out on land. George Isreal testified that in some areas it’s over three feet thick blocking sunlight and draining the oxygen supply of the water killing aquatic species. He stated Tete Bay is filling with the Giant Salvinia. Ronald Coco emphasized the thickness of the vegetation making transportation in boats & even airboats nearly impossible. Discussion ensued that the beetle can be raised fairly easily and they are not eaten by fish because they live above the vegetation. However, the beetles must be spread correctly using black moss full of the larvae.

The next discussion was the Acadian Watershed Initiative Program with the possibility of \$1.2 billion available for drainage and flooding projects throughout Louisiana. Avoyelles joined a group of nine parishes adjoining Avoyelles working as a group to increase the possibility of funding. There is a plan to dig a canal with connections to Bayou Des Glaise, Lil Choctaw, and the Chatlin Lake Canal in order to bring water into the Spring Bayou Complex. The Chatlin Lake Canal was first dug in the 1930’s to drain Alexandria. George Isreal went on a history lesson of the proposed projects of ten years ago he feels would still work today because of all the control structures along the waterway. Col. Jones requested the commission propose projects ready for submission if the monies become available. Vice-Chairman Laborde cautioned the commissioners to consider future plans in Rapides parish to continue lining the bayous and ditches in Alexandria and Rapides parish with concrete forcing even more water into Avoyelles over the next few years. James Franks recommended Avoyelles parish consider clearing the waterway below the Spring Bayou dam, Bayou Jeansonne, and Bayou Natchitoches in order to accommodate additional water. Commissioner Dugas stated one side of Bayou Natchitoches had been cleared by the Levee Board.

There was a short discussion on the NRCS application to get additional monies for projects. From the audience, Mr. Robichaux asked about the status with the “junk-man” and repairs to the Spring Bayou Road. During discussion it was pointed out that Entergy will not terminate his utility service as long as he pays his bills, but Col. Jones was reluctant to say the issue may end up in court. Concerning the road, Juror Borrel said the road is owned by LDWF and they are aware of the deteriorated condition.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:32 pm with a motion by Commissioner Hale, a second by Vice-Chairman Laborde, and a unanimous vote by the commissioners.