

Spring Bayou Lake Commission Meeting #2 On 9/10/2018

The second meeting of the Spring Bayou Lake Commission was called to order by Avoyelles Police Jury President Colonel Charles Jones at 6:00 pm in the Avoyelles Police Jury meeting room on 9/10/2018.

In attendance were Rayford Laborde, Dr. L.J. Mayeux, Artha Hale, Roland Dugas, Jimmy Landry, J.K. Bordelon, Terry Laborde, Police Jury President Col. Charles Jones, Juror Mark Borrell, and Juror Trent Clark. Absent were Philip Lamartiniere & Mayor Kenneth Pickett.

Col. Jones recommended the commission select a Chairman, Vice-Chairman and a Secretary/Treasurer. Terry Laborde was unanimously elected to the position of Secretary/Treasurer after a nomination by Commissioner Rayford Laborde and a second by Commissioner Dr. L.J. Mayeux. Rayford Laborde was unanimously elected to the position of Vice-Chairman after a nomination by Commissioner Terry Laborde and a second by Commissioner Artha Hale. Jimmy Landry was unanimously elected to the position of Chairman after a nomination by Commissioner Artha Hale and a second by Commissioner Roland Dugas. Each officer thanked the other Commissioners for their trust in leadership. Col. Jones offered his personal availability and availability of resources by the Avoyelles Police Jury in an effort “to get good things done for Spring Bayou and the parish while we communicate with the public”.

Commission Chairman Landry gave a brief description of plans for the Commission. Commissioner Dr. Mayeux presented a motion receiving a second by Commissioner Rayford Laborde that all meetings be held in the Avoyelles Police Jury meeting room every third Monday of the month with the next meeting being held on October 15th. Commissioner Rayford Laborde second the motion and it was unanimous by the Commissioners.

Discussion ensued on the term limits of the Commissioners, protocol on the removal of a Commissioner, and the focus of the Commission. Commissioner Dr. Mayeux recommended a name for the Commission be adopted. Suggestions were given by numerous members prior to Commissioner Hale making the motion to use the name “Spring Bayou Lake Commission”. Commissioner Dr. Mayeux second the motion and the title was approved unanimously.

Commissioner Dr. Mayeux followed that a precise, concise and direct to the point mission statement be formulated. Commissioner Dugas recommended every Commissioner develop a simple and effective mission statement to be presented at the next meeting.

The issue concerning finances drew suggestions from most members including Commissioner Dr. Mayeux’s recommendation of forming a 501-c3 and the process to accept donations & contributions for tax credit by donors to Col. Jones’ explanation that monies generated by the Commission for the purpose of improvements to the Spring Bayou complex could only be entered into the general fund account of the Police Jury. Commissioner Dr. Mayeux voiced an opinion to look into matching funds as Col. Jones expressed his request that the Commission look into grants for revenue sources.

When Commissioner Dugas requested direction from the Commission, Police Juror Trent Clark said “Restore is the key word here”. Col. Jones added that management tools were available to oversee or manage the Spring Bayou complex.

From the audience, Jonathan Bettevy presented a mission statement for consideration by the Commission. Bettevy also added additional constructive information for consideration.

Here is where Juror Mark Borrell turned the tables on the discussion saying most calls he gets from the residents in the Spring Bayou area are concerning problems associated with high water levels instead of low water issues. The discussion then ensued concerning the gates located at the Little River dam and the Coulee des Grues on Highway 1 between the Casino’s Cultural and Education Resource Center and Burger King. The latter gates were constructed to prevent backflow towards Rapides parish.

The Little River dam and gates discussion ensued. There was discussion concerning the operation of the gates and culverts to drain the complex. Juror Borrel explained the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries operate the gates, but questions arose concerning their availability for operation. Most Commission members agree a major problem to the facility is a result of the influx of silt and opening the gates would clear some of the silt out of Little River. “When water levels are high, opening the gates would reduce silt, but the problem is getting to the gates because the high water covers the access road. The gates have never been opened since I been here in 2004” Commissioner Dugas continued. Chairman Landry expressed concern if the gates could be mechanically opened. Ronald Coco responded that the gates were well below the height of the dam. Water going over the dam apparently has an easy flow from the complex all the way to the Atchafalaya River because of work that has been done to clean and remove debris from ditches and canals.

George Israel was the next to offer relevant information from the audience. Mr. Israel thanked the members of the Commission for their service to assist in the revitalization of the Spring Bayou Complex to insure the recreation and water source for land owners all the way from the 50’s when he remembers to the future use generations down his family line. “The data is already compiled and accumulated. The knowledge is there to be used. The comments I make are my own personal thoughts and suggestions in this matter” Israel continued. Bettevy also thanked the endeavor of the Commissioners and his local friends with their interest but warned there is no quick answers to the dilemma.

Commissioner Mayeux and Chairman Landry complemented the ideas being presented but noted the issue will be to find money to get work done. Commissioner Hale added that things were off to a good start but commented that when water levels in the complex are low, something needs to be done to get water into the complex. Commissioner Bordelon justified the suggestion to open the gates at the dam down Little River when water is abundant to clear the sediment. “We need to try something that has not been done” Commissioner Bordelon clarified.

Vice-Chairman Rayford Laborde suggested a level be established to open the gates and flush the sediment then another level be established to close the gates to prevent water loss. “We have gates not being utilized to reduce sediment” Laborde concluded. Mr. Israel listed a variety of

Government agencies that could be involved in the decisions concerning opening and closing the gates. Commissioner Bordelon reminded the panel of the necessity to install a fish cage of some sort to prevent the loss of aquatic species when the gated are opened. Again the concern of donations came up and Col. Jones recommended District Attorney Charles Riddle be involved in correct procedures.

“We need to start somewhere and the problem will not be solved in one day” Commissioner Mayeux commented. He also recommended that the entire panel take a “field-trip” to the dam to get a better understanding of what needs to be done and determine if the gates are in working condition. He noted that it’s easier to raise money for an issue in a priority perspective and informing the public on what the Commission is selling.

Vice-Chairman Rayford Laborde suggested a “general use permit” to be obtained from the Corps. Col. Jones reminded the committee that the Police Jury already has a consultant at their disposal. Ronald Coco clarified which of the area Corps of Engineers has jurisdiction for the Spring Bayou complex. Commissioner Laborde stated recent visits to an engineering firm concluded that the Red River will not free-flow into the complex, but tributaries from Rapides Parish do flow into Coulee des Grues and silt from Lake Pearl enters the bayou system now.

Commissioner Terry Laborde expressed his thoughts stating a major issue in his opinion is the sediment in the system and there should be a focus on reducing the impact of sediment in the Spring Bayou complex in order to have more water depth at all times. Options concerning getting more water into the facility need to be explored. Vice-Chairman Rayford Laborde emphasized the point that the dam is the cause of the sediment problems.

Commissioner Dugas and Chairman Landry gave an explanation on the size of pumps and cost of operating the pumps to get water into the Spring Bayou complex. Evaporation is a big factor in the loss of water in Spring Bayou as a result of the large surface area exposed to the sun’s influence on a daily basis. Commissioner Hale stated that he felt it was not right for water to be pumped out of the complex at this time of the year because of its scarcity and these farmers should put wells. Commissioner Dugas countered that he was pumping a negligible amount. The issue of other farmers and entities pumping from the watershed was questioned by Commissioner Dr. Mayeux. Vice-Chair Rayford Laborde said that there were many entities pumping along the water route. The next issue was the closing of the three gates on Highway 1 near the Marksville Burger King. Both Ronald Coco and Police Juror Borrel responded that the gates are to prevent back-water flooding and closing the gates would flood the Fifth Ward area.

After this influx of suggestion was added to the discussion, Chairman Landry thanked everyone for their commentary and obvious intention to move in the right direction in unity.

Commissioner Bordelon presented a motion at 7:52 to adjourn. Commissioner Hale seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned.

Submitted by _____

(Terry Laborde, Secretary/Treasurer, Spring Bayou Lake Commission)

