

Spring Bayou Lake Commission Minutes October 21, 2019

The October 21, 2019, meeting of the Spring Bayou Lake Commission was called to order at 6:00 pm in the Avoyelles Police Jury meeting room by Lake Commission Chairman Jimmy Landry. George Isreal led with the opening prayer and Chairman Landry led with the Pledge of Allegiance. Secretary Terry Laborde called the roll of commissioners. Present were Chairman Landry, Vice-Chairman Rayford Laborde, Secretary Terry Laborde, Commissioner Artha Hale, Commissioner Roland Dugas, Commissioner Jules Bordelon, Police Juror Mark Borrel, and Juror Trent Clark.

Vice-Chairman Rayford Laborde made the motion to accept the minutes of the September 16th meeting. Commissioner Artha Hale added the second and the motion was unanimous.

Chairman Landry opened discussion on the agenda item “Coastal Restoration and Protection Authority” saying he was in attendance of a meeting of the 2021 Atchafalaya Basin Program. The authority manages the 838,000-acre basin south of Avoyelles. According to discussion, many of the actions taken to modify the basin into a floodway by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have adversely impacted the natural hydrology and habitat of the Atchafalaya Basin. Vice-Chairman Laborde began a discussion noting significant similarities between the developing problems of the Spring Bayou Complex and the Henderson Lake Complex. Vice-Chairman Laborde stated how the installation of a dam in Spring Bayou has contributed to the accumulation of sediment which has “killed” Spring Bayou. Laborde stated that it appeared that the governing bodies of the Lake Henderson area built a levee years ago to travel across the lake for oil exploration which has prevented the flow of water which has been causing the deterioration of the lake. Laborde noted the similarity with our complex and recommended something be done to return the flow of water through Spring Bayou complex before it’s too late. Avoyelles Police Jury President Kirby Roy added that the governing bodies of the Henderson Lake complex have a pump with a maintenance cost of approximately \$116,000 a year bringing water into Henderson Lake. Roy suggested the commission look into the possibility of bringing water from Chatlin Lake.

Chairman Landry stated all the water elevation markers designated for Spring Bayou have been installed by Civil Works Director Kevin Bordelon, Commissioner Artha Hale, and other volunteers. Chairman Landry updated the commissioners on the opening of the Little River control structure saying the sediment accumulations against the structure were not as significant as expected and the mechanical components to open and close the three gates worked very well. Chairman Landry suggested the gates be opened when water flows over the dam to release sediment allowing flushing. Chairman Landry also spoke of the upcoming inspection of the Little River dam by Brad Sticker from DOTD. Mr. Sticker’s inspection is expected to be from only the above water portions of the dam but Commissioner Dugas and others expressed concern over the soundness of the underwater portion. By completing this inspection the Little River dam will be identified as a structure under the DOTD dam program.

Commissioner Dugas requested the agenda include a discussion on the access road to the dam by farmers and the general public. He stated the original contract was for the Avoyelles Police Jury to build and maintain a navigable road from the Wolf-Den to the dam. Commissioner Dugas’ opinion was that this portion of the deal was not kept by the parish. Discussion ensued on the dam. Commissioner Dugas stated his opinion that the access road’s condition is not a significant factor for 24-7-365 access because it has not been for many years. Chairman Landry said access should be

available for at least the once a year inspections and the working of the gates. When Ronald Coco questioned the commission on the maintenance of the dam and gates, Chairman Landry replied this issue is under the jurisdiction of the Police Jury and DOTD.

The next issue was an update on setting up a checking account for the Spring Bayou Lake Commission for the purpose of accepting donations and grant revenue. Chairman Landry stated District Attorney Charles Riddle, Attorney Jonathan Gaspard, and Police Jury President Kirby Roy agree that an account could be setup for the commission. Juror Mark Borrel stated the Police Jury's account is with Capital One Bank, but research at all the local banks should be done to determine the best option for the commission's account. Scott Laborde suggested the status of a non-profit organization should be a consideration. Secretary Terry Laborde presented a motion that the Spring Bayou Lake Commission research options from local banks to determine the best option for a bank account for the commission and once determined, open an account according to legal counsel recommendations. Commissioner Artha Hale added the second and the vote was unanimous.

Chairman Landry next opened a discussion on the recent Capital Outlay Grant Program. A request was filed last year, but the application for funding of approximately \$250,000 has since been classified as a second level priority project and the grant request is now approximately \$209,000. Discussion continued on the requirement for a percentage matching fund by the Police Jury for the grant. Recommendations were made on another project, the Zeno Desselle crossing. Due to flooding problems, recommendations were made to remove the nine-foot culvert and then either construct a wooden bridge or install two culverts, possibly two 12-foot culverts. Commissioners felt the bridge was the best option followed by two smaller culverts. The NRCS application for USDA grant money for a silt reduction project is due December 3rd.

Of the four options in the Spring Bayou Lake Commission Master Plan sent to Secretary Jack Montoucet of the LDWF for consideration, the department only recommended the goals for the implementation of the sediment removal project on Boggy Bayou and the goal for the prevention of sediment into the watershed. The LDWF addressed the root cause of habitat degradation, future financial investments in dredging that will have a longer term benefit in the waterways improvements and require less associated maintenance cost. LDWF does not support modifications to the control structure, but LDWF does support efforts to clear and maintain the area around the control structure. Finally, LDWF does not support efforts to develop access to new sources of water into the area. Discussion from the audience ensued that when the water in the Red River is at pool stage of 64-feet, the control structures in Rapides parish should be opened to allow water into Spring Bayou. Commissioner Dugas and Secretary Laborde support the recommendations by LDWF to follow up on their two goals and keep the other goals at bay for consideration at a later date. LDWF considers the Silver Carp and Giant Salvinia as invasive species.

Sediment reduction and dredging were the final topics of the night. Chairman Landry recommended the dredging of Boggy Bayou be a top priority. Commissioner Hale stated it's his opinion to pump the water/sludge/sediment out of complex as a top priority. He recommended the use of a marsh excavator with a dredge to remove sediment. The only question besides funding for the equipment and maintenance of the machinery is where to put the sediment. Chairman Landry then discussed the use of GEO-BAGS which are permeable to allow water to escape while holding the dirt. Damien Leonards questioned the committee on the goals of dredging and digging the channel. Chairman Landry responded that dredging in the 85-acres of Boggy Bayou will give depth

to hold more water in the complex as well as provide additional habitat for fish in drier months. Commissioner Dugas stated his opinion that dredging is just a Band-Aid project, but the priority of the commission is funding. George Isreal expressed his concern that dredging the hill at the meeting of Little River and Boggy Bayou should be a priority because of its necessity and a public approval project. Isreal added that the recent new local, state, and federal political elections are prime opportunities to add new and additional pressure in the legislature. Commissioner Dugas once again added his opinion that all projects and ventures are dependent on the money from funding programs.

Vice-Chairman Laborde presented a motion to adjourn at 7:20 pm. Commissioner Dugas added the second and the vote was unanimous.