

**ST. LANDRY PARISH COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING
WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 4th, 2024 @ 5:30 P.M.
OLD CITY MARKET, 131 W BELLEVUE ST
OPELOUSAS, LOUISIANA**

MINUTES

- I.** This meeting was called to order by Chairman Wayne Ardoin.
- II.** Chairwoman Mildred Thierry led the Pledge of Allegiance and the Invocation.
Chairman Wayne Ardoin ask that the audience silence their electronic devices.
- III. Roll Call: PRESENT:** Jody White, Nancy Carriere, Faltery Jolivette, Mildred Thierry, Harold Taylor, Ken Marks, Alvin Stelly, Vivian Olivier, Timmy Lejeune, Jimmie Edwards and Ernest Blanchard. Ex Officio: Wayne Ardoin. **ABSENT:** Dexter Brown.
- IV. Item for Discussion:**

1. A Buy-Sale Contract between St. Landry Parish Government and Opelousas Life Church.

Chairman Wayne Ardoin stated, “Mr. Bellard, you have called this meeting, do you want to elaborate?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “Yes, so the opportunity came up for us to buy the Owen Hills Country Club from the church. We secured money from the state through appropriations to do this. The plan for the facility as it sits right now is to immediately go in there and clean up the property and make sure that it is cleaned to start the whole process. The next step is to develop the master plan for a Sports Recreational Facility meaning softball, baseball, tournament ball and volleyball, a little bit of everything that we can put on there. It is open for discussion, there is no plan set in stone as of right now but the first step was the ability to buy it and get the funding for it.”

Councilwoman Mildred Thierry stated, “Mr. President, if this should happen will this interfere funding wise with the services that is provided to the constituents of the parish?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “No this money that we received or will receive from the state is subject to and only for the buying and the care of that facility over there. This is not money that is used or can be used for anything else but what it was allocated for.”

Councilwoman Mildred Thierry stated, “Thank you.”

Councilwoman Nancy Carriere stated, “I know that we are just discussing it. One of the questions that I have is about the neighborhood. In the past we have had issues with the church in the neighborhood. We have had some complaints and I wanted to know because there will be a lot of traffic if this goes through. There are a lot of residence that live around there. We have an opportunity to get money from the state to build or restore or remodel how much more expensive will it be to have this facility in a non-residential area?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “As far as the money concern is allocations from the state so that is to purchase the property and to get it back to where we need to have it as far as the grass being cut and everything else. The next part of this is to develop a plan and have input from everybody on how and what we do going further. The initial talk is mainly a sports complex to attract a tournament ball players to come to the parish which is going to attract a lot more tourism and a lot more money for the parish. It is a place for the kids to have, a place to go and play ball and do what they need to do.”

Councilwoman Nancy Carriere stated, “How is this going to be maintained if it does go through? Is the parish going to maintain it by hiring employees?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “It is going to be a parish facility and the funding is coming from the Federal Government. There is funding out there for us to go and get for this facility. We cannot go and apply for anything until we actually own it. We actually have a plan to submit to the Federal Government for the funding.”

Councilwoman Nancy Carriere stated, “So we are taking the public’s opinion on this right?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “Definitely, this is just a blank sheet of paper right now. The first step is for us to get with the area and have a meeting and let them come and put their input and hopefully people can agree on what needs to happen for that facility.”

Councilwoman Nancy Carriere stated, “I have one last question. I know in the past there have been some tax debt that was acquired. Is everything clear on this property? Are there liens or anything associated with this that we would have to incur?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “As far as the taxes the taxes were paid. So they are up to date on their taxes. It is not owned by an individual it is owned by the church. As far as for liens or anything else they are going to determine that through the title search whenever the process starts. We are not obligated to do anything as of right now because there is nothing to do with us. We did not do any search we just started the process.”

Councilwoman Nancy Carriere stated, “So the church is willing to sell this property. They approached you wanting to sell this? I know that you wanted to buy it initially before the church.”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “We have a Resolution from Pastor Kerney Thomas that his board voted to sell the church, yes.”

Councilman Ken Marks stated, “Mr. President, is there a time limit? Is there a window of opportunity identified or it has not been identified yet?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “The time frame basically is this: The state has the money and the state sends out a CEA for us to approve. Once that CEA is approved we only have until next June to completely do everything that we need to do with the money after that it can go back into their general fund. In the past few years it has not been, they usually give us some kind of breathing room on that because it takes so much time to do anything. We should see the CEA within the next two or three weeks. At that point we would like to do something and get the ball rolling because by the time they finish doing the title search and all of the paper work it will be a couple of months.”

Councilman Ken Marks stated, “So we don’t see the seller being in a fast tract?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “With a buy/sell agreement we kind of hold him to the price and to the conditions of the buy/sell agreement so I think that we will be fine.”

Councilman Ken Marks stated, “Okay, thank you.”

Councilman Harold Taylor stated, “Mr. Bellard, would you just inform the council of the discussion that we had before the meeting regarding the appraisal of these properties?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “So everything that we have in the buy/sell agreement is going to be subject to the appraised value. It has to appraise or we are not buying it, we can’t, the law does not allow us to pay more than what the value is, the state is not going to release the money if it does not appraise. The first thing is to make sure that it appraises for that amount. If it does not and the seller does not want to go down on the price to meet it then it is a no sale. Government cannot do this. I know that he paid 750 or seven something for the property and he is asking \$1.5 right now. Will it appraise

for \$1.5? We don't know but everything is condition to be whatever the appraised value is."

Chairman Wayne Ardoin stated, "I will ask some of the people that are here and I know that some of you all did not get time to fill out any slips but Mr. LeBlanc you had given me one and I have another one from a gentlemen in the audience. Please give your name and address and phone number please."

Ms. Monet DeBlanc addressed the council. She stated, "1221 Katherine Drive. My back yard is not going to hit the proposed sports complex I just think in a residential neighborhood it is unnecessary. I want anything for the kids but I am concerned about my property taxes and I am concerned about any kind of residuals, you know, whatever is going on. I can tell you from the neighbors that I have talked to they all have the same concerns. Is there not some other land that can be purchased for a Sports Complex? That is not my thing, my thing is animals. I am still waiting for that new shelter that supposedly was going to be built. I am not mad at nobody, don't take nothing the hard way but I am just saying. I thought that was going to happen and it should have happen long before a Sports Complex in a residential neighborhood where there is a 25 mph right there. Can you all imagine all of the drama and all of the bull? If you had to live there and see that and try to go to the store and do whatever you had to do. I am not opposed to a Sports Complex and I want something for the children, I honestly do, I came up poor, I was poor and I understand that. What I am saying is that I just don't think a residential neighborhood is the place to put it, no offense to anyone here whoever is supporting it. I also appreciate the fact that you mentioned that what it is purchased at and there is going to be an appraisal and I do appreciate that president. To me how can we have that big of a massive difference because it has been for sale forever in years past and it just did not go through. I don't know if you all ever been there or walked the grounds, I have, not because I was a member but it is just unlevelled. To me it seems like a lot of maintenance as far as building it up. There is no offense to anyone, I promise you I have no ill will. I just don't want it in my neighborhood. I would like it on some acres of land where there is going to be plenty of parking where you don't have to demolish stuff, just start over and build that animal shelter."

Mr. Greg Free addressed the council. He stated, "I am at 1324 Katherine Drive right across the corner from Ms. Monet and some of my neighbors over here as well. We have been there about three years. Our property backs up to the golf course. We try to be good neighbors to our friends at the church, we have visited them a couple of times and had some conversations with them. Our only issue ever was the way the property was maintained. We spoke to Mr. Bellard and he came to our home and helped us with an issue with our water meter. I trust the judgment of Mr. Bellard when he has these conversations. My concerns are a lot of the same as Ms. Monet's. I am not opposed to a Sports Complex but it is a big piece of property and I am sure that work needs to be done to the infrastructure like she was saying, property grading needs to be done. Where is in grass, where is e-grass? Where are we going to pull in or pull out? In my mind I am not opposed to the sounds of a baseball game or a softball game in the middle of the summer time, a little bit of light pollutions comes in but I just want to make sure that whatever process we go into the community is given the opportunity to give opinions, show us some drawings, show some plans and let's put ideas together. I tend to agree with another one of my neighbors if anything looking at my back porch other than what I am seeing now would be an improvement. I have paid like some of our other neighbors to mow that area back there and keep it clean, make it presentable, make it useful to the youth of Louisiana and the other states. I am not opposed to it but let's have a conversation about how it can be done well. I want cars to pull in and out somewhere besides like she was saying, not on a residential street, let's just talk about it. That is all."

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, "That is definitely going to be the issue talking to everybody around the area first and then hiring these professionals to come in and show us what it would look like. Before anything is done they have a lot of approval processes to go through. We have to make sure and I don't think that we are going to get everybody 100% on it because everybody has different ideas about different things but if it is not going to interfere with the neighborhood that is our goal. Everything should happen off of Prudhomme, nothing should go in the subdivision at all, that would not be

one of those, it is just not feasible and it is just not good. Something needs to happen with that area. I am just telling you all if we don't buy it and something else happens from what I am hearing it is not going to be good. I am just saying and I don't want to buy it for that reason, we do have a legitimate reason to buy it and to come up with the master plan of the Sport Complex but nobody is sold on anything. Nobody have seen the first drawings. There is nothing on it, opportunity came up and unfortunately in the world that we live in I cannot disclose information until I actually have the money. It is sad, I should be able to tell everybody what we are going at the capital when I go to the capital but if I do that then I won't get, you know, it is politics. I have to secure the funding first. Again if the council says we are not buying it then we are not buying it and the money stays with the state because we can't use it for nothing else. It is an opportunity that we have right now that could help that north end of the city and hopefully do some good. There is a lot of talk for a lot of different things but one think that you all can rest assure about, animal control is not going to right there and housing, that is not going to happen either, not if the parish owns it."

Chairman Wayne Ardoin stated, "Sir, would you please go back and fill out one of these slips that is on that back table with your name and address so our clerk will have a record of it. Is there anyone else in the audience that would like to speak about this item here of the Indian Hills Country Club? I will come to you Mr. White. Mr. Bellard, most of these people are very concerned about that jungle behind their yard, it is pitiful. You said you all have sent some letters for them to sort of clean up back there?"

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, "That process have been going on in that area. Once in a while they go cut the grass a little bit and they burn up the lawn mower and they stop."

Chairman Wayne Ardoin stated, "We went and ride there today. I know that subdivision. I know these people, they are all of my customers over there when I was in the pest control business. Some of these people are cutting the grass themselves like this gentleman said but this gentleman that owns it or this church that owns it, this group are they immune to where they have to follow the orders of the letters that you send them?"

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, "Now Mr. Ardoin you are going to ask that question in an open meeting and you know that answer that I am going to give you. Nobody is above the law. It is happening but like every little thing that we have to do if we don't do it by the letter of the law then we will have a problem. So whenever you bring up this kind of comment you are trying to make these accusations like I am giving people a break. So the answer to your question is: I am taking care of the problem, I am taking care of the problem."

Chairman Wayne Ardoin stated, "Okay, thank you. Mr. White."

Councilman Jody White stated, "I want the people in the neighborhood to know this: Number 1, I am still affiliated big time with softball and baseball right now. Yes in reference to the property there I totally agree that your entrances and exits from a potential Sports Complex needs to be as close to the service road as it can be, not toward the neighborhood and when you start getting to Prompt Succor so I totally agree with that. One thing I want you all to know is that in reference to most of the association's baseball and softball you cannot start an ending after 9:00 p.m. with the youths. When you start thinking about what type of noises, traffic or whatever we are not talking about late night types of things that would happen if the Sports Complex would come about. When you look at it that way in reference to having whatever noise you might have been having in the last year let us say at 12 o'clock at night you won't be getting that if the Sports Complex would come up because they cannot start endings after 9'o'clock."

Mr. Peter Briggs addressed the council. He stated, "I live at 1635 Kingston Place. Do you all know if the whole country club, I don't know how much land it is, 100 acres I guess, give or take, is it in the city or is it in the parish?"

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, "It is in the parish."

Mr. Peter Briggs stated, “So it is considered Parish Property?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “Correct.”

Mr. Peter Briggs questioned, “Are there any restrictions as what they can or cannot do with that property?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “Right now we have no zoning in the parish what so ever other than a subdivision that we passed last year or year before last, other than that there is no zoning. We are in the process of zoning some of, I call it zoning, they call it land use, it is the same word, up and down I-49 but it does not go that far to the Country Club.”

Mr. Peter Briggs stated, “Okay, I am just asking, you all talked about the grass cutting and there is another lot in the neighborhood that never gets cut which is like a jungle all in its own but that is a whole another thing. If you all are going to get money for a Sports Complex is it more like baseball fields or stadiums?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “If you know the Youngsville Park and these other Sports Complex’s that have been built in the last few years it brings a tournament team in from all over. That is what we are looking at doing but to the next level. We want to make something that is going to be where everybody can be proud of and generate the traffic that we need for funding. We are looking for something for kid to do and we are not looking for a place just for our kids but for everybody’s kids to come in and enjoy and have a good childhood if you say it that way.”

Mr. Peter Briggs stated, “So if a chain of events would happen and you all would want to purchase the property and the church is willing to sell the property as you all did with the sports field and stuff there, would you all buy the property only if that would be able to be done or would you all buy it and if that fell through then what happens?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “The first step is for us to own the property. Once you own the property you develop your plans. We have an idea what we would like to see out there but if you can’t then we have the property we would take care of the property. It would not stay vacant. I feel very strongly in saying that we will be able to get the funding to do what is needed out there for a Sports Complex. How it looks and what it looks like, we don’t know that because we never even sat down with anybody. But what I would like to do is whenever we do sit down with the professionals that draw this stuff up is have it at the Country Club where everybody can come and sit down and listen to the conversation. What I don’t want is to have a meeting where only a handful of us in the meeting deciding on what and how it is going to look. It is going to benefit the entire parish but it is going to have to benefit that area as well. It can’t be an eyesore, for sure that is not going to happen. My goal would be to have the meetings at that location so everybody can look at what they are saying could be done and what can’t be done. The input from the people who live around there is the most important part.”

Mr. Peter Briggs stated, “My big concern of the area no matter what happens with it is just that I don’t want anything that will bring down values in that particular neighborhood at all.

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “I am 100% behind you on that.”

Mr. Peter Briggs stated, “I am 62 years old and I have seen a lot of things where they say they are going to do this and it falls through and all of a sudden we are having to put this eye sore here and that all that we can do. Of course there is a bunch of excuses and a bunch of hoop-la with it and the people have no say so and it is like you like it or lump it. That is what I don’t want to happen.”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “No, and I am with you. I look at everything that we do in Government. If it is something that is going to effect the neighborhood or effect the neighbors I put myself with that neighbor. Would I want that next to my place? Period. If I don’t want it next to my place and I can see the bad spots in it then why

would I want to put it next to you or anybody else? Which there is a lot of things that I am afraid of and that it is going to get sold at some point, somebody is going to buy it. It might not be at \$1.5 and then what? An opportunity came up and like I told the people earlier I was not able to disclose that information until we get to a point where I can actually say something now because they have to agree to sell it and we have to get the funding. Now it is like we can buy it, develop it and have the input from everybody on what happens right there.”

Mr. Peter Briggs stated, “I caught the tale end, is there an anonymous donor or something that is helping them with funding or something?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “So the \$1,000,000.00 is coming from the state, appropriated money from the state. \$500,000.00 is going to come from Parish Government, regardless of where that money is coming from it has to funnel through Parish Government but it does not necessarily have to be tax payer’s money. I am going to tell you all, I rather not have anything to do with using tax money that we collect in our parish to purchase this property or any property. I feel very sure of telling you all that it would not be considered tax payers money whenever it is purchased other than I say tax payers money no matter what we do everybody is paying taxes, here or with the state or whatever, but the money that is coming into the parish is not going to be parish taxes used.”

Mr. Peter Briggs stated, “Thank you.”

Chairman Wayne Ardoin stated, “Peter would you fill out one of those slips in the back with your name, address and phone number. They are on the back table so we will have a record of it. Are there any councilmember with any comments? Do I have a motion to go ahead with the buy/sell contract with St. Landry Parish Government and Opelousas Life Church? Mr. Lejeune made the motion and I have a second. Roll call vote.”

Councilwoman Nancy Carriere started, “I want to understand, you said buy and sell.”

Chairman Wayne Ardoin stated, “It is a buy and sale contract which we have a copy here.

Councilwoman Nancy Carriere stated, “I will abstain for now.”

Chairman Wayne Ardoin stated, “That is to go ahead to start the process. It is just to start the process.”

Councilwoman Nancy Carriere stated, “It is just to start the process that is fine.”

A motion was made by Councilman Timmy Lejeune, seconded by Councilwoman Mildred Thierry to authorize the Parish President to sign the buy-sale contract between the St. Landry Parish Government and Opelousas Life Church.

On roll call vote: YEAS: Jody White, Nancy Carriere, Faltery Jolivette, Mildred Thierry, Harold Taylor, Ken Marks, Alvin Stelly, Vivian Olivier, Timmy Lejeune, Jimmie Edwards and Ernest Blanchard **NAYS:** None. **ABSENT:** Dexter Brown. **ABSTAINED:** None. **WHEREUPON,** this motion was adopted on this, the 4th, day of September, 2024.

2. A Buy-Sale Contract between St. Parish Government and Ken FaKouri.

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “So that contract you all do not have in front of you all. It is the same as the one that we have here. Peter had to have the opportunity to draft that one up but the stipulations are the same, it has to meet the appraised value. That property is located on HWY 35, right across from St. Bridget Church in Lawtell. That one is for a walk-in park, to develop a walk-in park and just have a park for kids. There is nothing in Lawtell and this would be a great place to do this. It is 10 acres of land and the plan over there would be to clean up the area first and then start putting a walk in trail down and develop the same thing, put a plan together and have the park put in place. There are allocations from a different pot of money on the Federal Government level that we are sure to get but we have to own it and have the plan in place first.”

Councilman Harold Taylor questioned, “Again Mr. Bellard would you tell them about the appraisal and that process.”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “Everything is subject to the same guidelines and it is state money. The same thing follows that money. If it does not appraise for the amount then we can’t. It is against the law and we can’t buy it. If it does not meet it then it is a no sale unless the seller goes down to what it needs to be.”

Councilwoman Nancy Carriere questioned, “Okay, I have a question. Any schools that were built around 1980 or before have that Asbestos problem. Do you know of any problems with this school? It has been sitting up a very long time.”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “Right so that is one of the conditions that the property, the 10 acres is Asbestos Free. We are fighting a battle everyday where we have to deal with Asbestos at the Courthouse. This property, if it is not asbestos free then we are not going to buy it.”

Councilwoman Nancy Carriere stated, “I know you said it was piggy-backed off of the same contract because we don’t have it in front of us to see it. It is verbatim, word for word, the same contract?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “Word for word as far as the conditions. Obviously the property description is going to be whatever that property description is in Lawtell. He has been in trial and he kind of did this one for us to get the ball rolling but it is going to be the same Buy-Sell Agreement as this one but just a different property description, same stipulations.”

Councilwoman Nancy Carriere stated, “With this one are you planning on getting Community involvement in this one also?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “Most definitely. The area comes first.”

Chairman Wayne Ardoin stated, “Are there any other questions? Do I have a motion?”

A motion was made by Councilman Ken Marks, seconded by Councilman Timmy Lejeune to authorize the Parish President to sign the Buy-Sell contract between St. Landry Parish Government and Ken FaKouri on HWY 35.

On roll call vote: YEAS: Jody White, Nancy Carriere, Faltery Jolivette, Mildred Thierry, Harold Taylor, Ken Marks, Alvin Stelly, Vivian Olivier, Timmy Lejeune, Jimmie Edwards and Ernest Blanchard **NAYS:** None. **ABSENT:** Dexter Brown. **ABSTAINED:** None. **WHEREUPON,** this motion was adopted on this, the 4th, day of September, 2024.

Chairman Wayne Ardoin stated, “At this time I will ask for a motion to adjourn.”

V. ADJOURN:

A motion was made by Councilman Timmy Lejeune, seconded by Councilman Ernest Blanchard to adjourn this Special Meeting.

On roll call vote: YEAS: Jody White, Nancy Carriere, Faltery Jolivette, Mildred Thierry, Harold Taylor, Ken Marks, Alvin Stelly, Vivian Olivier, Timmy Lejeune, Jimmie Edwards and Ernest Blanchard **NAYS:** None. **ABSENT:** Dexter Brown. **ABSTAINED:** None.

WHEREUPON, this motion was adopted on this, the 4th, day of September, 2024.

**I HEREBY CERTIFY THE FOREGOING TO BE EXACT AND TRUE
KAREN BARLOW, ASSISTANT COUNCIL CLERK**