

**ST. LANDRY PARISH COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 16th, 2024 @ 6:00 P.M.
OLD CITY MARKET, 131 W. BELLEVUE ST.
OPELOUSAS, LOUISIANA**

REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

The Council of the Parish of St. Landry, State of Louisiana, convened in a regular session on this 16th, day of October, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.

- I. Chairman Wayne Ardoin called the meeting of the St. Landry Parish Council to order. He asked that the audience please silence all of their electronic devices.
- II. Councilman Faltery Jolivette led the Pledge of Allegiance & Invocation.
- III. **ROLL CALL:** Jody White, Nancy Carriere, Faltery Jolivette, Mildred Thierry, Harold Taylor, Ken Marks, Vivian Olivier, Wayne Ardoin, Dexter Brown, Timmy Lejeune, Jimmie Edwards and Ernest Blanchard. **ABSENT:** Alvin Stelly.

1. Discuss possible Litigation related to Jail Expenses in Executive Session.

Discussed in open meeting.

17. Discuss Possible Litigation related to Jail Expenses.

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “So this is the problem. Everybody knows that the jail is a monster and it is costing us an arm and a leg to operate it and it is not going down. In July of this year I went and approached the Sheriff and I asked him to pay the \$17.00 per day per State Inmate to the Parish Government because the Sheriff collects \$26.39 per day for every State Inmate that is incarcerated in our jail. At the same time the sheriff has the authorization to ship any Parish Inmate out to another facility and negotiate the price with that sheriff with no talk with us at all and that is what the law states. I am not arguing that point but what I am saying is we are shipping out Parish Inmates, we are holding State Inmates and the Sheriff is getting the money of \$26.39 per day per State Inmate and only paying us \$3.50 a day to feed the inmates. It is costing Parish Government \$17.13 per day per inmate that we house across the street whether it be State or Parish. The Sheriff agreed to do it then he said no I am not doing it and talk to my attorney. So at that point of course I got with Lance who is my Attorney and I wanted to make sure that what we were stating was correct and everything that points to what the parish should be paying. We are paying everything across the street except the deputies. So the option on the table that I want to present is that the Sheriff pays us the \$17.00 a day per State Inmate because that is what it cost the Parish Government as we speak. If not then we go to court. Or he take over the nurses and take over the Kitchen, it is up to him because that cost should be on the Sheriff, the Nurses, the Medical Department and the Kitchen and we pay him three-fifty a day to this this. So what has been done in the past July 1, 2008 we took over the nurses area and the kitchen to help out the Sheriff’s Office at that time and that is fine because it is paid out of a different fund and that is not a big problem and we have the burden of paying for the medical across the street with these inmates so it is better for us to be able to control these inmates whether they go to hospital or not and of course the overall care that we have to pay for. So we did that in 2008. Now with the problems that we are having as far as the inmates all we are asking is that he pay is the \$17.00 a day per State Inmate that is what it cost us and he does not agree to doing that and I am just at a point where that is fine but I am not going to let the Sheriff tell us what he is going to pay and not pay. That is why I want to take him to court and let the Judge decide how much he owe us. I have a meeting next week with DOC because the law says that the Sheriff or the Operator collects that \$26.39. I will meet with DOC and I will find out from DOC what do they define as an operator of the Jail. I am pretty sure they are going to go with us because we pay all of the bills. I am at a point and that is why I don’t care if we do it in an open session and let the Media cover it, I don’t care. I don’t have the money to waste like that across the street. We have problems and it is not getting any better. We built a \$1,200,000.00 Trustee Dorm that he does not staff so it is closed. So what do we do next? We are at the whim of what the Sheriff wants to do or not do but it is costing the tax payers. With this new reform coming up in November if that passes like they say it is going to pass which I don’t think it will I think they are going to have some negotiations with that we will

be in more of a shortfall. We have a lot of stuff coming up and this is one of those things where we have to address the immediate need. We have been in conversation with his attorney and it is what it is.”

Chairman Wayne Ardoin questioned, “Who is his attorney on record?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “Mike Leger.”

Councilman Timmy Lejeune questioned, “How many State Inmates do we have right now in the jail, currently?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “Today, 58.”

Councilman Harold Taylor questioned, “Is that out of a 244 capacity?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “Correct, Yes Sir.”

Councilman Timmy Lejeune questioned, “I would like to know how many inmates could go to the Trustee Dorm?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “68.”

Councilman Timmy Lejeune questioned, “What does it cost us to put an Inmate in the Trustee Dorm?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “The \$17.00 per day.”

Councilman Timmy Lejeune questioned, “What does it cost us to house them in our jail?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “That is the same price. The \$17.00 a day to house that inmate at our facility whether it would be the dorm or it would be at the jail.”

Councilman Timmy Lejeune questioned, “So I understand that you are saying we have these State Inmates and he does not want to support housing the Trustee Dorm but could you explain to me and the public how the Inmate Dorm would benefit the cost of operations totally. What would you do if you moved all of these people to the dorm? Then what happens?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “Our problem is we have over 60 Parish Inmates in other facilities. We are paying \$26.39 to another Sheriff.”

Councilman Timmy Lejeune stated, “Okay.”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “So the plan was to bring these back and house them in a Trustee Dorm which would open up. The Trustees from the Parish Jail would move across the street opening up a Dorm and bringing some. Now we all agree that there are some that cannot be moved back over here because of the gang affiliations and everything else, we get that so we are thinking about 10 of them might have to be out in another facility and that is okay, we can manage that but not 60 something.”

Councilman Timmy Lejeune questioned, “So if you were to correct a State Inmate Issue and move, just follow me, and move those people from the jail to the dorm and transfer the people from out of Parish Prison back to our Parish Prison how much money would save per day? Do you have a close amount? Do you have an estimated amount?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “From \$17.00 to \$26.39 is what we would be saving.”

Councilman Timmy Lejeune stated, “Six Dollars a day per individual.”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “It would be around \$9.39. It is \$26.39 out of Parish and it cost us \$17.00 roughly across the street so about \$9.39 per inmate per day.”

Councilman Timmy Lejeune stated, “Wow, okay no further questions.”

Councilwoman Nancy Carriere questioned, “The Trustee Dorm is completed? I thought it was not complete.”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “Oh yes Ma’am. It is ready to go.”

Chairman Wayne Ardoin stated, “But there is no personnel?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “He is saying that he is having hard time finding people to come to work.”

Councilman Ernest Blanchard stated, “They need about 18 people I was told and they can’t get none.”

Councilman Ken Marks stated, “Mr. President, there is law that the Statue that is written is that correct for this?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “Yes Sir.”

Councilman Ken Marks questioned, “I don’t know the reason why it was written the way it was but it seems to me litigations needs to be looked at from a lawful standpoint to where equal distribution is being done rather than someone making that decision on a local basis I guess is what I am getting at. Is that possible?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “So the mandates that are put in place as you all know has been in place for years and has not been looked at in years. There are 26 Parish Presidents in the State of Louisiana and what we are doing right now is looking at all of these mandates and coming back next session and saying okay in the 1960 okay I understand it but know we are in 2024-2025 and it is time for these mandates to go away. To give you all an example our General Fund, we collect \$4,200,000.00 in Taxes in our General Fund. Our Mandated Expenses in General Fund is \$4,600,000.00 and that is the bear minimum and not anything extra. It is out of whack and with the Special Session starting in November I meet yesterday in Baton Rouge with the Commissioner of Administration and expressed our concern with the taxes that they want to be cut again and just the overall plan. I am not against the overall plan, I think it might work if they give us some type of subsidy to offset the \$800,000.00 we might get cut or cut out some of these Mandates.”

Councilman Ken Marks stated, “So this problem is not just our problem it is a State Wide Problem?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “It is State Wide. Everybody has got the same problems. In the state of Louisiana whenever we meet as Parish President, the jail and Animal Control.”

Councilman Ken Marks questioned, “You have an organized association as Parish President for the State of Louisiana?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “Yes we are meeting on the 25th of this month, yes.”

Councilman Ken Marks questioned, “Okay and you all meet regularly?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “Correct.”

Chairman Wayne Ardoin stated, “Are there any other questions? Mr. Bellard you are asking for a motion out of this item #17. Do you want to litigate this? Do you want to file suite?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “I want to bring this to a head. It is time. We have been playing with this long enough. This has been going on for years and I have already made the request with him. He agreed to pay the \$17.00 and then now he said he is not going to pay us because it is not in his budget and talk to his attorney.”

Chairman Wayne Ardoin stated, “Mr. Duplechain do you want to horn in on this? Have you been talking to Mr. Leger?”

Legal Counsel Garrett Duplechain stated, “Not about this. I have spoken to Mr. Leger about Litigations concerning the Parish Jail but not about this, I have not spoken to him about this. If the Council want to Green Light the Litigations then it will be there if the Executive Branch of our Government needs it.”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “I don’t know if they would have a conflict on the DA’s Office to represent us, that is another problem.”

Legal Counsel Garrett Duplechain stated, “There could be a conflict on the part of the DA’s Office but if the council wants to Green Light the Litigation if it is needed then perhaps we are looking for a vote by the council to Green Light the Litigation if it is needed.”

Chairman Wayne Ardoin stated, “This would be asking for a Declaratory Judgement in reference to these cost?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “I am not exactly sure what litigation he wants to pursue but yes it would be something to the fact of who pays this cost and who is obligated to pay the cost.”

Chairman Wayne Ardoin stated, “That is what you would call it Mr. Duplechain? You would ask for a Declaratory Judgement in reference to the Prisoner Cost.”

Legal Counsel Garrett Duplechain stated, “Yes, something along those lines to resolve this situation.”

Councilman Harold Taylor stated, “Since he is our attorney he should at least get with your attorney and say yes I am okay with this. I mean he represents us so don’t you think that is a great idea?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “I am good. I am just bringing it to the light of the council.”

Councilman Harold Taylor stated, “If the DA barks on this we have a problem.”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “I don’t think the DA can represent us in this case.”

Councilman Harold Taylor stated, “I understand but I just want to get his blessings to go forward with it is my point.”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “I don’t think the DA can give a blessing one way or the other because he can’t represent us on this case.”

Councilman Harold Taylor questioned, “Mr. Duplechain, what do you have to say about this? Can you understand my question?”

Legal Counsel Garrett Duplechain stated, “You are asking if the District Attorney can object to this. I don’t think that is an issue. If it is an issue I will let you know but I don’t believe that it is going to be an issue in this case.”

Councilman Harold Taylor stated, “Fair enough.”

Chairman Wayne Ardoin questioned, “Can you come back to us at the next Committee Meeting in the Finance Administration and give us your finding of what you have found out after you have talked to Mike Leger, the District Attorney and Chad Pitre and see what we can come up with. Some kind of solutions.”

Legal Counsel Garrett Duplechain stated, “I can talk to the District Attorney about it. In the end the council can do whatever it want. This could end up in litigation. The council can green light it or not tonight it is up to you all.”

Chairman Wayne Ardoin stated, “I just think that we might be moving a little hastily as a council to go with a Declaratory Judgement. Let’s try and sit down and try to iron the situation out.”

Councilman Harold Taylor stated, “I think that is a good idea.”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “So what do you suggest?”

Councilman Ernest Blanchard stated, “I make a motion that we Table it until next meeting.”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “So what do you suggest? Just to Table it.”

Councilwoman Nancy Carriere stated, “I think what Mr. Bellard is asking to take action on this so that we can move forward to try and settle this problem because the Sheriff has not negotiated is what he is saying and he feels the only way to solve this because the Sheriff said talk to my lawyer is to move forward with the lawsuit. I think what we is asking if we want to green light it. We are going backward and forwards with saying what the DA thinks, what Garrett thinks and what his lawyer thinks. His lawyer thinks in order to settle this is to get a lawyer. That is where we are at. I don’t think it is about waiting 2 weeks for Committee to try to decide that the DA is not going to get involved or Garrett cannot represent us. We are at this point where we need to get this settled before the year is up. Because the Sheriff said that then we should let the attorneys settle it and if we loose we lose we will have to face that consequence because we will have to end up paying our bills or paying the bill. I think that is where we are at.”

Chairman Wayne Ardoin stated, “You just want to lower the cost?”

Parish President Jessie stated “I want the Sheriff to pay his fair share. He is collecting \$26.39 per day per state inmate. It is costing us as a Government \$17.13 per day. How is that fair? Almost everyone on this council at one time or another behind closed doors saying you need to do something about. I am here doing something about it so now it is time for this council does something about. It is time we get from behind closed doors and get to the table and make some decisions so we can move forward. I am tired passing it on, passing it on. Let’s make it happen or don’t make it happen. Either way it goes I brought it to you all attention. If the council takes no action then we get what we get. But these behind closed door deals it is time for it to stop.”

Chairman Wayne Ardoin stated, “What is the wishes of the council?”

Councilman Timmy Lejeune stated, “Ms. Nancy, did you make that as a Sub-motion?”

Councilwoman Nancy Carriere stated, “I will make it as a Sub-Motion that we move forward and let the attorneys handle it.”

Councilman Jody White stated, “I will second it.”

Chairman Wayne Ardoin stated, “Mr. Ernie you offered a motion to Table this matter.”

Councilman Ernest Blanchard stated, “Until we find out more information but I will withdraw my motion.”

Chairman Wayne Ardoin stated, “I have a motion by Ms. Nancy. Can you repeat your motion?”

Councilwoman Nancy Carriere stated, “Based on what Mr. Bellard have said the Sheriff should pay his fair share. My motion is that he hire his attorney to move forward with this and let us see where it goes.”

A motion was made by Councilwoman Nancy Carriere, seconded by Councilman Jody White to authorize the Parish President’s Attorney to move forward with the litigations on housing the inmates at the jail.

On roll call vote: YEAS: Jody White, Nancy Carriere, Faltery Jolivette, Mildred Thierry, Ken Marks, Vivian Olivier, Dexter Brown, Timmy Lejeune, Jimmie Edwards and Ernest Blanchard.

NAYS: None. **ABSENT:** Alvin Stelly. **ABSTAINED:** Harold Taylor.

WHEREUPON, this motion was adopted on this, the 16th, day of October 2024.

A motion was made by Councilman Timmy Lejeune, seconded by Councilwoman Mildred Thierry to Enter into Executive Session, turn off the recording system, and ask the public to exit the council chambers to further discuss Item 15 and Item 16 on the agenda.

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

WHEREUPON, this motion was adopted on this, the 16th, day of October 2024.

A motion was made by Councilman Jimmie Edwards, seconded by Councilwoman Mildred Thierry to enter back into Regular Session.

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

WHEREUPON, this motion was adopted on this, the 16th, day of October 2024.

15.

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