

**ST. LANDRY PARISH COUNCIL
ADMINISTRATIVE/FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
THURSDAY, JANUARY 2, 2025
OLD CITY MARKET, 131 W. BELLEVUE ST.
OPELOUSAS, LOUISIANA**

ADMINISTRATIVE/FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

1. Administrative Finance Chairman Harold Taylor called this meeting of the Administrative/Finance Committee of the St. Landry Parish Council to order.
2. Councilman Jody White led the Pledge of Allegiance & Invocation.
3. **Roll Call:** Nancy Carriere, Harold Taylor, Ken Marks, Dexter Brown and Ernest Blanchard. Ex-Officio Wayne Ardoin. **ABSENT:** Faltery Jolivette.
4. **Person to address the Committee.**

Attorney Elbert Lee Guillory addressed the council. He stated, “Mr. Chairman, members, ladies and gentleman first let me say that I approach you all this evening as an elder in our community. I have seen a lot in my 80 years of living. Back in the 1950’s there was a problem in Shreveport when some officers rode into a church with guns and horses and chased the people out who were worshipping. I thought that America had buried those days, I thought that this was behind us, sadly this is not the case. This past Sunday an officer went into a church with a gun on his hip, hand on his gun and chased the people out who had come there to worship. They were just setting up, the musician and the pastor and he chased them out. There may be some questions, not in my mind about whether they were there appropriately or not. If they were not there appropriately, my God they were there to worship our Lord. There was no reason, no need to, no appropriateness in the gun in the sanctuary and chasing the people out. The next day when the Pastor went to retrieve some of the holy items from his sanctuary and you know that in every church there are some holy things, special things, when he went to get them he was prevented from doing that. There is a document that says that the property was sold on the 23rd of December, I believe it was and the people who sold the property, the church members and the church had 30 days to get their things out, to vacate and still all of this happened just a few days after that document was signed. I wanted you all to be aware of it, I wanted you all to understand the pain inflicted upon those people who were trying to worship God and were chased out of the sanctuary with a man with a gun on his hip and his hand on his gun. I ask you only one thing, please do all that we can to bury those old days where men could go armed into a sanctuary and chase people out of a place of worship. Thank you so much for letting me be here with you tonight.”

Ms. Angela D. Angello addressed the council. She stated, “My name is Angela Angello. I live at 315 S. Court Street, Opelousas, LA. Thank you all for letting me address you. I am a member and the Associate Pastor of Opelousas Live Church. I was also handling the deal for the church with Parish Government, just overseeing it. I am a Real-estate Broker and I have been for the last 19 years. Like Attorney Elbert Guillory said, we passed the sale on the 23rd of December and we were given a letter right here from President Jessie Bellard saying that we had 30 days to vacate the premises. I have done several deals where there were sellers that had remain on the property until they had somewhere else to go. We get a document signed and there is no problem once the time is up and we get our things and we leave and we were not given that and I had two meetings with Jessie asking him when we had to leave. He told me that it would be no problem for us to stay. We had an event center there where I would rent out buildings for special events like Baby Showers. I ask Jessie when we need to be out because I don’t want to schedule an event and take these people money and we have to leave. He was there with Kiara, she was there in the meeting and he told me that it would be no problem and there was no rush. After the documents were signed for the sale he came to the church like tyrant and asked us to leave when we had this document signed saying that we had 30 days to stay. This is my concern because we are still within our time period and he won’t let us on the premises without calling his office and that was not the agreement at the table. The agreement at

the table was that we had 30 days to vacate and that is our body and our items that are in there. This is what transpired. That is all that I have to say.”

Pastor Kerney Thomas Jr. addressed the council. He stated, “I am Pastor Kerney Thomas, 107 Barnette Court, Lafayette, LA. 70507. Ladies and gentlemen of the St. Landry Parish Committee I come before you tonight with great regret in my heart. As a Pastor but as a voice of my congregation and community. A community that have been subjected to gross injustice, intimidation and harassment by Mr. Jessie Bellard. His action not only undermined the mission of Opelousas Life Church but also created significant liability for this parish. Three plus years ago Opelousas Life Church stepped out on faith to purchase 103 acers with a vision to build a space for worship service and transformation. From the start we faced obstacles largely due to the unethical attempts by Mr. Bellard to derail our purpose. Despite his efforts to influence realtors, financial institutions against us we press forward and succeeded. Unfortunately our success only intensified his hostility over the past three plus years and his harassment has escalated. Most recently his actions forced the sale of our property to St. Landry Parish under duress on December 20, 2024. This was not a peaceful transaction but one marked by coercion and intimidation. On December 29, 2024 Mr. Bellard trespassed the property with his hand on his fire arm verbally abusing and threatening me. He called me a crook and he told me he wanted me off of the property immediately. I asked him why would you call me a crook and he said because you are a crook. We did vacate the property blatantly disregarding the official 30 days agreed upon and signed notice by Mr. Jessie Bellard himself. The following day while we attempted to enter the building he returned again armed, continued to flex and intimidation to attorney Elbert Guillory. Let me emphasize, Mr. Bellard has openly stated that his actions reflect the wishes of this Parish Government. If that is true then this body bears responsibility for his behavior. By failing to address his conduct St. Landry Parish becomes complicit in his actions assuming liability for the harm done to Opelousas Life Church. Let me be clear, should our church be forced to pursue further legal actions, the financial and emotional reputation caused to this parish will be immense. This is not just an ethical or moral abuse it is a matter of legal accountability. We demand immediate action to address the following: No. 1. A full investigation. I want an immediate and transparent inquiry into Mr. Bellard’s actions both personally and as a Parish Representative. No. 2. Accountability. Acknowledge the parish responsibility for enabling these actions and take the necessary steps to rectify this injustice, protection of our congregation. No. 3. Guarantee that Opelousas Life Church and its members are protected from any further harassment or intimidation as we transition over the property. No. 4. He has possession of all of our property. They are going through our property, they have moved property from one location on the property to another location on the property. There is some property that has been misplaced that we have been informed that is no longer on the property. This is not just about Opelousas Life Church, this is about whether those in position of power in St. Landry Parish can act with impunity disregarding the right, safety and dignity of the people that are suppose to serve. Let me be clear, Opelousas Life Church seeks a resolution, not retribution but let there be no misunderstanding if the parish fails to act we will pursue justice through every legal avenue available to us. I implore this community to act decisively to correct this grave injustice and protect the integrity of this parish and restore trust in this government. I want to thank you today for your attention and may God guide your decision as you seek to do what is right, just and honorable in the sight of God and in the sight of man. Thank you for your time.”

Administrative Finance Chairman Harold Taylor stated, “Mr. Duplechain, you have heard his request, what is your legal opinion on this? Advise us on how we need to handle this.”

Legal Counsel Garrett Duplechain stated, “Well the council can take no action this evening.”

Administrative Finance Chairman Harold Taylor stated, “I am asking you if we need to take action tonight or can we legally do it.”

Legal Counsel Garrett Duplechain stated, “You cannot take any action tonight.”

Councilwoman Nancy Carriere stated, “Mr. Duplechain, I know you said that we can’t take any action tonight but the pastor mentioned two words, Resolution and Retribution. Is there any resolution to this situation? We cannot take any action either here or there tonight but I am thinking that is what Mr. Taylor wanted to know, where do we go from here as councilmembers? Do we try to rectify this and come up with a solution-resolution?”

Legal Counsel Garrett Duplechain stated, “I understand what you are asking. If there is any concerns, opinions, ideas or feelings about the transition from the seller to the buyer then their attorney Mr. Guillory and I would be glad to discuss that, he apparently is the attorney representing the church. That is where this lies for right now if there is anything to this. The church has their attorney here and of course I have known Mr. Guillory for many years and I will be glad to discuss anything with him that he has to discuss and that would be the next step.”

Councilwoman Nancy Carriere stated, “Then you can come back to the council and let us know if you all came up with a resolution?”

Legal Counsel Garrett Duplechain stated, “I will be glad to inform the council of anything that comes up.”

Councilwoman Nancy Carriere stated, “Mr. Guillory, did you hear this. Mr. Duplechain is willing to meet with you and possibly with Mr. Ballard, but if not then with our council on the parish behalf on trying to resolve this situation.”

Attorney Elbert Lee Guillory stated, “I will contact him tomorrow.”

Councilman Jody White stated, “Mr. Guillory, being that you are their attorney I will direct my question to you sir. To your knowledge, was a formal complaint made to the St. Landry Parish Sheriff’s Office in reference to this?” I just expect a yes or a no answer.”

Attorney Elbert Lee Guillory stated, “We did discussed the matter with the Sheriff’s Office. They felt that this is a Civil Matter and not a Criminal Matter. There are some possible criminal charges but I have advised my client not to pursue criminal charges. There is no need to make this a bigger thing than it is.”

Councilman Jody White stated, “So to this point a formal complaint hasn’t been logged.”

Attorney Elbert Lee Guillory stated, “That is correct.”

Councilman Jody White stated, “Okay, question number two, was there any video surveillance that was present at the time that this matter happened?”

Attorney Elbert Lee Guillory stated, “Not to our knowledge.”

Councilman Jody White stated, “Okay, that is what I wanted to know.”

Parish President Jessie Ballard stated, “So it is a simple thing. This is a government building under my authority so those actions are taken by me as Parish President. The council has nothing to do with this transition. It was done legally and we are following the law to the letter. It is going to be handled through my office like it started and it is going to continue there. It is a government building so it will be taken care of.”

Administrative Finance Chairman Harold Taylor stated, “I understand but we are being addressed as having an issue.”

Parish President Jessie Ballard stated, “I understand but it is an investigation. The council cannot do an investigation on the Parish President’s office. It has to be done through a third party which would be like the Sheriff’s Office or somebody else. At the end of the day this is a Government Building and they would be allowed to get their items like they were instructed to do on Sunday Morning. They should contact my office for an appointment and we will do it, no big deal.”

Legal Counsel Garrett Duplechain stated, “There is no obligation or anything mandatory that the council do anything on this. Mr. Guillory believes that there is an issue then he and I can discuss it but the council need not take any action at this time.”

Attorney Elbert Lee Guillory stated, “I do agree with your attorney. This is Opelousas. This is St. Landry Parish. There is no need for this kind of hostility, anger, threats, displays of guns and all. I will contact your attorney and see if we can common sense and come to a resolution of this.”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “Mr. Chairman, just for the record, as soon as Mr. Duplechain is contacted he and I will discuss the outcome and make sure that we follow the way that we had it planned.”

Administrative Finance Chairman Harold Taylor stated, “Okay. We are moving on.”

5. Parish President & Finance Reports:

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “You have a copy of the Finances in front of you and I don’t have anything further.”

Administrative Finance Chairman Harold Taylor stated, “I have a question on that. It says as of October 31st

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “That is correct.”

Administrative Finance Chairman Harold Taylor stated, “We got the October 31st, one month and one half ago. Has it changed? Is this a new document?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “Is should have been November for this one. We will reprint and get you a November one for the council meeting.”

Administrative Finance Chairman Harold Taylor stated, “You will give us a new one.”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “I will give you a full one. Tomorrow we can e-mail it to you all.”

Administrative Finance Chairman Harold Taylor stated, “Is there anything else Mr. Bellard?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “No Sir.”

A motion was made by Councilman Ken Marks, seconded by Councilman Ernest Blanchard to accept the Parish President & Finance Report:

On roll call vote: YEAS: Nancy Carriere, Ken Marks, Dexter Brown, and Ernest Blanchard. **NAYS:** None. **ABSENT:** Faltery Jolivette. **ABSTAINED:** None.

Motion carried.

6. Forward all applications received from the ratifications to appoint Assistant Chief Mark Guidry, Chief Ervin Menard and Chief Matt Rabalais to the St. Landry Parish Communications District E-911 Board for a four-year term. (01-04-2025 – 01-04-2029).

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “Mr. Chairman I have a question. I did not think that an Assistant Chief could be on the board. I thought that the bylaws had prohibited the Assistant Chief for the Police Department to be on a board at that rank. I remember whenever Paul Janouseau was Assistant Chief he had to step down because of it. I just want some clarity on it.”

Legal Counsel Garrett Duplechain stated, “The bylaws of the board may state that about the Assistant Chief. I noticed that there are some Chiefs of here, Chief Rabalais, Chief Menard but when it comes to an Assistant Chief and the bylaws I don’t know if it prohibits and Assist Chief.”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “I remember when Paul Jeanouseau was there he had to set down as an Assistant Chief and that was the reason that was given to us before so I don’t remember.”

Councilman Dexter Brown stated, “I know Chief Ervin Menard and Chief Rabalais, are those two Fire Chief’s?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “Correct.”

Councilman Dexter Brown stated, “Our Assistant Chief is with the Opelousas Police Department, Assistance Chief Mark Guidry, would that make a difference because he is a police officer?”

Legal Counsel Garrett Duplechain stated, “There is a difference between a Fire Chief and an Assistant Chief, Police Officer. The bylaws may make that distinction. I don’t have the bylaws with me.”

Councilman Dexter Brown stated, “Okay, if you get in contact with Assistant Chief Guidry and he can’t serve on the board the he could nominate an officer.”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “We should contact the board to find out the bylaws.”

Councilwoman Nancy Carriere stated, “He had already served a term. We had appointed him and he already served a term and we did not catch this before.”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “He was a Major then he got promoted. He was a Major when he was appointed and since then he has been an Assistant Chief. I think during his term is whenever he became an Assistant Chief.”

Councilwoman Nancy Carriere stated, “Garrett you said something that was a little puzzling. You said that Chief Rabalis, Chief Menard.”

Legal Counsel Garrett Duplechain stated, “They are Firemen.”

Councilwoman Nancy Carriere stated, “Please look into the Bylaws. I think the Assistant Chief have done a real good job. I would hate to lose him. Lets just see what you find out.”

Councilman Ken Marks stated, “As we all know all of our Boards and Commission have laws and bylaws to govern themselves. We can belittle this all we want but we need to know what those bylaws say and to what degree as far as Assistant, Non Assistant, Chief, No Chief, whatever. It should be written and we should abide by whatever that law is written. Is that what you are planning to provide to us as far as the documentation of such?”

Legal Counsel Garrett Duplechain stated, “Yes.”

Councilman Ken Marks stated, “I request we follow with that procedure.”

Administrative Finance Chairman Harold Taylor stated, “We will withdraw agenda item No. 6 and submit it next month once we have more information.”

A motion was made by Councilman Ernest Blanchard, seconded by Councilman Dexter Brown to forward to Regular Meeting held on **Wednesday, January 15th, 2025** to withdraw Assistant Chief Mark Guidry and forward two applications received from the ratifications to appoint Chief Ervin Menard and Chief Matt Rabalais to the St. Landry Parish Communications District E-911 Board for a four-year term. (01-04-2025 – 01-04-2029).

On roll call vote: YEAS: Nancy Carriere, Ken Marks, Dexter Brown, and Ernest Blanchard. **NAYS:** None. **ABSENT:** Faltery Jolivette. **ABSTAINED:** None.
Motion forwarded.

7. **Forward all applications received for five appointments to the St. Landry Parish Tourist Commission for a three-year term. (02-19-2025 – 02-19-2028).**

A motion was made by Councilman Ernest Blanchard, seconded by Councilman Dexter Brown to forward to Regular Meeting held on **Wednesday, January 15th, 2025** to forward all applications received for five appointments to the St. Landry Parish Tourist Commission for a three-year term. (2-19-2025 – 02-19-2028).

On roll call vote: YEAS: Nancy Carriere, Ken Marks, Dexter Brown, and Ernest Blanchard **NAYS:** None. **ABSENT:** Faltery Jolivette. **ABSTAINED:** None.
Motion forwarded.

8. **Authorize the Council Clerk to advertise for two appointments to the St. Landry Parish Tourist Commission for a three-year term. Angelia Guillory and Delita Rubin has resigned. (02-19-2022—02-19-2025).**

A motion was made by Councilman Ken Marks, seconded by Councilman Ernest Blanchard to forward to Regular Meeting held on **Wednesday, January 15th, 2025** to authorize the Council Clerk to advertise for two appointments to the St. Landry Parish Tourist Commission for a three-year term. Delita Rubin and Angelia Guillory has resigned. (2-19-2025 – 02-19-2028).

On roll call vote: YEAS: Nancy Carriere, Ken Marks, Dexter Brown, and Ernest Blanchard **NAYS:** None. **ABSENT:** Faltery Jolivette. **ABSTAINED:** None.
Motion forwarded.

9. **Forward all applications received for one appointment to the St. Landry Parish Waterworks District No. 2 (Rural) for a four-year term. (01-01-2025 – 01-01-2029).**

A motion was made by Councilman Ken Marks, seconded by Councilman Ernest Blanchard to forward to Regular Meeting held on **Wednesday, January 15th, 2025** to forward all application received for one appointment to the St. Landry Parish Waterworks District No. 2 (Rural) for a four-year term. (01-01-2025 – 01-01-2029).

On roll call vote: YEAS: Nancy Carriere, Ken Marks, Dexter Brown, and Ernest Blanchard **NAYS:** None. **ABSENT:** Faltery Jolivette. **ABSTAINED:** None.
Motion forwarded.

10. **Forward all applications received for one appointment to the St. Landry Parish Agricultural Arena Authority for a five-year term. (01-18-2025 – 01-18-2030).**

A motion was made by Councilman Ken Marks, seconded by Councilman Ernest Blanchard to forward to Regular Meeting held on **Wednesday, January 15th, 2025** to forward all application received for one appointment to the St. Landry Parish Agricultural Arena Authority for a five-year term. (01-18-2025 – 01-18-2029).

On roll call vote: YEAS: Nancy Carriere, Ken Marks, Dexter Brown, and Ernest Blanchard **NAYS:** None. **ABSENT:** Faltery Jolivette. **ABSTAINED:** None.
Motion forwarded.

11. **Discuss any other business properly brought before this committee.**

Councilman Dexter Brown stated, “It is kind of late on the agenda now but I wanted to do this at the beginning of the meeting. I wanted to take a moment of silence for the victims and their families for the tragedy that happened in New Orleans for New Years.”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “We just got a text that there is shooting going on right now at the Acadiana Mall in Lafayette. Somebody is in there with an AK-47.”

Councilwoman Nancy Carriere questioned, “Mr. Bellard, have you and Mr. Jagneaux worked things out? Can you give us a little status on that?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “We have come to the point of leasing that section that is housing his records. They are getting the fair market value of the lease. Once I can get that I will bring it to the council. They offered for us to buy everything over there and

pay everything but we don't need another building like that. I offered to lease the area where he stores his records so that is what we are working on right now.”

12. Adjourn.

A motion was made by Councilman Ernest Blanchard, seconded by Councilman Dexter Brown to adjourn the Administrative/Finance Committee Meeting.

On roll call vote: YEAS: Nancy Carriere, Ken Marks, Dexter Brown, and Ernest Blanchard **NAYS:** None. **ABSENT:** Faltery Jolivette. **ABSTAINED:** None.

Motion carried.

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