

**FIRST MEETING
ST. LANDRY PARISH COUNCIL
PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE MEETING
TUESDAY, MARCH 3rd, 2026
OLD CITY MARKET, 131 W. BELLEVUE ST.
OPELOUSAS, LOUISIANA**

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

1. Public Works Chairman Jimmie Edwards called this meeting of the Public Works Committee of the St. Landry Parish Council to order.
2. **Councilman Faltery Jolivette said the Pledge of Allegiance & Invocation.**
3. **Roll Call:** Mildred Thierry, Alvin Stelly, Jimmie Edwards and Ernest Blanchard. Ex-Officio Wayne Ardoin. **ABSENT:** Jody White and Vivian Olivier.
4. **Person to address the Committee:**

Ms. Joy Usie addressed the council. She stated, “Good evening to all of you, President Bellard, Chairman Ardoin and members of the Committee. My name is Joy Usie. I am applying to be seated on the Fire Board for Coulee Croche Fire Protection District No. 4. I would like to tell you a little bit about myself. I was born and raised in the Cankton Community and I am a lifelong resident of St. Landry Parish. I belong to the Catholic Church in Cankton Louisiana. In growing up I attended Cankton Elementary School. I became a teacher and served as a teacher at Cankton Elementary for a number of years and then I went on and served as the School Principal at Cankton Elementary for about 15 years. I later worked as an Instructional Supervisor for the St. Landry Parish School Board. At that time I had an opportunity to visit communities and schools throughout our parish. I have traveled to Krotz Springs, Port Barre, Opelousas, Eunice, Melville, Morrow, Washington, Arnaudville, Sunset, Grand Coteau and back to Cankton. This is a large parish about 929 square miles as all of you know. Over that time I have meet some incredibly hard working people, people who love their community and are dedicated to serving their community. The men and woman of the Cankton Community and Coulee Croche are some of those hard working and dedicated people. Our first responders and firefighters know what service to their community is. If you dial 911 they are the first individuals there and they respond in minutes. These volunteers actively attend fire training and CPR training. They do hazmat and rescue operations. They seek grants and funds to upgrade equipment and to procure new equipment. They keep up with mandates, rules and regulations that pertain to fire safety and protection. In addition these volunteers support our veterans and our children. They participate in food drives, toy funds and they host the mosquito festival which was held in Cankton in the fall of 2025. As a member of the Cankton Community I am so proud of these men and women, many of whom I have actually thought in school, that tells you how old I am. For me to give back to my community, serve and support these people I would like your consideration when you select an individual for the Fire Board for Coulee Croche Fire Protection District No. 4. I thank all of you. Good evening.”

Public Works Chairman Jimmie Edwards questioned, “Does anyone have any questions for Ms. Usie?”

Councilman Faltery Jolivette stated, “It is truly a pleasure to hear you and the views that you bring to the table. We would like to say thank you for the passion that you have to serve.”

Ms. Joy Usie stated, “Thank you very much. My husband and I live in the Cankton Community. About 2-3 years ago they built the new Coulee Croche Fire Station and it is adjacent to our house. We are literally sitting on the Fire Station in Cankton.”

Public Works Chairman Jimmie Edwards stated, “Mr. Batiste do you want to speak or do you want to wait until the Finance Committee?”

Mr. Milton Batiste, Superintendent stated, “If I can.”

Public Works Chairman Jimmie Edwards stated, "Okay."

Mr. Milton Batiste, Superintendent stated, "Mr. Brown already told me that I had 5 minutes. We have a Regional Round Playoff Game tonight so I definitely appreciate speaking early. Good evening Mr. President and members of the board. Again thank you Mr. Brown for the invite and thanks to each and every one of you all for what you all do. I know we spend countless hours talking on the phone and you advocate for different areas around the parish so thank you for all of your support as we continue to move around. We have kicked off our School Millage Campaign. I have had a chance to present to every school staff at this point and I always start off like this. I am not the property tax police and I am not the millage police. The only thing that I want you all to do is listen with an open mind and an open heart. If there is something that you can support we would absolutely appreciate it. If there is something that you can't support I will understand but I want you to listen with an open mind and an open heart. We normally have a power point presentation as we are doing this but as I speak through it I ask you to try and create a visual in your mind so you can follow me. The first thought I had was in 1986. When you think about 1986 think about where were you. While you are thinking I will tell you where I was in 1986. In 1986 I was at Grolee Elementary in the second grade in Ms. Rider's classroom. I had not moved to Plaisance yet Ms. Thierry because I was still at Grolee in the second grade in Ms. Rider's Class. So think about where you were in 1986. So in 1986 was the last time that the St. Landry Parish School system had an increase in our school millage rate in the parish, so think about that. Now we are operating on a 40 year old budget. When you think about 40 years you think about a school bus and a school bus at that time cost about \$20,000.00 and one school bus as we speak now cost about \$125,000.00. We think about the classroom, it did not have air condition and now we have air condition all across our buildings. You think about computers, at that time we probably had 2-3 computers in the entire district and now we have thousands, in fact every student have a 1-1 ration and every student have their own device. I think that is one of the great benefits of the St. Landry Parish School System and that is insurance. Everything that you currently see and currently have like right now is being funded on that same 1986 budget. What we are asking for is an additional \$9.9 Mils. It is on that one page and you can follow along. The previous superintendent asked for 23 additional mils. What I did as superintendent I went to a lot of people who said no we cannot support that and I ask why? They said too much, too soon, too fast so I said what if we scale back and keep it under double digits and ask for some things that we can do and put into place will you support it? Right now the feedback that I have been getting so far has been really good in terms of the support so think about 1986. The second thing I want you all to think about is that we have 64 parishes in Louisiana and Ms. Joy Usie put it very eloquently that we cover about 929 square miles. So we have 64 parishes in the state of Louisiana and St. Landry Parish covers about 929 square miles. Of those 64 parishes St. Landry Parish as a school system currently have the 60 lowest millage. As a school system we have the 60 lowest millage out of 64 parishes. I will not mention Lafayette when you think about Acadia, St. Martin, Evangeline and our neighboring parishes they are passing some of the school millage but we are 60 out of 64 parishes in the state of Louisiana. If we are able to pass this millage what changes? That is the big token. Out of those 929 square miles we have seven high schools. Out of those seven high schools we have one functioning tract. Right now the only functioning tract in the St. Landry Parish School System is North West High, not Eunice High, Beau Chene High, Port Barry High, North Central High, none of those tracks are runnable or operable. This plan would allow every high school to have a new tract and a turf football field. I have already told every high school principal that these fields and these tracks are not just for the students they are also for the community. When we get this done we want the tracks open so Ms. Nancy can go run and exercise and anyone else. This will allow us to secure and fence in our elementary campus, remember the public said no to brand new buildings all around the parish so how do we secure what we currently have. At Eunice Elementary you can walk right onto Park Vista's campus. We have a lot of elementary campus that you can walk right onto from the major highways. We want to be able to keep outside threats out and we want to keep our students in because we have a lot of students that are runners. We want to be able to get the state of the art metal detectors at our schools to help deter treats, weapons violence all of those things that are at an all-time high. Our high schools have material loaded building but our elementary schools don't. We want to be able to get metal detectors to help in that effort. I mentioned seven high schools but what about our Magnet Schools. If I am a parent and I have a kid that goes to a Magnet School how would this benefit the Magnet Schools? The Magnet Schools does not have sports. The Magnet Schools would get a performance auditorium because they have performances. When families

go now they pack into the gym and most times they cannot hear or understand what is going on. This would allow families to benefit from the performances at the Magnet Schools. The last component would be for employees. This would allow every employee no matter what you do for St. Landry Parish School System, whether you are a principal, assistant principal, teacher, custodian, bus driver, cafeteria worker every employee would receive a \$2,500.00 raise. Why is that important? It allows me to compete with Evangeline and Acadia for the best personnel support for our students. I know that I have said a lot but I don't have a lot of time to go through everything but one more thing that I want to add is this: This is not just a public school plan it is a plan for St. Landry Parish. The St. Landry Parish School System supports private and public schools students. I will tell you how: Every school in the parish receives whether you are private or public you will receive Federal Funding. That Federal Funding comes in to the St. Landry Parish School system, I sign off on those funds and we distribute those funds and I do periodic evaluations. If you go to a private school or a public school and you receive Special Education Services whether that student is hearing impaired, vision impaired or speech impaired the St. Landry Parish School System provides Pupil Appraisal Services to those kids that qualify. This is not just a public school plan this is a plan for our parish. We look at crime and some of the challenges that you are facing as a governing body I think that education is the key to overcoming this. Again I am not coming forth to push this down your throat but I ask that you do your homework and do your research. At the bottom of the sheet you can see that if your home is valued for \$80,000.00 it will cost you an additional \$4.95 a year to support this. If your home is valued at \$140,000.00 it will cost you an additional \$64.35 a year to support this. We do have an active website to where you can go on and plug in an amount so you can see. If you have any questions you can give me a call and we can talk through it. All I ask if that you just look at it with an open mind and an open heart. If this is something that you can support and help advocate for please do so. The election will be on the ballot on May 16th, 2026. Employee salaries will start in September, fencing project, metal detection project will start right away. The only thing that will be delayed would be the football fields because we will be right in the heart of football season at that time and we will have to wait until the season ends to start those projects.”

Public Works Chairman Jimmie Edwards questioned, “Are there any questions for Mr. Batiste?”

Councilman Harold Taylor questioned, “What is the average assessed value of homes here in St. Landry Parish?”

Mr. Milton Batiste, Superintendent stated, “I don't know the average assessed value but I do know we have about 45% of our homes are homestead exempt. I am not sure of the average home stead exemption.”

Councilman Harold Taylor stated, “Thank you.”

Mr. Milton Batiste, Superintendent stated, “If you want to know the last time in 1986 that increased high school millage was used to build North West High, Beau Chene High and North Central High at that time.”

Public Works Chairman Jimmie Edwards stated, “Thank you Mr. Batiste.”

5. Public Works Report:

Mr. Barry Soileau, Public Works Director addressed the council. He stated, “For the month of February we:

Boom Axed	1	Roads
Culvert Cleaned	7	Roads
Culvert Installation	17	Roads
Debris Removal	27	Roads
Ditching	5	Roads
Grading	60	Roads
Grass Cutting	4	Road
Material Spreading	3	Roads
Patching	32	Roads

Sign Installation	22	Roads
Tree Removal	7	Roads
Washout	12	Roads

We also removed over 250 tires from bayous and canals in the parish last month. Not to mention stoves, refrigerators and pieces of cars.”

Councilman Dexter Brown stated, “Mr. Barry, Mr. Bellard, I want to thank you and your crew for the clean-up and the removal of the trees due to last month’s storm. I had several trees down in my area and I know that trees were down all over the parish but I want to thank you for the promptness that you all gave. Tell them thank you very much. We appreciate you all.”

Councilman Ernest Blanchard questioned, “Mr. Bellard, on HWY 190, Bayou Teche are we going to get to that soon?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “Yes, so right now that money that came in from the projects on the west side they are digging those canals that go into Bayou Des Cannes. After that is done they are going to start the process of cleaning up at the bridge itself. They have been monitoring that and picking up. The state have been monitoring and picking up as well it is just so much of it and it is steadily coming.”

Councilman Ernest Blanchard stated, “They did not pick it up for about one year and you all had to go out there and clean it.”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “That is what I am saying. Since then they have been monitoring it and picking it up as they go. The state have and we have also.”

Councilman Ernest Blanchard questioned, “Is that some of that appropriated money that you went and got in Washington DC??”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “No this is from DOTD and the state.”

Councilwoman Nancy Carriere questioned, “Do you have an update on that clean up that we were going to assist that drainage board?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “Yes, the board ask that we help them with that project. Yesterday afternoon we finally got some movement on it. It is not just that particular spot but behind where the concrete plants are we are finding out that the concrete company are dumping their washout into the canals and blocking our drainage. We are having to address that issue as well. I don’t know how we are going to fix that problem but that is one of the major reason why the west side of HWY 182 it is blocked up because the concrete company are washing out their trucks and the concrete have blocked everything. It will be a matter of the city pipes that cross the canal, I don’t why they have that but those pipes that are sewer lines and water lines that cross the canals and there are so many feet above the top and it is blocked so we are having issues with that but we are going to clean it up but it will be an ongoing project on that one.”

Councilwoman Nancy Carriere questioned, “How are we going to handle the concrete company dumping their waste? Is that legal?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “I was made aware of this on yesterday. I will be talking to the concrete company. I know in Eunice Babineaux use theirs and they sell it. Why not just do the same thing. Why block our drainage is what I am saying? I will be addressing that issue with the as well.”

Councilwoman Nancy Carriere stated, “The issue with the dumping of the concrete, I spoke with Mr. Barry about the Washington Road, HWY 182 on both sides. It is horrible.”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “They will start doing some work on the west side to alleviate that problem where the concrete plants are then they will jump on the other side and start the project. That is coming into the city of Opelousas. We will be working with the Mayor on that one.”

Councilwoman Nancy Carriere stated, “It is horrible that waste is at a standstill on both sides. I talked to the state and I was wondering if you all had any feedback. We will wait and see I guess. That is all that I have.”

A motion was made by Councilwoman Mildred Thierry, seconded by Councilman Ernest Blanchard to accept the Public Works Report.

On roll call vote: YEAS: Mildred Thierry, Alvin Stelly and Ernest Blanchard.

NAYS: None. **ABSENT:** Jody White and Vivian Olivier. **ABSTAINED:** None.

Motion carried.

6. Forward all applications received for two appointments for a two year term to Coulee Croche Fire Protection District No. 4. (04-20-2024 – 04-20-2026).

A motion was made by Councilwoman Mildred Thierry, seconded by Councilman Ernest Blanchard to forward to Regular Meeting held on *Wednesday, March 18th, 2026* to forward all applications received for two appointments for a two-year term to Coulee Croche Fire Protection District No. 4. (04-20-2024 – 04-20-2026).

On roll call vote: YEAS: Mildred Thierry, Alvin Stelly and Ernest Blanchard.

NAYS: None. **ABSENT:** Jody White and Vivian Olivier. **ABSTAINED:** None.

Motion forwarded.

7. Discuss placing a Speed Bump on the East Side and a Speed Bump on the West Side of the Curvy Section near the address of 567 Dufilho Road. (Councilman Dexter Brown).

Councilman Dexter Brown stated, “On two occasions we had individuals traveling down Dufilho Road at a high rate of speed. It is like an ‘S’ shape figure in the road. I guess they don’t anticipate how the road curves. On August 13th, 2025 and January 29th, 2026 there were two incidents in that section near 567 Dufilho Road where Mr. Jerome Robertson stays. On the first incident a Honda Accord hit the ditch and went into his yard and did damage to the yard. On the second incident a utility truck lost control and hit the telephone pole and knocked power out down Dufilho Road and other places. If we could do a feasibility study and we are not in the habit right now of putting speed bumps because it is tearing up our roads but if we could do some type of feasibility study whereas we could slow that traffic down. I know the first step is getting the sheriff department to monitor and control the speed on that road. I would like for you to look into it Mr. Bellard and Mr. Barry and see what would be the best solution to try and slow that traffic down in that area.”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “We will get with them and see if we could maybe put that trailer out there to see what the estimated and average speed is and hopefully fix that problem but at the end of the day it will be enforcement.”

Councilman Dexter Brown stated, “I believe that speed limit down that road is 35 m.p.h.

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “They must be doing about 50 m.p.h.”

Councilwoman Nancy Carriere stated, “I have been having problem with Jennings Road, McNeese Street and Graham Street and I could name about 100 of them. I thought we had voted there were going to be no more speed bumps. I would appreciate it if Mr. Brown would get it then maybe I can get it too.”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “Let me just give you all a little feedback on speed bumps. Speed bumps don’t work, bottom line. If we don’t put speed bumps that are high enough to slow the traffic down then it will damage vehicles and we will be held liable for something. I am not in favor of speed bumps. If you look at the study and you go fast enough you don’t even feel them anymore. The speed bumps don’t work and we need enforcement. I think that is the only way to stop it from happening. I know on Jennings Road we did a study and it came back with some people doing over 100 miles per hour.”

Councilwoman Nancy Carriere stated, “The best I could get was speed limits and nobody follows the law anymore.”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “Nope and I agree. I agree.”

Councilwoman Nancy Carriere stated, “Jennings Road is a major throughway from Grand Coteau all the way for people coming to work and it is bad. If you all decide just let me know, I would like to have a study done also.”

Councilman Ken Marks stated, “I would like to understand the situation. It looks like it is an ‘S’ shape type curb. With that being said there is no signage to notify people of that coming up? It is a parish road, right.”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “Yes, they do have signs.”

Councilman Ken Marks stated, “You have indicated that people don’t know about it. If they observe and they watch the sign they would know there is an “S” curb, right. What is the speed limit in that curb?”

Councilman Dexter Brown stated, “I want to say just on the road itself it is 35 m.p.h.”

Councilman Ken Marks questioned, “There is no slowing down before you get to the ‘S’ curb.”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “No sir. It is all 35 m.p.h.”

Councilman Ken Marks questioned, “Can we consider lowering the speed?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “We can. At the end of the day I agree. I think if we tell them it needs to be 25 m.p.h. instead of 35 m.p.h. then they may do 35. I am just going to be honest with everybody here we need enforcement on these parish roads. We need to give out some tickets and we need people to understand that you have to slow down. Speed bumps and Speed Cameras are not going to work until they get stopped and they get a ticket and hopefully they might slow down. The majority of the people that are complaining are the ones that are living down that road and they are going to be speeding to.”

8. How is drainage being addressed in the Parish? (Councilwoman Mildred Thierry).

Councilwoman Mildred Thierry stated, “Mr. Bellard, I know a lot have been done and is being done but just for the benefit of the public to know where we are would you tell us what is being done continuously to address the drainage issues in the parish.”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “As everybody knows the drainage is a major problem. It is actually getting better as we go along because we are doing a lot of extra work with the help of the Federal Government and the State Government that is giving us money to do that. We just came back from Washington DC last weekend and we applied for \$3,000,000.00 to finish Bayou Mallet and Bayou Carron and do some other drainage projects in the parish. Since we have done those two projects the reign we did get if flowing. We see a lot of help with that and we are very encouraged. We are not going to stop digging and we are not going to stop cleaning. I say digging but with certain things you have to just clean. The core won’t let you dig but you can clean so I have to be careful with the wording but for the most part we do a lot. We did get \$5,500,000.00 to do a Detention Pond which will be done in District 9 off of Country Ridge Road. That is the only project that was actually approved by the Federal and the State Government. That has been 3 years in the making so that is going to help that area. We have a lot of different areas in the parish that we have to do as they come up we try and address them. In Eunice we received \$300,000.00 from the State Appropriations to do some Laterals in Eunice that goes to Bayou Des Cannes. Everyone is seeing some extra that comes from monies from the Federal and the State.”

Councilwoman Nancy Carriere questioned, “Last year I think you all secured \$4,000,000.00. Did you all use all of that towards drainage? When you all went to Washington DC.”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “Last year we had \$1,000,000.00 that was used o Bayou Mallet and Bayou Carron from the state. We had applied for \$870,000.00 with Senator Kennedy and it did not get passed Senator Kennedy’s Office. This year we applied for \$3,000,000.00 through Senator Bill Cassidy and Representative Cleo Fields office and it is moving forward.”

Councilwoman Nancy Carriere stated, “I remembered \$4,000,000.00 a couple of years ago but that is fine.”

Chairman Wayne Ardoin questioned, “Mr. Bellard, when are they going to start the Retention Pond? Are you going to bid it out?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “Right now it is with William and them. At the final stage of that process or the next stage. It is going to be a little extra work on them because we have to actually purchase some land.”

Chairman Wayne Ardoin questioned, “Have you purchased the property from Sandoz yet?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “Oh no we have not done anything yet. I think that will be one of the hurdles that we need to cross.”

Chairman Wayne Ardoin stated, “Thank you.”

9. Discuss Broadband in Rural Areas. (Councilwoman Mildred Thierry).

Councilwoman Mildred Thierry questioned, “Mr. Bellard there are some concerns in the rural areas. Those roads that are off of those little roads they still have not receive any type of service and they are concerned if it is possible that they will ever be serviced?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “I did have a meeting two weeks ago with the State. They received more money from the Feds for that purpose. Their object and their main goal is to have fiber to the home, however there are some areas think the parish that are is going to have internet but it might not be fiber directly to the home but they will have high speed internet by the towers and everything else but their goal is to have high speed fiber to the home. They get so many billions of dollars but they are working. We just got LSUE as a Hub for LUS or Lafayette Fiber a couple of weeks ago. They will start branching out. A lot of Eunice is on the new fiber. All of the projects that were awarded as far as on our side have been complete. They still have the GUMBO Plan and all the rest of those plans. There are several plans out there that companies are doing work on. It is happening but it just have a lot of ground to cover.”

10. Update on Smooth Ride Home. (Councilwoman Mildred Thierry).

Councilwoman Mildred Thierry stated, “Where are we with that? I know that most of what is being collected is probably going towards the bonds. Could you update us?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “I have been telling Barry to get some roads done and Barry says he does not want to do them.”

Councilwoman Mildred Thierry stated, “Barry, why you don’t want to do those roads. You know that we need to do those roads Barry.”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “Actually as the money comes in we are trying to do as many roads as we can. A lot is going to the bond which is good, we can pay off the bond. The leftovers is for drainage and for roads. We are doing some roads it just takes a lot of time for that money to come and to build up enough to do a project.”

Councilwoman Mildred Thierry stated, “We have about 2-3 years left?”

Parish President Jessie Bellard stated, “Until 2029.”

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

None.

12. Adjourn.

A motion was made by Councilman Alvin Stelly, seconded by Councilwoman Mildred Thierry to adjourn the Public Works Committee.

On roll call vote: YEAS: Mildred Thierry, Alvin Stelly and Ernest Blanchard.
NAYS: None. **ABSENT:** Jody White and Vivian Olivier. **ABSTAINED:** None.
Motion carried.

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