 June 22, 2018

The following minutes were taken at the regular monthly meeting of the Mayor and the Board of Aldermen on June 19, 2018 at the Town Hall in Pearl River.

Mayor McQueen called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

Alderman Phillips gave the invocation; the pledge of allegiance was led by Mayor McQueen.

**ROLL CALL:**

Mayor McQueen called roll and Alderman Walsh, Bennett, Phillips, McGregor, Attorney Tim Mathison, Attorney Matt Daigle, and Town Clerk, Madeline Campbell were all present. Alderman Cutrer was absent.

Alderman Walsh motions to accept the minutes from April 17th 2018 regular council meeting for approval, Alderman Bennett seconds the motion. All in favor, Aye. **So Moved.**

Alderman Walsh motions to accept the minutes from May 8th 2018 special council meeting for approval, Alderman Phillips seconds the motion. All in favor, Aye. **So Moved.**

Alderman Walsh motions to accept the minutes from May 15th 2018 regular council meeting for approval, Alderman McGregor seconds the motion. All in favor, Aye. **So Moved.**

Alderman Walsh motions to accept the minutes from May 17th 2018 special council meeting for approval, Alderman Phillips seconds the motion. All in favor, Aye. **So Moved.**

**RECOGNITION OF SPECIAL GUESTS:**

1. Mike Talbot of Hancock Whitney Bank – Pearl River presence and Centennial Donation for the Fourth of July Celebration July 3, 2018
2. Alderman Bennett – Recognition of Yard of The Quarter, Mr & Mrs Bourgeois

**TABLED ITEMS:**

Mayor McQueen asks the council to take Ordinance #174A Sewer & Water Rates off the table for discussion.

Alderman Walsh motions to take this ordinance off the table. Alderman Bennett seconds the motion. All in favor, Aye. **So Moved.**

**PUBLIC HEARING:**

1. Mayor McQueen opens Discussion of Ordinance #174A Sewer & Water Rates for public hearing. We really need the council to make decisions on setting these rates; our current budget is set off prior years’ operations and only has minimal allowance for running the S&W Department. Mayor McQueen goes over rules for public to speak; come to the podium, sign in and limit to 3 minutes please.
2. Attorney Daigle first to speak. He presents a summary of the presentation brought to the council by LRWA Mayor Tim Lemoine, and some additional comparison data from other like municipalities in Louisiana. (Kinder, Slidell, Bogalusa, Abita Springs) National data shows average monthly usage around 6.000 gallons per month. He brings up some of the areas where current budget figures will not cover future needs: service on lines, replacement of older equipment, addition of new equipment, maintenance of department trucks. Current rates provide only very minimum funding for personnel, trucks for workers, regular maintenance like chemicals, service on lines, and any new equipment needed like fire hydrants and any replacement equipment required like for the eight year old water meters.
3. A question from the floor asked about the division of Sewer versus Water, and if the meter applies to inflow and outflow or just gallons in. Currently Sewer is a flat rate, and only Water is metered; the rate would only be for inflow gallons.
4. Alderman Phillips asks for the presentation to run with ceiling at 3,000 gallons. This turns total revenue from &152k to $116k.
5. Alderman Bennett brings up the average Pearl River family statistics. She points out majority of the households were at 3,500 gallons of usage; the single family and elderly couples averaged less than 1,000 gallons of usage.
6. A question from the floor, Mr Danny Bourgeois, brings up grants for upgrades through the US Department of Agriculture for small/rural communities. Mayor Mc Queen points out that grants’ matching requirement has kept this out as an option for now. Plus the new WWTP loan to finance the plant and the water tower financing is also being paid back which makes matching not feasible at this time.
7. Chief Dockery asks about commercial rates for his budget planning. He was given an estimate of at least $75.00 for their usage.
8. Alderman Phillips asks a question about delinquent bills, recovery assurance and responsibility of payment. We currently have an ordinance that keeps the outstanding bills a responsibility of the property owner. Attorney Daigle brings up that the council needs to decide this kind of thing; give the attorney’s their wishes to draft up how this should read in the S&W Rates ordinance. Mayor McQueen brings up that most towns require a deposit, usually two months. We currently put accounts two months behind into process for cutoff. Council must decide on the rates then the ordinance can be drafted for acceptance.
9. A question from the floor about how ready the system is to switch to metering. Mayor McQueen mentions only a few issues remaining to make this system complete; we have been reading meters for several months. There are 24 meters to repair. A few spots have several residents on the same meter, which will require separating and installing individual meters.
10. A comment from the floor, Miss Cheryl, our Water Department Clerk; she asks for the council to make sure they include allowances in the rates they set for the lower income senior citizens of our town. Must set procedures to accept people objectively who qualify as low income and in need.
11. Alderman Phillips mentions he supports the ceiling set at 3,000 gallons; Alderman Bennett mentions she supports the ceiling set at 2,000 gallons.
12. Mayor McQueen asks if there are any more questions or people who wish to comment about the S&W Rates. No more comments. He closes the public hearing.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

1. MWPP Resolution. Mayor McQueen asks the council to acknowledge receipt and they have read it and accept it. Alderman Phillips motions to accept the resolution. Alderman Bennett seconds the motion. All in favor, Aye. **So Moved.**
2. Resolution to accept the Audit Compliance Questionnaire for 2017 Financial Statements. Mayor McQueen asks the council to acknowledge receipt, they have looked it over, they accept it, and he requests they all sign the resolution to show their acceptance. Alderman Phillips motions to open the discussion. Alderman Walsh seconds the motion to open the discussion. All Aldermen ask for this group to come and present their findings to the council at the next regular meeting set for July 17th 2018. With this condition, Alderman Bennett motions to accept the resolution. Alderman Phillips seconds the motion. All in favor, Aye. **So Moved.**
3. Police Department Budget Amendments. Chief Jennings is introducing his request to make amendments to the Police Department Budget.
   1. First he asks that $5,000 in the Ammunition Bucket be put to the Attorney Fees Bucket; it was in this bucket now he asks that it be moved back. Alderman Bennett asks to clarify whether this allotment will be an additional line item to our Town Attorney line item in the General Fund to go under Police Department for Attorney Fees. Chief Jennings answers yes.
   2. Second he asks for the School Resource Officer salaries be added. He is asking for three officers to be added to his budget; the amount to budget will be two months’ salary for three people since the School Board will cover the 10 months during school. This means he needs $7500 added to his budget. Attorney Mathison asks what will happen if this millage for the SRO’s does not get renewed in two years. Chief Jennings answers they will be let go. He will put current officers into these positions, then hire three more, so those let go if necessary would not be the senior officers, but the new hires.
   3. Code Enforcement Officer salary be added to his budget. This would mean adding total costs of this employee at $60,000 to the budget. Chief Jennings brings up his belief that the Lawrason Act charges him, the police department, with enforcement of Town of Pearl River ordinances. He insists this is only correctly done with a full time position; violation and follow up enforcement are a full time duty. A question from the floor about how many officers are employed full time. Chief Jennings answers including himself, there are currently 12 full time officers. To uphold/enforce the laws, the ordinances of our town, is the duty of the Police Department.

Mayor McQueen asks the council to motion for his comment section to come last; that they move the Legislative Comments up on the agenda. Alderman Bennett motions to move this up on the agenda. Alderman Walsh seconds the motion. All in favor, Aye. **So Moved.**

**LEGISLATIVE COMMENTS:**

Alderman Bennett wants to bring details about the Pearl River Clean Sweep cleanup. She calls Miss Jessica Gauley to the podium for an update. On September 22nd, 2018 at 9:00am through 1:00pm, begins with the trash cleanup. All gather at the end for food; Jessica asks Mayor McQueen to cook. Then an after party will be held with food, drink and a wildlife outreach festival. This part will go from 1:00pm through 4:00pm. Mayor McQueen comments about how many volunteers come and they come from all over the country and the world.

Alderman Bennett wants to mention the Honey Island Swamp Festival. The two day event for the second annual HISF was a success. Attendance was approximately 4,200 people; this number does not include volunteer, vendor, musical, or staff persons. Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser gave the opening speech, and he stayed a while visiting with attendees. Approximately $4,000 raised will go to charities through The Lion’s Club. Only complaints were about the heat and no ATM machines on site.

Alderman Walsh mentions a letter we received from the St Tammany Parish director of COAST. Miss Julie Agan’s letter was read aloud. A copy of this letter in its entirety is attached to these minutes.

A resident, Miss Debbie Hebert, asks to be allowed to give her comments about the festival. She read her prepared document about her observations. She found it to be a very positive event; she volunteered her time to help in many areas. Her belief is this is a good thing for all of Pearl River, from the people who come, the vendors and the musicians, to the local businesses who all benefit from outside visitors spending money in our town. She doesn’t understand opposition to this event, or understand why efforts/resources towards this event are called a waste. Her final comment is a call for unity among everyone as part of “Team Pearl River”

Miss Lola Monroe comments that she was part of the Civics Club booth at the HISF, and they raised enough money for a scholarship and food baskets for the needy.

**MAYOR’S COMMENTS:**

Reminders: We have our District I LMA banquet meeting at Benedict’s Plantation tomorrow evening. Friday at 8:00am, the East St Tammany Chamber is having a breakfast at the Sheriff’s training facility. Mayor McQueen is the guest speaker; he will speak about past two years activities in the Town of Pearl River. We will have a Fourth of July Celebration on Tuesday, July 3rd at 6:00pm; comment from the floor, Mr Brian of STRW, mentions the many donations for this event from the community.

Alderman Walsh comments on the different town events we have; she mentions that the council cannot all participate at the same time for each event due to legal “quorum” issues and normal schedule conflicts. Each event is good for our town. None of us should feel competition between these events or each other.

Mayor McQueen comments on the Honey Island Swamp Festival. He said where he would usually let things go, and let time heal, with this event and the things that happened around it, he cannot let some of the misconceptions continue. He began this festival as a response to many pre-election requests by town residents. The council approved the money in the budget to spend for the festival. He feels that problems should be settled in-house, not through news people or newspapers. This letter in the paper was not passed through his office; he did not write, read or approve the newspaper article. He does not hide anything. He does not do things he is not given permission to do. He did not ban anyone from anything; he only responded to a land-owner’s request made in January when too late to move the festival. Every move he made and letter he signed was done through our town attorneys. He is very upset about being accused of stealing or misallocating funds; he has not done anything illegal, and went through all kinds of procedures and consulted various staff experts to make sure all town business is done properly and correctly with every penny accounted for. He is looking into another property for the festival next year where no restrictions would be placed on the town to operate this festival.

**CHIEF JENNINGS COMMENTS:**

Chief reports on the arrest activity for the month of May. He comments on the Code Enforcement and School Resource Officer positions mentioned earlier. The hourly rate for the officer would be $15.50 only giving salary of $35,000; the other part of $60k salary is the employee costs. Municipal and Civil laws are separate laws.

**PARISH COUNCIL:**

Gene Bellisario offers Hwy 41 Spur update; working on acquisition of all the land and expect this to be completed within 4 weeks from today.

**RECREATION DISTRICT 5:**

Skip Phillips updates; boat launch project is moving forward with addition of bulk heads; little league dormant season; lighting at the high school and long term usage agreements are underway. Meet on the third Monday of each month at 6:00 here at Town Hall.

**FIRE DISTRICT 11:**

Jack Dockery offers update regarding the activity in May. Report attached. He mentions the Fire Department will participate in the Fourth of July program; they will bring a bouncy house. Safety tips about fireworks: buy them legally, leave the firework show to the professionals, don’t play around with fireworks, don’t mix alcohol with anything “fire” related.

**PLANNING & ZONING:**

The Board met and held a public hearing about a property at 66193 Highway 41 Spur to change the zoning from R-1 residential to M-1 light industrial for building of a Whiskey Distillery. He was advised of Parish and State regulations he would need to fulfill.

Planning and Zoning Commission believe this area is not suited for his business. The Planning & Zoning Commission voted unanimously NOT to change the zoning. All feel the change would not be beneficial or fair for residents who live near this property. They all feel that this application to the Parish and State would not be allowed, not be approved.

Town Attorney says the presentation of the agenda with no subject line under the “Planning & Zoning” section, means no vote can be moved on tonight.

Comments were made on why this limits the action since actions have been made without such detail listing on the agenda in the past.

Mr. Scott Derouen, owner of the land and Bald Cypress Whiskey comes to the podium. His property has been annexed into Pearl River, and therefore can be decided by this council. He wants to mention, that he believes the process has not been easy and that he has gotten much resistance, and all he is asking is for due process to be allowed.

**SCHOOL BOARD DISTRICT 8:**

Peggy Seeley reports on newly appointed principals: at Little Pearl, Sabrina Parish; at Pearl River High School, John Preola; at Creekside Junior High School Assistant Principal, Byron Long; at Riverside Elementary, Principal Patty Holden.

She attended a ribbon cutting ceremony at PRHS. Thank you to the community for the bond issue that funded this project. She is planning an opening dedication, for all to attend, in the fall, around the 50 year reunion for the first PRHS class.

Alderman Phillips motions to go into Executive Session regarding Global Disaster Recovery. Alderman Walsh seconds the motion.

Mayor McQueen asks all in favor, Aye. **So Moved.**

Executive Session over. Alderman Phillips moves to adjourn; Alderman Walsh seconds. All in favor, Aye. **So Moved.**

MEETING ADJOURNED

AT 9:50 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED THIS 3RD DAY OF JULY 2018

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Madeline B Campbell, Town Clerk Clarence D McQueen, Mayor