



**TOWN OF PEARL RIVER
COUNCIL MEETING
JANUARY 15, 2019 at 7:00 P.M.**

CALL TO ORDER:

The Council Meeting was held at the Pearl River Town Hall and so called to the order by Mayor McQueen at 7:03 P.M.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Aldermen Walsh, Bennett, Galloway, Lee, McGregor along with Mayor McQueen, Chief Sessions, Attorney Mathison and Attorney Daigle. Absent: None

INVOCATION:

The Invocation was given by Alderman Bennett.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mayor McQueen.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mayor McQueen called for the December 18, 2018 minutes to be tabled. Alderman Walsh made the motion to accept, seconded by Alderman Bennett.

All in favor. So moved.

SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS & PRESENTATIONS:

Pearl River Lion's Club- John Gindro-

PUBLIC HEARING:

1. Ordinance No. 18-11-01 2019 Budget

Mayor McQueen opened the public hearing on Ordinance No. 18-11-01 2018 Budget. The Mayor stated the Council held a workshop on January 8, 2019 and asked if they the Council had any questions. The Public Hearing was closed. Alderman Bennett made the motion to accept, seconded by Alderman Lee.

All in Favor. So Moved

Mayor McQueen informed the aldermen that he would like to ask for a motion to rearrange the Agenda. He asked to have the Sewer and Water Use Ordinance first, because it will affect the budget. Alderman Phillips made a motion to rearrange the Agenda and to close the public hearing on Ordinance No. 17-12-12 2018 Budget, seconded by Alderman Cutrer.

1. Amended Ordinance No. 174-A Sewer and Water Use.

Mayor McQueen reopened public hearing with Ordinance No. 174-A Sewer and Water Use. He explained to the audience the plan is to raise the flat rate by \$5.00 (five dollars) for sewer and \$5.00 (five dollars) for water. This would be for a few months until a meter price is established with a usage fee. Once the meters are in place the residence will be charged a usage rate, therefore a single

residence's rate may come down. Mayor McQueen feels this is something that should have been done slowly over time. The Sewer and Water Department is operating in the red right now. Without this increase there is no funds to fix problems with the sewer system that will collapse if not repaired.

Alderman Cutrer asked if there will be a program for the seniors to apply for in order to keep their bills down. Mayor McQueen replied for the elderly along with single living residence will receive a cheaper rate, but for a household of four their bill will probably stay the same. Then there will be an option for the aldermen to decide on implementing a program for the elderly.

Alderman Bennett informed the audience that the last rate increase was twenty six years ago, which is unheard of in most towns. She feels that this increase is a must in order to keep up with repairs.

Alderman Phillips stated it is mandated by the state, and some of this is out of there control. As of January 1, 2018 the Town pays the state \$16.75 (sixteen dollars and seventy five cents) a month, the resident pays \$11.75 (eleven dollars and seventy five cents) a month for water. He believes reading meters will bring any leaks/repairs to our attention, and with the increase the Town will have the funds to fix those problems on our end. Alderman Phillips feels that for the safety of the Town, this increase is a must.

Debbie Hebert, from the audience, asked who pays for the new meters. Mayor McQueen stated most of the meters are in, and the federal government is allowing the Town to use the meters that they have. The software for reading the meters and billing has all been updated as well. Everything is in place, the Town just needs to decide on the rates. Alderman Phillips stated that all current residents' meters are already in place, but if you build a new home you will be required to pay for that meter.

Don Thanars, from the audience, asked about the state fees and what are we paying the state to do. Mayor McQueen replied, fees are for the state taxes on the water. Tax payers pay for the Town to drill the wells and supply residents with water, but the state taxes the water. Mr. Thanars asked who conducts the assessments for the water. Alderman Phillips stated there is a rural waste water system that the Town works with. Mr. Thanars asked if there are additional fees for the Town to do those assessments or does the state do the assessments for us. Mayor McQueen stated every year the Town receives a letter of the amount the Town has to pay by July 1. He does not know how the state assess the tax or how the state configures the amount. Alderman Phillips stated that the state owns everything underneath us, and one of those thing is water. Mr. Thanars asked about the sewer system plant that is on the verge of collapsing, what would be the plan to fix this and what would be the time line. Mayor McQueen stated bids for a new sewer system have already been made, which came back a little high, so they had to go back for approval for more funds. Those funds were accepted from the board of health, and the Town will have enough for the new sewer system and updates to be done on the sewer lines. The engineer gave an estimated completion to be towards the end of the 2018 year. Alderman Cutrer informed Mr. Thanars to look at Act No. 605 the State of Louisiana Office of Public Safety Drinking Water Fee for more information.

Floyd Trascher, from the audience, asked if in the increase will adequately cover the cost of providing all the services and for the future. Would the aldermen consider setting a base rate, because if rates go down once the meters are implemented the Town would lose money. Mr. Trascher also asked what the life expectancy is for the meters that are already placed in the ground, and how much would it cost to replace those meters. Mayor McQueen replied he was told that the meters that are in the ground have a life expand of five to six years as long as nothing happens to them. The rate increase is something the Town has to do in order to have the loan in place, and to get started with the process of the new sewer system. Alderman Cutrer stated the Town would also like to hire someone in the Sewer and Water Department. Mayor McQueen informed the audience there are only two men in the Sewer and Water Department at this time, and there is not enough man power to handle the work load. Mr. Trascher asked if the proposed increase would cover the cost of the Town to provide these services. Alderman Phillips explained the sewer system is one issue, but the rate increase is for the Town to produce the

water to the resident then treat the water once it leaves the resident. The rate increase will help maintain the Sewer and Water Department, but it will not generate money to build the new sewer system. Mr. Trascher asked if the rate increase will go further in order to put the new sewer system in. Mayor McQueen stated no the rate increase does include the new sewer system loan. Alderman Phillips stated the Federal Government requires the Town to have meters in. Mr. Trascher asked the aldermen to take in consideration of keeping the flat rate, for the residents who are on a budget to know what their bill will be every month. Mayor McQueen stated the flat rates would be better for a larger family, but the retired residents and the ones that are on fixed incomes the metering will be best for them.

Dolores King, from the audience, asked for a definite time line for when the metering will begin. Mayor McQueen replied two to three months, in order to give the residence time to fix any leaks. He does not want to bill someone for an outrageous amount when they have a leak they did not know about.

Alderman Phillips stated they talked about having a flat rate for the first 2,000 (two thousand) gallon. Ms. King feels that would benefit her, because she does live alone. She feels that it is not fair to pay the same amount for water that a house of ten people pay.

Alderman Bennett stated that the aldermen where assured that the residents that live alone would pay less according their usage. Mayor McQueen stated the Town had to find all the meters that were placed by the old administration, which delayed them from reading meters.

Ms. King stated she did not mind the delay until the rate increase. Mayor McQueen stated the rates that were giving to him, for the first 2,000 (two thousand) or 3,000 (three thousand) gallons would be \$11.00 (eleven dollars) to \$12.00 (twelve dollars). Then it would be \$2.50 (two dollars and fifty cents) to \$3.00 (three dollars) for every 1,000 (thousand) gallons after that.

The final decision on the rates will be up to the aldermen. Alderman Cutrer asked if they could reword the ordinance to say that the rates increase will be temporary. Alderman Phillips stated no this is not going to be a temporary increase, this \$16.75 (sixteen dollars and seventy five cents) is there.

Alderman Bennett stated it is permanent. Mayor McQueen stated that cost is there and cannot be changed. Alderman Phillips and Alderman Walsh explained that some resident's rates will come down, but not all.

Sandra Bailey, from the audience, asked if the increase included sewer. Mayor McQueen replied yes ma'am. Ms. Bailey asked if part of our water goes towards sewer. Mayor McQueen explained that right now there is a flat rate for both, and they are increasing both water and sewer.

Treating sewer actually cost more than it does to produce water. At the moment sewer and water are combined in the budget, but this year they will be put into two separate categories. Ms. Bailey asked if a resident has a break in their water line would the Town be able to make adjustments. Mayor McQueen stated all Towns work with their residents and will prorate the residents to help them.

Alderman Phillips stated that number 12 in the Ordinance states water purchased from a hydrant will be nothing per thousand gallons or nothing since per gallon, therefore the aldermen need to look at this again.

Gene Bellisario, from the audience, spoke about the environmental services and fees the parish charges with the sewer and water bills. Alderman Phillips asked if the parish was placing water lines on North Military. Mr. Bellisario stated no, that must be the state or a private utility company.

Alderman McGregor asked if the fees the Town pays to the state on water will go up once the Town charges for usage. Mayor McQueen stated he believes the fees are based off the gallons the Town uses already.

Attorney Mathison stated that the fees are per connection.

Joe Lee, from the audience, stated his water line is running through someone else's yard. He asked what if his neighbor breaks his water line without him knowing, he does not want to be responsible for someone else tearing up his water line.

Mayor McQueen informed the Mr. Lee that the Town put those water lines in. Alderman Phillips asked, if the Town put the water line in then the Town is responsible. Mayor McQueen replied yes the Town is responsible.

Public Hearing closed. Alderman Bennett motioned to accept the Amended Ordinance No. 174-A Sewer and Water Use, seconded by Alderman Phillips.

All in favor. So moved.

2. Ordinance No. 17-12-12 2018 Budget

Mayor McQueen opened public hearing on Ordinance No. 17-12-12 2018 Budget. Alderman Phillips informed the audience that the aldermen will redo the budget in March. Mayor McQueen stated he called the Secretary of State, and is waiting on a return phone call, to change the physical year. Mayor McQueen informed the audience of the total budget for each department.

Attorney Mathison stated Oscar Boudreaux sent a letter asking the aldermen to do two things. One is to provide \$400,000.00 (four hundred thousand dollars) to satisfy the State Bid Law, and second to award the bid to Lemonie Construction. He also explained changes to the Money Market Account for the new sewer system loan, which would need to be done before awarding the bid to Lemonie Construction. Mayor McQueen stated the Town will have to do an acceptance letter tonight as well. Attorney Mathison suggested making the Ordinance effective upon adoption, if the aldermen are inclined to act the budget tonight. Public Hearing closed.

Alderman Bennett motioned to accept the Ordinance No. 17-12-12 2018 Budget effective tonight, seconded by Alderman McGregor. Mayor McQueen added to the motion to accept the changes to be made in order to meet the \$400,000.00 (four hundred thousand dollars). He explained how he was assured that this money would not be touched or leave this account. The State is just having the Town keep this amount until the loan process is complete.

All in favor. So moved.

Mayor McQueen reads letter from Oscar Boudreaux regarding the DEQ loan.

Alderman Phillips motioned to award the construction of waste water treatment plant upgrades to Lemonie Construction in the amount of \$2,353,600.00 (two million three hundred fifty-three thousand six hundred dollars) continued on the DEQ approval, seconded by Alderman Bennett. All in favor. So moved.

Alderman Phillips motioned the approval to authorize the Mayor to sign the loan construction documents for these improvements, seconded by Alderman Bennett.

All in favor. So moved.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Appoint New Town Clerk

Mayor McQueen introduced, Madeline Campbell, for the approval of the Town Clerk position. Alderman Bennett motioned to accept Ms. Campbell as the Town Clerk, seconded by Alderman Walsh.
All in favor. So moved.

Mayor McQueen along with the aldermen, thanked Cheryl for stepping in as the acting Town Clerk.

2. Introduction to Amend Ordinance No. 16-28-11A

Mayor McQueen introduced Ordinance No. 16-28-11A to be amended. Public hearing will be at the next Council Meeting.

COMMENTS AND REPORTS:

asked that if anyone sees trash fall out of a garbage truck, please get their license plate number and the company will receive a Littering Citation. Alderman Bennett asked what would be the compliance method for someone that sees trash fall out of a truck. Mr. Trascher stated to get a picture of the trash and the license plate number, therefore the pictures can be used as evidence to use in court. The trash company that does not meet the parish's requirements as a waste hauler can also be issued a citation. Mr. Trascher feels the Town should receive bids and can make sure the companies operating in the Town are licensed. He stated all the truck on our streets are damaging the streets, when they make sharp turns they can damage the culverts, and can cause drainage problems. Alderman Phillips feels at this time the Town cannot answer any questions regarding the resident's garbage pickup, but if the Town incorporated the garbage then the Town will be able to answer those questions. Mayor McQueen stated this would be easier for the residents to have one provider, and this would help save the residents money.

Alderman Walsh asked if there is a waste treatment plant coming in by Kabco. Mayor McQueen assured the aldermen and the audience that no one has called, or came to him regarding this. He informed the aldermen that if someone would have contacted him to introduce it, the aldermen would have been the first to know. The M-1 Light Industrial Zoning Ordinance states the aldermen has to issue the special use permit. Alderman Walsh asked if this should go in front of the Planning and Zoning Commission as well, if introduced. Mayor McQueen stated it is still up to the aldermen to issue the permit. Alderman Walsh feels that the Planning and Zoning could review the zoning, and make sure this would be the proper area for a waste treatment plant. Alderman Phillips asked if commercial is now brought to the Planning and Zoning Commission. Mayor McQueen replied only if it is not zoned for commercial. He explained the process for a business in a commercial zoning.

Alderman Bennett informed the audience, the Pearl River Lions Club Parade will be Sunday, January 28, 2018. The date for the Chili Cook-off changed from February 24, 2018 to April 14, 2018. She also stated the 5K run registration is still open online until February 7, 2018, after this day shirts are not guaranteed. Alderman Bennett explained the route and the fees for the race. She also asked about updates with the payment from Billy Burkett. Mayor McQueen stated the Town received a letter of approval for one payment, but FEMA deducted \$6,000.00 (six thousand dollars). Mr. Burkett came by the Town Hall to receive a copy of the letter, and was going to meet with FEMA to see why the payment was not paid in full.

Alderman Cutrer informed the audience, "Polishing the Pearl" will be March 24, 2018. Alderman Bennett stated Alderman McGregor and herself will be incorporating a yard of the quarter into the Beautification Program, and will be judged by volunteers. Some local restaurants donated diner for two gift cards for the winner.

Alderman Cutrer asked if the Town Council Meeting will be moved, due to the Midwinter Conference falling on the same date. Mayor McQueen stated if the aldermen wanted to go to the conference then he would rescheduled the monthly meeting. He asked for the aldermen to inform him as soon as possible in order to have time to reschedule the meeting. Alderman Bennett stated she will be attending, but on Wednesday February 21, 2018.

Mayor McQueen informed the audience, the Town's Easter Program that is sponsored by Jubilee will be March 17, 2018.

even a girl on the senior trip to Disney World, which was bragging about getting credit for time missed while on the trip. Alderman Bennett asked if this is allowed in our schools, what are we teaching those children that are made accountable. Those children that get up, show up, and work hard to meet the criteria that states, a student must meet in order to receive a diploma. She feels that the schools are just trying to "look good". Those same children that are not made accountable are the same ones that are not showing up for work, they are not contributing to the tax system, are believe they are entitled. Alderman Bennett asked if these things are going too continued, or are there going to be changing in order to make children accountable. Ms. Seeley stated there is always room to for improvement. Some of these issues she was unaware of, and without knowing the problem they cannot improve. She asked for any complaints that need to be address be brought to the School Board Meetings, or first speak with the central office. Ms. Seeley spoke about the assessment with testing. She informed the audience that Pearl River High School's remodeling is finished. Ms. Seeley and Alderman Phillips spoke about the football fields are receiving new light poles, and the concerns about the track not having any light. She would like to see the old football field's lights be moved to the track. Ms. Seeley spoke about the portables being clean and moved by Mardi Gras. She also stated that they are trying to get a lighted flag pole for the High School.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

1. **Casey Adams vs. The Town of Pearl River, et al**
No. 201711692 Div. C
22nd JDC

Mayor McQueen asked for a motion to go into executive session for the Casey Adams case. Alderman Walsh made the motion, seconded by Alderman Phillips. **All in favor. So moved.**

Recess.

Alderman Walsh motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Alderman Phillips. **All in favor. So moved.**

CD available in Records room, per-request.

MEETING ADJOURNED
AT 9:55 P.M.
RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED THIS 18TH DAY OF JANUARY 2018.



Cheryl K. Schultheis



Honorable Clarence McQueen, Mayor