

MINUTES

Livingston Parish March 10, 2021

Pursuant to notice duly posted in the public lobby of the Livingston Parish Governmental Building, the Livingston Parish Citizens Drainage Committee met on March 10, 2021, at the hour of six o'clock (6:00) p.m. in the Parish Council Chambers, located in the Livingston Parish Governmental Building, 20355 Governmental Boulevard, Livingston, Louisiana with the following members present:

Joey Sibley
Brian Clemmons
Doug Palmer
Pat Genre
Kevin Hull
Stephen Howze
Ron McMorris
Eileen McCarroll
Ernie Balfantz
Eric Harrell- Vice-chair
Shane Marler- Chair

The Chair, Shane Marler, called the meeting to order and asked the secretary/Livingston Parish Council Clerk, Sandy Teal, to call the roll and all were present.

The Chair read agenda item 2a under New Business, "Presentation by Glen Duncan, PEC Corp." Mr. Duncan stated that he was there for informational purposes and that he represented a civil engineering firm that specialized in cities and municipalities which included sewer and water systems, roads, and drainage. As a firm, he noted that they have watched areas of opportunity to find funding in grants for their clients through their grant administration department. He provided basic information on watersheds and funding recently made available to Louisiana in the amount of 1.2 billion dollars. The Governor created the Louisiana Watershed Commission to move forward as a state on managing future flood risks. Additional information can be found on the Louisiana Watershed Initiative page. He noted that flood mitigation should be a collaborative effort based on watershed boundaries to include regional long-term solutions that can cross political boundaries. The Watershed Commission divided the state into eight regions each being watershed boundaries. Livingston Parish fell in Region 7 which included Ascension, East Baton Rouge, East and West Feliciana, Iberville, St. Charles, St. James, St. John the Baptist, St. Tammany, St. Helena, St. James, Tangipahoa, and Washington. The Louisiana Watershed Commission members were commissioned to come up with a plan on how to spend the money which included the creation of a steering committee for each region. Mr. Duncan provided the list of committee members and stated that initial spending of the 1.2 billion would be on what the Regional Committee feels is best for the region. Round one funding included phases, with the first releasing one-hundred million dollars. He added that those project applications had already been submitted with five million being allocated to Region 7. Duncan said that each region will create a permanent watershed coalition. He added that every federal and state flood dollar would likely be vetted first by the coalition who will choose the regional projects that move up the ladder. Duncan provided a list of Livingston Parish projects and briefly addressed them. The Chair allowed questions from the committee throughout the presentation.

Councilman Randy Delatte, district 8, approached the podium and reminded the committee that there were some opportunities to hire someone such as Mr. Duncan previously. If done by Administration, it could be done as a service contract, but if done by the Council it would have to be bid out. He hoped to see someone from the Livingston Parish Citizens Drainage Committee making a presentation during the next council meeting advising where they were at and what was needed to move forward. Mr. Delatte noted that the Livingston Parish representative for the steering committee was Steve Kistler.

The Chair moved to item 2b, “New Business: Master Plan Review Committee Report given by Gerald Burns.” Mr. Burns mentioned the eight pages on drainage and the course of action which the parish would create a parish-wide master drainage plan and would seek grants to do so. He noted the papers that Mrs. Teal had handed out and stated that the parish grant writer was given information last February, but that no grant had yet been awarded. He added that the \$125,000 that the council dedicated in the budget was a 25% match for the \$375,000 matching grant which would allow the parish to in turn put out for bids and to hire an engineering consultant to do the master plan study. This was a result of a council request from the Master Plan Review Committee in December 2019. Mr. Burns asked about the list that was given to the committee by Mr. Duncan, but nothing was found regarding the Livingston Parish Master Drainage Plan. He added that the Master Plan Review Committee was not involved in local drainage issues and ditches, culverts, etc. He added that they were not paralleling what the Citizens Drainage Committee was doing. He wanted them to know that they were available to help if it was needed.

The Chair read agenda item 2c under New Business, “Discussion and review of Master Drainage Plan for the Parish of Livingston.” The chair asked if there were any comments on what had been heard and allowed a discussion. The board asked about the next application deadlines and accountability. Councilman Delatte again reiterated that a presentation to the council and Parish President for resources would be an important next step. The board continued to ask questions of Mr. Duncan regarding PEC services. Afterwards, the chair allowed a discussion amongst the board members and Councilman Delatte.

The Chair read agenda item 3, “Other Business”, and stated that he had received an email to change the meeting dates and time from Wednesday nights. A Motion was made by Mr. Howze and duly seconded by Mrs. Genre to continue meeting monthly on the second Wednesday of the month at 6:00 p.m. With none opposing the Motion carried.

The chair allowed continued discussion, which included comments regarding the Army Corps of Engineers, before Councilman Delatte approached the podium. Mr. Delatte stated that the Corps expected certain terminology such as “Reclaiming the Shoreline” versus “for dredging”. He clarified to Mr. Clemmons and the board his example using the Planning Commission and how they approach the council with their recommendations. He asked that the committee gets on the council agenda to address the Parish President and council for tools to carry out the task that they have been given. One board member suggested getting engineers who had already done engineering work to come talk with the group. This included Eddie Aydele, Billy Taylor with McLin and Jamie Seale with Quality. Mr. Clemmons stated that Drainage District 2 has requested matching funds to create a plan to see whether the diversion is feasible, and he thought that Congressman Graves was pushing that. He also thought that there was a study in District 1 for flood mitigation. Mr. Clemmons said that there are two applications that he is aware of to get some of the money that Mr. Duncan referred to. Mr. Howze spoke about a study that Quality Engineering was doing with District 1 for the flood mitigation which mostly covers the Amite River. The chair questioned whether studies out there existed that could be utilized. Mr.

Clemmons noted that the last study that Gravity Drainage District 2 was given was in 2000 where the Parish Council asked District 2 to join in and make application for federal money. He mentioned the twenty years that had passed with a lot of changes, as currently, one thousand permits were given for a thousand units being built up along Beaver Creek resulting in a lot of change in drainage. Mr. Howze asked what the parish-wide drainage budget was. Councilman Delatte replied that last year's budget was \$68 million dollars, and it was \$16 million in 1996 when Dewey Ratcliff was President. He did not see any difference in the services. Mrs. Genre and McCarroll discussed the need to hire a professional to write the drainage plan. Mr. Howze suggested going to the Council to hire someone to write it. However, the chair did not feel that the time was right as work was yet to be done. Mr. Hull added that the parish also has a grant writer, Mr. Steve Kistler.

Mr. Clemmons wanted to remind the board that Congressman Graves conducts webinars often via his Facebook page. He noted that it was virtually one-on-one for questions and answers. Mr. Howze asked if the board was invited to the March 23rd meeting given by Congressman Graves and urged everyone to attend. Mr. Clemmons noted that the first deadline for the 1.6 million was about eight percent and that a lot of money was still available although that initial deadline could not be met. Ms. Genre added that the first part of the CARES Act was missed also. The chair allowed a brief discussion as Mr. Clemmons added that Gravity Drainage District No. 1 and 2 both made the decision to hire someone to do the writing for the Watershed money. Mr. McMorris asked if the drainage districts represented were familiar with the Watershed information presented by Mr. Duncan. Mr. Howze said that Districts 1 and 2 were using the same engineer. Mr. Clemmons felt that his issues were in line with Councilman Delatte, and he felt that the districts needed to start to work together and to cooperate which unfortunately may be to the detriment of those who do have money. Also, they would have to ask for money to gather some specific bottle necks, Lake Maurepas, with shell dredging it would make a huge difference everywhere.

The board briefly discussed the next speaker(s) for the agenda, and various engineering firms were mentioned. The chair stated that he would do some calling to line someone up to speak at the next meeting.

No motion or second was given as the chair adjourned the meeting.

/s/ Angie Cornett
Angie Cornett, Deputy Clerk

/s/ Shane Marler
Shane Marler, Chairman