

TOWN OF SIMMESPORT

MAYOR LESLIE DRAPER III

DISTRICT I
TED TURNER



DISTRICT II
KENNETH MARSH

DISTRICT III
MYRON K. BROWN

DISTRICT IV
SHERMAN BELL

ALDERMAN AT LARGE
PRESLEY BORDELON

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April 28, 2020 Special Town Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the regular meeting of the Mayor and Board of Aldermen of the Town of Simmesport held at the Simmesport Town Hall on Tuesday, April 28, 2020, at 4:00 PM.

Presiding: Mayor Leslie Draper

Members Present: Ted Turner, Myron Brown, Kenneth Marsh, Sherman Bell, Presley Bordelon

Members Absent:

AGENDA ITEMS 1,2,3

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Draper and was opened with a prayer given by Alderman Sherman Bell followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA ITEM 4

A motion was made by Alderman Turner and seconded by Alderman Bell that the agenda be accepted as is. All present voted as follows:

	FOR	AGAINST	ABSENT
Alderman Bell	X	_____	_____
Alderman Brown	X	_____	_____
Alderman Bordelon	X	_____	_____
Alderman Marsh	X	_____	_____
Alderman Turner	X	_____	_____

The motion was carried.

AGENDA ITEM 5

Mayor Draper told the Council that a leak in the main discharge line from the sewer plant has been discovered. This leak happens to be in the levee where the line crosses to the Atchafalaya River. The Mayor told the council that a phone meeting was held with the Red River Atchafalaya Bayou Boeuf Levee District and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. During this meeting the Corps of Engineers was adamant that the line needed to be removed from the levee when the leak is repaired. This procedure is called an "Up and Over" wherein the line is cut at the base of the level and rerouted over the top of the levee itself, then reconnected on the other side. The affected

levee is the main levee along the Atchafalaya River and is protecting the West Atchafalaya Floodway. The Corps did make it clear that they did not want any work done on the leak until the water was below flood stage. Mayor Draper informed then Council that since that meeting, and after talking with the Town engineering firm (Meyer Meyer LaCrix & Hixon) there could possibly be a much cheaper solution. Corps of Engineers policy is that the integrity of the levees must be maintained up to an elevation of 54 feet above sea level. At the spot the leak is occurring the levee is approximately 62 feet high. According to the engineering firm, if the line lies between the 54 foot mark and the top of the levee, we may be able to just dig and repair the line without moving it. Mayor Draper is in favor of having the engineering firm locate the line in the levee and seeing what we can do from there.

AGENDA ITEM 6

Mayor Draper informed the Council that the Town Insurance is up for renewal. Mayor Draper said that when the former carrier dropped us, the Town did not have much choice in finding another company to cover us because of the large number and amount of payouts on lawsuits, especially in the police department. As of today (April 28, 2020) the Town had no active lawsuits against it. Alderman Bell asked if there would be an age stipulation (minimum of 25 years of age) in the police department coverage in the new policy. Mayor Draper said he would find out. As of now, the underwriters are putting together a policy for us. Mayor Draper also said that all older vehicles that are not being used or that are nonfunctional have been removed from the coverage.

AGENDA ITEM 7

Mayor Draper asked Chief Damion Jacobs to call into the meeting. The Mayor also said that he realizes that people were being frustrated with calling into the Town Hall. He again asked for patience as there is only one person answering the phone and if we are taking credit card information from someone, they cannot answer an incoming call. The lobby is still closed and will remain so until the emergency declaration is lifted. We look for new information each day and still we have no date as to when the lobby will open again. All other municipalities have either closed their lobbies or closed their Town Halls entirely. Again, Mayor Draper said customers can pay over the phone with a credit card, mail in their bills or put their payment in the mail slot labeled to the left of the main doors. The Mayor asked for people to please NOT put cash in the drop slot. He also told the council that the maintenance crew has been filling potholes when they can, and he knows that there are many more to be filled. Also, the maintenance crew has been picking up limbs and dealing with water leaks. The Mayor also related that the last of the wireless meters are being installed. Alderman Turner asked about the financing of the meters and asked for a copy of the original agreement with Sustainability Partners for the meters. Alderman Turner wanted to know how much more the second round of installations will cost the Town of Simmesport. Mayor Draper said he would get him a copy of the agreement and reminded Mr. Turner that he had already voted to proceed with both the initial and second installations.

Alderman Turner then asked if he, as an Alderman, could call maintenance workers directly to report problems. Alderman Turner said that when he called workers on the weekends, they did not answer the phone. Alderman Turner wanted to know if Town workers could be required to answer the phones of Aldermen to report problems in their districts. Alderman Turner said they will not answer their phone on a weekend. Mayor Draper responded that under the Lawrason Act only the Mayor has the authority to handle day-to-day operations of employees. Mayor Draper told the Council that there was a process in place for maintenance workers to respond to problems that needed to be addressed. The Mayor also told Alderman Turner that he could always call him (the Mayor) to report issues. Mayor Draper also said that if there was an emergency situation then anyone should call 911 and they will get in touch with the Town maintenance workers and the police department.

Mayor Draper then told the Council that the police department was reporting no out of the ordinary number of calls or problems. He also said that a new officer, Joshua Johns, had begun working for the Town of Simmesport. Mr. Johns has experience as a police officer and is POST certified. Chief Jacobs called into the meeting. Chief Jacobs also said that the police department had gotten a load of masks from the Office of Emergency Preparedness and they distributed them to the public. Some citizens call the police department and come and pick them up.

Chief Jacobs also said that the Avoyelles Parish dispatch (318-256-4000 opt 1) has a list of who is on call for the Town of Simmesport. If there is an emergency then citizens can call that number and the dispatch will get in touch with the appropriate town worker. Alderman Bordelon asked if the officers who were laid off were considered for rehire before hiring a new officer. Mayor Draper said that the officers who are no longer on the roster voluntarily left and were not working before the patrol schedule was changed.

AGENDA ITEM 8

Mayor Draper told the Council that he could not meet with more than two council members at time on issues regarding town business because that would violate the State Open Meetings Law. When issues arise, Mayor Draper continued, that require decisions to be made by the council, the Town has to have a special meeting. Further, Governor Edwards has extended the lockdown order until May 15, 2020 so the Town Hall will remain closed until further notice. Alderman Marsh also added that he thinks the Town of Simmesport should continue to follow the recommendations from the Governor’s Office.

AGENDA ITEM 9

Mayor Draper informed the Council that he had been working on a financial recovery plan for the Town even before the COVID-19 outbreak. The Mayor said that he has been working with Jason Hewitt and Eric Street with Sustainability Partners to upgrade the sewer plant. With the first disbursement of these funds was budgeted \$625,000 for debts the Town currently owes. This includes the \$122, 203 owed to the IRS, \$161,441 owed to the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, the \$77, 000 owed to the Department of Transportation, \$90,717 owed to Bancorp South for the police cars, \$30, 365 for the work trucks to Simmesport State Bank, \$2,713 for the track also to Simmesport State Bank, \$15,000 to Mahindra Finance for the tractor, \$95,000 to the accounting firm Faulk & Winkler, and \$18,000 to the auditing firm of Kolder & Champagne. (**all of these loan values are approximate at the time of this meeting and subject to change depending on when the payout date actually is.*) Mayor Draper then told the council that the sewer treatment plant would begin to be upgraded shortly after that at an approximate cost of \$850,000 depending on what the engineering survey finds. Mayor Draper reiterated that this is being paid for from the increased revenue generated from the new meters and the rate increases. Income from the meters and the rate increase has seen utility collections rise 50-52%. Because the payback is from these income increases, the amount loaned to us by Sustainability Partners will not count as a debit on our annual budget. Alderman at Large Presley Bordelon asked if the Town shopped around for a lower interest rate. Mayor Draper said that because of the way traditional bank loans are structured, a loan from a bank or a bond sale would have to be counted as a debit on our budget sheet. Alderman Bordelon wanted to be assured that we did not borrow more than we needed to get out of debt. Alderman Turner asked if we were eligible for grants. Mayor Draper said that Simmesport was still not in compliance to receive grants, but when we are, we could use some infrastructure grants to pay off these sewer upgrade expenditures. Alderman Bordelon also added that he would like to put policies in place so that we never end up in this financial situation again. Mayor Draper told the council that he had sent a copy of the documentation for this agreement to their Town of Simmesport e-mail, but was not responsible if the council members did not rad them. Mayor Draper said he would like a motion from the Council to pursue this financing. Alderman Turner said he would vote against this until he saw something in writing. Mayor Draper

A motion was made by Alderman Bell and seconded by Alderman Bordelon that Mayor Draper pursue the funding for the Town through Sustainability Partners. All present voted as follows:

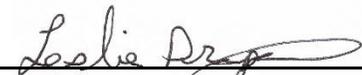
	FOR	AGAINST	ABSENT
Alderman Bell	X	_____	_____
Alderman Brown	X	_____	_____
Alderman Bordelon	X	_____	_____
Alderman Marsh	X	_____	_____
Alderman Turner	_____	X	_____

The motion was carried.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Alderman Marsh and seconded by Alderman Brown to adjourn. All present voted as follows:

	FOR	AGAINST	ABSENT
Alderman Bell	<u>X</u>	_____	_____
Alderman Brown	<u>X</u>	_____	_____
Alderman Bordelon	<u>X</u>	_____	_____
Alderman Marsh	<u>X</u>	_____	_____
Alderman Turner	<u>X</u>	_____	_____

The motion was carried and the meeting adjourned.



Leslie Draper, III
Mayor



Dacia Adams
Town Clerk

