

TOWN OF SIMMESPORT

MAYOR LESLIE DRAPER III

DISTRICT I
GLENN GAUTREAUX



DISTRICT II
TIESHA KENNEDY

DISTRICT III
PATRICK WRIGHT

ALDERMAN AT LARGE
ROMARO TURNER

DISTRICT IV
SHERMAN BELL

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April 17, 2023 Regular 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 Monday, April 17, 2023, at 6:00 p.m.

Presiding: Mayor Leslie Draper, III
Members Present: Sherman Bell, Glenn Gautreaux, Tiesha Kennedy, Patrick Wright, Romaro Turner
Members Absent:
Town Attorney: Present
Town Clerk: Absent

AGENDA ITEM 1,2,3: CALL TO ORDER, PRAYER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Leslie Draper, III called the meeting to order and Alderman Sherman Bell gave the opening prayer followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA ITEM 4: APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Councilman Romaro Turner informed the council that he wished to resign as Mayor Pro Tempore. A motion was made by Councilman Turner and seconded by Councilwoman Kennedy to add agenda Item 12a, the resignation of Councilman Romaro Turner as Mayor Pro Tempore and consideration of a new Mayor Pro Tempore. All present voted as follows:

| | YES | NO | ABSENT/ABSTAIN |
|--------------------|-----|----|----------------|
| Alderman Bell | X | | |
| Alderman Gautreaux | X | | |
| Alderwoman Kennedy | X | | |
| Alderman Turner | X | | |
| Alderman Wright | X | | |

The motion passed and the agenda was amended.

A motion was made by Councilman Bell and seconded by Councilwoman Kennedy to accept the agenda as amended. All present voted as follows:

| | YES | NO | ABSENT/ABSTAIN |
|--------------------|-----|----|----------------|
| Alderman Bell | X | | |
| Alderman Gautreaux | X | | |
| Alderwoman Kennedy | X | | |
| Alderman Turner | X | | |
| Alderman Wright | X | | |

The motion was carried.

AGENDA ITEM 5: APPROVAL OF JANUARY 2023 MINUTES

A motion was made by Alderwoman Kennedy and seconded by Alderman Gautreaux that the minutes from the March 13, 2023 meeting be accepted. All present voted as follows:

| | YES | NO | ABSENT/ABSTAIN |
|--------------------|-----|----|----------------|
| Alderman Bell | X | | |
| Alderman Gautreaux | X | | |
| Alderwoman Kennedy | X | | |
| Alderman Turner | X | | |
| Alderman Wright | X | | |

The motion was carried.

AGENDA ITEM 6: PAYMENT OF BILLS FOR MARCH

Councilwoman Kennedy asked why the Cleco bill was listed at “To Be Determined”. Mayor Draper said that the Cleco bill, along with several other bills, has not been fully ascertained. He said it was only in the past day that Computer 911 gave us computer access. Mayor Draper outlined other bills that had not been paid in multiple months and we are trying find out all of the bills that the Town of Simmesport owes.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Bell and seconded by Councilman Wright to pay the bills for March as posted. All present voted as follows:

| | YES | NO | ABSENT/ABSTAIN |
|--------------------|-----|----|----------------|
| Alderman Bell | X | | |
| Alderman Gautreaux | X | | |
| Alderwoman Kennedy | X | | |
| Alderman Turner | X | | |
| Alderman Wright | X | | |

The motion was carried.

AGENDA ITEM 7: PUBLIC COMMENT TIME

- There were no public comments.

AGENDA ITEM 8: ORDINANCE 03-2023-01 AMENDMENT OF THE BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2022-2023

A public hearing was held on the above ordinance on April 17, 2023 at 5:30 PM. The ordinance is to amend the Fiscal Year 2022-2023 to include the American Rescue Act Funds in the yearly budget.

A motion was made by Alderman Bell and seconded by Alderman Gautreaux to pass Ordinance 03-2023-01, an Amendment to the 2022-2023 Fiscal Year Budget to include the American Rescue Act funds. All Present voted as follows:

| | YES | NO | ABSENT/ABSTAIN |
|--------------------|-----|----|----------------|
| Alderman Bell | X | | |
| Alderman Gautreaux | X | | |
| Alderwoman Kennedy | X | | |
| Alderman Turner | X | | |
| Alderman Wright | X | | |

The motion was carried.

AGENDA ITEM 9: RESOLUTION 04-17-01-2023 APPOINTMENT OF THE TOWN CLERK

Mayor Draper recommended Mrs. Jalesia Batiste for the position of Town Clerk by way of Resolution 04-17-01-2023. Councilwoman Kennedy opposed the resolution and wanted to have the position advertised to the public. Mayor Draper reminded the Council that under the Lawrason Act, the Mayor nominates the Town Clerk and the Council only approves or disapproves. Attorney LaCour asked Councilwoman Kennedy what her intent was in posting the position to the public. Councilwoman Kennedy said she would like to see the Town of Simmesport get the best person possible for the position who had a clerical and/or municipal administrative background.

A motion was made by Alderman Turner to pass Resolution 04-17-01-2023, the appoint of Jalesia Batist to the position of Town Clerk and was seconded by Alderman Wright. A roll-call vote was taken with the following results:

| | YES | NO | ABSENT/ABSTAIN |
|--------------------|-----|----|----------------|
| Alderman Bell | | X | |
| Alderman Gautreaux | | X | |
| Alderwoman Kennedy | | X | |
| Alderman Turner | X | | |
| Alderman Wright | X | | |

The motion failed by a vote of 3-2.

Mayor Draper invoked his executive privilege and appointed Jalesia Batiste as interim Town Clerk.

AGENDA ITEM 10: RESOLUTION 04-17-02-2023 REMOVAL OF NAME FROM TOWN BANK ACCOUNTS

This resolution is to remove the former clerk from the Town of Simmesport bank accounts

A motion was made by Alderman Turner and seconded by Alderman Gautreaux to pass Resolution 04-14-2023, Removal of Name From Town Bank Accounts. . All present voted as follows:

| | YES | NO | ABSENT/ABSTAIN |
|--------------------|-----|-------|----------------|
| Alderman Bell | X | _____ | _____ |
| Alderman Gautreaux | X | _____ | _____ |
| Alderwoman Kennedy | X | _____ | _____ |
| Alderman Turner | X | _____ | _____ |
| Alderman Wright | X | _____ | _____ |

The motion was passed and the resolution was accepted.

AGENDA ITEM 11: RESOLUTION 04-17-03-2023 ADDITION OF NAME TO TOWN BANK ACCOUNTS

This resolution is to add Jalesia Batiste, as interim clerk, as a signatory on the Town Bank accounts. Councilwoman Kennedy asked if Rene Whitmore’s name (the assistant clerk) was on the accounts as a signatory. Mayor Draper said yes that he can add one of the second signatures necessary for checks, but Mr. Whitmore had no access to the bank accounts neither physically nor online. Councilwoman Kennedy asked if the Mayor Pro Tempore could be the third signature. Attorney LaCour said his opinion was that if this were the case, he suggested the Mayor Pro Tempore should be bonded since the Council is supposed to oversee spending.

A motion was made by Councilman Gautreaux and seconded by Councilman Turner that Resolution 04-17-03-2023, Addition of Interim Clerk Jalesia Batiste as a signatory to the bank accounts. A roll-call vote resulted in the following:

| | YES | NO | ABSENT/ABSTAIN |
|--------------------|-----|-------|----------------|
| Alderman Bell | X | _____ | _____ |
| Alderman Gautreaux | X | _____ | _____ |
| Alderwoman Kennedy | X | _____ | _____ |
| Alderman Turner | X | _____ | _____ |
| Alderman Wright | X | _____ | _____ |

The motion carried and Resolution 04-17-03-2023 Addition of Name to Bank Accounts was passed.

AGENDA ITEM 12: RESOLUTION 04-17-04-2023: APPOINTMENT OF TOWN SUPERINTENDENT

Mayor Draper nominated Tow of Simmesport employee Dana Smith for the position of Town Superintendent. Councilman Bell asked if the former Superintendent, Mr. Charles Carter, had resigned. Mayor Draper said that Mr. Carter was staying with the Town of Simmesport but will concentrate his efforts in maintaining the sewer plant and water system. Councilman Bell asked if we can afford paying Mr. Smith as Superintendent. Mayor Draper said yes. He also said that Mr. Smith will begin training to be certified as a water operator.

A motion was made by Alderwoman Kennedy and seconded by Alderman Turner to pass Resolution 04-17-04-2023 to appoint Mr. Dana Smith as Town Superintendent. In a roll-call vote all present voted as follows:

| | YES | NO | ABSENT/ABSTAIN |
|--------------------|-----|-------|----------------|
| Alderman Bell | X | _____ | _____ |
| Alderman Gautreaux | X | _____ | _____ |
| Alderwoman Kennedy | X | _____ | _____ |
| Alderman Turner | X | _____ | _____ |
| Alderman Wright | X | _____ | _____ |

The motion was carried and Resolution 04-17-04-2023 was passed.

AGENDA ITEM 12a: RESIGNATION OF ALDERMAN AT LARGE ROMARO TURNER AS MAYOR PRO TEMPORE

A motion was made by Alderman Turner and seconded by Alderwoman Kennedy that the resignation of Alderman at Large Romaro Turner as Mayor Pro Tempore be accepted. After a roll call vote all present voted as follows:

| | YES | NO | ABSENT/ABSTAIN |
|--------------------|-----|-------|----------------|
| Alderman Bell | X | _____ | _____ |
| Alderman Gautreaux | X | _____ | _____ |
| Alderwoman Kennedy | X | _____ | _____ |
| Alderman Turner | X | _____ | _____ |
| Alderman Wright | X | _____ | _____ |

The motion was carried.

Alderman Turner nominated Alderman Bell for the position of Mayor Pro Tempore. Alderman Bell accepted the nomination. Since no other nominations were made, Alderman Bell was chosen as Mayor Pro Tempore without opposition.

AGENDA ITEM 13: DEPARTMENT REPORTS

UTILITY DEPARTMENT

Mr. Charles said there was an increase in water leaks as heavy rains have been putting a strain on the water and sewer system. He also said that the State of Louisiana has been implementing increased monitoring on all water systems and we are seeing more and more testing of our water. Alderman Bell asked when the leak on his land off College Drive will be fixed. Mr. Carter said they are in plans to fix that leak without breaking up the new road. He (Mr. Carter) said that they have also fixed three leaks on College Drive. He reported that the cutoff valves are frozen and if he shuts the entire system down we have to issue a boil advisory.

SEWER PLANT

Mr. Carter said the planned upgrades through Sustainability Partners is on track and should begin in July. Mr. Carter also said that the lift stations throughout town will now get more attention since he does not have the responsibilities of Town Superintendent. Mr. Carter thanked the Council for recognizing the work the maintenance crew has done around town. Alderman Wright suggested the workers need more cones and barricades for safety when working next to the roadways.

STREET DEPARTMENT

Dana Smith said that because of the recent rains the crew will be weed eating South Simms. He also reported that the Levee board accidentally cut a water line which was promptly fixed. All the lawn mowers have been serviced and are running well.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

Fire Chief Dana Smith told those assembled that the spring fundraiser dinner will be on May 7. Plates will be \$12 each and Bingo will take place later that afternoon.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

Police Chief Daniel Firmin said there were 147 violations, 32 calls with 7 arrests and they collected \$8,224. He reported that the new units were ordered and he will get a delivery date in the coming weeks. The new radar units are in and are out on the road. Alderman Bell asked what mileage was allowed on the lease on the new cars. Chief Firmin said that 32,000 miles was allowed and he will stay on top of the mileage.

TOWN CLERK

Jalesia Batiste said she has been calling vendors to see exactly who and what we owe. She also said this is an ongoing process. Mrs. Batiste asked the Council to come in any time and ask for information before the meetings begin. Attorney LaCour also announced that he had been appointed by the Louisiana Municipal Association as their representative to the Louisiana EMS Certification Commission.

TOWN ATTORNEY/MAGISTRATE


Town Attorney Kirk LaCour informed the council that there are currently two active lawsuits against the Town of Simmesport. Mr Lacour said he believes one can be settled. The other is still in the discovery phase.

ITEM 14: ADJOURNMENT

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

| | YES | NO | ABSENT/ABSTAIN |
|--------------------|-----|----|----------------|
| Alderman Bell | X | | |
| Alderman Gautreaux | X | | |
| Alderwoman Kennedy | X | | |
| Alderman Turner | X | | |
| Alderman Wright | X | | |

The motion was carried, and the meeting was adjourned.



Leslie Draper, III
Mayor

Dacia Adams
Town Clerk