

**REGULAR MEETING OF THE MAYOR AND BOARD OF ALDERMEN
OF THE VILLAGE OF FRENCH SETTLEMENT, August 9, 2017**

The Mayor and Board of Aldermen of the Village of French Settlement met at 16015 Hwy. 16, French Settlement, Louisiana on the 9th day of August, 2017 at 6 p.m. in regular session convened. The meeting was called to order by Mayor Toni Guitrau with the following members present:

Alderman Teresa Miller, Alderman Danette Carrier, Alderman Rhonda Lobell

Also present: Chief Brignac, Assistant Chief Callender, LEM, French Settlement Legal Counsel Tim Pujol

A prayer was offered and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all.

Public Comments on Agenda Items: None

Guest Speaker: Paul Sawyer, with Congressman Graves' office.

Reading of Minutes and Statement of Finances

The Mayor and Board reviewed the Statement of Finances. The motion to adopt the minutes and statement of finances for the month of July 2017, as presented, was made by Alderman Carrier and seconded by Alderman Miller. A ye and a nay vote was called for and resulted as follows:

Yeas: Miller, Carrier, Lobell

Nays: None

Absent: None

Reading of Communications: Alderman Miller said the school announced that every child will receive free meals at school for this school year, including breakfast and lunches. This was extended because of the August 2016 Flood Event.

August 2016 Flood Event Update: French Settlement's Emergency Manager, Lawrence Callender, said that 3 estimates were received to begin repairs to stabilize the municipal building. This will include wiring, Cat 5 cable and reinstallation of insulation and ceiling tiles that had all fallen. Any broken ceiling supports will also be replaced. The low bid was \$11,474. The mayor said, if agreed upon, the Louisiana Government Assistant Grant (LGAP) can pay for \$9800.00 of this cost. Letters of support of this were received from Senator Lambert and Representative Schexnayder. Once the ceiling insulation and tiles are replaced, the electric bill will lower to pre-flood amounts. There has been constant air conditioning inside the municipal building since the flood to prevent mold from growing. The Board agreed to proceed with paying \$2100 to install the illuminating light at the intersection of Hwy. 16 and Hwy. 42. A motion to amend the LGAP grant to go toward the municipal building repairs was made by Alderman Carrier, seconded by Alderman Miller. A ye and a nay vote was called for and resulted as follows:

Yeas: Miller, Carrier, Lobell

Nays: None

Absent: None

A motion to accept the lowest estimate, Leland Hodges, for \$11,474.00, was made by Alderman Miller, seconded by Alderman Lobell. A ye and a nay vote was called for and resulted as follows:

Yeas: Miller, Carrier, Lobell

Nays: None

Absent: None

Mayor Guitrau presented Father Jason Palermo with a plaque on behalf of the Mayor and Board of Aldermen and of the Village of French Settlement. It read, "With deepest appreciation to Father Jason Palermo and St. Joseph Catholic Church for opening your hearts and your doors to the people of the Village of French Settlement during their darkest hour; You provided shelter to those rescued, fed the masses and clothed so many in the impacted areas. We thank you." Father Jason said that a new generator was installed today at the church hall, provided by the BR Diocese because they realize if there is ever a catastrophe again the church will play an integral role in helping this community to recover. He said Church is not always about what happens on Sunday, it is about where this Church can play an integral role in the community. The Church has been around since the 1840's and has faced flood and fire. It sits on high ground and will always provide a home so this town can operate if ever needed again.

Police Department Report – Chief Brignac reported assisting LPSO on a man-chase. Chief Brignac said the man did not have a weapon but the incident before that he shot at them. They have not caught him. Chief Brignac said that school went good this morning with no problems. Chief Brignac asked if we received \$80,000 for two police units. Mayor Guitrau said we had not received \$80,000. We did receive approximately \$12,000 and \$19,000 from the insurance company. Chief Brignac said he realizes the two white units have new rebuilt engines but because of the high mileage on two units, we need to look into replacing them soon. He said the reason we went to the magnetic

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stickers is because it makes no holes on them and is easier to sell them. Alderman Miller said that we were trying to, one at a time through a grant Assistant Chief Callender found, to lease new units. She said that worked fine but considering the financial situation we are in right now we can't make any move as we are trying to get back into the municipal building. She said that we would hope to replace all of them at some point and time. Chief Brignac said he is talking about in the future. Mayor Guitrau said that at one time last year, we were looking at it costing approximately \$40,000 a piece to lease but because of the flood and our current financial situation, we can't lease or buy, yet. Chief Brignac said he needs to order radar. He said he thinks the new radar on his desk, in a box, may be missing half of the parts. This will be checked into by Assistant Chief Callender because the radar being referred to is new. Alderman Miller told Chief Brignac that when he was gone to one of the conventions last month, there was an incident with four cars parked at a camp at Hwy. 16 and Mecca Rd. Chief Brignac said he is aware of that and is addressing it. Alderman Miller said that he, Chief Brignac, was gone to convention and so she called LPSO to make a courtesy call by that residence. She said she was trying to flow with the traffic, but had to wait for someone to turn in before she could go and she could not see. When she returned, there were five cars there blocking the view. LPSO told her that there was no French Settlement officer patrolling our town. She said this lead her to be concerned that our Chief is gone and both of our officers are on nightshifts only. She asked the chief if this was correct. He said yes, that he works the day shifts. He said that when he goes to conferences, he calls LPSO to cover 6 am to 6 pm shifts, and they were supposed to cover. Alderman Miller said that considering what the sheriff's office was dealing with that day, she understands that a parking issue is a strain on the sheriff's office to have to address. She said she does not understand us being in this position when we have two officers that could be working our streets, and they are for his, the chief's, back-up. Chief Brignac said that he is here now working 7 days per week, and is not looking to go to any conferences for a while. He said that when he does go to a conference, he is going to make sure that the sheriff's office will have a unit covering this town. Alderman Miller said she appreciates that but there was a murder in Holden, a murder in Prairieville, a bank robbery in Gonzales, and a shooting in Maurepas last weekend. She said that this is at our backdoor. She said she is not telling him anything about running his department because she does not know how to run a police department, but it would trouble her if something happens to him if he encounters a similar situation as what happened to Captain Rhoads with people in two cars shooting at each other. This dangerous incident was in broad daylight and ended on Hwy. 444. She said she is concerned for him, and our two officers not having anyone to back them up. She said she is confused about this. Chief Brignac said that this is what he wants. He said when he hollers for back up, LPSO backs him up because he seldom calls for backup. He said he is addressing the situation at Mecca Rd. and Hwy. 16. Alderman Miller said people come to the Mecca Road area that aren't familiar with the area and it was raining that day and she was just waiting for a wreck to occur with the situation. Chief Brignac said next time it happens, he is going to tow vehicles if they aren't moved. Alderman Miller asked if he was going to leave our officers on just night shifts. Chief Brignac said yes, and that he is working 6 am to 6 pm. Alderman Lobell said that she would like to add her concerns, also. She asked why our two officers are working at night when there is not a whole lot of activity at night. She had researched and read out loud data sheets from DOTD (2005) showing the traffic flow through French Settlement. The data was old and has no time stamp, but new data will be provided in 2018. She said that by Hwy. 16 and Hwy. 42 intersection in 2005 there were 7335 vehicles that crossed through there. At Hwy. 16 and Hwy. 444 there were 5834 vehicles that passed through. She said with plant, morning and commute traffic, you have to believe that most of this occurred during the day. She said with school starting, maybe there is a "disconnect" that she has, but why would we have our two officers working nights when the activity with the concern for the safety of the citizens, the majority, is during the day. She said she does not understand why we have two officers working on nights. Chief Brignac said that LPSO would back them up if needed and that he is there from 6 am to 6 pm. A citizen in the audience asked who is covering the town when he is doing the school zone crossing job. Chief Brignac said that he doesn't do that all of the time. Alderman Lobell said that with the numbers and the traffic counts so high during the day, she is having trouble understanding this. Chief Brignac said he is patrolling every street, three to four times per day. There were no further questions.

Note to minutes: Mayor Guitrau confirmed \$80,000 was applied for to FEMA previously but the village has not received \$80,000 from FEMA for police units.

Old Business

Grounds Report – Discussed the pavilion restroom doors being warped from the August 2016 flood. Mayor Guitrau said she worked Friday, removing the final contaminated objects and documents from the municipal building so that repairs can begin. Some documents had been sent to be restored but were unsalvageable. She will work one more Friday to finish.

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Road Report: None

Grant(s) and/or State Appropriation(s) Update: LGAP Grant 2015-2016: See minutes above. As soon as this one is complete, she will apply for the next one if the state is offering it.

New Business

- **Declaration of Surplus Property:** Town Utility Trailer. As briefly discussed at the last meeting, the mayor said that the utility trailer is in very bad condition and that we could put it out for bid or it can be donated to a government entity. It would cost the town money to put it out for bid. The Board declared the utility trailer as surplus property on motion by Carrier, second by Miller. A yea and a nay vote was called for and resulted as follows:

Yeas: Miller, Carrier, Lobell

Nays: None

Absent: None

A motion to adjourn was made by Alderman Miller and seconded by Alderman Lobell. A yea and a nay vote was called for and resulted as follows:

Yeas: Miller, Carrier, Lobell

Nays: None

Absent: None

/S/Toni Guitrau, Mayor

/S/Pam Melancon, Municipal Clerk