

MOSQUITO ABATEMENT

ST. TAMMANY PARISH

MINUTES

Board of Commissioners Meeting April 21, 2021

OPEN

The meeting of the Board of Commissioners, St. Tammany Parish Mosquito Abatement District, was called to order at 1:00pm by Chairman David Stuart, in the St. Tammany Parish School Board Chambers, 321 North Theard Street, Covington, Louisiana.

Present were Dr. A.J. Englande, Jr., Dr. Peter Gerone, Mr. David Stuart and Dr. Vicki Traina-Dorge, Commissioners; Mr. Jake Abdalla, Legal Counsel; Dr. Kevin Caillouet, Director; Mr. Calvin Smotherman, Assistant Director; Field Operations Supervisor Josh Foulon, and Accounting Manager Chad Simon. Advisor Dawn Wesson joined the meeting via video conferencing. Advisor Ron Francis was absent. Guests included Bryan and Claire Massery.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Chairman David Stuart opened the floor for public comment. There was no comment from the public.

MINUTES (Appendix 1)

The minutes from the March 17 meeting were presented. Commissioner Traina-Dorge moved to approve the minutes. Commissioner Englande seconded the motion. The motion carried.

TREASURER'S REPORT AND CREDIT CARD PURCHASES (Appendix 2)

Chairman Stuart reviewed all credit card purchases for the month of March 2021. All charge card accounts were found reasonable, accurate and consistent with District purchasing policies. Commissioner Englande will verify credit card purchases before the May meeting.

Accounting Manager Simon presented the Treasurer's Report and reviewed disbursements, revenue, and vendor payments for the month of March.

Commissioner Gerone moved to approve the Treasurer's Report and credit card purchases review. Commissioner Traina-Dorge seconded the motion. Carried.

FORMER EMPLOYEE GRIEVANCE (Appendix 3)

Former employee Bryan Massery appeared before the Board of Commissioners to address his recent termination. Mr. Massery was discharged for violation of the Personnel Policy Handbook Professional Conduct and Discipline Penalties, which states a total of five active or inactive violations will result in dismissal. He distributed correspondence to each commissioner and requested that the Board remove the termination from his employment record, instead to reflect that he was laid off. Mr. Massery chose to specifically address two written warnings: (1) the push-to-talk device and (2) the protective mask mandate.

Mr. Massery stated that he received a written warning on September 17, 2017 for not having the push-to-talk turned on. Before this written warning, he informed his supervisor that the device was faulty and would not hold a charge; however, no solution was offered. At the time the warning was issued, the field operations supervisor assured him that the warning would not go on his permanent record and only remain on the employee action log. He requested that the supervisor honor his word and remove this written warning from his employment record.

Mr. Massery also addressed the most recent written warning received on March 25, 2021, when the director witnessed him in conversation with another employee, unmasked and not socially distanced. Mr. Massery stated that he has asthma and that wearing a mask produces lightheadedness. He further explained that he did not disclose his medical condition earlier, because of HIPPA privacy and security rules. He provided a written statement from his physician attesting to the asthma diagnosis and affirming that protective masks adversely affect his breathing. Mr. Massery stated that he had also witnessed management unmasked inside the facility. He then asked for the removal of this warning from his employment record.

In conclusion, Mr. Massery requested that the Board address the current disciplinary written warning policy, in particular by setting a statute of limitations to establish a maximum allowable period in which written warnings would remain on an employee's record. He thanked the Board for their time and consideration of his requests.

Chairman Stuart thanked Mr. Massery for his statement and assured him that the Board would take his grievance under advisement, carefully consider his requests, and render a decision in writing. Mr. Massery and his wife left the meeting at 1:16pm.

Chairman Stuart requested guidance for Board deliberations from Legal Counsel Abdalla; particularly since the Board's decision would affect not only Mr. Massery, but also the District. Legal Counsel Abdalla stated that the best action would be to take no action at this time. Chairman Stuart asked whether the Board could discuss the termination appeal in an executive session. Legal Counsel Abdalla stated that the Board could enter an executive session, but advised taking no action. Director Caillouet stated that from management's perspective inaccuracies should be addressed, but sought direction from legal counsel before going into further detail. Chairman Stuart suggested that the Board listen to management's perspective on Mr. Massery's statements. The Director agreed, as long as doing so was permissible. Commissioner Englande suggested the Board consider entering an executive session.

Chairman Stuart called for a motion to enter executive session. Commissioner Gerone so moved, and Commissioner Englande seconded the motion. The Board entered into executive session at 1:17pm.

Commissioner Traina-Dorge moved to close the executive session at 1:50pm and resume the regular session. Commissioner Gerone seconded the motion. Carried.

Commissioner Gerone made a motion to send written correspondence to Mr. Massery of the Board's support, affirmation and ratification of management's decision to terminate Mr. Massery. The Director will draft a letter from Chairman Stuart to Mr. Massery conveying the Board's decision.

Legal Counsel Abdalla will review the correspondence before mailing. The Board will also review the written warning policy and consider a statute of limitations for active and inactive written warnings at a future meeting.

FIVE YEAR FINANCIAL PROJECTION (Appendix 4)

Accounting Manager Chad Simon addressed the effects of COVID-19 on revenue. He reviewed the anticipated 2021 revenue collections of \$8,994,201, at the current 3.9 millage rate. According to the St. Tammany Parish Assessor's office, COVID-19 did not negatively impact the assessed value of properties in the parish. Moreover, accelerated growth in ad valorem taxes is expected, due to the increase in property values experienced during 2020.

Medicare and Social Security tax credits totaling \$24k were submitted for reimbursement from the federal government for COVID-19 related purchases and upgrades. However, the IRS recently determined that government entities are not eligible to receive these funds and requested repayment of these tax credits.

MILLAGE PROJECTION

Director Caillouet reviewed millage considerations addressing public (reduction in millage) vs. auditor (taxes match service needs) expectations, four-year reassessment reset of the maximum millage, and expenses (4.98%) exceeding revenue (1.09%). The Director further explained the property tax reassessment, the adjusted millage rate after reappraisal/reassessment vs. the adjusted maximum millage, the revenue vs. expenses projections through 2026, anticipated revenue vs. expenses, surplus funds and anticipated capital expenditures. He reviewed calculations to maintain at least 0.5 years of current operating expenses in the fund balance. He recommended that the Board set the millage at 3.57 to levy upon the 2021 tax rolls.

Commissioner Traina-Dorge moved to set the millage assessment at 3.57 mils, when the Board formally adopts the 2021 millage at its public meeting in May. Commissioner Gerone seconded the motion. Carried.

BOARD'S INTENT TO ADOPT 2021 MILLAGE IN MAY

Chairman Stuart announced that the St. Tammany Parish Mosquito Abatement District Board of Commissioners will formally adopt its 2021 millage rate at the May 19 public meeting.

UPDATE ON OPEN COMMISSIONER NOMINATION

The Director sent letters to Parish President Mike Cooper and the Parish Council recommending Kathryn Townsend fill the remainder of former Commissioner Anthony Alfred's term. A copy of her biographical sketch was also included. The Parish Council will consider this request at its May 6 meeting.

CAMPUS EXPANSION

The Director reported a "Through-the-Fence" agreement with the City of Slidell has been reached to satisfy the FAA's proposed aircraft tie down fee of \$1,200 per year. Legal Counsel Abdalla is working on the subdivision of the property from the larger airport tract.

Legal Counsel Abdalla spoke with the Slidell City Attorney and learned the ordinance will be submitted to the Slidell City Council in May, and likely adopted in June. The property will be subdivided from the larger airport tract, a survey conducted following city standards, and the survey submitted to the Planning Commission. Once the Slidell City Council passes the ordinance, the closing will be scheduled.

COVID-19 STAFF VACCINATION CONSIDERATIONS

In December, Director Caillouet sought Board approval for ten days of COVID-19 leave for all employees for 2021, with no carryover from 2020. The staff is currently 52% vaccinated, possibly reaching 60% by the end of May. As an incentive to encourage vaccines, the Director asked the Board to change the ten days of COVID-19 leave to apply to only those employees who have begun or completed the vaccination process.

Chairman Stuart and Commissioners Gerone and Traina-Dorge voted in favor of the Director's recommendation. Commissioner Englande abstained. The motion carried.

ETHICS TIER 2.1 PERSONAL FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE STATEMENTS

2019 Filing - Past Due

Commissioners were advised that Tier 2.1 Personal Financial Disclosure Statements for 2019 are now considered delinquent by the Louisiana Board of Ethics.

2020 Filing - May 15, 2021 Deadline

The Tier 2.1 Personal Financial Disclosure Statements for 2020 are due by May 15, 2021. As a reminder for these annual filings, this item will be added to March and April agendas.

BOARD APPROVALS

a. Travel - Director Caillouet requested approval to travel to Lee County Hyacinth Control to learn about equipment, operations and herbicide applications for hyacinth control and source reduction of *Mansonia* species. Supervisor of Field Operations Josh Foulon will be accompanying the Director.

Commissioner Traina-Dorge moved to approve the Director's travel as requested. Commissioner Gerone seconded the motion. Carried.

b. Contracts

1. Blackstar Helicopter Lease Service Contract Extension

Director Caillouet reported that Blackstar LLC submitted the sole bid for contracted helicopter services, but it was not received by the bid deadline. However, the existing agreement with Blackstar includes an exception to extend the current lease for one year at the same rate. Following review by Legal Counsel Abdalla, the Director sought approval to extend the current lease.

Commissioner Englande moved to extend the current lease with Blackstar LLC for one year at the same rate. Commissioner Traina-Dorge seconded the motion. Carried.

2. Helicopter Purchase Bid Opening

Two bids were received as follows:

Bell Helicopter-\$4M

Airbus Helicopter-\$4.2M

Commissioner Traina-Dorge moved for management and legal counsel review of both helicopter purchase bids. She further moved that management provide its recommendation at the May meeting. Commissioner Englande seconded the motion. Carried.

3. ULV Mosquito Fogging Machines Bid Award

Following a review of the five bids received for ULV mosquito fogging machines at the March 17 meeting, Director Caillouet proposed that the Board award the bid to the lowest responsive bidder, Adapco, at the bid price of \$49,740.

Commissioner Gerone made a motion to award the ULV mosquito fogging machines bid to Adapco. Commissioner Traina-Dorge seconded the motion. Carried.

4. Slidell Airport "Through-the-Fence" Access Agreement

Legal Counsel Abdalla reviewed and approved the City of Slidell's "Through-the-Fence" Access Agreement for an annual cost of \$1,200.

Commissioner Englande moved to accept and approve the agreement. Commissioner Traina-Dorge seconded the motion. Carried.

5. VDCI Contract

The Director asked for a motion to amend the agenda to include the VDCI Contingency Aerial Adulticiding Contract. Commissioner Traina-Dorge so moved, and Commissioner Gerone seconded the motion. Carried.

The Director noted that one bid was received for contingency aerial adulticiding services from Vector Disease Control International (VDCI) at a rate of \$0.75 per acre. The contract will require Legal Counsel Abdalla's review and approval.

Commissioner Traina-Dorge moved to accept the contingency aerial adulticide services contract with VDCI, pending the review and approval of Legal Counsel Abdalla. Commissioner Gerone seconded the motion. Carried.

c. Director's Time Card (Appendix 5)

Chairman Stuart reviewed and approved the Director's time card for March 14-April 10, 2021. Commissioner Gerone moved to accept the Director's time card. Commissioner Englande seconded the motion. Carried.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

The Director reviewed the following recent and upcoming events.

- CDC NCEH - Publishing Sewage Associations Meetings
- Field Biologists Interviews
- Modeling Discussion with USGS
- Night Driver Training
- Pontchartrain Conservancy Meeting
- Grant Discussion with VecTech Company for Age-Grading Mosquitoes
- Widespread Internet Outage Disaster Planning
- Job Offers Extended to Three Field Biologist Candidates
- LMCA Annual Meeting Planning
- April and May Staff Meetings
- Emergency Relief Committee Meeting
- Frontier Precision Meeting
- Northshore Invasive Aquatic Plants Quarterly Meeting
- Meeting with USM Researcher Don Yee
- Water Outage Disaster Meeting
- Lee County Hyacinth Control Travel

Director Caillouet noted that IT Specialist Weber Janssen will provide a report on widespread internet outages and cyberattacks at the May meeting.

MOSQUITO CONTROL REPORT

The Director stated five WNV-infected mosquito pools returned positive out of 1,071 (0.47%) sampled this year. No additional mosquito pools have returned positive since January.

Assistant Director Smotherman reported *Culex salinarius* remained the most abundant species, followed by *Anopheles crucians*. *Culex quinquefasciatus* populations remained low, but will increase as temperatures continue to warm. He also reviewed the vector abundance five-year average per trap night for *Culex quinquefasciatus*, *Culex nigripalpus*, and *Culex salinarius*. Ground adulticide and larvicide treatments were compared for 2021 vs. 2020. Ground adulticiding was cancelled nine times and ground larviciding five times due to adverse weather.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:43pm on a motion by Commissioner Gerone and seconded by Commissioner Traina-Dorge. Carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Peter J. Gerone
Secretary