

**REGULAR MEETING OF THE MAYOR AND BOARD OF ALDERMEN
OF THE VILLAGE OF FRENCH SETTLEMENT, May 8, 2019**

The Mayor and Board of Aldermen of the Village of French Settlement met at 16015 Hwy. 16, French Settlement, Louisiana on the 8th day of May, 2019 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

Absent: None

Also present: Chief of Police William "Bill" Bliss, Assistant Chief of Police Lawrence Callender

A prayer was offered by Alderman Teresa Miller

Public Comments on Agenda Items: The mayor opened the floor to public comments on agenda items. There were no comments.

Guest Speaker(s): None

Reading of Minutes and Statement of Finances

The motion to adopt the minutes and statement of finances for the month of April 2019, as presented, was made by Alderman Miller and seconded by Alderman Carrier. A yeas and a nay vote was called for and resulted as follows:

Yeas: Miller, Carrier, Lobell

Nays: None

Absent: None

Mayor Guitrau said that in the month of April, the remaining FEMA funds were spent toward replacement of contents and a police unit that were lost in the August 2016 flood.

Reading of Communications:

- The mayor declared Tuesday, May 14, 2019 as "Laine Hardy Day" for his outstanding performances on American Idol, and for being a Top 3 contender. There will be a "Welcome Home" celebration at the French Settlement High School, a parade followed by him performing a short concert at the Livingston Parish Fairgrounds. Beside declaring May 14, 2019 as Laine Hardy Day, the mayor said she has something else for Laine but she wants to keep that a surprise for him on the day he returns. Laine Hardy graduated from French Settlement High School in 2018.
- Mayor Guitrau received a letter from the AG that stated they are in receipt of the Board's request for an opinion regarding supplemental-pay/overtime-pay.

Emergency Manager Report: Callender reiterated what the mayor said in that the funds from FEMA allocated toward replacement of lost contents and a police unit have been spent. The information is uploaded to the state and to FEMA then it takes years to go through audits with both. It took nearly seven years to close the books on Hurricane Katrina. The August 2016 Flood event may take ten years to close the books on. He and the mayor go through this with each storm where the village received funding. Everything purchased was at the lowest price and mostly under state contract. He thanked Joe Costello, with GOHSEP and all the FEMA workers for all of their assistance.

Police Department Report: Chief Bliss reported the following for the month of April:

- The police department will be working the Click It or Ticket Grant.
- Tomorrow is Senior Day which includes a small parade. The FSPD will escort the parade.
- The new police unit will be in service this coming Friday, May 10, 2019.
- Mayor Guitrau has declared Bench Warrants Amnesty Program until June 30, 2019.

Old Business

- **Grounds Report:** All is in good condition on the municipal grounds except for a few electrical problems. We were told the museum AC may be connected to the pavilion meter.
- **Road Report:**
 - The parish will blacktop Mecca Road Ext. soon. This is being done because the existing exit road does not allow a clear view of oncoming traffic on Hwy. 16. The mayor is in direct contact with the parish president so that if any issues should arise, they will be resolved as soon as possible.
 - More pictures of the pothole on Aydell Lane will be sent into the Livingston Parish DPW.
 - Someone is stealing the sign(s) on H.S. Brignac.
- **LGAP GRANT:** It has been confirmed that the \$6500 can be used as a match to a FEMA grant to purchase two natural gas generators. We are waiting on the fully executed contract from the Governor's office.

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- **Discussion of Travel Per Diem.** This discussion was continued from the Meeting of the Board of Aldermen of April 10, 2019: Previously, the mayor said that she was asked by an employee of the police department to bring before the Board of Aldermen for their consideration a discussion on how per diem is paid when an employee is away from the village to attend classes, conferences, meetings, etc. She was asked to consider using the GSA method instead of Village of French Settlement - Ordinance #3 of 2014. Excerpt from said ordinance reads as follows: "Meals will be reimbursed if travel is twelve (12) hours or more in duration. Employees, while on travel on municipal business, shall be allowed an advance of \$30 toward the cost of meals. No receipts are required unless they request reimbursement (up to \$75 for meals per day) for meals totaling over the allotted \$30/day. Receipts must then be submitted for reimbursement and the total amount shall include the advancement of the \$30." The Board discussed this request and agreed to continue the discussion at the next regular meeting of the Board on May 8, 2019.

Discussion continued from the last regular meeting of the Board of Aldermen is as follows: Alderman Lobell brought research paperwork of what her personal job pays her while away on company business. She said she works for a Fortune 500 company. The low per diem is \$45 per day and they give a guideline of states or cities. The hotel usually provides breakfast. High per diem cities like New York, Seattle, Miami, etc. is a total of \$68 per day. The national average per day is \$51. The IRS' GSA is only a guideline, and is not mandatory to use. When you use it as a deduction, the IRS only uses it as a percentage of the expenses. The mayor said the ordinance, as it is, gives those traveling away on business a flat \$30 per day for meals. For example, if a person eats \$50 per day, then they must provide \$50 worth of receipts in order to collect the additional \$20. They can be reimbursed up to \$75 per day as long as they can provide the receipts. The receipt can only be for one person and can not include alcohol. Since the ordinance was adopted in 2014, she can't recall anyone turning in receipts for over \$30 per day so this has not been an issue. Alderman Miller brought research papers with her, also. Alderman Miller said that in 2014, the Board researched all of this. She said she believes employees may want to use the GSA system for reasons of simplicity, because they would get money upfront without providing receipts. She said she believes in transparency in that you provide receipts showing where the money went for anything over \$30 per day, as stated in the current ordinance. She said she would have to be against the GSA system because our current numbers of "up to \$75" are good. She said that in 2014, the Board went down the middle of what is paid to IRS and State employees. Normally, we are in-state during travel but at times they may have to travel out of state. According to the GSA system, a trip to New Orleans is \$71 per day. Baton Rouge \$61 per day, and the Alexandria area is \$66 per day, so we are \$4 off on GSA, and \$7 off on the state. She believes our current numbers are good and has to decline going to the GSA system simply because it is not as transparent as the ordinance currently in place. Alderman Lobell and Alderman Carrier agreed. The mayor thanked the Board for doing further research into the employee's request and for the consideration of the request. She said she agrees with transparency and providing receipts for anything over \$30 per day.

New Business: French Settlement Mayor's Court is offering an amnesty program beginning May 13, 2019 through June 30, 2019 for anyone with an outstanding warrant issued by French Settlement Mayor's Court. Hundreds of people with outstanding warrants are currently facing possible arrest. Mayor Toni Guitrau said the amnesty program will allow those who have an outstanding warrant to pay their fines and court costs at the original amount without the retribution of arrest or additional recall fees. This does not include fees they may owe to the Office of Motor Vehicles (OMV). The amnesty program is an easy, economical way to resolve some of the backlog, and to give people an opportunity to avoid arrest. This amnesty program is only for warrants issued by French Settlement Mayor's Court

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and ends on June 30, 2019. These warrants are entered into a national database. If someone is stopped by law enforcement, and their driver's license is checked using this database, they run the risk of being arrested if they have an outstanding warrant. Many people are not aware that the Office of Motor Vehicles is also notified nationwide and the person's license is suspended until such time their warrant is cleared/recalled, and they pay fees with the OMV. Persons wishing to pay their outstanding warrants may contact the French Settlement Town Hall at (225) 698-6100 during business hours Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. If the office is closed, leave a message and someone will return your call as soon as possible. The money collected goes into the Village of French Settlement's general fund to pay for administrative and police department expenses.

Local Events: Senior Day/Senior Parade May 9, 2019. The mayor said that the Ribbon Cutting for the opening of Smiley's Donuts was a huge success.

Adjourn: A motion to adjourn was made by Alderman Miller and seconded by Alderman Carrier. A yeas 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