

Parish Council District 10 Community Meeting

August 29, 2013

Parish Officials in attendance:

Maureen O'Brien, Council Member for District 10
Pat Brister, Parish President
Gina Campo, Chief Operating Officer
Dexter Accardo, Director of Emergency Preparedness
Jerry Binder, Council Chairman

Maureen O'Brien welcomed everyone, introduced Parish officials, and asked audience to sign-in.

Pat Brister spoke briefly about the following projects:

- Since most of the Parish's main transportation arteries are State highways, the Parish has been working with the LA Department of Transportation and Development on expanding/improving the highways and Interstate 12.
- The Parish is working towards a solution on the changes to the National Flood Insurance Program. The Parish participates in a conference call every Tuesday and Friday. The Parish is part of a national coalition with members from 16 states. They are making great progress on this issue.
- Parish Sales Tax is increasing, Building Permits are up considerably, and Parish Government seems to have turned the corner on the recession.

Parish Wide Updates

A member of the audience questioned Brister about the amount of population increase since Hurricane Katrina. Brister estimated that the current population of St. Tammany Parish was 250,000 or above.

A member of the audience questioned Brister as to whether the State was currently working on any drainage projects in the Parish. Gina Campo stated that drainage projects are generally local projects. The State will complete drainage improvements associated with road construction projects.

A member of the audience asked to see the overall plan for the future including areas that were being kept wetlands by the Federal Government. Campo stated that the Parish's plan has evolved over the years. Under Kevin Davis' term, ordinances were changed and restrictions were placed on development to improve drainage. Campo said that the general plan was to look at the different drainage basins. There are more than 50 streams in the Parish. The Parish is looking at the areas experiencing flooding. Consultants will model the drainage in the basin. Then regional detention ponds will be planned.

Campo stated that after Hurricane Katrina, the Parish received an influx of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding. The Parish was able to add local funding to the CDBG funds to construct detention ponds. The Parish has completed \$50 Million of work in the past few years. Campo explained that the Labarre Street Project consists of a detention ponds and the upsizing of pipes.

Campo explained that with upcoming changes to the National Flood Insurance Program, the Parish is being more strategic with the properties accepted into the Hazard Mitigation Program. The Parish is looking at coastal issues and potential funding sources for storm surge protection. The Parish is also looking at completing our own coastal projects with local funds.

A member of the audience asked about the stress on the Locks on the Pearl River after Hurricane Issac. Brister stated that the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers constructed and owns the locks. The Vicksburg Office of the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers is responsible for maintenance and upkeep of the structures. Brister stated that the problem was that the Locks were not being maintained. The Vicksburg Office has now established a maintenance program for the structures, and they are discussing what to do with the Locks on a permanent basis. Campo stated that the Parish had been told in the past that the Pearl River was going to flood, and then it never happened. The Parish has partnered with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and Stennis to model the drainage in the whole Pearl River basin.

District 10 Updates

A member of the audience questioned the roundabouts planned for Highway 59. Campo stated that two roundabouts would be constructed – one at Sharp Road and one at Lonesome Road.

A member of the audience questioned the process for changing the zoning on a piece of property which was originally zoned commercial but downgraded to single family residential. Maureen O'Brien asked the constituent to contact her about the property so they could start the process.

A member of the audience expressed concern about commercial expansion into residential areas now that the I-12 Exit at Highway 1088 had been opened. Brister explained that there were some pockets of existing commercial along the highway, but the majority of the property was still zoned residential.

A member of the audience asked about an area of Sharp Road with drainage problems where the water goes over the road. Campo stated that two detention ponds are planned for the area, but the Parish will have to purchase some property.

A member of the audience expressed concern about the depth of the ditches off of Highway 59 at Dupard and Labarre Streets. Campo stated that there is not a lot of right-of-way on those streets and the Parish could not afford to subsurface the whole area. They are installing a sewerage system and some subsurface drainage. O'Brien stated if there are any funds leftover once the project is complete, they will look at the possibility of covering the deepest ditches.

Alert/Emails/Emergency Preparedness

Dexter Accardo, Director of Emergency Preparedness, spoke about communication during disasters. Accardo stated that updates are available on the Parish Website, Twitter, Facebook, and through the 800 number. The Parish also has reverse 911, so it is important to answer the phone during an emergency.

Accardo encouraged the audience to sign up for the Alert System so emergency messages can be sent to their cell phone. You must have a St. Tammany address to register and you can still use a 504 phone number.

Accardo stated that the Parish is working with some new software to gather more information from the public for preliminary damage assessments. These assessments help the Parish in getting Federal money for recovery.

Accardo discussed the importance of evacuations and curfews. Accardo also discussed Points of Distribution (PODs) where the public can access ice, water, MREs, etc. Accardo stated that opening a POD costs approximately \$600,000. Accardo stated that if the Parish experiences a minor storm and the grocery stores are still open, the Parish would have to match 25% of the cost of the POD. Accardo discussed the great working relationship the Parish has with the business community and how instrumental they are in recovering after a storm.

A member of the audience asked about the removal of trees after a storm. Accardo stated that the Parish has a Push Team and their top priority after the storm is to clear the main roads to the hospitals. After those roads are clear, they focus on search and rescue in the high impact areas. The Parish also has a strategic plan in place to clear all the roads.

Inspector General Task Force Updates

Jerry Binder stated that some residents want the Parish to have their own Inspector General. This gives you a more local approach to things, but it could get very costly to fund the operations. Binder explained the creation and composition of the Task Force. Binder stated that an Inspector General would have no authority over the cities. Binder went on to explain that the Task Force is trying to identify a scope of authority and how much it would cost to fund.

Parish Coroner Updates

Maureen O'Brien discussed two Resolutions recently adopted by the Council regarding the Parish Coroner – one setting a salary of \$80,000 for the Executive Director and the other requesting the Coroner reduce his salary. Jerry Binder, Parish Council Chairman, provided an update on matters related to the Parish Coroner. Binder explained that the Parish Council cannot remove the Coroner, nor could the Parish Council defund the Executive Director position. Binder advised that the Parish Council notified the Legislative Auditor once they were aware of a problem in the Coroner's Office. Binder explained that the Legislative Auditor is the Inspector General of the State. Binder stated that Maureen O'Brien joined other Council Members in requesting the Legislative Auditor perform a forensic audit of the Coroner's Office. Binder advised that the Legislative Auditor is close to issuing their report on the Coroner's Office. Binder explained that three Legislative Auditors have been working full-time on this project and investigating this issue for eight months. Binder stated that the Legislative Auditor's investigation has not cost the Parish any money.

Binder discussed the \$203,000 salary for a part-time Coroner and the part-time Coroner in Jefferson Parish makes \$77,000. Binder stated that the Parish Council adopted a Resolution asking for Galvan to voluntarily reduce his salary. Binder explained that Galvan's salary can't be reduced during his current term. If Galvan resigns or does not get re-elected, the Parish Council can set the salary of the new Coroner.

Garbage District Discussion

Maureen O'Brien stated that some streets in District 10 have as many as nine different garbage providers driving on them. This is causing a lot of wear and tear on the streets. O'Brien asked the audience if they would be interested in creating a Garbage District. O'Brien outlined the procedures for creating the district. O'Brien stated that participation was not mandatory. O'Brien asked the audience to email their thoughts on the matter to her. O'Brien stated that another meeting would be held to discuss this topic.

CDBG Updates

O'Brien asked if there were any questions on any CDBG projects and there were none from the audience.

Website Information

O'Brien reviewed the information available on the Website to District 10 residents.

Adjournment

There being no further business or discussion, the meeting was adjourned.