

ADVISORY BUDGET/FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

NOVEMBER 18, 2020
FRANKLIN, LOUISIANA

The Advisory Budget/Finance Committee met on this date with Rev. Craig Mathews, Chairman presiding and the following members present: J Ina, Rodney Olander, Scott Ramsey, Mark A. Duhon, Gwendolyn L. Hidalgo, Kristi Prejeant Rink, M.D., and Dean S. Adams. Absent were Leslie "Les" Rulf, Jr., Patrick J. Hebert, and James W. Bennett, Jr.

Also present were Chief Administrative Officer, Henry LaGrange, Director of Finance, Paul Governale, and Parish President, David Hanagriff.

The Invocation was pronounced by Mr. Ina and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Dr. Rink.

Alfreida Edwards, Franklin, Louisiana appeared before the Council to discuss diversity and representation of the African American community in the St. Mary Parish Registrar of Voters Office and to discuss any available employment and for additional funding.

Mr. LaGrange stated that State Law requires St. Mary Parish Government to fund a portion of the Registrar's salary and benefits and a portion of the Deputy Registrar of Voters salary and benefits. He informed that all other employees are State employees. He also stated that the Parish appoints the Registrar of Voters and provides and maintains the office space, and supplies office equipment.

Mr. Ina suggested that the Council write a letter to the Registrar of Voters requesting that when a vacancy occurs to consider hiring a qualified minority.

Rev. Mathews stated that this is an item of interest to him.

After lengthy discussion, Mr. Ina suggested that the request to write a letter to the Registrar of Voters be placed on the December 9, 2020 agenda relative to procedures of hiring employees.

Referred from the Regular Meeting September 9, 2020 - St. Mary Parish Registrar of Voters has submitted their 2021 Budget request.

Mr. Adams moved to recommend to the Parish Council to approve the St. Mary Parish Registrar of Voters 2021 Budget request. Dr. Rink seconded the motion, which carried.

Referred from the Regular Meeting September 9, 2020 – St. Mary Community Action Agency has submitted their Pre-Application requesting funds for Program Year 2021. Funding Request is \$69,500.00. (Transportation Funds - \$45,500.00 and Elderly Nutrition - \$24,000.00)

Mr. Olander moved to recommend to the Parish Council to approve the St. Mary Community Action Agency requested funds for Program Year 2021. Funding Request \$69,500.00; Transportation Funds - \$45,500.00 and Elderly Nutrition - \$24,000.00. Mr. Ramsey seconded the motion.

Mr. LaGrange stated that the Transportation Fund request of \$45,500.00 is included in the 2021 Budget (see page 31) and due to Covid-19, the Elderly Nutrition is budgeted in the amount of \$12,000 (see page 32).

In response to Dr. Rink's inquiry relative to last year's Elderly Nutrition amount, Mr. LaGrange stated that \$8,500 was spent through October. He stated that during the year, if everything opens back up due to Covid-19 and if revenues are better, there is always an opportunity to request consideration to restore the budget to its original request.

After lengthy discussion, an amended motion was made by Mr. Olander to recommend to the Parish Council to approve the St. Mary Community Action Agency requested funds for Program Year 2021; Transportation Funds - \$45,500.00 and Elderly Nutrition - \$12,000.00.

Mr. Ramsey seconded the motion, which carried. Rev Mathews and Mr. Duhon abstained.

NEW BUSINESS:

A. Review proposed 2021 Budget and Five-Year Capital Outlay.

Mr. Adams and Rev. Mathews suggested funds be allocated to pay for training or seminars for Boards and Commissions Members attend a meeting to get informed on the local government laws, rules, regulations, and operating procedures.

Mr. LaGrange suggested that in order to ensure attendance the Council adopt an ordinance requiring Boards and Commissions Members to attend training.

Legal Counsel, Eric Duplantis stated that required training for Open Meeting Laws can be held through the District Attorney's Office.

Mr. LaGrange stated that due to timing of appointments, the trainings may be offered a couple times a year.

Dr. Rink stated that she is in the process of revising the Boards and Commissions Ordinance and suggested a standard set of bylaws or a generic outline of bylaws be provided to help each board. She offered Council Members to review this ordinance and make any suggestions for revision.

Several Council Members stated that a budget is not needed if the Parish has access to appropriate resources to conduct training.

Mr. Duplantis suggested that in order to avoid violation of the Open Meeting Law, all Council Members should send their suggestions to him.

In response to Mr. Ina's inquiry relative to Parish Employee raises, Mr. LaGrange expounded on the 2021 Budget and the expected decreased revenues and with the new debt service payments on the Roads Funds are not available for raises.

In response to Mr. Adams' inquiry relative to using the General Fund or 3/10% Sales Tax Fund for employee raises, Mr. LaGrange stated that it would be a violation of sales tax proposition.

In response to Mr. Ina's inquiry relative to cost of living increase, Mr. LaGrange stated that years ago a two tier system was used based on the employees income and how many years they were employed. However, you still need to find a source to fund the raises. He reminded that employees currently get 12 paid holidays, paid vacation, paid sick leave, one hundred percent paid health insurance, and retirement. He also stated that last year there was an increase in health insurance that was absorbed by the Parish and not passed on to employees.

Dr. Rink asked if there is a way to use the sales tax funds on appropriate budget line items to make funds available for employee raises and suggested possibly increasing lower wage employees to a specific minimum standard of pay.

Mr. Ramsey suggested focusing on Economic Development to bring new business to St. Mary Parish.

Mr. Duhon requested allocating \$12,000 to the park near Rev. Smith's Church in Morgan City.

President Hanagriff stated that because this property is located in the city limits of Morgan City, we cannot use the Parish's 3/10 % Sales Tax Funds.

Mr. LaGrange stated that the Parish or the City of Morgan City can apply for a Local Government Assistance Grant. He informed that the application is due at the end of this year

and that it may take six (6) months to receive the grant. He further explained that funds cannot be spent until the signed grant agreement is received.

Mr. LaGrange stated that the Community Water Enrichment Grant application is also due by the end of the year.

There being no further business, Dr. Rink moved for adjournment. Mr. Olander seconded the motion, which carried.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

CRAIG MATHEWS, CHAIRMAN
ADVISORY BUDGET/FINANCE COMMITTEE