

OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF
THE ST. MARY PARISH COUNCIL OF THE
PARISH OF ST. MARY, STATE OF LOUISIANA

JULY 9, 2025
FRANKLIN, LOUISIANA
6:00 P.M.

The St. Mary Parish Council met on this date in Regular Session with Chairperson Gwendolyn L. Hidalgo presiding and the following members present: Rev. Craig Mathews, J Ina, Rodney Olander, David W. Hill, Leslie “Les” Rulf, Jr., Patrick Hebert, Mark Duhon, Dean Adams, and Kristi Prejeant Rink, M.D. Absent was James “Jimmy” Davis, Jr.

The Invocation was pronounced by Mr. Hebert and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mr. Rulf.

Mr. Olander moved that the reading of the second regular meeting, June 25, 2025 be dispensed with and that the same be approved. Mr. Hebert seconded the motion, which carried.

Diane Alexander did not appear before the Council to discuss “Save Our Children Mentoring Center Program.”

Edward “Tiger” Verdin, Executive Director of Louisiana Partnership for the Arts, and Hanson Memorial High School Students appeared before the Council for recognition of representing the Parish of St. Mary, Franklin, Louisiana in the world’s largest Theatre Festival, Friends Fest, to be held in Edinburgh, Scotland at the end of July 2025. He informed that Shell Oil Company has donated over \$100,000 so that the trip is at no cost to participants. He displayed the first Louisiana Arts and Culture vehicle license plate that will be available for purchase of \$60 tomorrow, and \$50 will be donated to the organization. He informed that the students’ premier of Soundscapes will be held on July 18, 2025 at the Teche Theater. He also informed that Allison Jones’ summer production of A Swampy Summer Night’s Dream, will be held on July 18-20, 2025 at the Teche Theater.

Fr. Joel Faulk, Church of the Assumption Pastor and Hanson Memorial High School’s Head Master, expounded on positive impacts the program has and that it is a Blessed opportunity for the school, students, and community.

Mr. Adams requested to move up Item 14A, “Resolution congratulating the Hanson Memorial High School Students on representing the Parish of St. Mary, Franklin, Louisiana in the world’s largest Theatre Festival to be held in Edinburgh, Scotland at the end of July 2025.”

Mr. Olander moved that the following Resolution be adopted. The Council seconded the motion, which carried by the following 10-0-0-1 Roll Call vote:

YEAS: Mathews, Ina, Olander, Hill, Rulf, Hebert, Duhon, Adams, Rink, and Hidalgo

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: Davis

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, Amelia Reynolds, Charlotte Reynolds, Mattie Judice, Johnae Hebert, Onnie Doucet, Makayla Miller, Fletcher Doucet, and Ethan Verdin, Hanson Memorial High School Theatre Students, were selected to represent Louisiana to compete at the world-renowned Fringe Fest – the largest Theatre Festival in the world, and

WHEREAS, the Hanson Memorial High School Theatre Students will be traveling to London and Edinburgh, Scotland at the end of July 2025, and

WHEREAS, these students will experience an extraordinary two week educational journey that will begin in London and end with their competition performance in Edinburgh, Scotland, and

WHEREAS, upon completion of the program, each student will earn three college credits, and

WHEREAS, the Hanson Memorial High School Theatre Students along with their teachers are to be commended on this historic accomplishment.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the St. Mary Parish Council does hereby extend sincere congratulations to the Hanson Memorial High School Students for participating in the world’s largest Theatre Festival to be held in Edinburgh, Scotland at the end of July 2025.

ADOPTED AND APPROVED by the St. Mary Parish Council in regular session convened on this the 9th day of July 2025.

APPROVED:

GWENDOLYN L. HIDALGO, CHAIRPERSON
ST. MARY PARISH COUNCIL

ATTEST:

LISA C. MORGAN, CLERK
ST. MARY PARISH COUNCIL

Parish President, Sam Jones appeared under Public comment and expounded on his time working for and representing former Governor of Louisiana, Kathleen Babineaux Blanco and their support to St. Mary Parish.

Chief Administrative Officer, Paul J. Governale submitted his report for a two (2) week period, ending July 9, 2025. He submitted a report from Tim Matte, St. Mary Parish Levee District Director, relative to Pump Station No. 9, Pump Station No. 4, Pump Station No. 8, Pump Station No. 6, TE-168, GIS, and the waterline relocation project on Veterans Boulevard. He also submitted a report relative to Maintenance Items Accomplished and Scheduled for Drainage District 2A and gave a Financial overview of the Parish. Discussion was had relative to holding payments, cash flow, road funding, bond payments, unfunded mandates, Harold J. “Babe” Landry Landfill upgrades and cost to replace the scale, Kemper Williams Park electrical upgrades, cost to use the Avoca Island Ferry and its revenue.

In response to Mr. Duhon’s inquiry relative to whether the contract was signed with DOTD for using Duhon Boulevard as a detour for heavy and wide loads, Mr. Governale stated that he has not received a response from DOTD.

Rev. Mathews thanked Mr. Governale for the Financial overview. He stated that his concern is when an allocation is included in the budget but there is a refusal response to the Council. He suggested ways to increase communication to be more efficient/effective through periodic Budget Finance meetings.

President Jones stated that the Parish should have a \$600,000 surplus by the end of the year and that all bills will be paid.

Mr. Ina stated that his concern is the lack of consistency and transparency among Administration and the Council.

Several Council Members discussed the Home Rule Charter regarding Council notification when expenses or revenues deviate 5%.

In response to Several Council Members' inquiries, Mr. Governale stated that no cuts have been made to personnel, benefits and overtime have not been cut, and that raises have been given to employees that have not received raises in years. Mr. Ina stated that the Parish's workforce employees should be considered a priority.

After discussion, Rev. Mathews, Advisory Budget Finance Committee Chairperson, called for a Finance Meeting to be held on August 13, 2025 at 5:00 p.m., 5th Floor Courthouse, Franklin.

Per Mr. Duhon's inquiry relative to an Intergovernmental Agreement regarding the use of tractors from Boards in Amelia to cut grass as a community project, Mr. Governale requested Mr. Duhon send him information.

In response to Dr. Rink's inquiry relative to design completion of the pumps at Pump Station No. 9, Mr. Governale stated that HMGP (Hazard Mitigation Grant Program) funds will be used towards the pumps and the upgrades and repair costs will be funded by the District and CPRA (Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority). President Jones stated that the number of pumps has been increased for immediate use for the hurricane season.

Dr. Rink moved that the Public Hearing Report, June 25, 2025 – 5:45 p.m. be adopted. Mr. Rulf seconded the motion, which carried.

Dr. Rink stated that there was brief discussion at Hospital Service District No. 1 meeting regarding several news articles listing Bayou Bend Health System as one of the rural hospitals potentially facing closure under proposed cuts in the Big Beautiful Bill. The Hospital's CEO informed that there is no immediate risk of closure of this hospital. Dr. Rink stated that the proposed changes put in the Big Beautiful Bill will not go into effect until the year 2028. Rev. Mathews informed that the board meets every 4th Thursday of the month at 5:00 p.m. and encouraged the public to attend. Their next meeting has been scheduled for July 31, 2025.

Mr. Ina withdrew Item 13A, **"FOR ADOPTION** - An Ordinance of the St. Mary Parish Council condemning the improvements consisting of an abandoned structure owned by Edwin Collins Sr., Keith Navy, Iris Goodly, Janice Navy, Alvin Navy Jr., Debbie Colvin, Cheryl Bertrand, Ruth Crockett, Beulah Dixon, Rose Harris, Claude Collins, Delores Thomas, Geraldine Trice, Loyce Jones, Mary Monette, situated at 140 Bray Dr., Franklin, Louisiana, Parcel ID No. 2324741045.00, as a result of same being in a abandoned, derelict structure condition which endangers the public welfare and ordering the demolition and removal of said improvements by the owner thereof in not less than sixty days from the effective date of this ordinance."

Mr. Ina withdrew Item 13B, **"FOR ADOPTION** - An Ordinance of the St. Mary Parish Council condemning the improvements consisting of an abandoned structure owned by Bernita Augustine, Twanna Porter, David Augustine Jr., April Augustine, Jeffery Porter, Bobby Bolden, situated at 139 Bray Drive, Franklin, Louisiana, Parcel ID No. 2324741055.00, as a result of same being in an abandoned structure condition which endangers the public welfare and ordering the demolition and removal of said improvements by the owner thereof in not less than sixty days from the effective date of this ordinance."

Mr. Adams moved that the following Resolutions be adopted. Mr. Hebert seconded the motion, which carried by the following 10-0-0-1 Roll Call vote:

YEAS: Ina, Olander, Hill, Rulf, Hebert, Duhon, Adams, Rink, Hidalgo, and Mathews

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: Davis

RESOLUTION

**Resolution Pertaining to the Adoption of the
HUD Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program
5-Year 2025-2029 Agency Plan
2025 Annual Agency Plan**

**ST. MARY PARISH GOVERNMENT
HUD SECTION 8 HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER (HCV) PROGRAM**

WHEREAS, the St. Mary Parish Government operates a HUD Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program through its St. Mary Parish Housing Office (SMPHO), and

WHEREAS, the requirements of the Housing Reform Act (QHWRA) of 1998, in part require HUD housing agencies to prepare a 5-Year Agency Plan each five-year period, and an Annual Agency Plan which is to be prepared each year, and

WHEREAS, in July 9, 2025, in order to comply and properly implement the Section 8 Housing Program requirements of the Housing Reform Act, the SMPHO developed, and the Parish Council adopted a 5-Year Agency Plan for the years FY 2025 – 2029, all in compliance with the HUD guidelines, and

WHEREAS, in order to further comply and properly implement the Section 8 HCV Program requirements of the Housing Reform Act, the SMPHO developed, and the Parish Council adopted an 2025 Annual Agency Plan and an updated Section 8 HCV Program Administrative Plan for 2025, and

WHEREAS, the Section 8 Program 5-Year Agency Plan for the years FY 2025 – 2029 and the 2025 Annual Agency Plan, was open and available for public review from April 2, 2025, and then presented to the public at a Public Hearing on May 21, 2025.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the St. Mary Parish Council meeting in session on July 9, 2025, in order to comply and properly implement the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program requirements of the Housing Reform Act, does hereby adopt the St. Mary Parish Government HUD Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program 5-Year Agency Plan for the years FY 2025 – 2029 and the 2025 Annual Agency Plan, and authorizes Mr. Sam Jones, St. Mary Parish President, to sign all documents necessary for the full implementation and compliance of the Parish Program with HUD requirements, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the St. Mary Parish Council meeting in session on July 9, 2025, does hereby authorize Mr. Sam Jones, St. Mary Parish President, and the St. Mary Parish Housing (SMPHO) staff, to formulate any further revisions to the Parish’s Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program Annual Plan and Administrative Plan for 2025 as necessary to achieve the full implementation and compliance of the Parish Program with the HUD requirements.

ADOPTED AND APPROVED by the St. Mary Parish Council in regular session convened on this 9th day of July 2025.

APPROVED:

GWENDOLYN L. HIDALGO, CHAIRPERSON
ST. MARY PARISH COUNCIL

ATTEST:

LISA C. MORGAN, CLERK
ST. MARY PARISH COUNCIL

RESOLUTION

Resolution approving and authorizing the Parish President to execute Amendment No. 2 to Task Order No. 1 with Quality Engineering & Surveying, LLC relative to the St. Mary Parish 911 Center Wind Retrofit and Safe Room Project.

BE IT RESOLVED, that Sam Jones, President of the Parish of St. Mary, be and he is hereby authorized and directed, for and on behalf of the Parish Council, to execute Amendment No. 2 to Task Order No. 1 with Quality Engineering & Surveying, LLC relative to the St. Mary Parish 911 Center Wind Retrofit and Safe Room Project, with said task order to contain such terms, conditions, and stipulations as he may best see fit, he being fully authorized in the premises.

ADOPTED AND APPROVED by the St. Mary Parish Council in regular session convened on this the 9th day of July 2025.

APPROVED:

GWENDOLYN L. HIDALGO, CHAIRPERSON
ST. MARY PARISH COUNCIL

ATTEST:

LISA C. MORGAN, CLERK
ST. MARY PARISH COUNCIL

NEW BUSINESS:

- A. We received the following financial statements:
 - Fire Protection District No. 3 – year ended September 30, 2024
 - Fire Protection District No. 7 – year ended September 30, 2024
 - St. Mary Parish Sales & Use Tax Department – year ended December 31, 2024

St. Mary Parish Sales & Use Tax Department – Agreed Upon Procedures Report – year ended December 31, 2024
Hospital Service District No. 2 – year ended December 31, 2024
St. Mary Parish Water & Sewer Commission No. 2 – year ended September 30, 2023 & 2024
St. Mary Parish Water & Sewer Commission No. 2 – Agreed Upon Procedures Report

- B. Discussion and action relative to seeking an opinion from Louisiana Attorney General regarding proper handling of St. Mary Parish's 3/10% Sales Tax Fund, including but not limited to proper use of those funds, and Parish Council's authority to expend according to the tax call. (Rev. Mathews)

Rev. Mathews requested that this item be moved to the August 13, 2025 meeting agenda, after the Council has an opportunity to engage in a more detailed Budget discussion.

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

Lisa C. Morgan, Clerk

Gwendolyn L. Hidalgo, Chairperson