

THE MAYOR AND BOARD OF ALDERMEN AND ALDERWOMAN, THE GOVERNING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF EUNICE, PARISH OF ST. LANDRY/ACADIA, STATE OF LOUISIANA, met in Regular Session on Tuesday, August 11, 2020 at six-thirty (6:30) o'clock p.m., at their regular meeting place, the Eunice City Hall.

6:30 pm The Mayor called the Regular meeting of the City of Eunice Board of Aldermen and Alderwomen to order:

There were present: Mayor Scott A. Fontenot, Alderman at Large Marion "Nootsie" Sattler, Alderman Chad Andrepont, Alderwoman Germaine Simpson, Alderman Ernest Blanchard and Alderwoman Connie Thibodeaux.

There were absent: None.

It was announced that a quorum was present and ready to transact business.

There were no public comment requests.

It was moved by Alderman at Large Marion "Nootsie" Sattler, seconded by Alderman Ernest Blanchard and carried to adopt the Minutes of the July 14, 2020 meeting.

Show Cause Hearings

City Attorney Vernon McManus advised that property owners had been notified of Hearing.

Code Enforcement Officer Judson Venezia presented the following :

100 Fruge Street:

Mr. Venezia presented photos of the house and advised the Board that the building appeared unstable, unsecure and unsafe.

Owner of record, Mr. James Price, Jr., was not present.

City Attorney Vernon McManus advised that the property owner had been served with notice of the Show Cause Hearing.

It was moved by Alderman at Large Marion "Nootsie" Sattler, seconded by Alderman Ernest Blanchard and carried to issue an Order of Condemnation on the house at 100 Fruge Street.

451 North Beulah Street:

Mr. Venezia presented photos of the house and advised the Board that the building had burned and presently only a wall was left of the building.

Owner of record, Mr. Donald Freeman, was present and addressed the Board. Mr. Freeman advised that he had hired an older gentleman to tear down the remainder of the burnt house. The man was older and it was taking him some time to finish but he hired him to help him out financially. Also slowing the progress of the demolition was that they would put debris from the house at the road and it took time for the City Street Department to pick up the debris. They could not continue with demolition until debris was picked up by the City. Mr. Freeman advised the Board that the structure was almost completely gone and there was not much remaining to demolish exact a couple of outside walls.

City Attorney Vernon McManus verified that Mr. Freeman is the owner of the property at 451 North Beulah Street and that the house was not livable. Mr. McManus advised Mr. Freeman that under the law the structure has to be demolished but the City could demolish the structure and place a lien on the property for the cost of tearing the ruined building down and that the property would still belong to Mr. Freeman, it would just have a lien on it from the City. Mr. McManus stated that the property has been burnt down for quite some time.

Alderwoman Simpson asked Mr. McManus if Mr. Freeman could demolish the structure himself, rather than having the City do it and place a lien on his property for the cost of demolition and Mr. McManus advised yes and it was up to the Board if they wished to give him time to do so.

Alderwoman Simpson asked Mr. Freeman if he could finish tearing down the last remaining walls of the structure in thirty (30) days and he advised he would try and that there was not much left of the structure.

The Mayor asked Mr. Freeman when the fire of the structure had occurred and Mr. Freeman advised he didn't remember the exact date but it had been 2 to 3 years since the fire occurred.

Alderwoman Simpson, Alderman at Large Sattler and Alderwoman Connie Thibodeaux all advised Mr. Freeman that the property was a danger to the public and that its demolition needed to be completed as soon as possible for the safety of the public.

Mr. McManus advised that he had sent Mr. Freeman a letter dated June 13, 2018 concerning the house. Mr. Freeman stated he had never received a letter concerning the condition of the house.

Alderman Ernest Blanchard made a Motion to give Mr. Freeman thirty (30) days to finish demolishing the structure at 451 North Beulah Street.

Alderwoman Simpson stated that the City could issue an Order of Condemnation on the property but not file the Order for thirty (30) days to give Mr. Freeman time to finish the demolition.

Mr. McManus advised Mr. Freeman that the City wanted him to completely demolish the house that the neighbors are complaining about and which is a danger to the public and that once he finished tearing down the remaining walls he could leave the bricks stacked on the property but he could not leave the structure in its current condition.

Alderman at Large Sattler made a Motion to condemn, however, the Mayor advised that Alderman Blanchard's Motion to give Mr. Freeman thirty (30) days was still on the floor.

Alderman at Large Sattler seconded Alderman Blanchard's Motion to give Mr. Freeman thirty (30) days to demolish the structure at 451 North Beulah Street. A roll call vote was called with the following results:

Yea: Alderman Blanchard and Alderman at Large Sattler.
Nay: Alderman Andrepont, Alderwoman Simpson and Alderwoman Thibodeaux.
Absent: None.

The motion did not pass.

It was moved by Alderman Andrepont, seconded by Alderwoman Simpson and carried to issue an Order of Condemnation on the property at 451 North Beulah Street but hold the Order for thirty (30) days (beginning August 12th) to give Mr. Freeman time to finish demolition of his property. The vote was as follows:

Yea: Alderman Andrepont, Alderwoman Simpson, Alderman at Large Sattler and Alderwoman Thibodeaux.
Nay: Alderman Blanchard.

The motion passed with a majority vote.

The Mayor advised Mr. Freeman to speak with Mr. Venezia, Code Enforcement Officer, who can advise him what exactly needs to be done to the property in order for the Order of Condemnation to be cancelled.

541 North 4th Street

Mr. Venezia presented photos of the yard and the garage and the attached outdoor kitchen on the property.

Mr. Kevin Miller, owner of the property, was present for the Hearing. He advised he doesn't live in Eunice and had let the property become overgrown and that neighbor's had told him that there were people going onto the property so he had the property mowed and bushes cut back and he secured the door and windows of the storage room attached to the garage. The house was torn down years ago and the brick garage and outdoor kitchen is all that is left on the property. He knows that there is some painting he needs to be done to the outdoor kitchen and will finish removing the bushes that are overgrown.

Mr. Venezia advised that the grass is being cut every week.

Mr. McManus commented on the photos presented by Mr. Venezia, particularly a photo showing a rotted section of eaves. Mr. McManus also commented on the photo with plants around the side of the outdoor kitchen

Mr. Miller advised that the eaves was on the outdoor kitchen and had water damage which he planned to repair. He also advised that he would fix up the plantings to make it more attractive.

Alderman at Large Sattler asked Mr. Miller his plans for the property. Mr. Miller advised that he planned to keep the property and possibly put another residence there one day but for now he would keep the property up.

Alderwoman Thibodeaux asked if he planned to repair the eaves as animals could possibly get into the building through the water damaged eaves.

Alderwoman Simpson questioned the condition of inside the outdoor kitchen. Mr. Venezia advised he had not gone inside the building. Mr. Miller stated that the property was locked but if the Board wished he would unlock the property for Mr. Venezia to examine the inside of the outdoor kitchen. Alderwoman Simpson questioned whether the inside of the outdoor kitchen was dilapidated however Mr. McManus advised that since the property was locked so that no one can enter without permission the law does not allow the Board to condemn the structure for interior issues.

It was moved by Alderman at Large Sattler, seconded by Alderman Blanchard and carried to give Mr. Miller thirty (30) days to finish or show significant progress in cleaning up and securing the property.

Mr. Miller asked the Board to what degree did he have to have improvements to the building in the next thirty (30) days. Mr. Miller was advised to reach out to Mr. Venezia as to what he needed to do with the property to be compliant with local ordinances.

Mr. McManus advised that the State statute required that the structure had to be secured from unauthorized people entering the building. The Mayor commented on the City of Eunice Ordinance which cites more violations than simply securing the building and Mr. McManus advised the Board could follow either law for condemning property, the State's or the City's local ordinance. Alderwoman Simpson stated that the City should update its ordinances and could use the state statute for guidance.

The Mayor announced that a letter has been sent to Congressman Mike Johnson requesting legislation that would allow the conveyance of the Liberty Center's Annex from the Federal Government to the City of Eunice.

It was moved by Alderman Chad Andrepont, seconded by Alderman at Large Marion "Nootsie" Sattler and carried to adopt a Resolution support the request for legislation allowing the transfer of ownership of the Liberty Center's Annex from the Federal Government to the City of Eunice.

Pastor Kayla Givs with Restoring God's Glory Ministries, Inc. of Eunice thanked the Board for allowing their organization to use the Southeast Community Center to provide over twelve thousand meals to elderly, disabled and veterans throughout their six (6) week program. They participated in the Louisiana Department of Education's Summer Feeding Program and fed over seventy-five thousand (75,000) children in three Parishes by cooking at the Southeast Center and transporting the meals throughout the three Parishes. They have established a COVID-19 Community Resources program and secured funding to assist the school board in feeding school children during the virtual school program created as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Restoring God's Glory Ministries, Inc. requested that they be allowed to use the Southeast Center until May, 2021, seven (7) days a week from 1:00 pm to 7:00 pm for the afterschool feeding program which will run through May of 2021.

The Mayor questioned the days and hours of use of the Southeast Center being requested, which was more days than they were currently using the Center. Pastor Givs advised that this program would provide meals for seven days and Sunday would be used to prepare meals for Monday.

Alderwoman expressed concern for the use of the Southeast Center for Saturdays and Sundays from 1 pm to 7 pm, commenting that the Southeast Center is often rented on these days by citizens for family events and the rental revenues contribute to upkeep of the Center.

Mayor advised that there are some rentals currently scheduled and deposits have been made for the Center. Up to this point the RGGM have not been using the center every day for their feeding programs. Alderman Andrepont asked if there could be an alternate site should the center be rented. Pastor Givis agreed that they could have a secondary site for delivery of meals on weekends when the center is not available. The Mayor also mentioned Headstart program which has in the past used the center. Pastor Givis advised that she would need to know whether or not they could use the center by the middle of September.

It was moved by Alderwoman Simpson, seconded by Alderman Andrepont and carried to authorize the Mayor to negotiate an agreement for use of the Southeast Center by Restoring God's Glory Ministries, Inc. for their afterschool feeding program that will also accommodate use by Headstart program and rental by private citizens.

Alderman Chad Andrepont gave an update on Chief Randy Fontenot's request to make Walnut Avenue, as it runs between 2nd and 3rd Streets, a one-way street. Safety consultant with RiskWise has come to Eunice to assess the road and traffic and would be putting together a report of recommendations to the Board.

It was moved by Alderman Blanchard, seconded by Alderman at Large Sattler and carried to declare the City's 1995 Gradall G3WD, serial # 132336, to be surplus.

Alderwoman Connie Thibodeaux spoke about the City of Eunice Ordinance Chapter 9, Section 3, "keeping or depositing refuse or rubbish in yards, streets or drainage ditches" and the problem of large trash items being put at the road, such as furniture, appliances, mattresses, etc... Alderwoman Thibodeaux commented that the City has been picking up these items at great cost of time and manpower to the City. The City will be developing a policy for disposal of these items. Waste Connections will pick up these items when the property owner calls and schedules a pickup.

Alderwoman Germaine Simpson spoke about City of Eunice Ordinance Chapter 14, Section 82, "Unnecessary Noise." Alderwoman Simpson addressed paragraph (f) of the Ordinance stating days and hours that excessive noise was prohibited, commenting that the hours prohibiting excessive noise may need to be extended. Police Chief Randy Fontenot advised that paragraph (b) of the Ordinance defines the level of noise that is in violation at anytime of the day or night, addressing the concerns of Alderwoman Simpson. Alderwoman Simpson also spoke about structures being moved in and within the city limits of Eunice without the purchase of a moving permit. Code Enforcement Officer Judson Venezia advised Alderwoman Simpson that a summons to appear before the Judge had been issued to an individual who had moved a structure into Eunice without a permit or inspection. Mr. Venezia advised that he had an appointment to meet with Judge Hoychick concerning this summons.

Police Chief Randy Fontenot read the report of the Police Department's activities for the month of July, 2020.

Fire Chief Mike Arnold read the monthly report of Fire Department activities for the month of July, 2020.

It was moved by Alderman Andrepont, seconded by Alderwoman Simpson and carried to approve payment of the City's bills for July, 2020 and acknowledge that the Board has received the financial reports for the City.

The Mayor advised that today was Alderwoman Connie Thibodeaux's birthday and he and the Board wished her to have a happy birthday.

It was moved by Alderman at Large Sattler, seconded by Alderwoman Germaine Simpson and carried to adjourn.

Ginny Moody, City Clerk

Scott A. Fontenot, Mayor