

Minutes of the Spring Bayou Lake Commission Meeting of March 18, 2019

Chairman Jimmy Landry called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

Chairman Landry led the group in an opening prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance.

Terry Laborde called the roll. Members present were: Chairman Landry, Vice-Chairman Rayford Laborde, Secretary Terry Laborde, Dr. LJ Mayeux, Artha Hale, Roland Dugas III, Philip Lamartiniere, Mayor Kenneth Pickett, Juror Mark Borrel, Juror Trent Clark, and Avoyelles Police Jury President Col. Charles Jones. Also in attendance were Ronald Coco, Mike Ducote, Scott Laborde, Bill Jupp, James Franks, Jacques Goudeau, Kevin Bordelon, and Jody David.

The minutes of last month's meeting were accepted by a unanimous vote after a motion by Commissioner Lamartiniere and a second by Commissioner Hale.

Jody David, LDWF Biologist, updated the group on the control structure. Biologist David suggested it is a good idea to open and check the mechanisms of the control structure near the Little River dam, but precautions should be taken so water is not lost in the event of a failure of the closing mechanisms. David is not sure if opening the control structure will let much silt leave the facility. David suggested Billy Williamson, an engineer with DOTD and associated with the Louisiana Watershed Initiative, be contacted to give additional suggestions on the proper techniques to be used. According to David, the structure is intended for the control of local flooding and for a drawdown. LDWF can only make a recommendation to the Avoyelles Police Jury because the structure is not inside the management area. When questioned by Chairman Landry about a drawdown, David suggested the drawdown, when needed, be done in the month of December at a rate of two to three inches per day because this would have minimal effects on the fish due to the cooler temperature of the water. As Commissioner Dugas asked more questions about the spillway and a fish kill, David said there was little chance of such a fish kill because water comes in and out the facility continuously. When Vice-Chairman Laborde questioned David about the future of the Spring Bayou Complex, David said major problems would become issues in the next twenty to twenty-five years at the current rate. David said the 14-foot dredged in 1989 as now at nine feet since silt has settled in. Vice-Chairman Laborde stated monitoring of Lake Pearl shows the area gets approximately an inch-and-a-half of silt a year.

Next Biologist David discussed the issue of tour boats. David said some WMAs are getting tour guides and it's a possibility for Spring Bayou. When Vice-Chairman Laborde asked about the relevance of this issue, Chairman Landry said this issue was involving the Spring Bayou Restoration Team (SBRT). Jacques Goudeau asked about the issue and David responded that the issue involved with WMAs is that money cannot be exchanged in a WMA.

Next Biologist David updated the group on the dredging permit submitted for the Spring Bayou Complex. He said the permit request for a nationwide permit has been submitted in Baton Rouge and there are verbal commitments from the three landowners that border the proposed dredging operation site, but signatures are needed on the documents from landowners. Following a question from Chairman Landry, Biologist David said the cost for the proposed dredging could be from a quarter to a half million dollars with a 75/25 cost share to include LDWF, the Avoyelles Police Jury, and any entity willing to assist. Scott Laborde and Commissioner Lamartiniere asked about cleaning silt in front of the gates and downed trees

along waterways. Biologist David said any debris in navigatable waterways needs to be reported to LDWF and it will be cleared. Commissioner Dugas questioned the status of the grass-eating carp in the complex. Biologist David responded that it is assumed some fish leave the complex when water rises above the dam, but there has been no evidence that any of the 50 carp originally put into the complex years ago saddled with transmitters ever left the complex. Biologist David did alert the commission of the threat of water hyacinth and the giant Slavonia showing a presence again. He did add that at one time up to 300-acres of the complex were being sprayed a day for their control.

Chairman Landry updated the commission on the success of the recent fishing tournament with a big bass near 6-pounds and nice stringers as 94 teams fished the Spring Bayou Bass Tournament sponsored by the local National Guard armory and SBRT.

Representing the Avoyelles Police Jury, Kevin Bordelon gave an update on the water elevation markers. Bordelon said the elevation markers will be installed on galvanized post at the six predetermined locations which will allow easy accessibility to the public. Commissioners Artha Hale and Terry Laborde voice opinions that the increments on the markers should be large whole numbers with ten increments between each foot indicator just like customary water level markers. The elevation for the top of the dam (40.85 feet of elevation) should be indicated on each marker in red. Jacques Goudeau indicated that the SBRT would volunteer to pay a portion of the additional cost to change the current markings on the present markers. Within a few days, after their monthly meeting, Commissioner Terry Laborde indicated the Avoyelles Wildlife Federation would pay up to \$150.00 or half the cost for the changes to the water level markers. This is in addition to the original approximate indicate charge of nearly \$700.00 being paid by the Avoyelles Police Jury.

Next Bordelon expanded on the control structure. Bordelon said plans are for the contractor to test the mechanisms to open and close the gates in May or June when access is prime (dry). The contractor will have “super-sacs” of sand available to protect form the possibility of water loss in the event of a problem with the operation of the gates. An area of silt approximately three-feet thick and up to 30-feet out from the gates is expected to be cleared. When Vice-Chairman Rayford Laborde asked about the process to open the gates, Ronald Coco said, from his experience, manual cranks should be used.

The next issue concerned the area near the Grand Lac boat launch termed as being a “junk-yard”. Vice-Chairman Rayford Laborde told the commission that the Avoyelles Police Jury, after receiving reports of shooting across the lake and white goods piled on the water’s edge and property, has sent a letter to the landowner in January of 2018 concerning the need for proper permits. He said proper channels are being followed and the problem has been turned-in to DEQ. Commissioner Mayor Kenneth Pickett added that some refrigerators have begun to wash along the edge of the complex down from the particular landowner’s property creating a definite eyesore on the area. Commissioner Dr. LJ Mayeau added that an additional eyesore is the property where Hwy 115 crosses over the Coulee Des Gruis.

Concerning NRCS and funding for dredging, Chairman Landry said there may be funding for the dredging and it may include in-kind-match for projects besides the ones dedicated to farmers. In another NRCS issue, Chairman Landry said a pre-proposal application has been filed, but due to the decrease of rice farmers in Avoyelles, USA Rice would not take the lead

role in securing funding even though the Spring Bayou Complex could get indirect funding. Commissioner Lamartiniere suggested target areas concerning sedimentation and siltation should be identified. He also suggested Dirk Dupuy and the Avoyelles Soil & Water Conservation should be involved in the partnership.

One of the final issues was the suggestion by Commissioner Dugas to raise the level of the top of the Little River dam and determine the effect on the property and timber in the complex. Biologist David said the water level at the dam was at approximately 43-feet of elevation (this is above the top of the dam) and plans are to analyze the effects. Chairman Landry recommended increasing the top of the dam by 1.5-feet and dredging would maximize benefits to the facility. Vice-Chairman Rayford Laborde cautioned how this could affect the Bordelonville side of the complex. It was Ronald Coco's opinion that there would be little effect, but Biologist David felt this was a large increase which could affect the timber and careful analysis should be done prior to finalizing the project. When Vice-Chairman Rayford Laborde questioned Biologist David about authorization to change the height of the dam, Biologist David answered it would come down to a decision by the US Corps of Engineers and LDWF.

Commissioner Artha Hale recommended a public hearing be held soon concerning the dredging project for the Spring Bayou Complex.

With no further business, Commissioner Artha Hale made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Roland Dugas added the second and the motion was approved unanimously.