

# **\*Notice of Public Meeting\***

Washington Parish Council  
Regular Meeting  
Washington Parish Courthouse  
908 Washington Street  
Franklinton, La 70438  
Council Chambers  
August 14, 2023  
Monday - 6:00 PM

**Item No. 1. - Call to order** - Chairman Rice called the meeting to order.

**Item No. 2. - Invocation** - Councilwoman Wagner gave the invocation.

**Item No. 3. - Pledge of Allegiance** - Councilman McMasters led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Item No. 4. - Roll Call** - Council Clerk Sarah Cook called the roll. Present were Joe Culpepper, Shawn Rice, Kim Wagner, Clark Harry, Rusty Fornea, Reginald McMasters, and Carley King.

**Item No. 5. - Approval of Minutes** - Approval of minutes dated July 24, 2023.

Councilman Culpepper offered a motion, seconded by Councilman Fornea to approve minutes dated July 24, 2023.

Roll call of vote as follows:

YEAS: (7) Wagner, Harry, Fornea, McMasters, King, Culpepper, and Rice

NAYS: (0)

ABSENT: (0)

ABSTAIN: (0)

**Item No. 6. Michelle Treschwig** - Kushner LaGraize 2022 Audit Report.

Michelle Treschwig presented a great 2022 audit report.

**Item No. 7. Dr. Casama** - Washington Parish Coroner's Office.

Dr. Casama pleaded with the council about the dire need for funding for the coroner's office.

**Item No. 8. Adopt Resolution No. 23-1235** - A resolution authorizing the filing of an application with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development for a grant under any of the following FTA Programs managed through Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development.

Chairman Rice: "This is the Council on aging's annual resolution. Would anyone like to come forward and speak before the council votes?"

No one came forward.

Councilman King offered a motion, seconded by Councilman McMasters to adopt resolution 23-1235.

Roll call of vote as follows:

YEAS: (7) Wagner, Harry, Fornea, McMasters, King, Culpepper, and Rice

NAYS: (0)

ABSENT: (0)

ABSTAIN: (0)

**Item No. 9. Adopt Resolution No. 23-1236** - A resolution of appointment for the Washington Parish Tourism Commission Board of Directors.

Chairman Rice: "This appointment is for Edna Kennedy who will be filling the vacant spot of Deborah Brumfield whose term will expire December 31, 2023. Would anyone like to come forward and speak before the council votes?"

No one came forward.

Councilman Fornea offered a motion, seconded by Councilman Culpepper to adopt Resolution 23-1236.

Roll call of vote as follows:

YEAS: (7) ) Wagner, Harry, Fornea, McMasters, King, Culpepper, and Rice

NAYS: (0)

ABSENT: (0)

ABSTAIN: (0)

**Item No. 10. Adopt Resolution No. 23-1237** - A Resolution ordering and calling a special election to be held in the Parish of Washington, State of Louisiana (the "Parish") on Saturday, November 18, 2023, for the purpose of authorizing the levy and collection of a 3.15 mill tax on assessed valuation of all property subject to taxation in the Parish, for a period of ten (10) years for the purpose of operation and maintenance of the Washington Parish Coroner's Office, including the creation of a morgue and vital community education center focused on preventive, premature deaths; and further making application to the State Bond Commission for consent and authorization to hold the aforesaid election; and further providing for other matters in connection therewith.

Chairman Rice: "At the request of Dr. Casama, this item will be removed."

**Item No. 11 - Public Participation -**

Chairman Rice: "Would anyone from the public like to come forward and speak, if so, please state your name and address for the record?"

No one came forward.

Councilman King offered a motion, seconded by Councilman Culpepper to close public participation.

Roll call of vote as follows:

YEAS: (7) ) Wagner, Harry, Fornea, McMasters, King, Culpepper, and Rice

NAYS: (0)

ABSENT: (0)

ABSTAIN: (0)

**Item No. 12. - President Report -**

John Wyble, candidate for State Representative District 75, gave a quick speech.

Parish President: "We had a very traumatizing weekend with a fire in Mt. Hermon that almost got away from us. We all pulled together from St. Tammany Parish, Tangipahoa

Parish, Livingston Parish, and locally. All these people contributed to our situation. Mr. James Garrett was in the front row lines, and I would like him to say a few words. Ms. Bobbi Jo Breland will give us a full report at our next meeting.”

Washington Parish Fire District 1 Fire Chief, James Garrett: “I was first on scene and command of the scene. In route to the scene, I knew we had a serious problem because I could see the smoke. I reached out to Fire District 8 and District 3 and forestry was already dispatched. When I arrived, we had two structures in extreme danger and luckily my guys were able to get those flames knocked out. Later on, one of those structures had a barn and we ended up losing that and if that is all the structures we lost and didn’t lose any lives, then it was a victory. Brandon Lasalle and I worked together to coordinate where helpers needed to go. Nobody in this area has ever worked a fire that big. I have been a fire fighter for 25 years and 22 of those years was in Texas. I was a fire chief over there for six years and got with district 2 and became a member of district 1 as captain and now fire chief. We had 22 departments on that scene and over 100 fire fighters. 4 guys went down from heat exhaustion, and I am thankful for all the other departments that came to help out. We also had a fire on Hwy 450 last Sunday. That fire about got me and had me pinned for about 10 minutes. It took 10 thousand gallons of water to get that out and that was a scary fire and we have been dealing with that one all week. Saturday, we got called back out for Fire Tower Road 15 times and twice on Old Lake Road. We probably dumped 20,000 gallons of water on Fire tower Road and Old Lake Road just on Saturday. I do live nearby so I can keep a close eye on it. I’m just thankful that no lives were lost, and everybody made it home safe.”

The crowd gave a standing ovation.

President Thomas:

- Thursday, August 3, 2023, was a special grand opening and ribbon cutting at the state park. Please go by there and see what has been added recently. We are all so proud of our state park and is one of the top parks in the state. It was a great turnout. Thanked Senator Mizell for her hard work as we were able to secure more land.
- Congratulations to the council with no opponent. For the ones with opponents, keep on pushing.
- Our jail was overcrowded, and we had to send around 30 inmates to Plaquemines parish that cost us close to \$1,000 per day. We know we need a new jail, but it is going to be up to the people to realize that. We met with the District Attorney and Judges to see if we could get some relief there. It is a bad situation. Last Monday, we had court and around 30 were able to get out.

Donna Graham - Financial Director:

“We had several meetings with the coroner and discussed different things we can do to assist their office financially. I have asked for information, some of which we have received. We are looking to fund the supplies they need in doing their job in a more adequate level. It’s kind of one of those things, if you don’t ask for it, we don’t know what you need. So, we are in the process of working through that. I also asked them for a detail of what they would need to be appropriate staffing for their investigators and what that pay would be like. I am still waiting for that, but I know this will not happen overnight so I’m sure they are working on it. I would also like to add that the coroners in our state may be compensated in several different manners. They can be fully salary, they can be a fully fee-based coroner and get paid by the autopsy report or other services they provide, or they can get paid by a combination of the two. Currently Dr. Casama is correct. His salary is \$18,000 and it has been there for quite a while. This year he requested to be compensated for the CEC’s he performs, which we agreed to. So, currently we are paying him approximately \$3,000 a month in addition to his salary for the CEC’s that he performs. We were working with the office too and provided them with office space in addition to the temporary morgue that we have, recently set up a computer with internet access and they have an office to work in. We are doing everything we can within our budget constraints to help their office and I do think we can most likely increase the budget next year. Just to clarify something that Dr. Casama stated. We have never, since I have been here in the last ten years, funds that came to the parish that were due to the coroner that did not go to him. We do not receive funds

for the coroner. We receive funds out of the court fees and fines, approximately \$5,000.00 for funding the office of the coroner that goes towards his office operations. Washinton Parish Government has a new website, please visit [www.wpgov.org](http://www.wpgov.org) Please go check it out and if any of our departments see things that we have listed on three that may not be current or correct, please let us know so we can correct that.”

Danny Knight Transportation Supervisor: Month of June

- Drainage work on 15 roads covering 19 miles
- Delivered 54 tons of cold mix on 27 roads covering 34 miles
- Delivered 115 tons of hot mix on 10 roads covering 17 miles
- Installed 4 culverts
- Graded 47 roads covering 82 miles
- Hauled 120 yards of gravel on 4 roads covering 8 miles
- Bush hogged 178 roads covering 293 miles
- Picked up 380 bags of trash on 37 roads
- Installed 5 road name signs
- Installed 39 other signs
- Maintained 25 parish locations
- Asphalt Crews completed overly using 2,375 tons of asphalt of the following:
  - West McCain Rd
  - Creel Rd
  - R.J. Creel Rd
  - Jim McCain Rd
  - Norman McCain Rd
- Sprayed & weedeated around signs on 24 roads

**Item No. 13. - Council Discussion**

Thank everyone for attending. Congratulations to all candidates who have been unopposed. Thank Dr. Casama for all his hard work and dedication to this parish. Thanked Chief Garrett for his dedication to the community and thanked everyone who was there to help with these fires in our parish. Good luck John Wyble.

**Item No. 14. - Adjourn** - No further business to come before the Council, meeting was adjourned on motion by Councilman King seconded by Councilman Culpepper.

Roll call of vote as follows:

YEAS: (7) ) Wagner, Harry, Fornea, McMasters, King, Culpepper, and Rice

NAYS: (0)

ABSENT: (0)

ABSTAIN: (0)

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Shawn Rice, Chairman  
Washington Parish Council

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Sarah Cook, Clerk to the Council  
Washington Parish

**Order of Voting:**

Kim Wagner	Carley King
Clark Harry	Joe Culpepper
Rusty Fornea	Shawn Rice
Reginald McMasters	

Next meeting will be held on Monday, August 28, 2023

In accordance with the Americans Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance, please contact Sarah Cook, Clerk to the Council at 985-839-7825 Ext. 313 describing the assistance that is necessary.

(All Ordinances, Resolutions and Attachments in its entirety are available at the office of Clerk of the Council at 909 Pearl Street, Franklinton, Louisiana or at (985) 839-7825 or [washingtonparishalerts.org](http://washingtonparishalerts.org).

“This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.”