

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING OF THE
AMITE RIVER BASIN DRAINAGE & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Location: The Estuary 1110 S. River Rd, Baton Rouge, LA 70802

March 14, 2023

MEMBERS PRESENT DURING ROLL CALL: John Clark, Robert Carter, Clint Cointment, Peter Dufresne, Brin Ferlito, LeeAnn Fitch, Mark Harrell, Jack Harris, Gary O’Neal, Edwin Parker, Fred Raiford, Joseph Shelton

MEMBERS ABSENT: Lionel Bailey

ALSO PRESENT: Kyle “Chip” Kline and Bren Haase, CPRA; Ed Knight, LADOTD; Monica S. Gorman and Blaine Sheets, Pontchartrain Levee District; ARBC Executive Director Dietmar Rietschier, ARBC Executive Secretary Toni Guitrau, Legal Counsel Larry Bankston, Amite River Basin Drainage & Water Conservation District; Lawrence E. Marino, Oats & Marino; David Mitchell, The Advocate

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 2:00 p.m. by ARBC Chairman Clark.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Roll Call: See above

4. Minutes – No Public Comments

The Board unanimously approved a motion by Parker, second by Harris to approve the February 7, 2022 regular meeting minutes.

5. Financial Statements - No Public Comments

The Board unanimously approved a motion by Parker, second by Raiford to approve the January and February 2023 General Fund and CRDC Fund financial statements.

6. Report by ARBC President: Chairman Clark welcomed everyone in attendance. He said that public comments would be heard at the time of the agenda items. Any general comments will be heard at the end of the meeting prior to adjournment.

7. Report by Executive Director:

a. Executive Director Rietschier reported on the status of the Comite River Diversion Canal Project. He said the approximate \$9M in taxes that ARBC collected from EBR, Ascension, and Livingston Parishes are specifically to be used on Comite River Diversion Canal. Toward the end of the project there may be a shortfall of funds and if not, it may be used toward maintenance of the canal. The USACE makes the project completion estimates. Chip Kline suggested watching this project from a financial and timeline standpoint. He encouraged Rietschier to keep the ARBC updated on the CRDC Project. Cointment asked if it was possible to get a Gantt Chart. Raiford, EBR Parish, asked the board to consider that funds need to be dedicated to long-term care of the canal. Dredging of the canal may need to be done every 10 years. EBR Parish is putting funds aside every year in the budget to program money to go toward future maintenance.

b. Rietschier handed out information on the LWI application process for Round 2 of funding.

8. Report by Legal Counsel: Bankston reserved his comments and any questions anyone has for the upcoming agenda items as it relates to the proposed resolutions.

9. Old Business

a. **Discuss/Schedule future ARBC meeting place, dates and time:** The Marriott, and LSU Center for River Studies was mentioned as location places. Moving the meetings to earlier in the day, parking consideration, etc. were discussed. Under an old statute it requires a meeting to be held in EBR, Livingston and Ascension Parishes once per year. Cointment suggested a committee to consider the locations and times and then submit their recommendations to the Board.

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Bankston said coordination needs to be considered for parish presidents who have council meetings so it doesn't interfere with their normal process. It was also mentioned to use the State Capitol as it has a sound system, live streaming, archiving and enough seating. Chairman Clark said a committee would be appointed.

b. **HR 149 Report Update:** This "urge and request" study per Resolution 149 was a request by Rep. Mincey related to storm water, and surge as it relates to impacts on Livingston Parish. The board postponed action on HR 149 in February 2023 in order to consider this as part of the Master Plan.

c. **Discuss process to place items on ARBC agenda(s) as per ARBC bylaws:** Rep. Carter made a motion to change the bylaws so that it would not require two commissioners to place an item on the agenda, seconded by Harrell. A ye and nay vote was called for and resulted as follows:

Yeas: Robert Carter, Mark Harrell

Nays: John Clark, Clint Cointment, Peter Dufresne, Brin Ferlito, LeeAnn Fitch, Jack Harris, Gary O'Neal, Edwin Parker, Fred Raiford, Joseph Shelton

Absent: Lionel Bailey

Abstain: None

10. New Business - There were no public comments on New Business agenda items.

a. ARBC Commissioner, Mark Harrell made a presentation on the Livingston Parish project to restore the mouth of the Amite River & Adjacent Shoreline.

- From Port Vincent to the St. Helena line, EBR Parish has partnered with Livingston Parish to clean approximately 40 miles of waterway. EBR Parish will help with the cost share.
- Some areas that were cleaned after the 2016 flood were then hit by Hurricane Ida leaving vegetative debris which was much easier to deal with.
- They are removing a lot of sediment at the mouths of the Amite River, Blind River and Dutch Bayou. They will remove the sediment and open the channel back up.
- Thanks to LWI, they are about to start a project along I-12 from parish line to parish line. All box culverts will be cleaned out along the interstate. This is approximately a \$15M project. The bridges that cross the interstate have been cleaned out.
- Between the last of 2022 and up to this part of 2023, they will do approximately \$100M worth of drainage projects with partners.
- Through LWI, \$42M was secured for the Hwy. 22 flood project.
- ARBC Commissioner Cointment/Ascension Parish President, briefly explained the Hwy. 22 drainage project. It utilizes the swamp or lowlands for capacity purposes during heavy rains. It creates great hydrology, and brings in silt material for new growth. It has a regional impact on flooding. It also has an environmental component to help the wetlands.
- ARBC Commissioner, Representative Carter, said that St. Helena Parish is divided into 3 river areas. Approximately 1/3 drains into the Amite River Basin while 75% drains into Tickfaw and Natalbany. That jurisdiction falls under Region 7.
- Amite River Diversion Canal Weir: Harrell had a Hazard Mitigation Project for the weir. During Phase 1 they were informed there may be hundreds of properties affected if they proceeded with the weir project by restoring it back to its original design. Hazard Mitigation funding allows for no negative impact, so the project was stopped.
- Harrell stated that even prior to the reformation of the ARBC, parishes have been working together.

b. Paul Sawyer, Chief of Staff, Congressman Garrett Graves' Office was unable to attend.

c. **Resolution 1159:** The board unanimously approved a motion by Raiford, second by Cointment to approve Resolution 1159 authorizing John Clark, in his capacity as President of the Board of Commissioners for the Amite River Basin Drainage and Water Conservation District, or Dietmar Rietschier, in his capacity as Executive Director of the Amite River Basin Drainage and Water Conservation District, to execute acts of subordination and right-of-entry agreements, subject to review and approval by legal counsel, in connection with the Amite River Diversion Project, State Project No. H.007811, East Baton Rouge Parish, Louisiana.

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- d. **Resolution 1160:** The board unanimously approved a motion by Parker, second by Harrell to approve Resolution 1160 designating the Amite River Basin Drainage and Water Conservation District Board of Commissioners as the Steering Committee for Region 9 of the Louisiana Watershed Initiative.
- e. **Resolution 1161:** The board unanimously approved a motion by Harrell, second by Parker to approve Resolution 1161 authorizing John Clark, in his capacity as President of the Board of Commissioners for the Amite River Basin Drainage and Water Conservation District, subject to review and approval by the Executive Committee, to negotiate and execute an Intergovernmental Agreement with CPRA for the use and expenditure of funds appropriated to CPRA under Act 170 for the Implementation Program for the ARBC for the Amite River Basin Flood Risk Reduction Study, including scopes of work for the same.
- f. **Resolution 1162:** The board unanimously approved a motion by Harrell, second by Harris to approve Resolution 1162 authorizing John Clark, in his capacity as President of the Board of Commissioners for the Amite River Basin Drainage and Water Conservation District, subject to review and approval by the Executive Committee, to advertise for the position of Executive Director.
- g. **Bank Resolution(s)** Update Hancock/Whitney Bank Signature(s) – The Board unanimously approved a motion by Harrell, second Parker to remove former ARBC commissioners and to add ARBC President John Clark, and Vice President Jack Harris to authorized signers/users for ARBC Hancock-Whitney bank accounts. Those who are authorized to be signers are as follows: Lionel Bailey, John Clark, Toni Guitrau, Jack Harris, Edwin Parker, and Dietmar Rietschier.
- h. **Discuss hiring of Auditor for FY 2022-2023 Audit:** The board discussed hiring an auditor for fiscal year ending June 30, 2023. The board unanimously approved a motion by Harris, second by Harrell to assign this task to the Finance Committee. The Finance Committee will make a recommendation to the full board.
- i. **Discuss/Approve creating an ARBC inventory list and web-based map of current and future flood projects located within the ARBC jurisdictional boundary:** O’Neal updated the board on the progress he and Fitch have made on gathering data. Parishes and agencies are cooperating. ARBC Commissioner Gorman/PLD, is completing a similar plan and will be happy to share it with ARBC. ARBC Commissioner Kline/CPRA Chairman, believes identifying projects, status, funding, etc. would be very educational for the public and the ARBC. He requested a list of projects that this commission would like to see funded through the next round of watershed awards by the next meeting as this would be helpful for the Basin as a whole. O’Neal will have the list of projects for the next board meeting. Harrell mentioned that parishes have projects that need matching cost share. It was discussed that LWI could possibly cover the matching cost share. The board unanimously approved a motion by Cointment, second by Harris to continue moving forward with the project inventory list/map and to include future projects.
- j. **Discuss ARBC’s selection process for RFP/RFQ:** This will be deferred to the Executive Committee. It was suggested to have an agreement separate from the Resolution 1161, \$8M agreement. After discussion, Bankston said a motion to authorize the Executive Committee to draft a separate agreement with CPRA, DOTD, and PLD in order to potentially use their contractual relationships with consultants to move forward. The board unanimously approved said motion by Harris, second by Harrell.
- k. **Flood Awareness Month:** The Board unanimously approved a motion by Parker second by O’Neal to proclaim March 2023 as Flood Awareness Month.

General Public Comments: Comments included:

- That amplification be considered at the next meeting as it is difficult for the public to hear the board speak.
- Robert Burns of the group Concerned Citizens for Drainage Projects spoke regarding flooding concerns due to the delay in the CRDC Project.

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- Chairman Clark stated that the next meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 11, 2023 with location and time to be determined.

11. The meeting was adjourned at 4:05 pm.

APPROVED:

/s/John Clark/ARBC President

/s/Toni B. Guitrau, Executive Secretary

Date: April 11, 2023