

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING OF THE
AMITE RIVER BASIN DRAINAGE & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
Location: Louisiana State Capitol 900 North 3rd Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802

November 14, 2023

MEMBERS PRESENT DURING ROLL CALL: John Clark, Jack Harris, Lionel Bailey, Clint Cointment, Kenneth Dawson, Brin Ferlito, LeeAnn Fitch, Mark Harrell, Gary O’Neal, Edwin Parker, Fred Raiford

MEMBERS ABSENT DURING ROLL CALL: Robert Carter, Peter Dufresne
ALSO ABSENT: Ed Knight, LADOTD

ALSO PRESENT: Bren Haase, CPRA; Blaine Sheets, PLD, Executive Director Rachael Lambert, ARBC, Executive Secretary Toni Guitrau, ARBC; Legal Counsel Larry Bankston, ARBC; Lawrence E. Marino, Oats & Marino
ALSO PRESENT AFTER ROLL CALL: Monica Gorman, PLD

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by ARBC President Clark.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Roll Call: See above.

4. Audit Report of 2022-2023 - There were no public comments.

The report will be presented at a future ARBC meeting.

5. Minutes – There were no public comments.

The Board unanimously approved a motion by Parker, seconded by O’Neal to approve the October 10, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes, as presented.

6. Financial Statements – There were no public comments.

The Board unanimously approved a motion by Bailey, seconded by Dawson to approve the October 2023 General Fund and CRDC Fund financial statements, as presented.

7. Report by ARBC President – There were no public comments.

President Clark said the Amite River Basin Commission is now a unique board made up of 7 parishes represented by parish presidents or their designees. We now have Professional Engineers, Floodplain Managers, etc. as board members. He believes if the board continues to operate as a team, progress will continue to be made. Clark welcomed the new ARBC Executive Director Rachael Lambert. Several ARBC Commissioners commended her for the work she accomplished in the past 40 days. It was said that Lambert is exactly what the Board was searching for in an Executive Director for the ARBC.

8. Report by ARBC Executive Director Rachael Lambert – There were no public comments.

Lambert provided a presentation updating the board on the following:

a. Annual Plan

- Kickoff Meeting on October 16
- Outline Delivered on October 20
- Feedback Sessions on October 27 and October 31st
- First Plan Draft on November 15th
- Final Plan delivery on December 12th
- Submit to the House/Senate before January 1, 2024
- Public Meetings in 1st Quarter of 2024 (locations & dates forthcoming)
- Revised Plan with public comment before 2024 Session

b. LWIRCBG

- Regional Capacity Building Grant
- \$800,000 through end of 2025

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING OF THE
 AMITE RIVER BASIN DRAINAGE & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
 Location: Louisiana State Capitol 900 North 3rd Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802

- Application submitted and additional documentation submitted October 12th
 - Approval typically takes 8-12 weeks for approval.
 - CEA received on November 8th
- c. LWI Round 2**
- Action Plan Amendment #3 submitted to HUD on October 19, Consolidated Round 2 & 3; Dedicated \$100M for Region 9.
 - Region 9 to receive \$42M in Round 2
 - OCD staff identified projects that fit within the allocation for each region in preparation of HUD's approval.
 - Upon approval by HUD, Watershed Council will hold a public meeting and announce conditional award letters publicly.
 - Project selections received from OCD on November 1
 - Clearing & Snagging Comite North of Hwy 10 - \$13,750,000
 - Clearing & Snagging Comite South of Hwy 10 - \$13,200,000
 - Taylor Bayou Regional Improvements - \$8,850,000
 - Kennedy Heights Drainage Improvement Project - \$2,280,000
 - OCD & Watershed Coordinator meeting to review recommended projects on November 6.
 - Required Scope Adjustments for Recommended Projects
 - Possible 5th Project from remaining funds allocation to Region 9
- d. ARBC Project Inventory/Map.** Lambert created a Project Inventory Map that is located at www.amitebasin.org/map. It includes recently undertaken/completed projects, projects that are under construction, in planning and future projects. The ARBC has put out a call for projects undertaken by local municipalities. Parameters being looked at are regional flood risk reduction, floodplain preservation/acquisition, large scale detention/storage, and multi-parish impact/benefits.
- e. ARBC Logo.** Lambert redesigned the ARBC logo. It now has a seal-like appearance with a watershed silhouette, modern font, and includes Amite and Comite features.
- f. ARBC Website.** Lambert has redesigned the ARBC website. It can be viewed at www.amitebasin.org.
- g. Stakeholder Meetings Attended.** Lambert has attended stakeholder meetings with ARBC commissioners, parishes, CPRA, PLD, DOTD, LWI, and local engineers. Topics discussed were coordination, collaboration, direction, needs, priorities, policy, and projects.
- h. Funding**
- Project – Upper Amite River Flood Risk Reduction and Restoration – The success and impact of ongoing flood risk reduction projects in the downstream reaches is contingent upon the restoration of the upstream reaches. Restoration of the upper reaches will provide long-term benefits to the lower reaches. Sediment transported downstream significantly impairs flood conveyance and capacity and water quality. Targeting abandoned/inactive sand and gravel mining operation contributing large quantities of silt for reclamation/restoration.
 - Planning – PLD/CPRA has \$1.36M for study/models.
 - Capital Outlay – Lambert submitted for \$2,500,000 for FY 24/25 to begin acquisition/reclamation.
 - UDA-NRCS – Lambert sent a letter to request grant funding consideration for project.
- i. Outreach Plan**
- Annual reporting is required to the parish presidents and parish governing bodies, the legislature of Louisiana, and to a committee of state representatives and senators. This is in addition to the required public meetings for Annual and Master Plans. Lambert is requesting to be on agenda in January and February at all 7 Parish Council and Police Jury meetings. She will reach out to newly elected state representatives and senators and other elected officials.
- j. Master Plan**
- The RFQ draft is completed and is now awaiting comments from the Executive Committee. It was discussed and agreed that the full Board will also review all draft RFQs/RFPs and submit comments. The tentative timeline for advertising is November 28th and opening December 28th but these dates may change. The deadline for completion is December 31, 2024. The deadline to submit to the legislature is February 28, 2025. Dawson offered his time and assistance if Lambert should need it. Lambert said that last week she sent out an email to local legislators requesting a Letter of Support for LWI, Amendment #3, dedicating \$100M to Region 9. It

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING OF THE
 AMITE RIVER BASIN DRAINAGE & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
 Location: Louisiana State Capitol 900 North 3rd Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802

would be helpful if Board members could follow up with their legislators regarding the request. This will be further discussed under New Business, Resolution 1173.

9. Report by Legal Counsel – There were no public comments.

- Bankston reminded the Board that they had recently approved the RFQ/RFP template for Professional Services contracts. Lambert implemented language and added additional insurance information into the template for the Master Plan project. The Board is welcome to submit any comments they feel are necessary.
- The LWI Cooperative Endeavor Agreement date had to be amended as it had expired. Cointment suggested that the Board should be able to view and track changes in documents prior to meetings.
- Act 490 of 2022. If the ARBC board has any changes, revisions, or suggestions they would like to bring to legislators regarding Act 490 of 2022, the board should consider those now so they can prepare legislation, act on it, and present it to a potential author for revisions in the legislature.

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

- LWI Region 9 Coordinator Updates/Discussion – under Executive Director’s report.
- Status of HMPG Funding for Region 9 – Cointment confirmed that Ascension Parish has applied for the HMPG Funding.
- Status of ARBC Annual Plan – under Executive Director’s report.
- **CRDC Project Status.** Updates can be found on the ARBC website at www.amitebasin.org as provided by the USACE. Lambert said that progress is being made with the Florida Gas Pipeline relocation. As discussed at the ARBC board meeting on October 10, 2023, the project is approximately 60% completed so this could lower the cost of flood insurance premiums in the impact area under FEMA’s A99 process. It was understood that the USACE had contacted FEMA regarding this but O’Neal recommended that ARBC also reach out to FEMA and the USACE. Bankston said the Corps has approved the preliminary route evaluation for Florida Gas and are working on the final design. It must be submitted to FERC. ARBC has been working with Demco because they need additional relocations.

11. New Business – Public Comment(s): Cindy O’Neal, City of Walker, asked if LMI stats in this vicinity would make an impact in possibly receiving the funds. The states vs. the federal LMI maps were discussed.

- **Resolution 1173** – ARBC in support of LWI, Amendment #3, dedicating \$100M to Region 9. The Board discussed the fact that other parishes were not as impacted by the August Flood of 2016 as was Region 9 parishes. Raiford, Clark and Cointment stressed the importance of the data proving that this area was the most impacted and distressed. It was mentioned that it was Ascension, EBR and Livingston parishes that were the most impacted in the 1983 flood. The data on this is factual. Resolution 1173 is written as follows: WHEREAS, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) identified the Most Impacted and Distressed (MID) areas as East Baton Rouge, Livingston, Ascension, Tangipahoa, Ouachita, Lafayette, Vermilion, Acadia, Washington, and St. Tammany Parishes; and the LWI Master Action Plan committed to spending at least fifty percent of the LWI funds in the HUD MID areas. WHEREAS, three of the HUD identified MID parishes are located in Region 9. WHEREAS, according to the Louisiana Economic Development’s economic impact assessment of the Great Floods of 2016, there was a total loss of over \$300 million in labor productivity state wide, with over 94% occurring in Region 9; WHEREAS, over 109,000 housing units were flooded state-wide in the Great Floods of 2016, with over 84%, or 92,000 units, flooded in Region 9. This translates into over \$3.8 billion in housing damages state-wide, with over 71%, or \$2.7 billion, occurring in Region 9. WHEREAS, because of the significant impact to Region 9 parishes from the Great Floods of 2016, LWI Action Plan Amendment #3 seeks to allocate \$100 million solely to Region 9 for the implementation of large, transformative projects with demonstrable and quantifiable mitigation outcomes. NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the Board of Commissioners of Amite River Basin Drainage and Water Conservation District (the "Governing Authority"), in regular session assembled, that the Board of Commissioners of the Amite River Basin Drainage and Water Conservation District voiced their support for LWI Action Plan Amendment #3, and the dedication of \$100 million to Region 9. A motion to approve Resolution 1173 as written was offered by Raiford and seconded by Parker. This resolution having been submitted to a roll call vote thereon as follows:

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING OF THE
AMITE RIVER BASIN DRAINAGE & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
Location: Louisiana State Capitol 900 North 3rd Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802

YEAS: John Clark, Jack Harris, Lionel Bailey, Clint Cointment, Kenneth Dawson, Brin Ferlito, LeeAnn Fitch, Mark Harrell, Gary O'Neal, Edwin Parker, Fred Raiford

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Robert Carter, Peter Dufresne

ABSTAIN: None

Lambert once again asked that board members reach out to their representatives and senators requesting their support.

- **Comite River Diversion Canal Maintenance: There were no public comments.** As per the PCA, EBR Parish is responsible for the future maintenance of the CRDC Project. Cointment said that he thinks the ARBC should be in the maintenance business moving forward on some of our major long-term projects since maintenance is needed over the years after completion. He believes ARBC should develop a plan for maintenance. Cointment suggested that the ARBC should have a representative attend the next CRDC Project meeting to express this to them. O'Neal recommended requesting the Corps to come up with an Operations and Maintenance Plan. Raiford said the formal O&M Plan will be submitted soon from the Corps.
- **Discuss Act 393 Public Meeting Law** – Bankston said Section H of the statute does not apply to ARBC. The ARBC also does not have the capability to utilize teleconferencing or video conferencing. The second part applies to all Boards and Commissions. They shall adopt rules, regulations, and procedures to facilitate viable alternative methods for a member of the public with a disability recognized by the Americans with Disabilities Act or a designated caregiver of such a person who so requests to participate in its meetings. There are different ways to comply with this section. After discussion, the Board unanimously approved a motion by Harris seconded by Parker for Bankston to further research this matter.

12. Kaitlyn Richard, Senior Project Manager, USACE, gave a presentation on the Amite River and Tributaries Feasibility Study. They currently do not have the federal funding for the project. They will also need approval from Congress later to move forward with the project. They are planning to hold meetings for public input. Cointment said that he would like to see more proactive than reactive plans to prevent flooding. **Public Comment(s)** Randy Delatte, Livingston Parish President-Elect said there are a lot of studies and no work. He showed a map of the current condition of the Amite River and said you can't see the mouth of the Amite River. Less than 2 miles of dredging is needed to solve 70% of the problems in this area. He said boats are getting stuck because they can't see where the mouth of the river is. He said they need help from the Corps of Engineers to be more proactive. Richard said she would make sure his comments are entered into the draft report. Comments can be submitted through email, comment cards, etc. A draft report will be posted on the USACE website on December 15, 2023.

13. **General Public Comments.** None.

14. The Board unanimously approved a motion by O'Neal, seconded by Cointment, to adjourn the meeting at 12:30 pm.

APPROVED:

/s/John Clark/ARBC President
Date: December 12, 2023

/s/ Toni B. Guitrau, Executive Secretary