

MINUTES OF THE  
BLANCHARD MAYOR AND TOWN COUNCIL  
REGULAR MEETING – JULY 12, 2011  
7:00 O'CLOCK

Present: Mayor Digilormo, Alderpersons Ashby, Jones, Lee, and Whittington, Chief Presswood, Atty. Tom Arceneaux, CPA Sam Stevens, III, Dave Cherry, David Yeates, Candy Foshee, Jennie Ashby, Mat Graf, Billy Boles, Jamie Davis, Connie and Robert Jenkins, Town Clerk Debra Smith, and various citizens.

Absent: Alderperson Prewett.

Pledge of Allegiance led by Ashby.  
Invocation given by Arceneaux.

Questions and Statements of Citizens: None

Motion by Jones to accept minutes of the regular meeting of June 14 and Special meeting June 30, 2011. Second by Lee. All voted yea.

OLD BUSINESS

Public Hearing on Ordinance 6 of 2011 (Town Clerk Salary)

The public hearing opened at 7:03. There being no discussion, the public hearing closed at 7:04.

Ordinance 6 of 2011

Ordinance 6 of 2011

An Ordinance to amend Section 3.8 of the Code of Ordinances for the Town of Blanchard, Louisiana, establishing compensation for elected and appointed officials, and otherwise providing with respect thereto

BE IT ORDAINED by the Mayor and the Board of Aldermen of the Town of Blanchard, Louisiana, in due, legal and regular session convened, as follows:

Section 1. Section 3.8 of the Code of Ordinances of the Town of Blanchard is amended and re-enacted to read as follows:

Section 3.8 Establishing Compensation for Elected and Appointed Officials

The monthly salaries of the elected and appointed officials are as follows:

Town Clerk, Annually	50,000.00
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Section 2. If any provision or item of this ordinance or the application thereof is held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect other provisions, items or applications of this ordinance that can be given effect without the invalid provisions, items of applications and to this end the provisions of this ordinance are hereby declared severable.

Section 3. All ordinances or resolutions or parts hereof in conflict herewith are hereby repealed.

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED that the Town hereby ratifies any payments heretofore made to any such public officials.

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED that if any provision or item of the ordinance or the application thereof is held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect other provisions, items or applications of this ordinance which can be given effect without the invalid provisions, items or applications and

to this end the provisions of this ordinance are hereby declared severable.

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED that all ordinances or resolutions or parts thereof in conflict herewith are hereby replaced.

Motion by Lee to adopt Ordinance 6 of 2011. Second by Jones.

Roll Call Vote:

YEAS: Ashby, Jones, Lee, Whittington

NAYS: None

ABSTAINED: None

ABSENT: Prewett

And Ordinance 6 of 2011 was adopted this 12<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2011.

### NEW BUSINESS

#### Sam Stevens Finalized Investigative Audit Report

No action required other than to accept the report. Jones thanked Mr. Stevens “for conducting a truly independent account report.”

Jones also asked Mr. Stevens in an open meeting, “Nobody directed to you with what they expected to be reported, this is truly independent?”

Mr. Stevens: “This is strictly a presentation of information and we agreed on the procedures and basically put out a net to capture any items that were paid by the town or by any of the companies associated with the water plant that were identified here. Anything that was paid by them to the town for the employees.”

Jones: “Do you believe that the procedures that were agreed upon were broad enough to cover any illegal or unethical payment during the time period of 2007 through 2011?”

Stevens: “I believe that it would catch any payment, legal or illegal.”

Jones: “Is there anything that you’re aware of that is not reflected in this audit report that we should know of?”

Stevens: “No.”

Jones: “Okay. Once again I would like to thank you for your professionalism in the process and I apologize to you for any inconvenience or any statements that I am aware of that have been made to you that were unwarranted and that should never have been made to you.”

Motion by Jones to accept the independent accounts report and based upon the same, the town take no further action with respect to the matters raised therein, subject to the clarification of the Harley Davidson purchase paid out of the Mayor’s budgeted furniture for Mayor’s office paid out of approved Town’s budget. Second by Lee. All voted yea.

#### Connie Jenkins re: trailers next door to her

After Mrs. Jenkins expressed concern regarding trailers next door to her..Based upon tendered written report submitted by Jones, motion by Jones to send owners of referenced properties letters requesting they come to a special hearing scheduled for July 26, 2011, 6:30 p.m. Second by Whittington. All voted yea.

#### Blue Bird Lease

Motion by Jones to waive notice requirement and agree to extend the lease pursuant to the increased rates set forth therein. Second by Whittington. All voted yea.

#### Nathan Ashby statement

Ashby read the following statement to the Council:

STATEMENT TO BOARD OF ALDERMEN FOR THE  
TOWN OF BLANCHARD BY NATHAN A. ASHBY,

ALDERMAN, TO BE RECORDED IN THE MINUTES

The first thing I would like to do is apologize for any embarrassment this accusation may have caused any member of the Board of Aldermen. I will continue to do my job, as Alderman, the way I have always done, except that I will no longer approve or disapprove any outstanding or future invoices for purchases made with Bearing Service & Supply, my employer. Someone else will have to do that until this matter is resolved one way or the other. In fact, it was suggested by my council that the Town of Blanchard might consider not conducting any business with Bearing Service & Supply until this matter is resolved. I personally have discussed this matter with my employer and they are of the opinion that due to the negligible amount of business that is generated by the Town of Blanchard with Bearing Service & Supply, there is no problem with putting the account "on hold" until this matter can be settled.

I have contacted Kathleen Allen of the Ethics Administration Program, and she has advised me to submit a letter to the Louisiana Ethics Board for a ruling on whether I have committed any violation. I have obtained legal council to help me prepare the letter. I will act upon whatever determination the Louisiana Ethics Board decides upon, for or against me.

I do not take this accusation lightly, because it questions my honor, my honesty and integrity and my position on this Board of Aldermen. I will pursue this matter to its conclusion.

Mr. Lawler and his paper, have done what I told him to do, "keep us honest", so I harbor no ill will against him or his paper. Again, if I am in the wrong, I will pay the price, whatever that may be.

I would also ask that my response to Mr. Lawler dated July 7, 2011 be printed in the paper of record for the Town of Blanchard, in its entirety. I will pay the cost of this additional printing and present documentation to anyone that the payment was made.

Thank you for your time and any remaining support I may have from this Board.

Letter to Danny Lawler, publisher of *The Inquisitor*:

July 7, 2011  
Mr. Danny Lawler  
7781 La Hwy. 1  
Shreveport, LA 71107  
Dear Mr. Lawler:

As an elected official of the Town of Blanchard, ("the Town") I took an oath "to support the constitution and laws of the United States and of the State of Louisiana, and that I would faithfully and impartially discharge and perform all the duties incumbent on me as Alderman." My job as an Alderman is to represent the citizens of Blanchard to the best of my ability and to oversee the funds brought in by the Town and to assure that they are spent wisely.

During your investigation on Wednesday, July 6, 2011, you contend that there are alleged violations, as follows:

- 1) the Town of Blanchard has an account and does business with Bearing Service & Supply, Inc.,
- 2) I am an employee of Bearing Service & Supply, Inc.,

3) as an Alderman, I inspect and approve for payment the invoices to the Town of Blanchard, for work performed by Bearing Service & Supply, Inc.

After some investigation with my employer, I found that the Town has had a long working relationship with Bearing Service, as this account has been in existence since April 1, 1989. I did not begin working for Bearing Service until October, 2007.

I am in my fifth term as Alderman for the Town, having served from 1991 to 2002, 2007 to 2010, and my fifth term is 2011 to 2014. I have always tried to conduct myself in an honest and direct manner.

I do not believe there is a problem with my working for Bearing Service and my job as an Alderman for the Town, but I will certainly contact the Ethics Board on my own and explain "my side."

You have my permission to print this letter in its' entirety in your paper this Friday.

I will keep you in the loop concerning this matter.

Very truly yours,  
Nathan Ashby, Alderman  
Town of Blanchard

Motion by Jones to accept and submit Nathan Ashby's statement. Whittington for the record, "I know in my heart of hearts that Nathan Ashby did not do anything to harm the Town of Blanchard, its pocketbooks, or its citizens. I would like to make that for the record because I know that to be true. I would also like to comment on the ad that was in *The Inquisitor*. I am growing a little weary of what is going on. The ad on page 2 of this past edition especially concerned me because there was a quote that was not attributed to anyone. There were 6 people's pictures, the Mayor and the Board of Aldermen, and then there was a quote in quotation marks that could insinuate that it was attributed to any person of those 6. I don't think that was right, I don't think that was very good journalism, and that is all I'm going to say about that." Jones asked that the following be included in the minutes, too. "The issue that raised this was an issue as to where we print our town minutes. That was done openly, it was done honestly, and it was based on the bids received." Second by Lee. Ashby abstained, all voted yea. Motion by Jones to continue to do business with Bearing Service & Supply conditioned upon Nathan Ashby having no involvement in solicitations, obtaining, or the approval of work done or payments of the same. Second by Whittington. Ashby abstained, all voted yea. Whittington made amendment to motion by Jones to add that Nathan Ashby's statement **and** letter responding to Danny Lawler dated July 7, 2011 be printed in their entirety in these minutes. Ashby abstained, all voted yea.

Amend the agenda: Motion by Jones to suspend the rules to add a motion to consider authorizing the Mayor to sign a petition for annexation of the new water plant site into the Town of Mooringsport to the agenda. Second by Lee.

Roll call vote:

Yeas: Ashby, Jones, Lee, Whittington

Nays: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Prewett

Open for public comment on proposal to add motion to consider authorizing the Mayor to sign a petition for annexation of the new water plant site into the Town of Mooringsport to the agenda. No comments presented.

Motion by Jones to authorize the Mayor to sign a petition for annexation of the new water plant site into the Town of Mooringsport. Second by Ashby. All voted yea.

Report of Departments

Buildings and Grounds—Whittington stated nothing to report.

Streets and Rights of Way—Jones stated nothing to report.

Water Dept.—Cherry stated the water tank refurbishing is now complete.

Sewer Dept. — Ashby stated town received \$120,000 Louisiana Community Development Block Grant (LCDBG) to rehabilitate Trey Ridge lift station.

Police Dept.—Chief stated doing okay.

Treasurer Report—Lee stated doing okay.

Comments by Mayor:

Whittington stated he would get more information on the FEMA flood insurance program.

Motion by Whittington to adjourn, second by Lee. All voted yea. Meeting adjourned 8:05.

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Johnny Digilormo, Mayor

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Debra Smith, Town Clerk