**SOUTH TANGIPAHOA PARISH PORT COMMISSION**

**REGULAR MEETING**

**WEDNESDAY, JULY 23, 2025 9:00AM**

**CITY HALL ANNEX BUILDING - 110 W. HICKORY ST., PONCHATOULA, LA**

The regular meeting was held on Wednesday, July 23, 2025 at the City Hall Annex Building, located at 110 W. Hickory Street, Ponchatoula, LA. President Daryl Ferrara called the regular meeting to order at 9:25 A.M.

The invocation was given by Administrative Assistant Robyn Pusey, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Commissioner/Secretary Rhonda Sheridan.

Commissioners Present: Daryl Ferrara, Tina Roper, Timothy DePaula, Rhonda Sheridan

Commissioners Absent: William Sims

President Ferrara welcomed the attendees to the meeting this Wednesday morning, including former Commissioner Jimmy Schliegelmeyer, Jr. Mr. Schliegelmeyer was presented with a plaque for his years of service and dedication with the STPPC.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

President Ferrara asked that in the essence of time that the agenda be amended to move up the audit review by Pinel & Martinez. A motion was made by Secretary Sheridan and seconded by Vice President Roper that the South Tangipahoa Parish Port Commission amend and approve today’s agenda to allow Pinel & Martinez to present the audit review for FY 2024 at the beginning of the STPPC meeting for July 23, 2025. Motion passed. Yeas: 4 Ferrara, Roper, DePaula, Sheridan Nays: 0 Absent: 1 Sims

**Pinel & Martinez – Audit review FY 2024**

Bonnie Naquin, Senior Auditor for Pinel & Martinez, introduced herself and handed out copies of the audit results to the commissioners. She then reviewed the audit process with the commissioners for the year ending December 31, 2024, and provided a summary of the results. She said based on the audit procedures performed, they believe that the audit evidence obtained was sufficient and appropriate to provide the basis for the audit opinion. Ms. Naquin said they issued an unmodified opinion, which is a clean opinion, that there were no findings or deficiencies related to the port commission’s financial statements for the year ending December 31, 2024. She gave the commissioners a brief overview of the assets, liabilities, revenues and expenses that were audited. Ms. Naquin told the commissioners that she and Mr. Martinez would be available to answer any questions after they have a chance to review the report. Port accountant Lee Barends told the commissioners that there will be some adjusting journal entries soon and in a few months the commissioners will see that information transferred to the monthly balance sheet.

Mr. Dufrene and the commissioners thanked Ms. Naquin and Mr. Martinez for coming today, and they left the meeting. At that time, Mr. Schliegelmeyer also left the meeting.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

President Ferrara told the commissioners that the minutes from the June 4, 2025 meeting should be found in their meeting packets. After a brief review, a motion was made by Vice President Roper and seconded by Secretary Sheridan to adopt/approve the minutes from the regular meeting on June 4, 2025. Motion passed. Yeas: 4 Ferrara, Roper, DePaula, Sheridan Nays: 0 Absent: 1 Sims

**TREASURER’S REPORT**

Port accountant Lee Barends was asked to review the June 2025 financial reports with the commissioners. The financial reports had been emailed to the commissioners, and a copy was in their meeting folders. She asked if there were any questions before reviewing the reports, and there were none. She said that everything looked good, and she didn’t think there was any reason to discuss an amended budget at this time. She said the only item over budget was membership and dues by $400.00, and that this could be adjusted when the budget is amended later in the year. She said the only item she wanted to defer to next month is moving any money from the operating account to the investment account, that in July the large insurance payment was made. She said let’s see what the balance sheet looks like next month and then get the commission’s approval to move money to the investment account and bring the balance in the operating account back to $250,000.00. President Ferrara confirmed that he was contacted by the Executive Director and Administrative Assistant about the large insurance invoice and whether to have the invoice broken down to several payments or just pay the entire invoice, and he approved paying the entire invoice. Ms. Barends agreed, saying the money was there, and that it’s easier for financial reporting. A brief discussion was had about CD’s and when they would be coming due.

A motion was made by Treasurer DePaula and seconded by Vice President Roper to accept/approve the financials for the month ending June 30, 2025. Motion passed. Yeas: 4 Ferrara, Roper, DePaula, Sheridan Nays: 0 Absent: 1 Sims

**OLD BUSINESS**



1. **Warehouse Buildings #2 and #3 – lease agreement update**

Port attorney, Andre Coudrain, told the commissioners that there was nothing new to report from the tenant who appears to be content with a month-to-month lease on one building and a long-term lease on the other. Vice President Roper asked Mr. Coudrain if the tenant was aware if the STPPC gets interest from another tenant who wants to rent the other building on a long-term basis, that the STPPC is open to renting it to them. He said it’s month-to-month (lease), and that is the risk both sides take. He said that he has made overtures to the tenant multiple times with no response, and thinks when they are ready, they will contact the STPPC; however, he will contact them again when the STPPC is ready.

1. **LA-DOTD Port Priority Program Application – update**
2. **Resolution**

Mr. Dufrene reminded the commissioners that Vice President Roper had recommended doing some drainage work by the track in front of warehouse building #2. He said that he contacted the port’s engineer for this to be the first project in the LA-DOTD funded program which will fund 90% of the project, and that the STPPC agrees to an engineering fee not to exceed $4,000.00. He said it is a small project, that 2 gravity drains will be installed to the existing drain between warehouse buildings #2 and #3. Vice President Roper further described the drainage issue to the commissioners. Mr. Dufresne also explained the same to President Ferrara who asked how the repairs would be done.

A resolution was introduced by Secretary Sheridan as follows:

Moved by Commissioner DePaula, seconded by Commissioner Roper that the South Tangipahoa Parish Port Commission authorize Patrick J. Dufresne, Executive Director, to enter into an agreement with G.I.S. Engineering, LLC, to provide professional engineering services for the Building 2 Rail Track Drainage Project, fees not to exceed $4,000.00.

Motion passed. Yeas: 4 Ferrara, Roper, DePaula, Sheridan Nays: 0 Absent: 1 Sims

1. **Official Journal – bid results**

Bids for the STPPC Official Journal for 2025 – 2026 were submitted by the Daily Star and The Tangi Times. After reviewing both bids, Mr. Dufresne recommended The Tangi Times as the Official Journal. Vice President Roper said she had one concern that The Tangi Times did not publish a daily newspaper. Secretary Sheridan said the Tangi Times is planning to expand its publication to 3 days per week. It was said that the Daily Star does not publish a daily newspaper either. President Ferrara asked Mr. Coudrain about the HB 526 bill recently passed in the LA legislature. Mr. Coudrain said to identify the official journal first, then and then he would look at the statute. After a brief discussion, The Tangi Times was chosen as the official journal of the STPPC with the lowest qualified bid.

A resolution was introduced by Secretary Sheridan:

Moved by Commissioner DePaula, seconded by Commissioner Roper, that the South Tangipahoa Parish Port Commission accepted the proposal submitted by Bobby Perez, Publisher of The Tangi Times dated June 25, 2025 to serve as its Official Journal, for the period beginning August 1, 2025 and ending July 31, 2026 and is hereby designated and authorize to represent the contractual rates as stated in the proposal, meeting all state law requirements, LA R.S.43:142, with regards to port related business/public notices.

Motion passed. Yeas: 4 Ferrara, Roper, DePaula, Sheridan Nays: 0 Absent: 1 Sims

1. **Invoice Payment Approval**

The following invoices for payment were presented today for approval by Treasurer DePaula:

1. Cashe Coudrain & Bass

Services rendered through June 30, 2025

Inv# 131300 Matter # 4623-1 Amt.$ 40.00

Inv# 131299 Matter # 4623-13 Amt.$ 259.00

Total Amt.$ 299.00

A motion was made by Vice President Roper and seconded by Secretary Sheridan to approve payment for the invoices presented today for Cashe Coudrain and Bass. Motion passed. Yeas: 4 Ferrara, Roper, DePaula, Sheridan Nays: 0 Absent: 1 Sims

1. CN Illinois Central

Private Road Crossing – annual fee

Inv# 9500275344 Amt.$ 3,000.00

A motion was made by Vice President Roper and seconded by Secretary Sheridan to approve payment for the invoice presented today for CN Illinois Central annual fee for the private road crossing at Port Manchac. Motion passed. Yeas: 4 Ferrara, Roper, DePaula, Sheridan Nays: 0 Absent: 1 Sims

1. Pinel & Martinez, LLC

Audit of the Dec 31, 2024 financial statements

Inv# 14812 Amt.$ 6,500.00

A motion was made by Vice President Roper and seconded by Secretary Sheridan to approve payment for the invoice presented today for Pinel & Martinez, LLC, STPPC audit FY 2024. Motion passed. Yeas: 4 Ferrara, Roper, DePaula, Sheridan Nays: 0 Absent: 1 Sims

1. Southeastern Overhead Door, Inc.

Remove existing operator on existing steel door; furnish and install new Genie

Electric Operator

Inv# 20348 Amt.$ 3,713.00

A motion was made by Vice President Roper and seconded by Secretary Sheridan to approve payment for the invoice presented today for Southeaster Overhead Door, Inc., to furnish and install new electric door operator. Motion passed. Yeas: 4 Ferrara, Roper, DePaula, Sheridan Nays: 0 Absent: 1 Sims

**5. Barge dock repair project - update**

**a) Resolution**

**b) Resolution**

Mr. Dufrene reminded the commissioners that funding from FEMA and LA-DOTD was received for the reimbursement process for the pending barge dock repair project. He said the next step is to update the engineering fees to accommodate option #3 for damage that occurred in the barge dock incident. Mr. Dufresne said he negotiated with the project engineers, Ragland, Aderman and Associates and recommended adding $80,000.00 to the original agreement of $135,000.00, of which 90% will be paid by FEMA. With the additional $80,000.00 it will bring the costs to $215,000.00, which is a little below the estimated $225,000.00. Treasurer DePaula asked if this included permitting. Mr. Dufresne said the only thing it doesn’t include is the soil testing. Discussion continued about soil testing. Treasurer DePaula said the soil testing will have to be done to get the permitting done, and Mr. Dufresne said it is all part of the process. Treasurer DePaula said to make sure Mr. Ragland’s drawings are adequate, as he will bear responsibility if something should happen. Vice President Roper asked “where we are” with the engineers. Mr. Dufresne said $215,000.00, and that FEMA would fund 90% of the first $135,000.00, and the STPPC will be responsible for the additional $80,000.00. Treasurer DePaula said he doesn’t think it’s out of the ordinary what the engineer is charging for this type of work. Vice President Roper said she wants it to be clear that the cost includes everything except for the soil testing.

A resolution was introduced by Secretary Sheridan:

Moved by Commissioner DePaula, seconded by Commissioner Roper that the South Tangipahoa Parish Port Commission authorize Patrick J. Dufresne, Executive Director, to enter into a revised agreement with Ragland, Aderman and Associates for additional professional engineering services for the construction phase of the barge dock repair project (Option #3) at the Port Manchac Inter-modal terminal. The revised professional engineering service fees for the barge dock repair project (Option #3) shall not exceed $215,000.00

Motion passed. Yeas: 4 Ferrara, Roper, DePaula, Sheridan Nays: 0 Absent: 1 Sims

Moving to the next resolution, Mr. Dufresne said in relation to the FEMA funding of the barge dock project, there is a process mechanism that allows the port to recoup the cost management services for his time spent working on the FEMA process over the last 3 ½ years. This includes hundreds of emails, meetings, conference calls, etc. He said GIS Engineering, LLC has staff available that can catalog everything, which could make the STPPC eligible to be reimbursed up to $50,000.00 in administrative fees for the balance of the project. A brief discussion was held regarding how this would be handled, and the costs to the STPPC. Mr. Dufresne said the cost would be $6,000.00 but could not guarantee receiving $50,000.00 from FEMA. After more discussion, the commissioners agreed to move forward with this request.

A resolution was introduced by Secretary Sheridan:

Moved by Commissioner DePaula, seconded by Commissioner Roper that the South Tangipahoa Parish Port Commission authorize Patrick J. Dufresne, Executive Director, to enter into an agreement with G.I.S. Engineering, LLC, to provide professional engineering services for FEMA cost management services for the barge dock repair project, fees not to exceed $6,000.00.

Motion passed. Yeas: 4 Ferrara, Roper, DePaula, Sheridan Nays: 0 Absent: 1 Sims

Before addressing agenda item #6, Treasurer DePaula suggested moving up agenda item #2 under “New Business” before discussing the litigation update and entering Executive Session. A motion was made by Treasurer DePaula and seconded by Vice president Roper to amend the STPPC agenda and approve moving “New Business” agenda item #2 to ”Old Business” agenda item #6, and the Litigation update to follow. Motion passed. Yeas: 4 Ferrara, Roper, DePaula, Sheridan Nays: 0 Absent: 1 Sims

**6. Meeting date for August**

After a brief discussion by the commissioners, it was agreed that the next STPPC meeting would be held on Thursday, August 14, 2025 at 9AM.

**7. Litigation – update**

**South Tangipahoa Parish Port Commission vs Wilco Marsh Buggies, Inc.,**

**Docket # 20240004367**

1. **Executive Session**

Mr. Coudrain recommended that the commissioners go into executive session to discuss the latest litigation update. A motion was made by Treasurer DePaula and seconded by Secretary Sheridan to enter into executive session. Motion passed. Yeas: 4 Ferrara, Roper, DePaula, Sheridan Nays: 0 Absent: 1 Sims

A short while later a motion was made by Treasurer DePaula and seconded by Vice President Roper to return to regular session. Motion passed. Yeas: 4 Ferrara, Roper, DePaula, Sheridan Nays: 0 Absent: 1 Sims. There was no action taken in the executive session.

Regarding the warehouse lease, Mr. Coudrain said Mr. Parker had told him that he was talking to his investors/partners. Mr Coudrain said he wasn’t sure what the industry looks like, or if they are worried about tariffs, but they are reluctant to commit to something different than what they have right now. This was the last that he had heard (from Mr. Parker). Mr. Coudrain stated that he had sent emails for several months with no response and will try again next month. He said they had discussed merging both buildings into one lease, and talked about parameters, and insurance. Treasurer DePaula asked about the maintenance plan for the building, and Mr. Coudrain reminded him that the repairs had been made. Vice President Roper said we need to have someone go out and look at the buildings on a quarterly basis. Mr. Coudrain feels this will advance the conversation with the tenant.

President Ferrara mentioned the upgrade to the security entrance system at the port. Mr. Dufresne said that he had received 3 bids (to replace the keypad entry) but did not put this on the agenda because he did not receive the final bid until the last minute. He said he would forward the information to President Ferrara for review. Mr. Dufresne said this would be a Wi-Fi based entry system, that the cell phone entry is not working properly, and will be more efficient. He said the port will be utilizing the same company and explained that not all companies do the same thing. President Ferrara asked if there was a fee for using this, and Mr. Dufresne said there is a monthly fee for using the line, that this is a cloud-based system and hopefully will be more efficient. Discussion continued among the commissioners. Mr. Dufresne said again that he would forward the information to President Ferrara for his review. There were no questions.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Agenda items **#1 (Pinel & Martinez – Audit review FY 2024)** and **#2 (Meeting date for August)** were moved up on the agenda by the vote of the commissioners. There was no other new business.

**REMARKS**

Mr. Dufresne thanked everyone for coming. The meeting adjourned at 10:14 AM.

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Rhonda Sheridan, Secretary STPPC Daryl Ferrara, President STPPC