**SOUTH TANGIPAHOA PARISH PORT COMMISSION**

**REGULAR MEETING**

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4, 2025 9:00AM**

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

The regular meeting was held on Wednesday, June 4, 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 9:04 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, William Sims, Rhonda Sheridan

Commissioners Absent: Timothy DePaula

President Ferrara welcomed the attendees to the meeting this Monday morning, which included Patrick Dufresne, STPPC Executive Director; Robyn Pusey, Administrative Assistant; Paula Sziber, Jackson Vaughn, Richard Meek, Action 17 News and Chloe Williams, The Daily Star.

President Ferrara told everyone that Vice President Tina Roper had been selected as one of the Tangipahoa Parish Annie Award recipients and congratulated her on this “huge honor”. He also acknowledged STPPC Secretary Rhonda Sheridan as one of last year’s Annie Award recipients.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA/MINUTES**

A motion was made by Vice President Roper and seconded by Secretary Sheridan that the South Tangipahoa Parish Port Commission approve the agenda for June 4, 2025 as presented. Motion passed. Yeas: 4 Ferrara, Roper, Sims, Sheridan Nays: 0 Absent: 1 DePaula

President Ferrara stated that the minutes from May 14, 2025 had been sent to the Commissioners electronically by the administrative assistant for review. The meeting folders included a hard copy of the minutes, and the administrative assistant said there were no changes. 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 May 14, 2025. Motion passed. Yeas: 4 Ferrara, Roper, Sims, Sheridan Nays: 0 Absent: 1 DePaula

**TREASURER’S REPORT**

The ports accountant and Treasurer DePaula were not in attendance at today’s meeting. Vice President Roper reviewed the May 2025 financial reports with the Commissioners. She said the May income statement report there was a net income of approximately $97,000.00, that there was $142,625.94 in revenue, and $44,789.36 in expenses. leaving the total net income of $97,836.58. Vice President Roper said, “it looks like we’re doing well” and didn’t see anything that was questionable with the expenses. President Ferrara asked Executive Director Patrick Dufresne about the rail car income of $2,100.00 and asked if there was a “timing issue” (with the payments). Mr. Dufresne explained that there were several income invoices pending with Balchem, that there was a change in their logistics company and the transition has been difficult. He said that he had spoken to someone with CN Rail business development and they were going to try and identify some additional rail clients now that there is additional space at the port. President Ferrara asked if the rail car storage was “slowing down” and Mr. Dufresne said the rail cars are being used and are only seen at the port when they are being parked.

Vice President Roper continued with the Edward Jones statement, saying the account value was $5,126,035.60. She said that at the last meeting there was approval to move money to the Edward Jones account, and she thought this was done. Vice President Roper said at the next board meeting we will have income over the threshold agreed upon, but since the port accountant was not at today’s meeting this will be discussed at the next meeting. President Ferrara confirmed that the transfer was approved at the last STPPC meeting and said that he and the Executive Director had received an email from the financial advisor Sean McArthur, and they approved the transfer.

A motion was made by Secretary Sheridan and seconded by Commissioner Sims to accept/approve the financials for the month ending May 31, 2025. Motion passed. Yeas: 4 Ferrara, Roper, Sims, Sheridan Nays: 0 Absent: 1 DePaula

**OLD BUSINESS**



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

Executive Director Patrick Dufresne told the commissioners that port attorney, Andre Coudrain, was not at the meeting, however there was no update with the tenant. He hoped that Mr. Coudrain would be available with an update at the STPPC meeting in July. There were no questions.

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

Mr. Dufresne told the commissioners that a couple of signatures were needed for the cooperative agreement and resolution for the LA-DOTD reimbursement program. He said once these documents have been forwarded to the LA-DOTD in Baton Rouge, the STPPC will receive an executed copy and then be eligible for the LA-DOTD reimbursement program.

1. **Invoice Payment Approval**

The following invoices for payment were presented today by Vice President Roper:

Cashe Coudrain and Bass

Services rendered through May 31, 2025

Inv# 131094 Matter # 4623-1 Amt.$ 840.00

Inv# 131095 Matter # 4623-4 Amt.$ 40.00

Inv# 131093 Matter # 4623-13 Amt.$ 40.00

Total Amt. $ 920.00

There were no questions regarding the invoices from Cashe Coudrain and Bass.

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

1. **Litigation – update**

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

**Docket # 20240004367**

1. **Executive Session**

Mr. Dufresne said that he had received an email from the port’s attorney that there was no litigation update for today’s meeting. Vice President Roper asked Mr. Dufresne, for the record, if we “are clear on that with the port project” and Mr. Dufresne replied “Yes.” The Commissioners did not enter into Executive Session. No action was taken.

**NEW BUSINESS**

1. **Insurance FY 2025-2026 – update**

Paula Sziber of Jackson Vaughn updated the commission on the insurance status for the upcoming term. She said she is still waiting for the numbers (from the underwriters) but expects them any time. Ms. Sziber said there was approximately a 33.5% increase in the rate from last year and explained how the percentage was determined. She said she was told there was an approximate 5% rate increase, and that the remaining 28.5 % rate increase was determined by the addition of a FEMA grant that raised the port revenues and was based on those revenues alone. She said the policy will follow the same special marine program as last year without wind coverage. She said if the board wishes to pursue a wind option, she can do that, however she expects the wind coverage to be at a high level as last year.

Vice President Roper had concerns about the renewal time and wanted to know if the insurance renewal date could be changed to negotiate premiums in the month of January and not June, during the hurricane season. President Ferrara asked if changing the renewal date would make a difference. Ms. Sziber thought it would make a difference; however, she said the wind rates are not there, that “we are basically only doing the fire rates”. She said the only way to improve the fire rate is to consider a sprinkler system to the buildings, however the cost of the premium compared to the cost of a sprinkler system may not be feasible or may take a period of time before that number is feasible.

Vice President Roper mentioned that last time when discussing the insurance, that one of the reasons the insurance “went through the roof” was because of hazardous chemicals being blended in the buildings. Discussion was had regarding the blending of hazardous chemicals by the tenant, and the liability of the tenant, and that some of the cost should be passed on to the tenant.

After discussion, President Ferrara and Vice President Roper told Ms. Sziber the money from the FEMA grant is not revenue and felt this should be clarified with the underwriters. Commissioner Sims said the grant money is an operational non-recurring revenue dedicated to a particular project and said it would be helpful to have clarity. Vice President Roper continued to further to explain that the port does not have this money, that the port incurs the cost out of the current revenue and then the costs are reimbursed into the current revenue. She said the STPPC is reimbursed 90% of (project) costs with a 10% cost to the STPPC for the funds (previously approved) for multiple port improvement projects. Ms. Sziber said she would send correspondence regarding this to the underwriters and asked the commission if they could provide another report outside of the budget that shows revenue minus operating expenses to get the operational income only. Mr. Dufresne was asked to have a conversation with the port’s accountant about this request. President Ferrara asked Mr. Dufresne if he had ever investigated getting a fire suppression system, and Mr. Dufresne said this was listed in the grant. He said fire hydrants will take water from the channel and a fire truck would be able to directly hook up to the hydrants. Ms. Sziber said that the insurance company is looking for an actual sprinkler system that would trigger immediately upon any kind of temperature change in the building. Mr. Dufresne said that the upgrade to the hydrants would be helpful to the response time for the fire department. Ms. Sziber said anything she could share with underwriting would be helpful, and she would share any information as soon as it was received.

A discussion was held regarding a resolution for the insurance renewal not to exceed a certain amount for this year and will allow Mr. Dufresne to negotiate on behalf of the commission.

Vice President Roper made a motion to authorize Executive Director Patrick Dufresne to approve on behalf of the South Tangipahoa Parish Port Commission the insurance renewal for 2025, not to exceed $250,000.00 and to present Jackson Vaughn with required information to potentially reduce premium costs. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Sims. Motion passed. Yeas: 4 Ferrara, Roper, Sims, Sheridan. Nays: 0 Absent: 1 DePaula

Vice President Roper asked again about changing the renewal time frame. Ms. Sziber said she could go to the underwriters, and they could either cancel/re-write the policy or extend it to possibly a 20-month term and then renew at that time period. Vice President Roper asked Ms. Sziber to please consider this for the next renewal.

**REMARKS**

Mr. Dufrene said that Mr. Coudrain investigated the possibility of the STPPC requesting bids for multiple years in the Official Journal RFP instead of one year at a time. He said Mr. Coudrain told him the contract term must be for one year.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 AM.

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Rhonda Sheridan, Secretary STPPC Daryl Ferrara, President STPPC