

**September 9, 2025**

VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT DURING ROLL CALL: John Clark, Jack Harris, Lionel Bailey, Ryan Byrd, Clint Cointment, Pete Dufresne, Brin Ferlito, Mark Harrell, Fred Raiford, Roy Schmidt, III

VOTING MEMBERS ABSENT DURING ROLL CALL: Randy Delatte

ALSO PRESENT: Brian Lezina, CPRA, Larry Marino, Oats & Marino, Randy Clouatre, Sr., PLD, Ed Knight, LADOTD; ARBC Executive Director Paul Sawyer; ARBC Executive Secretary Toni Guitrau; ARBC Legal Counsel Larry Bankston, Bankston & Associates

**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 2024-2025** - There were no public comments.

Nikki Dupuy, with Diez, Dupuy, & Ruiz, LLC: The audit reflected no violations of state rules or deficiencies in the financial statements. In the opinion of the auditor, the ARBC is in compliance with all applicable state and federal laws, the Legislative Auditors Office, as well as internal controls of financial matters within the district, stating this is the best opinion that ARBC can receive. The Board unanimously approved a motion by Bailey, second by Cointment, to accept the audit report, as presented.

**5. ARBC President introduced East Feliciana Parish ARBC Board designee, Roy Schmidt, III.** Mr. Schmidt, III was designated by East Feliciana Parish President Louis Kent.

**6. Minutes.** There were no public comments.

The Board unanimously approved a motion by Cointment, seconded by Raiford to approve August 12, 2025, regular meeting minutes, as presented.

**7. Financial Statements.** There were no public comments.

Approval of Financial Statements ending August 31, 2025 will be on the October regular meeting agenda.

**8. Report by Executive Director Paul Sawyer.** There were no public comments.

- **Upper Amite Flood Reduction and Restoration Project. (Capital Outlay)** Sawyer reminded the Board that at the July ARBC meeting, the Board approved two contractors to begin the due diligence process that is underway. He and Bankston will have a meeting tomorrow with one of the contractors to chart progress. The environmental consultant has been asked to pause temporarily while other parts are worked out specific to title research. On September 15, 2025, he and President Clark conducted a site visit. ARBC currently has \$2 million in Priority 2. He met last week with Senate Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Chairman Franklin Foil. He indicated that he is working with the Commissioner of Administration to elevate the P2 funding to P1. That might occur at the October 2025 state bond commission meeting. Sawyer is in process of preparing next year's application to convert/elevate \$2 million of what is now in P5.
- Sawyer received a letter from OCD regarding ARBC's Regional Capacity Building Grant "RCBG". This is the money ARBC receives for serving as LWI Region 9 coordinator. The funding was set to expire on 12/31/25, but they have awarded ARBC a one-year extension on this deadline. OCD certifies that to date and perhaps conclusively ARBC has provided all of the required deliverables related to the LWI RCBG process. They want ARBC to produce a budget. Sawyer will coordinate with ARBC's RCBG coordinator Garvin Pittman, The Water Institute of the Gulf. Once they have a proposal, they will share it with the ARBC Commissioners for review and approval. It will then be submitted to OCD. He reminded the Board that there is \$360 million in this region in LWI funding for 24 projects, four of which are our major transformational projects that are being handled by four of ARBC Board members. ARBC will continue to participate in LWI project meetings.

- **Comite River Diversion Canal Project.** Sawyer stated that nothing substantial has changed. 85 out of original 89 required parcels acquired with 4 additional parcels required for Brook Lake under appraisals. There are currently additional parcels required for C&S three bayous. Forty-nine of sixty-three relocations are complete. The remaining utilities are under various stages of relocation. USACE is currently analyzing whether additional relocations are needed for C&S three bayous. LA 964- 99.4% complete. LA 67 is 99.6% complete, LA 19 is 9.9% complete.
  - Sawyer stated that ARBC has been assisting Congresswoman Letlow. She has been meeting with USACE officials and has asked ARBC to brief her on projects within our region and watershed to help her position her work with the USACE. This would include her work concerning permitting some of our LWI projects and or moving along congressionally authorized projects that are occurring with our member parishes as well as the CRDC Project.
  - Sawyer updated the Board on the status of the “Five Bayous Project” in East Baton Rouge Parish.
  - Sawyer reported that the ARBC website is being modified. The plan is to provide the public with more resources to review, make it user friendly and to promote the ARBC Master Plan.
  - Sawyer mentioned that a draft RFQ is in the Board’s packet. Approval by the Board is not needed for an RFQ, but it is helpful to have Board input. This will be further discussed under New Business.
  - Sawyer made mention of the months of work involved in receiving audits with no findings each year.
9. **Report by Legal Counsel.** There were no public comments.
- Bankston stated he has been working with ARBC staff on the purchase agreement matter mentioned in Sawyer’s report.
  - **DRAFT RFQ:** Bankston stated Board input is welcome. He said the proposed draft is similar to the RFQ by ARBC years ago as it relates to engineering and acquisition services. The purpose of doing this in advance is for ARBC to have the ability to call upon an engineering and/or acquisition firm(s) that has been designated or chosen by the board. This would ensure that our qualifications and potential reimbursement in the event that we had any federal funds involved in that acquisition are met. Bankston stated this pre-approved list of firms is something ARBC needs to have in place in anticipation of receiving future federal fund reimbursements.
10. **Old Business.** There were no public comments.
- **ARBC Contractor – Garvin Pittman, The Water Institute’s Report:** LWI Region 9 Coordinator: Mr. Pittman reported that the current Dewberry invoice has been sent for approval noting this will not be Dewberry’s last invoice. There should be another small one remaining. Pittman was working with OCD because they wanted to change the way ARBC was seeking reimbursement for overhead expenses. As of yesterday, that was completely cleared up. Also, soon there will be another quarterly report, and another Request for Payment to OCD. Dewberry’s invoice would then be submitted to CPRA. On the CPRA contract there is approximately \$788,000 remaining. In the RCBG grant there is approximately \$390,000 available. On The Water Institute of the Gulf contract there is approximately \$93,000 available and the on the Dewberry contract there is approximately \$188,000 available. He stated the Dewberry and The Water Institute of the Gulf contracts do not have specific end dates, but the Board can end them at their discretion at any time. Clark requested that Pittman provide the Board with a summary or table of those individual grants, their balances, description etc. for each.
  - **St. Helena Parish Police Jury Resolution of July 22, 2025 Discussion.** St. Helena Police Jury resolution of July 22, 2025 opposing the inclusion of upper Amite reservoirs in the ARBC Master Plan. The Board unanimously approved a motion by Byrd, seconded by Harrell, to include said resolution as part of the ARBC Master Plan.
11. **New Business.** There were no public comments.
- **Draft RFQ Discussion:** Commissioner Mark Harrell exited the meeting at this time. The Board discussed the proposed draft RFQ including task orders, the scope, budgeting for services, payment types such as task-order-driven vs. lumpsum, flexibility, and specifics in the services being requested, etc. It was agreed that Bankston will prepare another draft RFQ based on today’s discussion at the next ARBC meeting in October.
  - **Discuss ARBC meeting dates in November and December:** Since November’s regular ARBC meeting falls on Veteran’s Day, it was decided to poll the Board by email to see which date in November they would prefer the meeting to be held on.
12. **Public Comments and/or ARBC Board Members discussion on General or Non-Agenda Items.**
13. The Board unanimously approved a motion by Dufresne, seconded by Bailey, to adjourn the meeting at 11:10 a.m.

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

Location: **Louisiana State Capitol, 900 North 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802**

APPROVED:

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/s/John Clark/ARBC President  
Date: September 9, 2025

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/s/ Toni B. Guitrau, Executive Secretary