**MINUTES OF APRIL 16, 2019 REGULAR MEETING**

**Board of Commissioners of**

**Bayou D’Arbonne Lake Watershed District**

Union Parish Courthouse Annex

303 East Water Street

Farmerville, LA 71241

6:30 p.m.

1. Roll Call – Trotter Hunt called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Commission members present were Trotter Hunt, Steve Cagle, Jake Halley, Cary Brown, Clint Graham. Terri Towns was absent. Also present were Neal DeForest, Bill Carter, Marshall Hill, Jeff Shapiro, Sam Hodge, Gary Eldridge, Ryan Daniels, Chase McPherson, Jerry Taylor, Jon McKinnie, Robert Lemoine, Mark Rainwater and numerous members of the public.
2. Invocation/Pledge of Allegiance – Jake Halley led the invocation and Steve Cagle led the Pledge of Allegiance.

C. Public Comment Registration -Several members of the public signed up for public comment.

D. Agenda Approval – Motion was made by Steve Cagle and seconded by Jake Halley to amend the Agenda to move Item G. 8. – Tainter Gate Opening and Closing Plan – to the beginning of Item G of Old and New Business, as number 1, and to adopt the agenda, as amended. The motion passed unanimously.

E. Approval of Minutes – Motion was made by Steve Cagle and seconded by Jake Halley to approve the minutes of the March 2019 meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

F. Financial Reports/Budget/Audit:

1. Approve March 2019 Bank Account Summary – Motion was made by Jake Halley and seconded by Steve Cagle to approve the March 2019 Bank Account Summary. The motion passed unanimously.
2. Approve March 2019 Bank Statement Reconciliation – Motion was made by Jake Halley and seconded by Steve Cagle to approve the March 2019 Bank Statement Reconciliation. The motion passed unanimously.
3. Approve March 2019 Financial Report – Motion was made by Jake Halley and seconded by Steve Cagle to approve the March 2019 Financial Report. The motion passed unanimously.

G. Old and New Business:

1. Tainter Gate Opening and Closing Plan – Trotter Hunt said that there several persons in attendance from Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD), being Marshall Hill, District 5 Engineer Administrator, Jeff Shapiro, District 5 Area Engineer, Gary Eldridge, Design Engineer and Sam Hodge, Water Resources Engineer. He said that also in attendance were Ryan Daniels and Chase McPherson from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) as well as Jerry Taylor from the Union Parish Police Jury. Mr. Hunt indicated that all of these representatives will speak and then the meeting will be open for public comment.

Mr. Hunt asked Steve Cagle to first comment on the Tainter Gate Opening and Closing Plan (Plan) and discuss why this item is on the Agenda.

Steve Cagle said that the Plan was designed in 2015 based on the detailed engineering studies prepared in connection the planned operation of the tainter gates. He said that individuals call him often concerning the tainter gates and flooding. He said that there are discussions between the DOTD, who owns the tainter gates and the Commission. Mr. Cagle indicated that all of the representatives are in attendance so that all aspects of the opening and closing of the gates are addressed. He said that the landowners are a concern but also the economics of the lake.

Marshall Hill, DOTD District 5 Administrator, provided an overview of information about the lake and the history of attempts to manage water levels in the lake. He also provided detailed information about the design and operation of the tainter gates and the Opening and Closing Plan. He stated that while the DOTD owns and operates the tainter gates, there is ongoing discussion and cooperation with the Commission regarding the gate operation as well as periodic revision of the Opening and Closing Plan. A more detailed summary of Mr. Hill’s comments is available in a separate document.

Ryan Daniels, Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Manager, Monroe Office, provided information regarding the effect of lake level fluctuations on the fish population in the lake. He referred to studies showing correlation of lake levels and fish populations. He stated the data shows the fluctuations and high levels during the spring spawning season were beneficial to the populations of bass and crappie. He asked that this information be kept in mind in connection with the operation of the tainter gates. A more detailed summary of Mr. Daniels’ comments is available in a separate document.

Jerry Taylor, Union Parish Police Jury President, stated that opening the tainter gates at lower levels was preferable in an attempt to minimize damage to Rocky Branch Road downstream of the gates. He also commented on boat use on the lake at high levels and damage to structures caused by boat wakes.

Public Comment –

John Kelly – Mr. Kelly stated the lake level should not be allowed to exceed 80 feet except for a short time after a rain event.

Kendall Terral – Mr.Terral commented on the need to balance the lake levels with the economic importance of the lake.

Dudley Huber – Mr. Huber asked if there was a phone number or website that people could access to get information as to the opening and closing of the gates.

Gary Preston – Mr. Preston requested a lake level gauge be installed on Corney Creek to provide more information and possibly alleviate flooding in that area.

Buddy Fisher- Mr. Fisher basically echoed the comments of Gary Preston.

Trotter Hunt thanked everyone for their comments and said that the Commission will discuss and make necessary decisions in the near future.

Steve Cagle stated that he had a summary showing the lake level history and said that before the tainter gates, the lake level would sometimes be 86 to 90 feet. Since the tainter gates were installed, the level has only gone over flood stage 3 or 4 times. He said that the tainter gates are only 5 years old and they are still making adjustments. He said he appreciates everyone’s patience and thanked everyone for coming.

1. Channel Markers Project – Neal DeForest said that the new markers have been installed. There is still a lack of fill material and some chain link fence that needs repair at the tainter gate location; but, the place that needs repair is underwater. At RHTC’s request, a 30 day change order is being processed with only time change and no change to money. He indicated the request for reimbursement No. 1 for $15,003 is being processed through FEMA and should be on the way, the request for reimbursement for No. 2 is just under $20,000 and request for reimbursement No. 3 is $85,000.

Trotter Hunt said that Jake Halley mentioned to him that there were some poles that were recently installed that are leaning. Mr. DeForest said that by the time he could get to the lake to look at the poles, the lake was closed to boat traffic. He said that he spoke with John Gates and Mr. Gates will look at those poles when the lake is accessible. Steve Cagle said that there are some reflective decals left over from the project and he thinks the commission needs to purchase the leftover decals. He would also like to purchase a box of trim coil from Reed Lumber. Neal DeForest said that the contractor had a lot of trouble getting the reflective material and there was a minimum order. He knows that RHTC has leftover material and the commission definitely has a need for it.

Motion was made by Steve Cagle and seconded by Cary Brown to purchase the leftover material from RHTC and have the Sheriff’s department make the markers to finish the channel marker project. The motion passed unanimously.

1. Spillway Beach Area Improvements Project – Neal DeForest stated that the Request for Quotes is still being worked on and should be ready at the next meeting. Bill Carter stated that the bonds will be required because of the estimated cost of the project. He indicated that there are two contractors who put in a bid on Phase I and the commission can see if either of those contractors are interested and if not, contractors with bonding capacity in surrounding areas can be contacted. Trotter Hunt asked how the schedule will lay out. Neal DeForest said he projects starting Phase II at the end of May or the first week of June.

Motion was made by Steve Cagle and seconded by Cary Brown to allow the president to accept a quote for the project that is $50,000 or below and to give the president permission to sign all necessary documents. The motion passed unanimously.

1. Proposed Joint Revised Lake Regulations – This item was not addressed.
2. Sediment Erosion Near Mann Road/D’Arbonne Bluffs Subdivision – Mr. Carter stated that they are working on a date that is acceptable for all parties to view the site. Steve Cagle suggested any work be done during the 2020 drawdown due to the fact that there is not access to it now and it needs to dry out.
3. Annual Ramps Mowing Contract ­– Mr. Carter stated that Mark Bryan agreed to perform the mowing services for the same price as the previous two years and that they have already started mowing. Mr. Carter provided the contract for the president’s signature which had already been signed by Mark Bryan.
4. Union Lincoln Regional Water Supply Initiative – Mr. Carter said that he went to the last meeting. He said that after a long discussion the Board voted not to renew its contract with Waggoner Engineering. The Board formed a committee to meet and come back with a recommendation to the Board as to future plans.

Jerry Taylor, who is a member of the Board, said that there are many ways to conserve water from the Sparta over the 16 parish areas, but, the whole burden is falling on Union and Lincoln Parishes. Mr. Taylor said some rural water systems do not know what their water loss is. Mr. Taylor said that the Board is planning to look at some other engineering firms and other options to see what can be done to save the Sparta and not using the lake as the only resource.

1. Dock Maintenance (Gills Ferry) – Steve Cagle said he and the contractor looked at the dock but could not get an estimate since it is still underwater.

General Public Comment – Jon McKinnie said that the American Crappie Trail had their tournament April 27-30. He said on April 27, there were ten different groups that were reporting nationwide and regionally. He indicated that over the next three days there were 160 fishermen, 80 teams those of whom were representing fifteen different states that came to participate. The social media impact was six million people with a potential of 40 million people who watched the videos. There were four TV crews and Lake D’Arbonne got a 4-day national commercial for $7,500 Cary Brown asked what the chamber would need to keep the weigh-in at Farmerville. He said the Ruston tourism group paid $10,000 and got the state to pay $20,000 which swayed them to allow Ruston to have the final weigh-in. He said that the average stay was seven days and most of the people told him that this was their second or third trip here. He stated that each individual spent $1,500 - $2,000 and one team told him that they spent $4,000. He said that many of the fisherman stayed on lakefront homes that were being rented and the rest of the fisherman stayed in Ruston. He said that one of the fisherman, the current champion, made a statement on national TV that D’Arbonne was the best crappie fishing lake he has ever experienced in his life.

I. Adjourn – A motion to adjourn was made by Steve Cagle and seconded by Jake Halley. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting adjourned.