

**LOUISIANA AGRICULTURAL FINANCE AUTHORITY  
(LAFA) BOARD MINUTES**

**December 18, 2024**

12:00 PM

21549 Frontage Road

Iowa, LA. 70647

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by the Vice Chairman, Ronald Petree, at 12:05 PM.

**II. ROLL CALL**

The roll was called by Christopher Lowery.

**Present:** Brayden Blanchard, Jennifer Hill, Ronald Petree and Bill Waguespack

Mr. Lowery stated there was not a quorum with four members present.

Also present were board advisors, Representative Troy Romero and Senator Stewart Cathey.

Commissioner Mike Strain arrived at 12:19 P.M.

Kent Brown arrived at 1:55 P.M.

**III. LACASSINE INDUSTRIAL PARK PRESENTATION AND TOUR**

The board and additional attendees received information about the Lacassine Industrial Park. Presentations and comments were given by the following:

Commissioner Mike Strain

Nicholas Cole, Director of LAFA

Creed Ramano, President and CEO of Jeff Davis Parish Economic Development

Paige Carter, Chief Business Development Officer of Louisiana Economic Development

**IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no public comments.

Chairman Strain requested a new roll call to establish a quorum for the business portion of the meeting.

**Present:** Commissioner Strain, Brayden Blanchard, Kent Brown, Jennifer Hill, Ronald Petree and Bill Waguespack

Mr. Lowery stated there was a quorum with six members present.

Also present were board advisors, Representative Troy Romero and Senator Stewart Cathey.

## **V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

Commissioner Strain asked the board members to review the minutes from the September 20, 2024, meeting.

A motion was made by Mr. Brown to approve the minutes as presented.

Ms. Hill seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

## **VI. REVIEW OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

Mr. Wayne Tedesco presented LAFA's financial statements to the board and answered the members questions.

A motion was made by Mr. Waguespack to accept the financial statements as presented.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Petree.

The motion passed unanimously.

## **VII. COMMISSIONER'S REPORT**

Commissioner Strain thanked everyone in attendance and stated that he was glad to show how far the property and operations at the facility have come, with the ultimate goal being to increase economic development in the region and taking advantage of the business opportunities that already exist.

Commissioner Strain reported that he spent a week in England meeting with government officials to discuss a potential collaboration as they now import the majority of their foods. He also recently came back from his third trip to Cuba this year in an effort to

properly facilitate trade with them for agricultural products such as rice, corn and fertilizers.

## **VIII. OLD BUSINESS**

### **A. Update on Bob Odom Loop Paving Project**

LAFA Director, Nicholas Cole, updated the board on the current status. He informed the board that they decided to reject the initial bids and republicize for bids a second time.

Alex Guillory from Blue Wing Civil Consulting explained to the board the details of the bid process and results of the 2<sup>nd</sup> round of bids received. Mr. Guillory recommended the board accept the bid from HD Truck and Tractor, a local construction company in Lake Charles, which represented the lowest bid with a new projected base cost of \$494,755. Mr. Guillory noted to the board that it will be another 60 days before construction of the new road can start.

Chairman Strain made a motion to accept the award recommendation of Blue Wing Civil Consulting to contract with HD Truck and Tractor to complete the Bob Odom Parkway Paving Project.

The motion was seconded by Ms. Hill.

The motion passed unanimously

### **B. Update on Application for DOTD Capital Improvement Project**

Mr. Cole reminded the board of the approval they granted for the submission of an application to the DOTD Capital Improvement Plan aimed at improving airports around the state. He informed them that the application was successfully submitted.

### **C. Update on Large Warehouse Roof Repair**

Mr. Cole reminded the board of a roof repair project that was approved in the summer. When Napier Sheet Metal made their estimate of about \$53,000, it was well under the other quotes received that were all over \$100,000.

They confirmed that their estimate was correct but once the project was underway, they realized that there was a miscalculation in the measurements causing a shortfall in their initial and approved quote. They are asking for fifty percent of the shortfall, if the board is amendable, that would bring the total project cost to \$78,730, which would require a contract amendment and updated invoice.

Chairman strain made a motion to amend the contract with Napier Sheet Metal to increase the compensation on the Large Warehouse Roof Repair at Lacassine.

Mr. Davis seconded the motion.

The board discussed the compensation amount to be given. It was asked and Mr. Cole reiterated that even if the board chose to pay Napier the entire amount of the job that should have been initially quoted, it still would have been the lowest quote of those received by all companies approached for the job.

A motion was made by Jennifer Hill to amend the contract with Napier Sheet Metal to increase the compensation amount by \$50,820, to reflect the amount of work completed, for a total project cost of \$104,140.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Blanchard.

The motion passed unanimously.

## **VII. NEW BUSINESS**

### **A. SLRF Project Request**

Mark Pousson requested, on behalf of South Louisiana Rail Facility, funds for a bagging machine and equipment that would allow for the packaging of grain in various quantities to meet the needs of new partnerships that have been established. The new machine will also provide new opportunities for the farmers that utilize the facility and increase production capabilities.

A motion was made by Mr. Waguespack to authorize Commissioner Strain as chairman to negotiate and execute all documents necessary to make a loan of up to \$1.5 million to the South Louisiana Rail Facility for the purchase of the requested bagging project.

Ms. Hill seconded the motion.

Mr. Petree abstained from discussion and vote.

The motion passed unanimously

### **B. Baton Rouge Headquarters Equipment Canopy Project**

Chairman Strain informed the board that funds have been provided by the legislature to extend the canopy on the warehouse of the building adjacent to the cold storage facility at the Baton Rouge Headquarters. The project requires approval from the board in order to utilize the funds received.

A motion was made by Mr. Petree to approve the funds necessary for the construction of a Baton Rouge Headquarters Equipment Canopy and to authorize Commissioner Strain as Chairman to execute a contract and any other necessary documents needed for the project.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Waguespack

The motion passed unanimously.

### **C. Lacassine Weigh Scale Right of Use Agreement**

Chairman Strain informed the board that there have been several requests made by outside vendors to use the weight scales at Lacassine. Each company will be assigned their own code to track use for allocating expenses. This will not be an additional charge for current tenants at the park.

A motion was made by Commissioner Strain to approve the use of the truck weigh scales at the Lacassine Industrial Park for outside vendors and authorize him as chairman to negotiate and execute any and all right of use agreements at a fair market value with vendors desiring to use the scales.

Ms. Hill seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

### **D. Riviana Foods Transloading Agreement**

Mr. Cole informed the board that Riviana Foods is interested in a weight-scale use agreement and to lease a portion of land near the pond as a staging site. However, the details have not been decided yet. The agreement would be for a period of forty weeks and then potentially a long-term lease for a trans loading facility with Rail Logix.

A motion was made by Commissioner Strain to authorize him as chairman to negotiate and execute a lease agreement with Riviana Foods for the purpose of a staging area to be used as part of their transloading project with Rail Logix.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Waguespack.

The board discussed the details of the space to be leased.

The board decided not to set an amount; it will be done in the negotiations.

The motion passed unanimously.

### **E. Edge Energy Data Warehouse Lease Agreement**

Mr. Cole informed the board that Edge Energy is interested in leasing three to five acres of land for a Data Warehouse. It will be a long-term lease at the anticipated rate of \$690 per acre per month. This project comes through Rail Logix and will be located close to the western edge near Bob Odom Parkway.

A motion was made by Commissioner Strain to authorize him as chairman to negotiate and execute a lease agreement with Edge Energy for the purpose of providing land at the Lacassine Industrial Park to house data warehouse facilities.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Brown.

The motion passed unanimously.

#### **F. Acadiana Workforce Development Lease**

Mr. Cole informed the board that the lease for a current tenant at the Civic Center in Opelousas is about to expire. During negotiations a new rate of \$6.51 per square foot was determined for the new lease term.

A motion was made by Mr. Petree to authorize Commissioner Strain as chairman to negotiate and execute a new lease agreement with the St. Landry Parish Council on behalf of Acadiana Workforce Development for the purpose of providing office space within the Opelousas Civic Center facility.

Mr. Waguespack seconded the motion.

The board discussed the condition of the facility.

Maintenance is needed on the building and the parking lot needs to be repaved. The terms of the agreement will need to be renegotiated to reflect this. Mr. Cole stated that he will visit the site to determine the extent of the work that needs to be done.

The motion passed unanimously

#### **VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mr. Petree thanked Lee Mallet and his family for hosting the meeting at their ranch.

#### **IX. ADJOURNMENT**

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Waguespack.

Ms. Hill seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 3:59 PM