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PJ's property lien ordinance remains on agenda

Trash continues to plague Catahoula Parish. Residents' complaints consist of littering, the \$12.00 service fee on top of the one cent sales tax for house-to-house garbage pickup, and the possibility of the Catahoula Parish Police Jury (CPPJ) placing a lien on property if the \$12.00 monthly fee is not paid. Ordinance 2975 as written by the police jury, gives them (the jury) the authority to adjust the service fee, lowering it or raising it at any time, without taxpayer consent by a parish wide vote.

Next Monday night, July 26th, CPPJ will meet at 6:00 p.m., and one item on the agenda is the \$12.00 fee and the potential for a lien on your property. If a lien is placed on property an individual or business will be unable to obtain a loan including farm loans.

A public hearing was held on July 12, 2021, to consider the adoption of an amendment to Ordinance 2975 allowing the police jury to place a lien on a person's property for nonpayment.

During the public comment period of the hearing many residents



HARRISONBURG SERVICE League and the Village of Harrisonburg maintains the one town dumpster located at the old high school.

expressed their concern of the \$12.00 fee that went into effect March 2021 and not being able to vote on this sanitation fee. CPPJ members passed the Ordinance without it going before the voters.

The jury did ask for District Attorney Brad Burget's advice in what route to take for nonpayment. The biggest concern was the jury being able to legally place a lien on property for nonpayment. Jury member Johnnie Adams mentioned tabling the amendment during the public comment period. Rodney Sones made a motion during the meet-

ing to table the item with a second by Jeffery Estes and the motion passed.

Declining revenue is blamed for making it difficult for the police jury to pay Metro close to \$40,000.00 a month. President Harold Sones of the CPPJ stated, "The \$12.00 fee will offset the loss of sales tax to help continue to have house to house garbage service. If in the future, there is a surplus of revenue the police jury can lower the rate at a jury meeting. All the money collected must be spent on sanitation. CPPJ wants to

manage the garbage and keep the parish clean."

The monthly collections are approximately \$21,000, while the monthly deficit is only \$6-\$8,000, causing the taxpayers to question the jury's intent for \$12.00 which has a projected year end surplus of well over \$200,00 if all invoices are paid.

Since before 1994 a one cent sales tax for house-to-house garbage pickup has been in effect. The tax is divided between municipalities and the parish. The town of Jonesville receives 16.5 percent of the tax and charges \$10.00 a month to pick up residential garbage. The Village of Harrisonburg receives 3.5 percent of the tax and charges an additional \$7.50 a month. Sicily Island receives 5 percent of the tax collected and does not charge any additional fees for picking up garbage within the city limits. CPPJ receives 75 percent of the tax collected with 25 percent of that promised to road and bridges. The one cent sales tax will be up for renewal in 2025.

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Smith, Taliaferro & Purvis reinstated as TOJ attorney

At last Tuesday night's Town of Jonesville Meeting, Jared Tayler, updated the council on the electrical plant and the options regarding the electrical program and rate study well at the substation. Speaking on the age of Jonesville's substation he stated, "The Transformers in use are at an old age. They were manufactured in 1962 which means they have been in service for nearly 60 years." He went on to say that the normal life expectancy of transformers is from 30-40 years. He complemented the town on how well they were maintained but asked the board that they look into some way to rehabilitate and replace the transformers.

For agenda items 8 and 9, a motion was made by Council Bruce Lofton and second by Council Benny Vault Sr. to discontinue the employment of Town Attorney, Ruby Freeman beginning July 12, 2021.

Then a motion by Council woman Josie Bullitts and second by Council woman Loria Hollins was made to employ Smith, Taliaferro and Purvis Law Firm beginning July 13, 2021.

On agenda item 10, the board carried the motion to authorize Chief Richard Madison to re-form the Jonesville Police Dept. to a model that existed during the 2018-2019 Fiscal year. Madison explained that in order to fix their money deficit they will reduce personnel. He stated that they will have two officers working the night shift and one during the day, eliminating dispatchers of the sheriff's department.

On the next item, the board agreed to use LA Department of Correction's inmates three days a week to help with removal of debris, to cut grass, and to employ a part time DOC Certified Officer as a guard.

The council also approved the emergency removal of limbs and debris from the town's streets to the land fill in Harrisonburg.

School System Receives Stimulus Fund Allocations

The Catahoula Parish School District has benefited from the three different federal stimulus fund acts. The Cares Act in May of 2020 allocated three different sets of funds for the system. The Consolidated Response & Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA) in December of 2020 allocated more funds for the system; however, the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) has only released half of those funds to the school system. Finally, the American Rescue Plan Act (ARP) has allocated the largest amount to the school system, but again the LDOE has only released a small portion of the funds to the district.

All of the stimulus funds are provided as grant funds with specific guidelines on how they can be used. Some of the guidelines are more stringent

than others, but all budgets for the funds must be approved by the LDOE based on the established rules before the district may utilize the funds. The funds all are back dated to March of 2020 when the pandemic was first declared an emergency, and all have different ending dates.

The Cares Act was the first stimulus act that provided funds for the school system. The funds were allocated to the district in three different grants: Elementary & Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER I), Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEERF), and Elementary & Secondary School Emergency Relief Incentive (ESSER Incentive). GEERF funds were to be solely used for technology and the district used the \$141,921 grant for MiFi devices for students and a

portion of the cost of a year of the internet service for those devices. ESSER Incentive funds also had strict guidelines on the use of the funds. The district utilized the \$102,708 allocation for online licenses for Tier I programs for students, supplies for Tier I programs, and contract services for teacher professional development.

The ESSER I funds had the most lenient guidelines and was the largest amount of CARES ACT funds, coming in at \$515,894. The district was able to use the funds for a wide variety of things including Chromebooks for students and teachers, a hand sanitizer program with Cintas that provides a dispenser in each classroom and common area, water for dispensers in each school, more MiFi devices for school, more MiFi devices for students and a

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Sandifer recognized by Jonesville Lions Club



LADELL SANDIFER was recognized by the Jonesville Lion's Club last week for his service to the club and to Jonesville and to the parish of Catahoula for the past 50 years. Sandifer is still an active and productive club member at the age of 93. Pictured above are Lion's Club members left to right Kevin Routon, Ladell Sandifer, Sheriff Toney Edwards, and Mike Wilson.

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