

## PUBLIC HEARING REPORT

APRIL 22, 2020  
FRANKLIN, LOUISIANA

The St. Mary Parish Council held a Public Hearing on this date via Video Conference with Chairman Dean S. Adams presiding and the following members present: Rev. Craig A. Mathews, Rodney Olander, Scott Ramsey, Leslie “Les” Rulf, Jr., Patrick J. Hebert, James W. Bennett, Jr., Mark A. Duhon, Gwendolyn L. Hidalgo, and Kristi Prejeant Rink, M.D. Absent was J Ina. Five (5) Council Members were physically present and the remaining five (5) were present via video conferencing.

Mr. Adams informed that Howard Castay, KBZE is live streaming via their Facebook page.

The purpose of the Public Meeting will be to receive written comments by mail, fax, or email; and oral comments by telephone to adopt the following ordinance:

An ordinance creating Consolidated Gravity Drainage District No. 2A of the Parish of St. Mary, State of Louisiana, describing the territory to compose the district and the boundaries thereof, and providing for other matters in connection therewith.

Clerk of the Council, Lisa C. Morgan informed that she received an email from Deborah Price stating, “April 20, 2020, Dear Council Members, Once again, I am writing to express my concern regarding the Proposed Ordinance to “consolidate” Consolidated Gravity Drainage District #2 and Drainage District #6. This issue is up for a vote during this week’s Parish Council Meeting. I have multiple issues with this. First, I believe that ONLY essential business that would otherwise endanger the operations of the parish should be conducted during this time of emergency and in this manner. While the entire Parish (and world) is struggling with ramifications of Covid 19, it is unseemly for the Council to conduct business that is not of an emergency nature when the public cannot actually participate “live” in the meeting. I know Mr. Duplantis will disagree with my opinion, but I believe this is against the intent of the Sunshine Meeting Law, and against the intent of the revised statute allowing governing bodies to conduct business via remote operations during this unprecedented time in our history. The meeting is to be conducted via videoconference. The only way the public will see/hear the meeting seems to be by watching a live stream through Facebook. The meeting announcement states Public comments relating to agenda items upon which a vote is to be taken, may be submitted prior to the Public Meeting via mail to St. Mary Parish Council, Clerk of the Council, 500 Main Street, Franklin, Louisiana 70538; via email to lmorgan@stmaryparishla.gov; or via fax to 337-828-4092 “Attention: Clerk of the Council”. During the Public Meeting, oral public comments may be submitted via telephone at 337-828-4100, ext. 517. The Public Meeting may be viewed via the Facebook pages “St. Mary Parish Office of Emergency Preparedness and Homeland Security” and “KQKI 95.3 FM”. What about the portion of the public that doesn’t have Facebook or internet? I urge the Council to VOTE NO on this Proposed Ordinance. No information has been presented that explains in detail why consolidating these two districts would make greater sense than allowing them to operate separately as they do currently. We have repeatedly asked for specifics as to the proposed “savings” this would bring about, but have only received generalities. The fact is, in this instance, it makes no sense to consolidate these districts, and would, in fact, be detrimental to the areas serviced. CGDD#2 has done an outstanding job over the past several years. Right out of the box, they refinanced and saved the district (taxpayers) \$53,000. Major improvements have been made: All Pumping Stations have been automated to allow faster response time; Station 6 (Victor II) has been renovated by the addition of new equipment and increased pump capacity; drainage ditches and canals are being cleaned of over growth, garbage, lilies and silt build up to increase our drainage ability (which is being done in ditches that are not even necessarily the Drainage District’s responsibility, but need to be done); most importantly, CGDD#2 is in the middle of completing the levee system, building Station 9 (which will increase pumping capacity over the combined capacity of stations 3 and 4) and then completing the tie in of Station 7. This work is too important to be interrupted by the Parish’s so-called “consolidation” plan. The completion of the levee system and the pumping stations will directly impact every property owner in Morgan City & Siracusa. Again, I am urging you all, since this HAS come up for vote during this time, to VOTE NO and allow our Consolidated Gravity Drainage District #2 to get on with the excellent work they have been providing for us instead of worrying about how these incomplete consolidation plans may affect us all.”

Mrs. Morgan also informed that she received an email from Deborah Tabor stating, “Questions for the 4/22/20 meeting. What is the official plan for consolidation? We have heard different plans how will the consolidation be carried out. Who will be in charge? Parish or Board? Personnel, money, bills to

be paid, time frame. What is the cost savings of this plan. I understand it will cost more to consolidate than savings. Is there actual cost savings? Supervisor salary, insurance, retirement, expenses to cover the two areas? Will the people have this to vote on this? What is the time frame? This questions are asked by Errol and Deborah Tabor personally.”

In response to Mr. Bennett’s inquiry relative to the Sunshine Meeting Law, Legal Counsel, Eric Duplantis expounded on Governor Edwards’ Executive Order #2020-30 and stated that any matter can be discussed via video conferencing and not violate any laws.

Consolidated Gravity Drainage District No. 2 Chairman, Lee Dragna appeared before the Council in opposition of creating Consolidated Gravity Drainage District No. 2A. He submitted information and expounded on current cost and savings verses cost and savings of consolidating Consolidated Gravity Drainage District No. 2 and Gravity Drainage District No. 6.

In response to Mr. Adams’ inquiry, Mr. Dragna stated that Consolidated Gravity Drainage District No. 2 has eight (8) pump stations and 46 pumps that currently pump 1.9 million gallons per minute and when the upgrade is complete it will pump 2.6 million gallons per minute.

Mrs. Morgan informed that public comments can be received via telephone calls at 337-828-4100 Ext. 517.

Errol Tabor, Amelia, Louisiana phoned in opposition of creating Consolidated Gravity Drainage District No. 2A. He stated that he is not aware of any issues with the boards in Amelia and expounded on his reasons not to consolidate.

There being no further business, Mr. Bennett moved for adjournment. Mr. Olander seconded the motion, which carried.

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Lisa C. Morgan, Clerk

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Dean S. Adams, Chairman