

# CENTRAL LOUISIANA REGIONAL PORT

## BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

February 26, 2025

The Central Louisiana Regional Port Board of Commissioners convened at 8:03 AM, February 26, 2025, at the Port Central Office, 600 River Port Road, Alexandria, Louisiana.

**Present were:** Paul Coreil, Haywood Joiner, Gil McKee, Brannin Leglue, John Scott, Basil Smith, Terry Spruill, Larry Turner

**Absent:** Mike Grant

**Also Present:** Ben, Russo, CLRP Executive Director; Keith Hillman, MMLH; Stephanie Ryland, CLRP Executive Assistant

Roll called by Stephanie Ryland

Upon establishing a quorum, the meeting was called to order by Vice President Terry Spruill

Invocation was given by Commissioner Larry Turner

Pledge of Allegiance led by Vice-President Terry Spruill

Vice President Spruill offered a Public Comment Period Pursuant to LRS 42:14; there were none.

### Introduction of Bo Douglas

- The Rapides Parish Police Jury appointed Mr. Bo Douglas to the Board of Commissioners (replacing the vacated seat of Daniel Lonsberry).
- Terry Spruill appreciates Bo joining the CLRP board and believes the board concentrates on what's important for Central Louisiana.

### VI. Action Items:

- a. Agenda - Motion by Commissioner H. Joiner, seconded by Commissioner B. Smith, to approve the agenda as proposed; motion carried.
- b. Minutes - Motion by Commissioner B. Leglue, seconded by Commissioner P. Coreil, to approve Minutes of the regularly scheduled meeting held on November 20, 2024; motion carried.
- c. Financial - Motion by Commissioner G. McKee, seconded by Commissioner L. Turner to approve financial statements for January 2025; motion carried.
  - Revenues are a little down in January because Avant and Distran paid rent early.
  - Still above budget for the overall year.
  - Expenses are in good shape.
  - O and M will be tweaked in the budget process.
- d. Financial - Motion by Commissioner P. Coreil, seconded by Commissioner J. Scott to approve the proposed General Operating Budget for FY 2025-2026 as presented; motion carried.
  - Budget includes expenses for upcoming military rotation.
  - Salaries increased to account for raises and the intern; Intern is doing a "fabulous job".
  - Professional services adjusted down.
  - Expenses going through capitalized projects like the Distran project.
  - Membership has gone up; Joined Louisiana Central and Louisiana Armed Forces and Louisiana Central.
  - Adjustments in insurance have been made; Negotiations are ongoing.
  - More work with Heartland Services for preventive maintenance; Work orders and estimates are being used to track projects.
  - \$90,000 included for bond interest for the Distran project which covers bonding until revenue or reimbursements from the state are received.
- e. Motion by Commissioner H. Joiner, seconded by Commissioner J. Scott to approve a public hearing relative to CLRP's proposed General Operating budget on March 26, 2025, at 8:00 am at the CLRP's Central Office.; motion carried.
  - The budget notice will be published in the newspaper on Sunday and will be posted on our website.
  - The budget goes into effect May 1<sup>st</sup>.

- f. Motion by Commissioner B. Leglue, seconded by Commissioner L. Turner accept the nominating committee as recommended by Vice-President Terry Spruill to include Mike Grant, Chairman, Paul Coreil and Terry Spruill; motion carried.
- The nominating committee will meet to discuss and nominate the president, vice president, and secretary/treasurer of the board.
  - Stephanie will send an email listing all the committees and their members.
  - The committees are: Executive Committee, Finance Committee, Legal Committee, Nominating Committee, Operations Committee, and Personnel Committee.
- g. Motion by Commissioner G. McKee, seconded by Commissioner J. Scott to award the 45 Acre Tract Site Improvements project based on the Engineer’s recommendation.; motion carried without opposition.
- Over 30 contractors downloaded electronic bids on this project and 14 bids were received.
  - Skyplex Trucking was recommended for a project.
- h. Motion by Commissioner P. Coreil, seconded by Commissioner L. Turner to authorize the Executive Director to execute a CEA with the Red River Waterway Commission for the electrical Substation project; motion carried without opposition.
- Port priority project for Distran had a funding gap of \$3.8 million.
    - RRWC approved gap funding.
    - Terms: Loan with no interest, to be repaid when DOTD provides port priority funds.

VII. Comments:

**a. Comments by Executive Director – Ben Russo**

Ben Russo provided the following updates which reflect the continued progress and strategic efforts being made across multiple projects at the port:

**Funding Updates**

- Decision to pull back from applying for a USDA grant due to issues in D.C.
  - Difficult to contact people; some programs have been canceled.
- CLRP had issues with reimbursements from DRA grant initially, but payments have now been received.
- Focus on EDA, DRA, and Department of Defense money in the future.
  - Department of Defense funding has been very good.
- Assumption made regarding categorical exception for NEPA not recognized by both the Department of Army and Fort Johnson.
  - Will seek categorical exception issued by the U.S. Army, Fort Johnson oversight before applying again.
- Louisiana Central had roughly \$450,000 available for the project after the ‘match’ requirement through the state's LED program.
- Discussion with the executive director regarding the military initiative and infrastructure needs.

**Military Affairs:**

- Anticipate hearing a go or no go on a project in the second quarter of next year.
- Met with the Corps of Engineers and the U.S. military.
- Mardi Gras festivities will include active and retired military and their families – including floats for Friday’s parade, taste of Mardi Gras on Saturday and crew parade on Sunday.
- Executive Director will meet with the four-star general out of Barksdale at the Port of Caddo Bossier to look at bringing in materials for their fuel for their B52s.
  - This was generated by the last rotation with the 377 Sustainable Group.
  - This will give more tonnage on the river, which will help facilitate more investment on the river.
- Ben received a call from a gentleman in Alabama about shipping bark out of the port.
  - The bark is used in fuel boilers to produce steam and power in pulp and paper mills.
  - The closing of the IP facility in Campti is causing a loss of ability to get rid of material.
  - Canadian sawmills are generating a lot of bark and need a place to go.

- b. Comments by Legal Counsel – none
- c. Comments by Economic Development – none
- d. Comments from Elected Officials – none
- e. Comments by public– none
- f. Comments / Questions by Commissioners – none

There being no further business to come before the Board, Commissioner G. McKee motioned to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner J. Scott. This meeting of March 26, 2025, was adjourned by Vice President T. Spruill at 8:47 AM.