

TUESDAY, JANUARY 26, 2016
MATHEWS, LOUISIANA

STATE OF LOUISIANA
PARISH LAFOURCHE

A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE LAFOURCHE PARISH COUNCIL, PARISH OF LAFOURCHE, STATE OF LOUISIANA, WAS SCHEDULED FOR TUESDAY, JANUARY 26, 2016 AT 4:30 P.M., HELD AT THE MATHEWS GOVERNMENT COMPLEX, 4876 HIGHWAY 1, MATHEWS, LOUISIANA.

The Lafourche Parish Council was duly convened as the Governing Authority of said Parish by Mr. Jerry LaFont, Chairman, who then stated that the Lafourche Parish Council was ready for the transaction of business at 4:30 p.m.

Proceedings of the meeting were called to order with the following:

PRESENT:	Mr. Jerry Jones – Vice Chairman	Mr. Corey Perrillioux
	Ms. Luci Sposito	Mr. Armand “Noonie” Autin
	Mr. Michael Gros	Mr. Jerry LaFont - Chairman
	Mr. Aaron “Bo” Melvin	Mr. Daniel Lorraine
	Mr. Roy Landry	Mr. James Cantrelle, Parish President

ABSENT: None

Chairman LaFont *announced* that the **invocation** would be led by Ms. Sposito. The Council then recited the **Pledge of Allegiance** led by Mr. Autin.

RESOLUTIONS

4:34:25 PM The first item (1) on the agenda was a resolution approving the Parish President’s appointment of Tommy Lasseigne for the position of Finance Director and Human Resources Director for Lafourche Parish Government; and authorizing the Parish President to sign, execute and administer any and all relevant documents. A motion was offered by Ms. Sposito and Mr. Gros, seconded by Mr. Melvin.

Mr. Landry said, “On page 34 of 41 of the Home Rule Charter it says the Director of Finance and such other parish officials or employees *designated by the Council* shall be bonded in the amount and with the surety prescribed by the Council. Is there anything that would stop the bond from taking place if we need to get a bond for Mr. Lasseigne? *Is he bondable?* That’s what I am asking.”

Chairman LaFont asked, “Do we have a Bond on the Finance Director?”

President Cantrelle answered, “I have a Bond on myself and somebody else. I don’t know if that is required but if it is required *I am sure he can get a Bond.*”

Chairman LaFont said, “I don’t think it should be a problem.”

Mr. Tommy Lasseigne, 1110 Audubon, Thibodaux, LA, came forward to answer questions.

Mr. Perrillioux stated, “My main question is about your most recent employment with this very

Council. I've *heard rumblings* back and forth with different scenarios with you and I was kind of curious and would like to hear your side of it. First of all, can you explain why you left with no notice and put a *gone fishing sign* on your desk?"

Mr. Lasseigne answered, "The gone fishing sign *was a joke*. A previous employee in our department, the Legislative Branch, had left, bought a shrimp boat and went fishing and had put a sign on her door, gone fishing. I don't see what the deal is with that. *It was a joke.*"

Mr. Perrillieux said, "Not more or less the gone fishing I understand that could have been lighthearted stab at whatever but leaving with no notice. From what I understand, you put the note on that day and said as of 4:30 that day *I am out of here.*"

Mr. Lasseigne asked, "Note as to what. What do you mean note as to what?"

Mr. Perrillieux explained, "When you leave a job normally you give a two week notice. I guess not down here but I am curious about that."

Mr. Lasseigne said, "I just chose not to give a *two week notice*. I was doing nothing. I was sitting there doing nothing. I'm not going to sit in my office and get a check doing nothing. I'm not going to do it. I needed to be *assigned work* or be able to do it on my own. The Legislative Auditor was not supposed to do it on his own. They did change that to where it could have been but it was just not the time or the right situation and *I chose to move on.*"

Mr. Perrillieux stated, "Another thing I heard was, are you a morning person because I understand sometimes you would not show up to work until 11 a.m. and then say you were going to work on the weekends to *cover the time.*"

Mr. Lasseigne said, "The Chairman dictates when I work. When I worked with different Chairman I went in at different times.

Mr. Perrillieux asked, "Who was the last Chairman?"

Mr. Lasseigne answered, "Mr. LaFont."

Mr. Perrillieux asked, "Mr. LaFont would you want to answer that?"

Mr. Lasseigne stated, "He put a time clock in and *I was the first one* or second one there every day. Ms. Carleen was either first or second and I was either first or second always every day on time."

Mr. Perrillieux said, "I am not trying to badger you, sir. You hear about these things and I just want to, *for the record*, have your response to it. That way, I can hear both sides. Basically, to make my decision. I looked at your resume and I tried to call but you didn't have any references in it, of course. So, I tried to do some digging and I really *couldn't find too many people* to talk to. Do you have broad experience running an entire Finance Department?"

Mr. Lasseigne answered, "Yes."

Mr. Perrillieux said, "I understand you have a PHD."

Mr. Lasseigne answered, "Yes, *I ran Key Medical* for 4 or 5 years. We made the Inc. 500 list for fastest growing companies in America for two years in a row which is very hard to do. We were the only ones from around here who has ever done it."

Mr. Perrillieux said, "I was able to reach Mr. Hession. He was the one person that I did locate, basically, on my own. He gave you a *favorable response* to my questions about your character and stuff like that."

Mr. Lasseigne stated, "I made a lot of money for him."

Mr. Perrillieux said, "Well, that's always nice. Going into something like this, as far as being a public official and stuff there could be a *lot of scrutiny* from whomever. My next question is about Fiduciary responsibilities. Have you ever been charged or convicted of Fiduciary mismanagement?"

Mr. Lasseigne answered, “No.”

Mr. Perrillioux stated, “Okay. I think we have a right to know that. If you are handling the tax payers’ money we would like to know if there’s *ever been a problem* in the past with liens or judgements or something like that.”

Mr. Lasseigne answered, “No liens no judgements. You can check it’s all public record. I don’t have any *liens or judgements*.”

Mr. Perrillioux said, “Okay, I just wanted to ask you. I didn’t want to spend my own money and resources trying to find out because the Parish decided not to do *background investigations* on anyone this year.”

Mr. Lasseigne stated, “They have a right to do a background investigation. I don’t have a problem with that. I just had a background. Don’t you work for I.C.E.? Aren’t you associated with I.C.E.?”

Mr. Perrillioux answered, “*I am*.”

Mr. Lasseigne stated, “So, you are familiar with T.S.A. and the TWIC card.”

Mr. Perrillioux answered, “Absolutely.”

Mr. Lasseigne said, “To get a TWIC card what was the first thing they do.”

Mr. Perrillioux said, “To get a TWIC card I think *criminal background*....”

Mr. Lasseigne began speaking, “Extensive, extensive background information. Not just criminal.”

Mr. Perrillioux stated, “Not just criminal.”

Mr. Lasseigne said, “My TWIC card is less than a year old. Less than one percent of the people in the United States have that and there’s a lot of them down here because of *Fourchon and the chemical plants*. We can do another background check. I don’t care.”

Mr. Perrillioux said, “I didn’t get that response from the Administration so I appreciate it. I might just do that.”

Mr. Lasseigne said, “It’s their prerogative if the Council wants to *initiate a background check*.”

Mr. Perrillioux stated, “So it’s not your approval.”

Mr. Lasseigne said, “I’ll approve it but Administration would be the one who chooses to do it or not.”

Mr. Perrillioux said, “They would choose if they wanted to *pay for it or not*.”

Mr. Lasseigne stated, “The Council wanted to initiate background checks, say on all the department heads they could establish an ordinance to do that. The only thing that perplexes me now is *why this is coming up for the Finance Director* and I didn’t see any of this conversation or discussion for the Parish Administrator.”

Mr. Perrillioux stated, “The reason I’m asking these questions is because if you’re a Finance Director and you are going to be in charge of multi million dollars of tax payer money I want to make sure it’s in *proper hands*.”

Mr. Lasseigne said, “I understand that. We’ve always had a perfect audit and I was an Internal Auditor for the Parish. It’s not like I don’t know what I am doing.”

Mr. Perrillioux said, “I didn’t say you don’t. I’m just saying. I wouldn’t want to hire a Michael Vicks to run the Animal Shelter. I just want to make sure that you’re the character suitable for the position and that’s what I am aiming at. *I appreciate it*.”

Mr. Lasseigne said, “I don’t know how to explain it. I don’t know what to say. I’ve taught at five universities. I’ve run multiple organizations. I don’t know what to say. It’s not like I’m an

unknown commodity.”

Mr. Perrillieux said, “I appreciate what you are saying.”

Mr. Melvin stated, “How are you doing Mr. Lasseigne? As most people know, Mr. Lasseigne has been a Councilman before *in this exact chair* and unlike anyone else up here besides Mr. Cantrelle, I ran against Mr. Lasseigne this past Spring and he ran a clean campaign and I am thankful for that. He also ran against Mr. Jimmy several years ago for President. I am in a unique position sitting up here compared to some of my co-council and *I don't hold any grudges*. Nothing personal with Mr. Cantrelle but I had some phone calls from certain constituents who were just concerned so I don't want to seem like this is personal. If you are approved, I'm going to work with you best I can like I will anybody else who would be approved for this position for the *betterment of Lafourche Parish*.”

Ms. Sposito stated, “Mr. Lasseigne, your resume, I don't know that we could have found someone more qualified for this position and I know it's an important position so you are under a great *deal of scrutiny* and probably rightfully so. I will say this, in that, the Finance Department in any organization especially a governmental organization has so many checks and balances. It's easier to steal a pump, a lift pump; than it would be to funnel money from the Parish funds I would imagine that. So, if you would look at any workplace there's *more theft that goes on* and a lot of people don't have even a chance to look at the bottom line. So I think we need to understand that if in fact he was required or any Parish employees I think what we do for one we need to do for all if you want a credit check or if you want a criminal check. We have other Directors that we already appointed. I don't feel like it is fair to require something of one and not the others no matter the position because there's opportunity for theft in every, every position.”

Mr. Lasseigne stated, “*I would like to say something*. When Mr. Cantrelle asked me about this I said well, one thing good about Finance and the Parish has some things that need to be straightened up I believe, Finance isn't one of them. The Finance Department is run pretty well. It's been run pretty well. Even with turnovers with heads of the department and everything. It's run well. Everybody is still there because the woman who was past department head is still there as a Fund Accountant. So, I think it'll be improved. That's what I have always strived to do. If you have a well-run organization you tweak things and *make it better*. Now the easiest thing to fix is a poorly run organization. You can fix something but Finance is in good shape. Don't worry about it. HR is a small department because you also have Civil Service. They kind of overlap each other.”

Mr. Autin said, “We've never met Tommy but myself and Jimmy had a discussion some time back and *your name was mentioned* and I had some issues because for whatever reason many people see you as being the vice of in controversial regardless of your academic, I'm not going to say qualifications, but what your academic background is. It's pretty solid. This is evident in your resume. However, several people called me and spoke in favor of allowing Jimmy to have his Department Heads and largely we have done that so far. However, when you said you have no judgements against you I had someone give me *three judgements* today against you and maybe if you want to review them. You specifically just said on the record that you didn't have no judgements against you. These are judgements and if you want to look at them. *This was handed to me*. I didn't want to bring it up and I wasn't, actually, I just pulled it out of my case. When you said you had no judgements against you, thirteen hundred, three thousand dollars etc. Do you want to review them? Maybe a different Thomas *aka Tommy Lasseigne* out of Thibodaux. Anyway, beyond that one of the things I feel really strongly about is to me it would be an insult to Councilman Melvin in that he ran a race and the constituents in that area approved him and disapproved you representing them in Parish Government. So, I kind of feel like how can I now go back and say how I'm going to *approve you* in being a significant part of the

Parish Government when constituency in your locale didn't support you. Maybe you can explain what the *reason for that was*, why people see you as being the vice of in controversial and what of these three judgements against you said weren't against you. Maybe they're someone else."

Mr. Lasseigne replied, "These three judgements are all *old judgements that are settled*. When I went you can look at some of these things, 84, you know what happened in 84 with the oilfield."

Mr. Autin stated, "91, 84 but specifically you just said you had *no judgements against you*. Did you not, sir?"

Mr. Lasseigne answered, "I didn't say I *never had a judgement* against me. I said I have no judgements against me. I don't have any judgements against me. These are not outstanding."

Mr. Autin said, "It says Court of Law at the top it says Judgement does it not?"

Mr. Lasseigne answered, "This is not an existing judgement. I don't know where you got it."

Mr. Autin replied, "It says Court of Law Seventeenth Judicial District and on top it says judgement."

Mr. Lasseigne said, "It's 1984. *Its thirty two years ago.*"

Mr. Autin stated, "We are entrusting you with millions of dollars in the Parish Government."

Mr. Lasseigne stated, "I paid one last year no two years ago. *I paid the last one off*. Everything when I went back to school I lost everything and I worked and I came back and I worked and I came back. That's how I know I have no judgements because I paid off the last one last year."

Mr. Autin said, "Understood. The question was do you have any judgements and you said no, I think I got my answer. *I appreciate it.*"

Mr. Gros stated, "I've known Mr. Lasseigne for a long time. He actually taught me a marketing class at Nicholls and the *guy is very sharp*. I think we are all in agreement with that in his resume. The one thing he knows is Government, the Home Rule Charter. I would put him up against anybody in terms of citing the Charter. Maybe Mr. Lorraine might have him on that but anytime I have asked him a question, he knows what's *going on in the Charter*. We have a new Administration, new Council people and I think it's only important to guide them over there. I disagree with Mr. Autin about what he said about his race against Mr. Melvin. I ran against two fine gentlemen and if they were up to something I would not *hold that against them*. He ran for Parish President and gave it a good race. A lot of people like him in this parish but just like the rest of us a lot of people voted against us. I thought I did well in the race and there were a lot of people I didn't get their votes. It doesn't mean *I'm a bad person*. I think we need to think about that. We all are working with the Government and working with our Administration. We need to *work with him* and I understand the questions from Mr. Perrillieux and I appreciate it. I think we owe it to our constituents to *dig deep on this* but are we on a witch hunt and trying to look for petty things? Nobody's perfect and I think this guy right in front of us will do a good job as a Finance Director."

Mr. Melvin stated, "I can appreciate what Mr. Autin was saying but *I reiterate I did not put myself here*. The people of District 4 did and I'm responsible for representing them as well as other folks in Lafourche Parish. Nobody got put here by themselves. *People put us here*. So, as I mentioned earlier he was my opponent. I have no axes to grind. He ran a clean campaign. Just from concerns from constituents that I received calls from I don't think I can support this nomination but if he is approved or whoever gets the position I will work with them the best I can to *put the best foot forward*. Thank you."

Mr. Perrillieux said, "That was basically my question earlier. Were you ever charged or convicted of financial crimes or ever had judgements against you for financial reasons. I didn't even know about this."

Mr. Lasseigne said, "One of these I've never *heard of the person* on here."

Mr. Perrillioux said, “That was not a set up because I did not even know those existed. I just want to make that clear.”

Mr. Lasseigne said, “This one is resolved. I know that.”

Mr. Perrillioux stated, “Another thing. *It is a general comment.* I sent an email to Ms. Carleen and she dispersed it amongst the Councilmen and I think the Administrator. A job application for the Parish of Lafourche the last page on the application is a consent form to have a *background investigation* done. I didn’t know that Department Heads were being excluded from any type of background investigation. That’s why when I started asking about this position in Finance because it’s very undoubtedly very important to me.”

Mr. Lasseigne replied, “I have no *problem with it.*”

Mr. Perrillioux stated, “I am not on a witch hunt. I just want to make sure that the people of Lafourche Parish are taken care of by the most talented, gifted and charismatic people that we can put in those positions and that’s why I am asking these questions about legality and things like that. Believe me, I am so impressed. I haven’t finished my degree yet and I’ve been in school for twelve years. I understand the work you put into that and *I respect that.* Truly, I do. I kind of feel misled a little bit when I asked the question and then this thing came up.”

Mr. Lasseigne said, “These are not active. I tell you right now.”

Mr. Perrillioux said, “But, historically you’ve *had judgements against you.* That was my question.”

Mr. Lasseigne answered, “If you are a contractor for decades you are going to go to court. I’m going to tell you that right now. I’m sure but I’m not going to say anything but it’s contractors that you know and they’ve all been in court. You have disagreements with home owners, wives, subcontractors, suppliers. It’s a part of business. The Parish gets sued all the time. Are you going to *fire the Parish?*”

Mr. Perrillioux answered, “I guess it depends on why they are getting sued.”

Mr. Lasseigne stated, “The Sheriff gets sued more than anybody.”

Mr. Perrillioux said, “Yes, I guess you have to find the source of the *lawsuit there.* If it’s a deputy doing something wrong, yes, you get rid of them and you handle the suit. I’m just trying really hard. I think I’m the only one who looked for references and *stuff on this deal.* It’s been a tough road to try and get any information together but anyway I appreciate all your honest answers.”

Mr. Jones called for Question.

Chairman LaFont explained, “What the Call for Question is, Gentlemen, if you are not familiar, it takes six people to vote for it. It means I’m going to ask who wants to vote for it. Yes, means nobody it going to talk again. If you feel you need to say something again vote no. If it doesn’t have six votes.” Chairman LaFont was interrupted by Mr. Lorraine who stated, “*Question takes five votes.*”

Chairman LaFont answered “Six. We looked it up. So, all those in favor of Question. We’re going to light them up. Wait never mind you are going to have to put that up. Just raise your hand if you want to go to Question. Question means no more discussion. So we go to Question.”

The call for Question then *carried* with a vote of (9) yeas, (0) nays and (0) absent.

Chairman LaFont said, “Now we are going to light them up. A vote yes hires Tommy. A vote no doesn’t hire him. A vote to abstain means you don’t want to vote on him. Congratulations you are hired. Do you want to make a statement?” *Mr. Lasseigne did not want to speak.*

The resolution then *carried* by a vote of (5) yeas, (4) nays – Mr. Melvin, Mr. Perrillioux, Mr. Autin and Mr. LaFont and (0) absent.

RES. NO. 16-031 HIRING TOMMY LASSEIGNE AS FINANCE DIRECTOR & H.R. DIRECTOR

ADJOURNMENT

On **motion** by Mr. Gros and seconded by Mr. Jones, and with no further business, the Lafourche Parish Council Meeting of January 26, 2016 *adjourned* at 4:53 p.m.

JERRY LAFONT, CHAIRMAN
CARLEEN B. BABIN, COUNCIL CLERK

PATRICIA GHERE, MINUTE CLERK
LAFOURCHE PARISH COUNCIL