

**Board Meeting**  
**September 17, 2024**

**St. Landry Parish Economic and Industrial Development District**  
**Business Resource Center**  
**5367 I-49 S. Service Road**  
**Opelousas, LA 70570**

Agenda

- I. WELCOME .....Chairman, Donald Dejean
- II. PLEDGE
- III. ROLL CALL
- IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS, VIA COMMENT CARDS- Limit of 3 Minutes
- V. ADOPTION OF AUGUST 2024 REGULAR BOARD MEETING MINUTES –  
Action
- VI. FINANCIALS, AUGUST 2024.....Treasurer – Seth Robin-  
Action
- VII. OLD BUSINESS
  - a. Project Rosie (Walmart Distribution Center) PILOT Program Addendum Update
  - b. Washington Lighting Update
  - c. SLED Annual Holiday Function
- VIII. NEW BUSINESS
  - a. SLED Building/Contents/Liability/Umbrella Policy
  - b. SLED Annual Holiday Function
- IX. BOARD COMMENTS
- X. ADJOURN

**Voting Members Present:** Donald Dejean, Roma Stewart, Andy Dakin, Seth Robin, Chelsey Sharplin, John Hamlin, Erika Milton, Kevin Fuselier, Juan Joseph, Sharon Ortego, Toni Effingger, Daniel Lyons, Candace Papillion

**Voting Members Absent:** Susan Vigee, Kevin Doucet, Lena Charles

**SLED Staff Members Present:** Bill Rodier, Janece Riser, Victoria Mott

**Guests:** Jessie Bellard (Parish President), Landon Boudreaux (SLEMCO), Paula Jordan (United Way), Herman Fuselier (Parish Tourism), Bruce Gaudin (SLED Legal Counsel), Julius Alsandor (Opelousas City Mayor), Shawnee Milburn (Parish Government), Jennie Ledoux (Parish Government), Emani Boyd (Parish Government)

It was determined a quorum was present.

Chairman Don Dejean opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and welcomed the board at 10:09 AM.

**No Public Comments**

**Adoption of August 2024 Regular Board Meeting Minutes:** A motion was made to accept the August 2024 board meeting minutes as submitted by Andy Dakin and seconded by Roma Stewart. The motion was carried without objection.

**August 2024 Financial Report:** Seth Robin presented the financial report, detailing the revenues and expenditures. A motion was made to accept the financial report as submitted by Erika Milton and seconded by Roma Stewart. The motion was carried without objection.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Project Rosie (Walmart Distribution Center) PILOT Program Addendum Agreement**

**DIALOGUE:**

Jessie Bellard- "So, we met with uh- the executives from Walmart a couple weeks ago, and it went well. A lot better than what we anticipated to be honest with you. There was three parts to the proposal. The first part was them staying on and paying the lease payment to SLED and then out of that money, 200,000 goes to SLED. And then the remaining balance of that, goes to the taxing agencies. The second part was the 65/35 on Project Rosie, which is on the equipment. And then the third part was the sales tax exemption for uh- the state.

"Since then, this is- this is what they want to do: They want to buy out the contract and own that property over there- and be property owners and taxpayers of St. Landry. They want their name on paper. That's for sure, that's what they want to do. Everything else is fine.

That's only thing they had. The problem I have is, unless Bill can tell me something different, was when the threat if a lawsuit came up, they tellin' me that their answer was just go ahead and honor the contract and buy out the contract and come on the tax rolls. That's the problem that I have as a parish president and an elected official of this parish is we've been playing with this for years when there's folks over there telling me that they want to buy and become property owners of the parish.

"So, that's the deal in place now, and I've instructed them to deal with me and Sherry only, until this done. Then we would come to the board with our recommendation of what to happen. And the reason for that is, the information I'm getting from Walmart executives- I was under the impression that they were fixing to move out to Mississippi. I was under the impression that they didn't want to become taxpayers. All this time we were protecting \$200,000 for SLED. Economic development cannot be only for economic development. It has to be for the people of our parish. So, they were instructed to not communicate with anybody else besides me and Sherry.

"Once they give us their final deal, I'll come to the board and bring it to y'all. But it's going to be exactly what we wanted from the beginning. Any questions?"

Andy Dakin- "I have a question. So you had a conversation with them recently on your own?"

Jessie Bellard- "We have."

Andy Dakin- "Did they provide you any documentation or anything that would suggest that that offer was ever made formally to us or to our lawyer or anybody?"

Jessie Bellard- "We did not- we did not request any documentation from them on that level because- and I will when the time comes to- that we need it."

Andy Dakin- "Well, I mean it sounds like you're standing here accusing Bill of withholding it- "

Jessie Bellard- "Not accusing- not accusing at all. This is what I- "

Andy Dakin- "You're accusing somebody of withholding it- "



Jessie Bellard- "If you let me talk Andy- "

Andy Dakin- "Well, I was talking."

Jessie Bellard- "At the last meeting last meeting we had in there, they had Nick Gautreaux was on record as representing this board over there in negotiations since 2019."

Andy Dakin- "Okay. So, again, have you been provided any documentation."

Jessie Bellard- "I did not request it."

Andy Dakin- "So you haven't been provided anything yet that would show who, or to whom that information was provided so that we can find out why it is we didn't get the information or who had it, when it was delivered or whether it was ever actually delivered to us."

Jessie Bellard- "So I'm going to request the information when the time is right."

Andy Dakin- "So, when would that- when would the time be right since you're in a public meeting saying that we've been holding this information for some period of time?"

Jessie Bellard- "I never said- I never said the board did. I don't think y'all were given all the information Andy."

Andy Dakin- "So that goes back that you're indicating that either Nick, Bill- but I only have a couple of people that have been talking to Walmart. Nick, Bill, and Eric. Those are the three guys have been talking to Walmart. You're telling me Walmart has told you in a conversation that I wasn't involved in and none of them were involved in, that they provided to us an indication they wanted to buy this contract out some time in the past. It would have seemed to me at that point, I would have said, do you have any documentation to reflect that before I came in and I made that basically allegation here in a public meeting?"

Jessie Bellard – "It's not an allegation- "

Andy Dakin- "It is an allegation."

Jessie Bellard- "I'm not talking about the board. I never said the board."

Andy Dakin- "If Nick is acting on behalf of the board, if Eric's acting on behalf of the board, and if Bill is acting on half of the board, they're agents of the board, therefore it is the board."

So, my- that's my concern. I don't I mean- I I'm with you. If that's a fact- if those are the facts, that's a concern. We need to get to the bottom of it and see what happened. I don't like coming into public meetings without having addressed this. I was with you last week. We've been- we've been- it's my understanding that we've been reaching out, trying to get information on updates of the meeting that happened last week and we haven't gotten a return call from our lawyer, from you or from Wal -Mart and now being told, you told Wal -Mart not to respond to us.”

Jessie Bellard- “Correct.”

Andy Dakin- “And then you come in here and the first time I hear of it is in a public meeting and you were basically accusing, and you can say you're not, but that's what that was. That's an accusation that somebody on behalf of this board received information that Wal -Mart wanted to buy this contract out sometime in the past and they would held it from us for the purpose of benefiting SLED. That's what you said, and I want to know when are we going to get that documentation from Wal -Mart to document when and to whom they sent that document that- they sent that request.”

Jessie Bellard- “I’ll get that document.”

Andy Dakin- “Thank you.”

Jessie Bellard- “That’s not gon’ be a problem.”

Andy Dakin- “Perfect. Thanks.”

Jessie Bellard- “So, if anybody has any questions, I’m here to answer questions.”

Bill Rodier- “So I would just like to bring something up, Jessie. First of all, I agree. You can say what you want, but we are supposed to be working together.”

Jessie Bellard- “I 100% agree with that Bill.”

Bill Rodier- “So, and this isn't what I would call working together. I'm just going to say that for the record, okay? Secondly, as I've informed the board in the email, Walmart did indicate that they wanted to purchase the building back, and the Project Rosie discussion was brought up, and Walmart indicated because of Project Rosie, they wanted to put that consideration to

the back burner. They can tell you what they want, what that was, and I've indicated that to the board in an email with that. So I'm not disputing that, And I've communicated that to all the board members and an email with that. Walmart did indicate that they wanted to put that back. Project Rosie changed that. That was Walmart's indication through Project Rosie to change that. I just want that to go on public record with that. I would like to ask you, you can take whatever position you want. You're the Paris president. I understand that, and I respect your position with that. But I do think that we should be working together for the best interest of everybody on this project."

Jessie Bellard- "I agree 100%. And by the time Sherry and I got involved in this conversation the parish was going to get zero, zero. Now we're going to get the taxes that's over to the Paris government and to the and the school- school board and every taxing agency because we got involved. The 200 ,000 for SLED was a tool that was used, I believe, to better the SLED. They have to have \$200 ,000 and I think that can happen very easily.

"But the people of this Parish, and Walmart. both want to be very open and transparent. They want to pay their taxes. They want to pay their taxes on their bill. They want to be on record of saying that and doing that. And after that meeting- during that meeting, they alluded to that. And me and Sherry talked about that the next morning, so we contacted Greg and that's what's on the table right now. His people, and- his people are very happy to know that that's... the only problem they havin' right now is getting with the legal- the legal minds over there at Walmart to agree with the sales tax on the state side, by putting it in y'all name."

Andy Dakin- "So, I have one other question on that then, if they buy the property back, they take ownership of that, then how are we going to do the state tax thing? We're still going we're going to take ownership of the equipment in their building?"

Jessie Bellard- "It's a PILOT program based strictly on Project Rosie. Not the building and grounds. Their- their only hurdle is to get the people they buyin' equipment from to agree that is going to be under the name of SLED and not Walmart and that's the hurdle they're trying to jump over right now."

Don Dejean- "Okay. Any questions?"



\*Silence\*

Don Dejean- "So, we will still have a PILOT in place?"

Jessie Bellard- "The PILOT is being based only on Project Rosie. So, the 1999 contract is not even an issue anymore. Okay. So, it goes away. The new one comes in only on Project Rosiel."

Don Dejean- "Okay. Anybody have anything? Thank you, Mr. Jessie. Alright. Bill, do you have anything to add? Anybody else? No. Okay. So, Bruce, we gonna make a motion to table it for further consideration, or...?"

Bruce Gaudin- "Yeah. That's a fair motion."

Don Dejean- "Okay. Can I get a motion to table this until we get more information and update it?"

Roma Stewart- "Is it for the letter that Andy was speaking of?"

Bill Rodier- "Yeah, so the motion should be to table the previous approval for the addendum agreement until we have updated information for a new addendum."

Roma Stewart- "A new addendum?"

Bill Rodier- "Right."

Bruce Gaudin- "I think it's appropriate since things seems to be changing every day, that you need to table any action at this time so that you can put all the pieces together so that the board knows the current status is when they vote on what to do going forward. So it's not enough information right now and as I said, especially with the information changing so quickly that should be table at this time. That would be my recommendation."

Don Dejean- "Okay, we got a recommendation to table this project until we get more information on it because it's changing. I have a motion by Ms. Roma and a second by Juan. All in favor? Any opposed? Motion carries."

Bill Rodier- "And the only other thing that I'll say to you as board members, that I will keep you updated in email format on the happenings of this. From what I know, as I have been doing on this to keep you up to date on the motion that I'm up to date with."

Andy Dakin- "I have a question Bill. You just said that they did, in fact, make that offer to purchase this project."

Bill Rodier- "Yeah. They did indicate that they wanted to purchase it."

Andy Dakin- "When was that done?"

Bill Rodier- "Sometime around June of 2022 if I had to guess."

Andy Dakin- "And was that information conveyed to us?"

Bill Rodier- "No, it's only discussed with the attorney... and Walmart, which would taxi the precipice for Project Rosie to come here."

Don Dejean- "And who's the attorney?"

Bill Rodier- "Eric."

Don Dejean- "Eric LaFleur. Okay."

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John Hamlin- "Okay, I have one other question about that."

Bill Rodier- "Yes."

John Hamlin- "Was that whenever you were under a non-disclosure?"

Bill Rodier- "That was at the preface of starting a non-disclosure."

Don Dejean- "Okay."

Andy Dakin "So, was it an offer to buy out the contract or was it a discussion where in that was discussed or was it discussed subject to the NDA? I mean, I'm trying to get clarification because this is the first time that I'm being made aware that there was an actual- that there was a suggestion- that there was an offer to purchase this contract. There's a distinction in my mind, and maybe that's just in my mind. And my minds a weird place to hangout sometimes. But there's a distinction between y'all are having a conversation about whether or not they would purchase it or they said we want to purchase this contract and become the property owners. Because I think if that's it was an offer was made that's one thing, that's that I think should be brought to this board to discuss, if it's conversations of multiple options that are



out there and we never got past that, that is something different. And that's what I'm trying to get clarity on."

Bill Rodier- "So they did indicate an intent to purchase the building back in the same timeframe that they indicated an intent, approximately to go forward with Project Rodie. The conversation happened with them, what do you want to do with your consideration to want to purchase the building and they said we would put that on the back burner until we discuss whether Project Rosie could be a reality. While we're in this, Jessie, and you can dispute this for whatever you want. I've indicated to the board, and I've told I've had two people, including one of the members of your council, who has a connection back to Bentonville, that it indicated that intent to Mississippi. So, whether those two people were, which respected local people that called me about that, whether they were being factual or not, I can't say but these conversations did happen. I'm telling you that, okay?"

Don Dejean- "Okay. Anything else?"

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The following was discussion happened following the original discussion. It is being placed under this as it relates to the agenda item and issues previously discussed with it.

Toni Effingger- "So, I have a question."

Don Dejean- "Mrs. Toni?"

Toni Effingger- "So, you and uhm Sherry ...is that it? Are our attorneys involved? Is nobody involved? Because I just feel like okay, we're given all this extra information now, but we're not- we don't know 100% where it's coming from. So, It makes me feel some type of way because we spent a lot of time on it.... I've dedicated my time to come here to this meeting, and we wanna know what's going on. And I think everybody just been pushing it off, because nobody really want to, you know, talk about this. But we need to have at least one more person that can validate all of this information. I'm not saying that you're not telling us the truth. I'm not saying you're not telling us the truth, but it's like we're getting all this conflict of information and I want to know before I go any further because I- it's just- it kind of questionable."

Jessie Bellard- "I agree 100%. I think, 1. Part of the executive committee should be involved from day one. Not a consultant, not just one person. It should have been an executive board."

Toni Effingger- "Well that's all in the past. So going forward, what do we need to do to get someone at that table, to make sure that everybody- "

Jessie Bellard- "That's my job. And I'm takin care of that myself. And Sherry McGovern, the tax assessor. I promise the parish will win in this negotiation and everybody's going to get what they need out of the deal. But at the same time, people are gonna see that Walmart is going to pay their taxes- their fair share of taxes. It's gon' be on top the table. Everything that's been thrown out there is gon' be on top the table. Eric's going to get involved whenever they finish- "

Toni Effingger- "So, Eric will be involved?"

Jessie Bellard- "If you get the lawyers involved right now, they start doing all kind of stuff for no reason just to make some hours. Whenever Walmart agrees to the deal, then we give it to Eric and ... bring it to the board."

Toni Effingger- "So, when can we expect to... because, you know, I don't want anyone to feel like this board is not valid, or that we are not doing what we are supposed to do."

Jessie Bellard- "I agree 100%. But here's the thing, this board was not given all the information. So, without that happening- it's not the board's fault."

Toni Effingger- "So, is there no way we can get someone else in these conversations that y'all are having, so we can all be on the same page?"

Jessie Bellard- "Sherry and I are negotiating with Walmart right now, and as soon as Walmart agrees to the sales tax side of it, it's a done deal. Everything we talk about in that meeting ... but now they wanna say their intent was to get out of that contract and do the building and grounds and pay their taxes. That's the only thing different. Everything in that meeting we had, was exactly what we ...."

Bill Rodier- "So, Jessie, what their intent was and what they did are two different things. I agree that that's what their intent was. But what their intent was and what they did were two different things. I mean, that's just the fact. That's the fact."

Jessie Bellard- "So, as soon as Greg gets the paperwork, I'll bring it to the board and let the board see."

Bill Rodier- "That's fine. But what their intent was and what they did were two different things. Walmart are- they're big people, and they have their own legal team. And what their intent was- to originally by the building back. And what they ended up doing because of Project Rosie was Walmart's I have informed this board that that's what their intent was. I have informed their board that Project Rosie changed their intent, that's the fact. So, and to her point, I don't think that's what she's actually- she's talking about this as economic development, and she's asking that we should be a part of the discussion with the project that we've worked on for years. And now you're saying, "No, it's not your project, this board isn't valid, you're not economic development, I'm economic development." Am I wrong?"

Jessie Bellard- "All I'm saying is the parish has to look out for itself at this point in time, and that's what I'm doing. And I promise y'all, y'all are going to have everything that y'all need to have when the time comes, and it's going to come for Walmart. The negotiations as far as y'all know it, and what we know it, and what Walmart knows it, it's not all the same. That's the problem. So, I sat down with Chad, our district attorney, sat down with Sherry, we all had a meeting last week, this is the route we taking, because it's too big of a deal. Just remember, the first meeting we had about this over here, they all approved something that was never on the table, never posted, Nothing. Y'all approve the deal that didn't, y'all didn't have it in front of you. Who benefited from that? It's that simple. That's when we stepped in and said, Where's the Parish, where's the tax and entities get anything out of this? Other than what we getting already because they won't come and do anything. That's why we got involved. Because somebody has to look out for the parish. And that's my job."

John Hamlin- "That's our job too, and we're doing that."

Jessie Bellard- "I- I- I- "

John Hamlin- "It's insulting to say that we are here looking out for- "

Jessie Bellard- "I never said the board- "



John Hamlin- “None of us are getting paid. We’re here because we are in this parish, and we’re helping this parish. That’s why we’re all here. To say we aren’t looking out for the parish, is insulting.”

Jessie Bellard- “So- “

Seth Robin- “I want a point of order. I mean, this is a session you can have off the record, y’all can argue in the parking lot....”

The following was discussion happened following the original discussion, under board member comments. It is being placed under this as it relates to the agenda item and issues previously discussed with it.

Andy Dakin- “Yeah, I've got one. And I'll make it brief. But before-- when you guys walk out of here today, I want to caution you against making any assumptions about what's been said here today because until we get some documentation as to what actually transpired there's a great difference between conversations about options that are out there and offers to do something. It's a huge difference and it's worth noting it's not it's not something that's insignificant in a three year negotiation, okay, lots of things get discussed, lots of options get put out, lots of threats get made, not all of those things constitute offers and not all of those things need to come to the board for discussion as they're happening, offers to purchase specific language where they offer to do something is a different story and if that's what happened then that's something we need to take seriously to take a look at but I just caution you before you walk out of here it everybody has an interest in this. It's been pointed out we had an interest in the way this thing was negotiated well I'd like to point out people have interest in the way it's been negotiated now we all have interest we need to cool your jets and let's get the facts and then we can sit down and decide whether we've had all the information or we haven't had all the information. I just want to caution you guys because I know we want to go out and we'll talk and we'll you know have conversations with people and those things can be detrimental both to this project and to things going into the future. So I just, that's my comment is, you know, and I apologize if I got hotter than I should have gotten, but, you know, until I have the evidence in front of me, I don't like public accusations being made. I don't think it's appropriate. I don't think it's fair. And so that's all, that's what got me upset. until I have the evidence in front of me, I don't like public accusations being made. I

don't think it's appropriate. I don't think it's fair. And so that's all, that's what got me upset. So I just, I'm going to heed my own advice here and when we walk out here we got to just calm down and we get the facts and then we can go from there and we'll see what happened and if there's something that happened that shouldn't have we're all grown -ups and we're here to do a job and I feel confident I feel confident just remember on this board I think it's one of the strongest groups of people that I've been associated with and I you'll confident in you guys and in the ability for us to assess that and make the right decisions in that time.”

Don Dejean- “Thank you Andy. Kevin?”

Kevin Fuselier- “When you say offer, it’s not an offer until it’s on a piece of paper in writing.”

Andy Dakin- “Well I would suggest that that would be what I would be looking for yes a formal offer, but I don't know- “

Kevin Fuselier- “If it ain’t written on a piece of paper, it didn’t happen.”

Andy Dakin- “I think that part of the consideration, yeah.”

Bruce Gaudin- “Let me just say that the contract with Walmart is the least of an option to purchase. So they can buy it back anytime that they want to. So it wouldn't be an offer. It would be more or less exercising the option to become the owner.”

Kevin Fuselier- “Even that, if you’re going to exercise the option, don’t you have to put that in writing? A verbal discussion is just that. A verbal discussion until it’s on a legal document.”

Bruce Gaudin- “So if they exercise an option, you're bound and they're bound by the terms of the option that was signed in 1999. So they can't come in, they can come in and change it with your approval or you can change it with their approval, but If the two are of different sides, then you go by the terms of the lease. And if the lease says they have an option to buy and they want to buy, there's nothing you can do about that, that was the negotiated contract from 25 years ago.”

**Washington Lighting Update:** Bruce Gaudin has drafted a CEA for the project between Washington. Bill Rodier suggested tabling the item to the review of the Executive Committee. This suggestion was accepted, and the item was tabled.

**SLED FMLA and Parental Leave Policy Addition (Action):** Seth Robin took lead on the discussion by starting with the explanation of the FMLA policy that is widely used in the work force. It guarantees an employee's job when they take time off to take care of a family member. It guarantees up to 6 weeks of unpaid time off for qualifying circumstances. A motion to adopt the FMLA policy into the SLED handbook was made by Erika Milton and seconded by Candace Papillion. The motion was carried without objection.

Seth Robin continued the discussion by explaining the Parental Leave policy that is being considered. It includes up to 6 weeks of paid leave for a mother, father, or guardian having a child or coming into custody of a child. A motion to accept the proposed Parental Leave policy into the SLED handbook was made by Roma Stewart and seconded by Juan Joseph. The motion carried without objection.

Seth Robin then went on to explain the issue with the current cap on PTO. The current cap of PTO carryover per year is 40 hours and a total cap of 240 hours. A motion to remove the maximum cap on PTO carryover and leave the cap at 240 hours was made by Andy Dakin and seconded by Roma Stewart. The motion carried without objection.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

**SLED Building/ Contents/ Liability/ Umbrella Policy:** The ending date on the current insurance policy is approaching on September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024. The price of the current insurance policy has increased by \$14 and needs approval from the board to renew. A motion was made to renew the current insurance policy with an expense increase of \$14, for a total cost of \$ by Seth Robin and seconded by Erika Milton. The motion carried without objection.

**SLED Annual Holiday Function:** Bill Rodier introduced the date proposal of the annual holiday event held by SLED of Monday, December 2, 2024. Toni Effingger suggested that instead of holding the function at the Steamboat as usual, the function be held at the newly owned and renovated Equine Sales Center, with permission from the CSLEDD board. It was



also suggested that local vendors be used to provide a meal and those that would like to attend can pay in for their portion.

**Board Comments:** Dictated under Project Rosie (Walmart Distribution Center) PILOT Program Addendum Agreement.

With no further matters to be brought before the board, a motion to adjourn was made by Seth Robin and seconded by Candace Papillion. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 10:56 AM.

SECRETARY:

  
Erika Milton

CHAIRMAN:

  
Don Dejean