LOUISIANA AGRICULTURAL FINANCE AUTHORITY BOARD
LAFA BOARD MINUTES

JUNE 20, 2025, 10:00 A.M.
LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY
EXECUTIVE SUITE BOARDROOM
5825 FLORIDA BLVD., SECOND FLOOR
BATON ROUGE, LA. 70806

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by the Chairman, Commissioner Mike Strain, at 10:06 A.M.

II. ROLL CALL AND DECLARATION OF QUORUM

The roll was called by Christopher Lowery.

Members present: Commissioner Mike Strain, Brayden Blanchard, Kent Brown, Ronald Petree and Bill Waguespack

Members Absent: Devin Davis, Jennifer Hill, Katie R. Sistrunk, Representative Chris Turner

Mr. Lowery stated there was a quorum.

III. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

Chairman Strain made a call for nominations for the position of board chair.

Mr. Petree nominated Commissioner Mike Strain for the position of board chair. The nomination was seconded by Bill Waguespack.

The motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Strain then made a call for nominations for the position of board vice chair. Mr. Brown nominated Ronald Petree. The nomination was seconded by Commissioner Mike Strain.

The motion passed unanimously.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Petree introduced the new Economic Development Director for Jeff Davis Parish, Cesillee Oliver.

There were no public comments.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PREVOUS MEETING

Mr. Petree made a motion to approve the minutes from the December 18, 2024, meeting.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Waguespack.

The motion passed unanimously.

VI. REVIEW OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Mr. Jeremy Waller presented LAFA's financial statements to the board and there were no questions from the board members.

Mr. Petree made a motion to accept the financial statements as presented.

The motion was seconded by Mr.Waguespack.

The motion passed unanimously.

VII. COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Strain presented the Commissioner's report. He noted that the Department of Agriculture has been entrusted with administering funds for current and future projects.

He acknowledged the work being done in Lacassine and the continued effort to export rice to Cuba and to the world. He also shared plans to travel to the UK and Europe later this year to discuss timber.

Commissioner Strain thanked the legislature for funding the replacement of vehicles and heavy forestry equipment. As a part of the Elected Ag Commissioners of America, he participates in discussions on commodity pricing. He also referenced the Budget Reconciliation Bill and noted that the agency is currently working through any foreseeable changes.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

A. Update on Lacassine Paving Project

Alex Guillory, an engineer with Bluewing Civil Consulting, provided an update stating the paving should be completed by this upcoming Monday morning and will begin the project close-out.

B. Update on Louisiana Agricultural Workforce Development Program

Mr. Cole provided updates concerning the program and commented that four business were funded this year. Mr. Cole also answered questions from the board.

C. Update to RFSI Program

Mr. Cole updated the board on the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure grant that LAFA is administering. He reported that USDA-AMS has issued final approval for funding.

At the beginning of this year, the program was delayed but recently received a letter from USDA-AMS that the program will be moving forward. He stated that USDA-AMS has revised the timeline and accelerated the program. Staff are finalizing the legal agreement and will award 32 Equipment-Only projects and 3 Infrastructure projects.

Mr. Cole answered questions from the board.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

A. Review and Approval of FY26 Budgets

1. **LAFA**
   Mr. Cole presented the proposed FY26 LAFA General budget to the board. The board reviewed the LAFA budget. Mr. Cole also addressed questions from the board.

2. **Lacassine**
   Mr. Cole presented and explained the FY26 Lacassine budget to the board. The board reviewed the Lacassine budget.

3. **Indian Creek**
   Mr. Cole presented and explained the FY26 Indian Creek budget to the board. The board reviewed the Indian Creek budget.

4. **Certified LA**
   Mr. Cole presented and explained the FY26 Certified LA budget to the board. The board reviewed the Certified LA budget.

Mr. Petree made a motion, in globo, to accept the FY26 Budgets as presented.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Brown.

The motion passed unanimously.

B. Motion to Amend the Agenda

Chairman Strain asked for a motion to amend the meeting agenda to hear Item H out of order to accommodate the schedule of a member of the public here to present on the item.

Mr. Petree made a motion to amend the agenda.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Waguespack.

The motion passed unanimously.

C. South Louisiana Rail Facility Rice Marketing Project (previously Item H)

Mr. Petree recused himself from all discussion and vote on this item.

Commissioner Strain stated that the legislature has appropriated $6.5 million to LDAF-OMF to be administered by LAFA for rice marketing projects.

Mr. Mark Pousson, President and CEO of South Louisiana Rail Facility Rice (SLRF) was present to submit a request for funds for the purpose of building a warehouse, purchase equipment, and build a rice loading terminal at the Port of Lake Charles. Mr. Pousson also addressed and clarified questions from the board.

Mr. Brown made a motion to authorize Commissioner Strain as Chairman to negotiate and execute all documents and agreements necessary to grant any legislatively appropriated funds for rice marketing up to ONE MILLION FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS ($1,500,000.00) to the South Louisiana Rail Facility for the purpose of building a warehouse and purchasing equipment to provide for bagging and storage operations at the Lacassine rice mill facility to allow for the expansion of new products to be marketed on behalf of rice farmers.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Waguespack.

The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Blanchard made a motion to authorize Commissioner Strain as Chairman to negotiate and execute all documents and agreements necessary to obligate LAFA as a sponsor to the SLRF Economic Development Award Program agreement if needed.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Waguespack.

The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Blanchard made a motion to authorize Commissioner Strain as Chairman to negotiate and execute all documents and agreements necessary to grant any legislatively appropriated funds for rice marketing up to TWO MILLION DOLLARS ($2,000,000.00) to the South Louisiana Rail Facility or the Port of Lake Charles for the purpose of

building a rice loading terminal at the Port of Lake Charles to allow for the marketing, selling, and distributing of rice to other markets.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Waguespack and passed unanimously.

Mr. Blanchard made a motion to authorize Commissioner Strain as Chairman to negotiate and execute all documents and agreements necessary to loan the South Louisiana Rail Facility a line of credit up to FIVE MILLION DOLLARS ($5,000,000.00) for the purpose of building a rice loading terminal at the Port of Lake Charles to allow for the marketing, selling, and distributing of rice to other markets.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Waguespack.

The motion passed unanimously.

D. Ratify USDA-MAO Lease

Mr. Cole presented the terms of the USDA-MAO lease at the LDAF Hammond complex.

Mr. Petree made a motion to ratify the new USDA-MAO lease at the Hammond complex.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Brown.

The motion passed unanimously.

E. Oakdale Hangar Lease Renewal

Mr. Cole provided details on the new lease renewal of the Oakdale airport. He also addressed and clarified questions from the board.

Mr. Brown made a motion to authorize Commissioner Strain as Chairman to enter negotiations and execute all documents necessary for the purposes of exercising the renewal option on the hangar lease at the Oakdale airport.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Waguespack.

The motion passed unanimously.

F. Gov. Office of Elderly Affairs Lease/Hammond Complex

Mr. Cole provided details on the new lease terms of the Gov. Office of Elderly Affairs Lease at the LDAF Hammond complex. He also addressed and clarified questions from the board.

Mr. Petree made a motion to authorize Commissioner Strain as Chairman to enter negotiations and execute all documents necessary for the purposes of leasing office space at the Hammond complex to the Governor's Office of Elderly Affairs.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Blanchard.

The motion passed unanimously.

G. Acadian Ambulance Air Med Services Lease at Woodworth Airport

Mr. Cole presented the terms of the Acadian Ambulance Air Med Lease at the Woodworth airport. He also addressed and clarified questions from the board.

Mr. Brown made a motion to authorize Commissioner Strain as Chairman to enter negotiations and execute all documents necessary for the purposes of entering a new lease with Acadian Ambulance Air Med Services for the purposes of renting the large hangar at the Woodworth airport.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Blanchard.

The motion passed unanimously.

H. Tetrahedra Quanta Technologies Property Improvement Projects

Mr. Cole introduced Tito Quinones and Dane Revette to present the business' plan for expansion to the board on behalf of Tetrahedra/ Quanta Technologies Property.

Mr. Quinones and Mr. Revette presented their requests to the board. They also addressed and clarified questions from the board.

1. Building Construction Project

Commissioner Stain moved to amend the previous board approval from September 2024 authorizing the construction of a new building from the amount of $250,000 to a total of up to $400,000. The motion was seconded by Mr. Petree.

After discussion, Mr. Petree moved to amend the main motion from a total up to $400,000 to a total up to $550,000 for the construction of a new building. The amendment was seconded by Mr. Brown. The amendment passed unanimously.

After discussion on the main motion as amended, the motion passed unanimously to authorize the construction of a new building in Lacassine up to $550,000.00.

Mr. Petree made a motion to approve the funds necessary and authorize him as chairman to enter into any agreements and contracts for the construction of a rail spur to service the Workshop Building at the Lacassine Industrial Park.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Blanchard.

The motion passed unanimously.

2. Rail Spur Construction

Mr. Petree moved to authorize the Chairman to negotiate and execute all document necessary and to expend any necessary LAFA funds up to TWO MILLION ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS ($2,100,000.00) with a 15 to a 20-year lease for the construction of a rail spur to service the Workshop Building at the Lacassine Industrial Park.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Waguespack.

During discussion of the motion, it was pointed out that the estimated cost of the project could increase by the time it went to bid and that the amount was based on past estimate.

Mr. Petree withdrew his motion and then moved to authorize the Chairman to negotiate and execute all document necessary and to expend any necessary LAFA funds up to TWO MILLION FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS ($2,500,000.00) with a 15 to a 20-year lease for the construction of a rail spur to service the Workshop Building at the Lacassine Industrial Park. The motion was seconded by Mr. Blanchard and discussed.

The motion passed unanimously.

3. Tetrahedra Lease Negotiations

Mr. Brown moved to authorize Commissioner Strain as Chairman to negotiate and execute any and all amendments to the current Tetrahedra lease at the Lacassine Industrial Park to include any assignments, subleases, separation of lease, or change in terms to accommodate the construction projects being done for the benefit of Tetrahedra/Quanta.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Petree.

The motion passed unanimously.

I. Rail Logix Development Project

Mr. Cole introduced Randy Bennett and the team to present the business' plan for expansion to the board on behalf of Rail Logix.

Mr. Bennett and the team presented their request to install new tracks on a portion of the Lacassine Industrial Park owned by LAFA to the board. They also addressed and clarified questions from the board.

Mr. Petree made a motion to authorize Commissioner Strain as Chairman to negotiate and execute any and all new agreements or amendments to current agreements to allow Rail Logix to make improvements to a certain portion of land at the Lacassine Industrial Park.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Waguespack.

The motion passed unanimously.

J. Healthy Food Retail Program

Mr. Cole provided details of the Healthy Food Retail Program and source of funds to pay for the project. He also addressed and clarified any discussions from the board.

Mr. Brown made a motion to authorize Commissioner Strain as Chairman to approve any legislatively appropriated or LAFA funds up to $1MM necessary for administering the Health Food Retail Program.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Waguespack.

The motion passed unanimously.

K. Feeding Louisiana Food Assistance Program

Commissioner Strain introduced Mr. Pat Van Burkleo, Executive Director of Feeding Louisiana Food Assistance Program and associates to present to the board.

Mr. Petree made a motion to authorize Commissioner Strain as Chairman to enter into any agreements for the purpose of administering the funding that has been allocated by the legislature which are now subject to administrative change by the Joint Legislative Committee of the Budget and for Feeding Louisiana.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Blanchard.

The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Pat Van Burkleo and Jayne Wright-Velez, Executive Director of Food Bank of Central Louisiana, presented their request to the board and addressed questions from the board.

Mr. Petree made a motion to authorize Commissioner Strain as Chairman to enter into an agreement to grant $500,000 to Feeding Louisiana for the purpose of making food purchases from farmers to be repaid by any legislative appropriated funds in FY26.

Discussion: Mr. Petree asked for clarification of repayment of funds. Board addressed and clarified.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Waguespack.

The motion passed unanimously.

X. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Cole reminded the board members to complete their financial disclosures. Mr. Petree thanked the board for all their work.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Waguespack made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Brown.

The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 12:27 P.M.