

September 16, 2019

To: St. James Parish Council Chairman Ryan Louque

P.O. Box 136

Hester, LA 70743

From: RISE St. James President Sharon Lavigne

8581 Highway 18

St. James, LA 70086

September 13, 2019

Via Email and Hand Delivery

Mr. Clyde Cooper
Councilman, District 5
St. James Parish Council
8164 King View Street
St. James, LA 70086
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Mr. Ralph Patin
Councilman, District 4
St. James Parish Council
9189 Schexnayder Street
Convent, LA 70723

Re: Request for Item to be Placed on Council Agenda: A Moratorium

Dear Councilman Cooper and Councilman Patin:

Pursuant to Sec. 2-38 of the St. James Code of Ordinances, as fellow residents and constituents from the Fourth and Fifth Districts, we are writing to request that you place the urgent matter described below on the agenda for the Parish Council's next regular meeting on September 18, 2019.

The Topic: A moratorium on consideration of new land use applications, as well as variances, for all new and existing petrochemical facilities and infrastructure, including pipelines, by the Planning Commission and Parish Council.

The reasons for this request are many. We and many others have repeatedly made this Council aware of the harmful and discriminatory impacts of its land use decisions each time a new facility is considered and approved, or each time an existing facility is allowed to expand its operations. We have consistently highlighted the many burdens and harms these facilities place on our communities.

We have observed that the only examples in recent history of facilities that have been rejected by the Parish government were those that were proposed for sites that are in communities that are majority white. To be clear, we are glad those facilities were rejected because we don't think *any*

community should be saddled and burdened with these toxic industries. But it is painful to see a land use map that so clearly signals the disregard of *our* lives and communities – one that assumes that neither we, nor our children or grandchildren, will be on this land in the not-too-distant future, clearing the way for more industry, more pollution, and more harm. It is painful to see and experience this different treatment and have to voice these things at every meeting of the Council and Planning Commission only to have our concerns fall on deaf ears.

We note that while our communities experience the most direct effects, other communities are also affected by the multiple impacts of these facilities on the land, air, and water around us, on our coast, and even our climate. So, we urge this not only for our communities but for all who are impacted by both the immediate and further-reaching effects of these decisions.

We reiterate a few key reasons for this moratorium -- and why it should be on the Council's agenda and immediately put into effect:

Our Health and Our Lives. We all know we live in the heart of what has long been known around the world as “Cancer Alley.” True to the name, we have watched our friends and people in our families and communities suffer from and too often succumb to cancer and other illnesses at alarming rates. Illnesses that are associated with the pollution emitted from the facilities that surround us. We have made the council aware of this. Scientists and environmental experts, lawyers, and advocates have made the council aware of this. Repeatedly and to no avail. This is immoral.

Our Homes and Our Histories. The Council has also been made aware, as if it weren't already, that the Fourth and Fifth districts have borne the painful brunt of these land use and development plans. It is no secret that our districts are majority Black districts – overwhelmingly so with African Americans comprising 64% and 90% of the populations in our districts respectively. Many of us are descended from people who were enslaved on the plantations that operated in this area, which are more protected by this Parish's land use plans than we are. Many of us were born during the era of Jim Crow. Many of us are privileged to own land that was hard-earned by our ancestors and passed down to us. It has deep meaning for our families. Many of us want to stay here and raise children and grandchildren and pass this land on to them. Because of the placement of these facilities in and near our communities and homes, our land has depreciated in value, in addition to being harmed by the pollution emitted from these facilities, and often unsafe for our children and grandchildren.

Our State Is in Crisis. Louisiana is still losing coastline at alarming rates. Even the State has had to acknowledge that oil and gas infrastructure has contributed to that land loss. St. James Parish is also at a risk of land loss and increased flooding threats, in addition to contributing to the future threats to environmental, coastal and climate crises by allowing more facilities to take what is left and pump millions more pounds of toxic substances into our air, land, and water.

The industry has dictated the agenda for the State for so long and still has many believing that we cannot live without it. Yet, at the same time, while these industries were being touted as good for us and necessary for our economy, Louisiana has consistently ranked at the bottom in education, economy, health, and of course, the environment. The fact is we can no longer live with it. And we are living in a time where there are healthier, life-saving alternatives.

Our communities deserve more than this. Our Parish deserves more than this. We know we can do better. But we must call an urgent time-out and take stock of the path we are on to look for creative, healthy, equitable, just, and sustainable ways to live into our futures.

Sincerely,



Sharon Lavigne

Gail LeBoeuf

