

**TOWN OF SIMMESPORT**

MAYOR LESLIE DRAPER III

DISTRICT I  
GLENN GAUTREAUX

DISTRICT III  
PATRICK WRIGHT



ALDERMAN AT LARGE  
ROMARO TURNER

DISTRICT II  
TIESHA KENNEDY

DISTRICT IV  
SHERMAN BELL

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**June 12, 2023 Regular Town Meeting Minutes**

Minutes of the regular meeting of the Mayor and Board of Aldermen of the Town of Simmesport held at the Simmesport Town Hall on Monday, June 12, 2023, at 6:00 p.m.

Presiding: Mayor Leslie Draper, III

Members Present: Sherman Bell, Glenn Gautreaux, Tiesha Kennedy, Patrick Wright, Romaro Turner

Members Absent:

Town Attorney: Present

Town Clerk: Absent

**AGENDA ITEM 1,2,3: CALL TO ORDER, PRAYER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Mayor Leslie Draper, III called the meeting to order and Alderman Sherman Bell gave the opening prayer followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

**AGENDA ITEM 4: APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

A motion was made by Councilwoman Kennedy and seconded by Councilman Gautreaux to add agenda Item 8a, the passage of Resolution 06-2023-01, property tax resolution for the Parish of Avoyelles. All present voted as follows:

	YES	NO	ABSENT/ABSTAIN
Alderman Bell	X		
Alderman Gautreaux	X		
Alderwoman Kennedy	X		
Alderman Turner	X		
Alderman Wright	X		

The motion passed and the agenda was amended.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Kennedy and seconded by Councilman Bell to add agenda Item 11a, a proposed settlement in Case 1:21-cv-03781, Coleretha Chaney on Behalf of Minor Children vs. Town of Simmesport, Glenn Hall, John Doe. All present voted as follows:

	YES	NO	ABSENT/ABSTAIN
Alderman Bell	X		
Alderman Gautreaux	X		
Alderwoman Kennedy	X		
Alderman Turner	X		
Alderman Wright	X		

The motion passed and the agenda was amended.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Kennedy and seconded by Councilman Turner to add agenda Item 8b, the standard retainer agreement for the accounting firm of Faulk & Winkler. All present voted as follows:

	YES	NO	ABSENT/ABSTAIN
Alderman Bell	X		
Alderman Gautreaux	X		
Alderwoman Kennedy	X		
Alderman Turner	X		
Alderman Wright	X		

The motion passed and the agenda was amended.

A motion was made by Councilman Bell and seconded by Councilman Turner to accept the agenda as amended. All present voted as follows:

	YES	NO	ABSENT/ABSTAIN
Alderman Bell	X		
Alderman Gautreaux	X		
Alderwoman Kennedy	X		
Alderman Turner	X		
Alderman Wright	X		

The motion was carried.

#### AGENDA ITEM 5: APPROVAL OF JANUARY 2023 MINUTES

A motion was made by Alderman Turner and seconded by Alderman Wright that the minutes from the March 13, 2023 meeting be accepted. All present voted as follows:

	YES	NO	ABSENT/ABSTAIN
Alderman Bell	X		
Alderman Gautreaux	X		
Alderwoman Kennedy	X		
Alderman Turner	X		
Alderman Wright	X		

The motion was carried.

#### AGENDA ITEM 6: PAYMENT OF BILLS FOR MARCH

Mayor Draper informed all assembled that the Legislative Auditors have given no findings as of yet. He also said that the State Legislative Auditors stopped our auditors from coming. The accounting firm, Faulk & Winkler, is scheduled to come tomorrow to reconcile the accounts. Mayor Draper also said that many of the vendors who are owed have negotiated payment plans. Cleco is also working with the Town of Simmesport to resolve balances owed. Mayor Draper said the Cleco account is approximately \$475,000 in arrears since 2020. Mayor Draper told the Council he did not know the bill was not being paid. Mayor Draper also said that the lawsuit against the Town by the Municipal Police Employees Retirement System (MPERS) is ongoing. Other towns have settled, but our case is still ongoing. The worry about the MPERS is that they would demand a large, one-time payment which we could not afford.

A motion was made by Councilman Bell and seconded by Councilman Turner to pay the bills for May as posted. All present voted as follows:

	YES	NO	ABSENT/ABSTAIN
Alderman Bell	X		
Alderman Gautreaux	X		
Alderwoman Kennedy	X		
Alderman Turner	X		
Alderman Wright	X		

The motion was carried.

#### AGENDA ITEM 7: PUBLIC COMMENT TIME

- Mr. Cecil Whitmore asked if the budget was being worked on. Mayor Draper said the going was slow, but the budget was worked on. Another citizen asked why the bills were not paid. Mayor Draper said no one is sure why the bills weren't paid and that facet of the problem is being investigated. Councilwoman Kennedy asked if the budget would require a special meeting. Mayor Draper said most likely so.

#### AGENDA ITEM 8: ORDINANCE 05-2023-01 REDISTRICTING PLAN

A public hearing was held on the above ordinance on June 12, 2023 at 5:30 PM. The ordinance is to reorganize the voting districts in Simmesport to comply with the Federal Voting Rights Act in light of the 2020 Census. The ordinance would redraw district lines according to the map entitled Plan A (*see attached*). Alderman Bell strongly objected to the plan on the grounds that Alderman Wright did not live in the district in which he ran (District III), and that Alderman Wright moved the district line in the proposed plan to move his (Alderman Wright's) residence on Abby's Ln. from Alderman Bell's district (District IV) into District III.

A motion was made by Alderwoman Kennedy and seconded by Alderman Bell to pass Ordinance 05-2023-01, to redraw the Simmesport voting districts according to Plan A (*see attached map*). All Present voted as follows:

	YES	NO	ABSENT/ABSTAIN
Alderman Bell	X		

Alderman Gautreaux	<u>          X          </u>	<u>                          </u>	<u>                          </u>
Alderwoman Kennedy	<u>          X          </u>	<u>                          </u>	<u>                          </u>
Alderman Turner	<u>          X          </u>	<u>                          </u>	<u>                          </u>
Alderman Wright	<u>          X          </u>	<u>                          </u>	<u>                          </u>

The motion was carried, and ordinance 05-2023-01 adopted.

Councilwoman Kennedy stated she was confused on what the Ordinance was actually saying and objected to the first vote which adopted the ordinance 5-0. Attorney LaCour then stated the first vote was unclear because not every council member gave a verbal affirmative vote, although no member gave a negative vote. Councilwoman Kennedy then asked for a roll-call vote. *(This amendment was added after the July 10, 2023 meeting in which the council voted to amend these minutes by adding the above passage)*

Councilwoman Kennedy contested the vote and asked for a roll call vote. The original vote was declared a passive vote with no one objecting. A roll call vote was then taken:

	YES	NO	ABSENT/ABSTAIN
Alderman Bell		X	
Alderman Gautreaux	<u>                          </u>	<u>          X          </u>	<u>                          </u>
Alderwoman Kennedy	<u>                          </u>	<u>          X          </u>	<u>                          </u>
Alderman Turner	<u>                          </u>	<u>          X          </u>	<u>                          </u>
Alderman Wright	<u>          X          </u>	<u>                          </u>	<u>                          </u>

After the roll-call vote was taken, the ordinance failed by a vote of 1 for and 4 against.

**AGENDA ITEM 8a: RESOLUTION 06-2023-01 MILLAGE AGREEMENT RENEWAL FOR PARISH PROPERTY TAX**

Resolution 06-2023-01 is a resolution by the Town of Simmesport agreeing to collect Parish millage taxes. Mayor Draper explained this is done yearly and no taxes have been changed.

A motion was made by Alderman Gautreaux and seconded by Alderman Bell to pass Resolution 04-2023-01, the appoint of Jalesia Batist to the position of Town Clerk and was seconded by Alderman Wright. A roll-call vote was taken with the following results:

	YES	NO	ABSENT/ABSTAIN
Alderman Bell	<u>          X          </u>	<u>                          </u>	<u>                          </u>
Alderman Gautreaux	<u>          X          </u>	<u>                          </u>	<u>                          </u>
Alderwoman Kennedy	<u>          X          </u>	<u>                          </u>	<u>                          </u>
Alderman Turner	<u>          X          </u>	<u>                          </u>	<u>                          </u>
Alderman Wright	<u>          X          </u>	<u>                          </u>	<u>                          </u>

The motion passed by unanimous vote.

**AGENDA ITEM 8b: RETAINMENT OF FAULK & WINKLER AS THE ACCOUNTANT OF RECORD**

The Town of Simmesport has to choose an official accounting firm each year. The accounting firm of Faulk & Winkler is to be retained in this capacity.

A motion was made by Alderwoman Kennedy and seconded by Alderman Turner to retain the accounting firm of Faulk & Winkler as the accounting firm for the Town of Simmesport. All present voted as follows:

	YES	NO	ABSENT/ABSTAIN
Alderman Bell	<u>          X          </u>	<u>                          </u>	<u>                          </u>
Alderman Gautreaux	<u>          X          </u>	<u>                          </u>	<u>                          </u>
Alderwoman Kennedy	<u>          X          </u>	<u>                          </u>	<u>                          </u>
Alderman Turner	<u>          X          </u>	<u>                          </u>	<u>                          </u>
Alderman Wright	<u>          X          </u>	<u>                          </u>	<u>                          </u>

The motion passed by unanimous vote.

**AGENDA ITEM 9: ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES**

Mayor Draper told the council said there were some water inspections coming up. The rooms have been secured for the LMA Annual Conference.

**AGENDA ITEM 10: DEPARTMENT REPORTS**

**UTILITY DEPARTMENT**

Mr. Dana Smith said all the water leaks were repaired. The bayou on College Dr has been cleaned out and they are working on Clark St. Mr. Smith said that the Brushy Bayou is next on the list. Alderman Wright said he secured some beaver traps to catch the beavers stopping drainage. Alderman Bell asked if the dirt piled up on Clark St would be removed. Mr. Smith said they started on that today.

**SEWER PLANT**

Mr. Carter was absent.

**STREET DEPARTMENT**

Dana Smith said the crew was reticent to any work in the bayou near Erhardt Park because of the condition of Mission Drive. There is a spot in the drainage ditch where water has washed out under the road.

**FIRE DEPARTMENT**

Fire Chief Dana Smith told those assembled that there were several calls for brush fires because of the dry weather. The delivery of the new fire truck is still slated for September.

**POLICE DEPARTMENT**

Police Chief Daniel Firmin said there were 27 calls, 43 tickets issued resulting in 72 charges and 6 arrests. Over \$12,000 in fines were collected. Chief had no new reports on the vehicles.

**TOWN CLERK**

Jalesia Batiste was absent. Mayor Draper said we are paying \$629 per month for the town dumpster. Many on the Council found this excessive and with the large trash cans, the dumpster may not be needed. Also, we are taking a look at the cell phones to see which ones may not be needed. Mayor Draper relayed that the state legislative auditors said we cannot pay standby pay. Mayor Draper also said that he doesn't believe the Town of Simmesport can pay the electricity, utilities and phone for the fire department without some contractual agreement. Mayor Draper imparted that the State Legislative Auditors told him that while, according to the Lawrason Act, the Council cannot be involved in day-to-day operations, they can have "oversight". The Mayor said that he is waiting on some literature from the Legislative Auditor detailing what they mean.

**TOWN ATTORNEY/MAGISTRATE**

Town Attorney Kirk LaCour informed the council that town court was a good turnout.

**ITEM 11: EXECUTIVE SESSION: Case 1:21-cv-03781 Coleretha Chaney on Behalf of Minor Children vs. Town of Simmesport, Glenn Hall, John Doe**

A motion was made by Alderman Bell and seconded by Alderman Turner to go into executive session. All present voted as follows:

	YES	NO	ABSENT/ABSTAIN
Alderman Bell	X		
Alderman Gautreaux	X		
Alderwoman Kennedy	X		
Alderman Turner	X		
Alderman Wright	X		

The motion was carried, and the Council retired into executive session.

A motion was made by Alderman Bell and seconded by Alderwoman Kennedy to come out of executive session. All present voted as follows:

	YES	NO	ABSENT/ABSTAIN
Alderman Bell	X		
Alderman Gautreaux	X		
Alderwoman Kennedy	X		
Alderman Turner	X		
Alderman Wright	X		

The motion was carried, and the Council came out of executive session.

A motion was made by Alderman Bell and seconded by Alderman Turner to go into executive session. All present voted as follows:

	YES	NO	ABSENT/ABSTAIN
Alderman Bell	X		
Alderman Gautreaux	X		

Alderwoman Kennedy	<u>          X          </u>	<u>                          </u>	<u>                          </u>
Alderman Turner	<u>          X          </u>	<u>                          </u>	<u>                          </u>
Alderman Wright	<u>          X          </u>	<u>                          </u>	<u>                          </u>

The motion was carried, and the Council retired into executive session.

**ITEM 11a: SETTLEMENT IN Case 1:21-cv-03781 Coleretha Chaney on Behalf of Minor Children vs. Town of Simmesport, Glenn Hall, John Doe**

A motion was made by Alderman Bell and seconded by Alderwoman Kennedy to accept a \$250,000 settlement and dismissal of all charges in the matter of Case 1:21-cv-03781 Coleretha Chaney on Behalf of Minor Children vs. Town of Simmesport, Glenn Hall, John Doe. All present voted as follows:

	YES	NO	ABSENT/ABSTAIN
Alderman Bell	<u>          X          </u>	<u>                          </u>	<u>                          </u>
Alderman Gautreaux	<u>          X          </u>	<u>                          </u>	<u>                          </u>
Alderwoman Kennedy	<u>          X          </u>	<u>                          </u>	<u>                          </u>
Alderman Turner	<u>          X          </u>	<u>                          </u>	<u>                          </u>
Alderman Wright	<u>          X          </u>	<u>                          </u>	<u>                          </u>

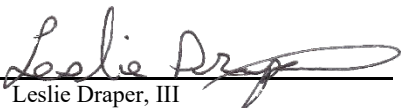
The motion was carried.


**ITEM 12: ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, a motion was made by Alderman Bell and seconded by Alderman Turner to adjourn. All present voted as follows:

	YES	NO	ABSENT/ABSTAIN
Alderman Bell	<u>          X          </u>	<u>                          </u>	<u>                          </u>
Alderman Gautreaux	<u>          X          </u>	<u>                          </u>	<u>                          </u>
Alderwoman Kennedy	<u>          X          </u>	<u>                          </u>	<u>                          </u>
Alderman Turner	<u>          X          </u>	<u>                          </u>	<u>                          </u>
Alderman Wright	<u>          X          </u>	<u>                          </u>	<u>                          </u>

The motion was carried, and the meeting was adjourned.

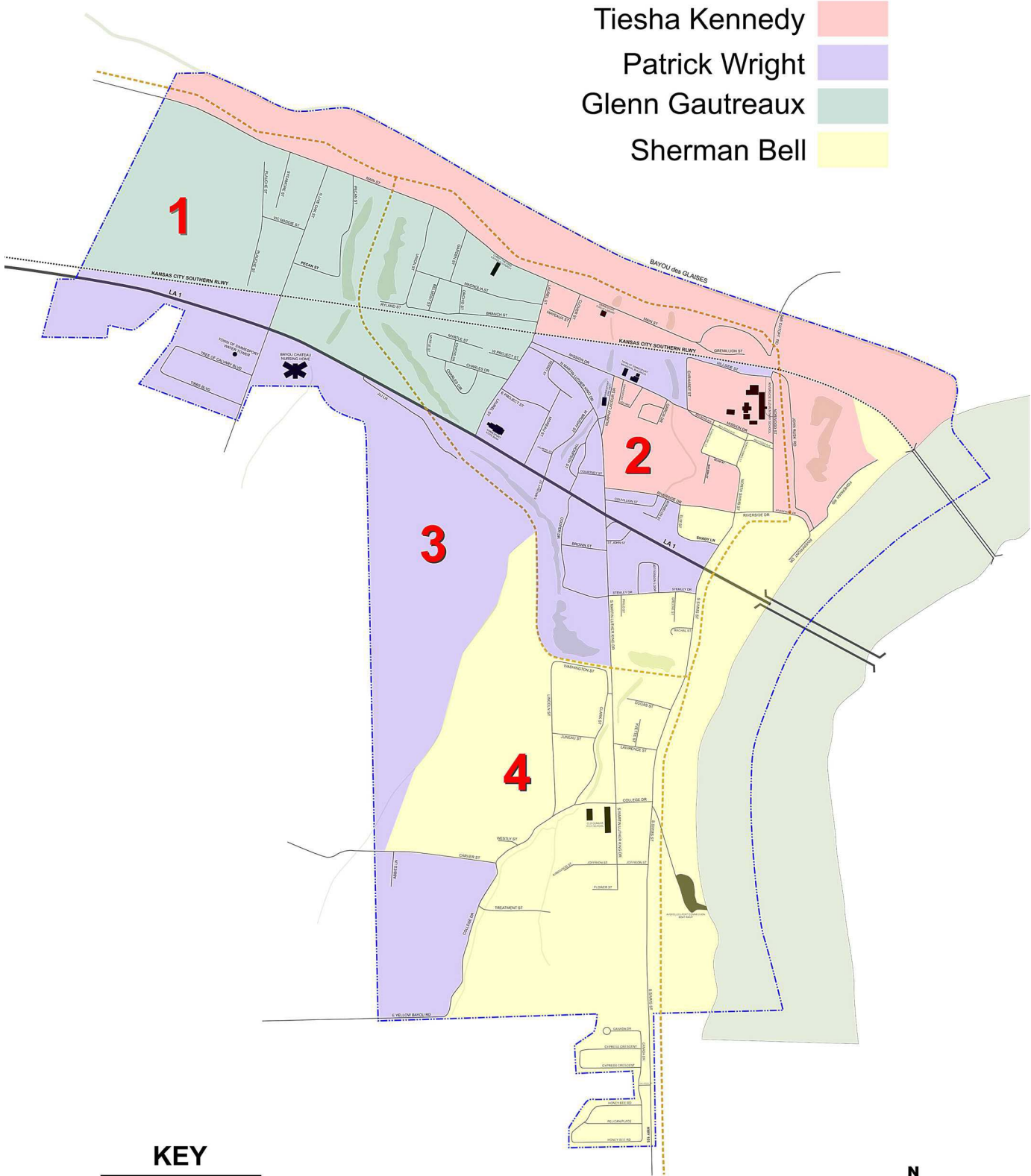
  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Leslie Draper, III  
 Mayor

  
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 Jalesia Batiste  
 Interim Town Clerk

# TOWN OF SIMMESPORT

## ALDERMAN DISTRICTS

Tiesha Kennedy   
 Patrick Wright   
 Glenn Gautreaux   
 Sherman Bell



### KEY

Town Boundaries	<span style="border-bottom: 1px dashed blue; width: 50px; display: inline-block;"></span>
Levee	<span style="border-bottom: 1px dotted orange; width: 50px; display: inline-block;"></span>
Roads	<span style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; width: 50px; display: inline-block;"></span>
Waterways	<span style="border-bottom: 1px solid lightblue; width: 50px; display: inline-block;"></span>

# PLAN A

