

Opinions

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Budget test: final examination

After looking at the Police Jury budget for 2020 last week and commenting on the budget for this year the excitement has been exhausting. But the thrills don't stop yet.

The State of Louisiana's LGAP grants (Local Government Assistance Program) and FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) are expected to supply a substantial portion of the increase in revenues budgeted to be spent in 2021. In total, we're looking forward to shelling out \$3,255,470 even though we still expect to take in only \$3,152,720.

This deficit spending would be worse without an expected assist from FEMA of \$155,000 spread between the Hard Surface Fund and the Road and Bridge Fund. Also coming to our aid, the above mentioned LGAP grants are expected to hand us another \$86,000 for the Hard Surface Fund and the General Fund.

By drawing down surpluses from previous years we will be spending \$102,750 that we did not take in from any source in the current year. We

also plan to spend about \$240,000 that we did not generate through our local economic activity and tax collections. Of course, that \$240,000 is, at least in some part, our own state and Federal taxes coming back to us.

All in all, this is pretty economical government with a minor exception or so. The most important one, of course, is that we have a Police Jury that is, at a bare minimum, twice the size that's necessary based on our population. Were it up to me (it's not; it's up to you), we would cut the size of the governing body and put that money toward more employees actually doing the work on roads, culverts, ditches, bridges and hard surface work.

Much has been made of the fact that we are in the midst of a plague. However, the problems we are facing were with us long before COVID-19. At the current rate they will be with us a while longer even if we begin to take measures to change our approach to local government.

What I have suggested before, I suggest again

and that is to organize a Home Rule Charter Committee to redesign our government to be less expensive and, second, whether we do that or not, begin aggressively to investigate and write economic development grant applications as if we were creating confetti for a tickertape parade down Wall Street.

Reducing the size of the Police Jury might be a way to provide a salary for a full-time grant writer or perhaps such a person could be paid on an "advance against commissions" basis. In any case, we need a lot more than \$240,000 a year in grants that only come around when there's a flood or plague.

If you have driven on streets in Vidalia or roads anywhere in Louisiana, sooner or later you will realize we're not the only people in trouble. But I repeat, if your boat is in a fleet of sinking ships, the fact that others are drowning too doesn't improve your own situation at all. There is never an excuse for failure when survival is at stake.

By Leo Chappelle



JEB Tales

Good Citizens

When Shirley and I heard that our dear friend Glen McCormack had passed away from the COVID, Shirley put this on Facebook. "Glen was always there for us. When the storm blew trees on our house and we had considerable damage, Glen McCormack was there and brought manpower and his heavy equipment. He worked all day until the tarps were put on top of our house that night. Deborah came with food and fed all the crew that showed up to help us. When I had COVID-19 Glen and Deb brought food and put it on our porch more than once. Anything that went on in our community Glen and Deb were at the front of the line helping. Glen was very dedicated to our church. Saying he will be missed is an understatement. I can not imagine this community without him. We are praying for his family. Our hearts are broken."

I remember that Glen was a junior on my first basketball team at Enterprise and Deborah Wyant was a sophomore on my girls' basketball team.

Glen was an all-American type boy who loved things outdoors, hunting, fishing, drag racing and basketball. These activities along with work left little time for girls. However, by the next year Glen was a senior and discovered that Deborah was getting more and more beautiful all the time and maybe he better make his move. Deb was not so sure. Glen was very persistent and finally won Deb's heart.

After Glen and Deb married, I believe they

moved to Monroe where Glen went to work for Coca-Cola and Deb also found a job. I do know they were a team and worked as a team throughout their marriage. I also know that Deb was an incredibly good money manager who could make a small amount go a long way. A couple years later Glen and Deb moved back to Enterprise and both had jobs. Glen went to the oil field where he had a remarkably successful career as a directional driller. During this time, they bought land, built a beautiful home, and had three beautiful daughters. Beautiful and sweet Jennifer was their first and twins Misty and Sherie came next. What a blessing! These three daughters gave Glen and Deb several grandchildren. More blessings.

Not one to sit around, when Glen retired from the oil field, he and Deb bought equipment and started a contracting business. They hired local men and Glen did good work at a good price and they were very successful.

Again, not one to sit around, Glen was appointed as Ward Three police jury member last January after the sudden death of Juror Bo Aarons and was later elected to the seat in March of 2020. To say that Glen represented his district well is an understatement. Glen took this job very seriously and could be seen at all times of the day and night checking roads, culverts, ditches and checking on people's needs. Many times, with Deb by his side.

Glen and Deb have been long-time members of our church, New Ouachita Baptist Church, and always willing to work on anything our

church needed or anything anyone needed.

Postscript

Dear Deborah and family, Glen and Deborah McCormack are two of the best examples of good citizens and Christians I have ever known. I thank God that they were a part of my families and my life.

Very Sincerely,
John Ed Bartmess

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