Acadiana Watershed District Board Meeting
101 Jefferson St., Lafayette, LA 70501
Wednesday, December 10th, 2025
10:00am to 12:00pm
Agenda

I. **Call to Order**

II. **Pledge of Allegiance**

III. **Roll Call**

IV. **Action Summaries Approval – ACTION REQUESTED**

a) Board Meeting – 08/28/2025
b) TAC Meeting – 10/16/2025

V. **2026 Meeting Dates Approval – ACTION REQUESTED**

VI. **Regional Watershed Plan Update**

VII. **Regional Project Criteria – ACTION REQUESTED**

VIII. **Southwest Coastal Louisiana Project – Home Elevations**

IX. **Bylaws Amendments – ACTION REQUESTED**

a) Officer Elections
b) Board Member Attendance

X. **District Funding Discussion**

a) Parish Participation
b) Project Selection

XI. **Amending District Legislation**

XII. **Miscellaneous Updates**

XIII. **Public Comment**

XIV. **Next Meeting Date**

XV. **Adjournment**

Notice to Hold Video Conference Meeting

Acadiana Watershed District Meeting

Wednesday, December 10th, 2025

The Acadiana Watershed District will hold a meeting on Wednesday, December 10 th, at 10am. This meeting is in accordance with the Louisiana Watershed Initiative activities and is integral to provide a sustainable, institutional basis to increase continuity, improve flood resilience, and enable more effective flood prevention within our region.

The Acadiana Planning Commission for the Acadiana Watershed District will continue to conduct board and committee meetings by teleconference or video conference. The meeting will be available online via Zoom here: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81302553071?pwd=el2Wk7f6bPh2Z0C3yw5yXp2fElHlpE.1.
The meeting will begin at 10am on Wednesday, December 10th, 2025.

Agenda:
Attached

Public Comment Procedure:
Public comments will be accepted at the end of the meeting and limited to three minutes per individual.

For questions regarding the virtual committee meeting, please email kbingham@planacadiana.org.

Action Summary

Acadiana Watershed District Board Meeting Minutes

ACADIANA PLANNING COMMISSION

10am-12pm, Thursday, August 28th, 2025
Rosa Parks Transportation Center
101 Jefferson St.
Lafayette, LA 70501

LOUISIANA WATERSHED INITIATIVE

AGENDA, NOTES AND DECISIONS

AGENDA ITEM	DISCUSSION
CALL TO ORDER & WELCOME	The meeting was called to order at 10:10am by Rachel Godeaux, Vice Chair of the Acadiana Watershed District. Opening Statement: *" Welcome to public meeting of the Acadiana Watershed District's Technical Advisory Committee Meeting. I am Rachel Godeaux, Vice Chair of the District.* *Agendas are available at the room's entrance and were made available through the AWD email distribution list and online at planacadiana.org. For our records to reflect your attendance, please sign-in at the table and any Board or TAC members online, please add your name to the chat box.* *The purpose of this public meeting is to consider items established by the agenda. Public input is welcome on these matters. For those wishing to speak in-person, please complete a speaker card and present it to the APC staff. Comments/questions will be read aloud during the public comment period. To ensure an orderly meeting, members of the public will speak at the time designated. Each organization may be permitted one representative to speak for 3 minutes on its behalf and individual public members are permitted 3 minutes. This will be strictly enforced. Thank you."*
PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE	Rachel Godeaux led the Pledge of Allegiance, and all stood and recited the pledge.
ROLL CALL	Roll call was taken by Kelia Bingham. A quorum was present.

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OFFICER NOMINATIONS & ELECTIONS	There was a motion by Mayor White to keep the same officers for one year: Chair – Jacob Landry Vice Chair – Rachel Godeaux Secretary/Treasurer – Roslyn White **VOTE:** **YEA – 11** **NAY – 0** **ABSENT – 7**
REPORT OUT – TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE JULY 17TH MEETING	Kelia Bingham gave the following report out: The Technical Advisory Committee met on July 17th and reviewed and finalized the regional project criteria for the Board's approval. The LWI gauges are now under DOTD where only 41 locations have flow data. The Acadiana Regional Gauge Project is active where approval of DENR and USACE permits are pending as well as an approval of a transfer of disaster funding from FEMA. Since the Board is deciding on a path to take for sustainable funding of the AWD, the CRS User Group, RAIN, as well as a goal to increase CRS participation will be on hold. Another item on hold is the regional flood communication system. Allie Olsonoski, Project Manager, with the Environmental Defense Fund presented on the Southwest Coastal Louisiana Project Home Elevations Program. This project is 100% voluntary and there is no cost share. Allie Olsonoski will present this program to the AWD Board in November.
ACTION SUMMARIES APPROVAL	There was a motion to approve the meeting meetings for the following by Mayor White and seconded by Jacob Coco. All were in favor. • Board Meetings of February 27th and May 15th • TAC Meetings of March 18th, April 17th and July 17th **VOTE:** **YEA – 11** **NAY – 0** **ABSENT – 7**
VISION & MISSION STATEMENTS APPROVAL	A motion to approve the Vision & Mission statements was made by Mayor White and seconded by Jacob Coco. All were in favor.

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	VOTE: **YEA – 11** **NAY – 0** **ABSENT – 7**
BYLAWS AMENDMENTS APPROVAL	There were two proposed amendments to the AWD Bylaws concerning **Officer Elections** and **Board Member Attendance**. These were discussed by the Board with further amendments proposed. The Board discussed officer election terms, deciding that officers can serve for up to two consecutive years in any single position but can run for different positions after a one-year hiatus. They also reviewed attendance requirements for board members, which specify that members must attend at least two quarterly meetings per year, with provisions for medical excuses. The board agreed to defer voting on both items until their November meeting, allowing time to revise the language regarding attendance consequences. The Board did agree that a follow-up with absent members needs to happen to determine reasons for non-attendance. There was a motion to defer the vote to approve the amendments at the November 13th Board meeting by Matt Johns and seconded by Mayor White. **VOTE:** **YEA – 11** **NAY – 0** **ABSENT – 7**
REGIONAL PROJECT CRITERIA	The Board reviewed and discussed the regional project criteria. This will be voted on at the next Board meeting in November. Vice Chair Rachel Godeaux did ask to add priority projects in the draft regional watershed plan and to update the Board on that plan.
2026 BOARD MEETING ALTERNATING VENUES	Members of the Board did bring up alternating the Board meeting venue and time for 2026. However, there were no objections to keeping the Board meetings at their current location and time for 2026.
SUSTAINABLE FUNDING OPTIONS APPROVAL	The basic funding budget (administrative to keep the meetings going) was reviewed as well as three options for funding a basic budget of $250K. Option 1: Parish Dues Based on Per Capita Population; Option 2: Parish Dues Spilt Evenly Over 16 Parishes; Option 3: Parish Dues Based on Square Miles of Parish. These numbers are based on the boundaries of the watershed district. The Board reviewed the fairness of each option for the basic funding budget as the Board may pursue a stormwater fee for sustainable funding. Once a stormwater fee is established for the comprehensive budget, then these dues will no longer be in effect. The question of non-participation was brought up. In this case the AWD legislation may have to be amended to have those parishes as non-voting, ex-officio members OR amend bylaws to state that if a parish does not pay into the AWD, then that parish does not get a project. However, projects may have to go through a non-voting parish to be completed.

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	Language options can be explored on what can be added to the bylaws about parish non-participation and language options provided at the November Board meeting. Hard decisions will need to be made by the Board on non-participation as well as consideration of amending the AWD legislation on participating parishes and boundaries of the District. OCD will give a no-cost extension for one year on current funding to December 2026. At the November meeting, the Board can discuss (if OCD allows) using leftover funds to hire a stormwater consultant on how to best and legally impose a stormwater fee. A timeline for implementation of parish dues and a stormwater fee can be provided at the November Board meeting. This also depends on parish budget cycles. To implement a stormwater fee, a comprehensive informative/education campaign will take place for every parish council/police jury as well as host several public meetings to inform citizens of the purpose of a proposed AWD stormwater fee. The stormwater fee would allow the District to maintain the regional watershed models as well as provide match for regional projects as state and federal funds require a match. Another main element would be to reduce flood insurance premiums for residential and commercial buildings through parish participation in the NFIP Community Rating System (CRS). Only one parish out of 16 in the AWD participates in CRS. With funding, the goal would have all the parishes in the District participate in CRS. Kelia Bingham provided What If? Statements to the Board that was provided by Stefanie Weeks (former Lafayette Parish Floodplain Administrator). These statements show flood insurance discounts in the parish IF they would participate in the program. The CRS program cost to participate can be explored. A motion to defer this item until the November Board meeting was made by Mayor White and seconded by Parish President Sam Jones. All were in favor. **VOTE:** **YEA – 11** **NAY – 0** **ABSENT – 7**
MISCELLANEOUS UPDATES	**Action Requested** – APC would like the AWD Board to give permission to the Chair to approve and sign support letters (name only, no funding commitment). Parish President Sam Jones motioned to approve this, and Mayor White seconded this motion provided the support letters will be reported to the Board when signed. All were in favor. **VOTE:** **YEA – 11** **NAY – 0** **ABSENT – 7** An update on the Acadiana Regional Gauge Network Project was given as APC is waiting for permit approvals from DENR and USACE as well as a transfer of funds from the original disaster budget to complete the project due to increase in costs.

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	Jacob Landry will ask if Michael Hare with CPRA could give an update on CURRENT at the November meeting. Philip Parker with CPRA did inform the group that anyone can submit projects for the CPRA 2029 Master Plan online until October.
PUBLIC COMMENT	There was no public comment.
NEXT MEETING DATE	November 13th at 10am
ADJOURNMENT	Matt Johns made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Sam Jones seconded that motion. **VOTE:** **YEA – 11** **NAY – 0** **ABSENT – 7**
MEETING DETAILS	
CONTACT	Kelia Bingham, LWI Region 5 Watershed Coordinator kbingham@planacadiana.org or (337) 446-0807
ADA/TITLE VI NOTICE	The Acadiana Planning Commission (APC) convenes public meetings in accessible locations. Meeting materials can be provided in accessible formats and in languages other than English upon request. If you would like accessibility or language accommodation, please contact the ADA/Title VI Coordinator via email at amoran@planacadiana.org: or by phone at 337-806-9364. If you wish to attend an APC function and require special accommodation, please provide at least 72 hours advanced notice.
	ATTENDANCE RECORD
ATTENDEES	**Delegates Present:** Acadia Parish – Earl Garber Allen Parish – Tylier Tullier Avoyelles – Jacob Coco Evangeline – Dirk Deville Lafayette – Rachel Godeaux Rapides – Matt Johns St. Landry – Van Reed St. Mary – Sam Jones

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ABSENTEES	Vermilion – Keith Roy House Committee Natl Resources & Env – Rep. Jacob Landry Senate Committee Natl Resources – Mayor White **<u>Others Present</u>** At-Large TAC Member – Richard Greig CPRA – Philip Parker CPRA – Ivy Thibodeaux LA Legislature – Rep. Troy Hebert Fenstermaker – Rhett Hebert Fenstermaker – Mohamed Awaad Evangeline Parish Police Jury – Jody Snoddy UL Watershed Flood Center – Emad Habib HDR Engineering – Garland Pennison Freese & Nichols – Whitney Broussard Freese & Nichols – Jim Keith Bayou Vermilion District – Karen Hail APC – Sara Gary APC – Kelia Bingham APC – Kade Jones APC – Sean Reed **<u>Delegates Absent:</u>** Calcasieu – Terry Frelot Cameron – Kara Bonsall Iberia – Ben Langlinais Iberville – John Clark Jefferson Davis – Kori Myers Pointe Coupee – Nathan Cobb St. Martin – Chris Tauzin

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Minutes approved on _____by the Acadiana Watershed District Board.

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Mayor Roslyn White, Secretary/Treasurer
Acadiana Watershed District

Action Summary	
Acadiana Watershed District Technical Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes 10am-12pm, Thursday, October 16th, 2025 Rosa Parks Transportation Center 101 Jefferson St. Lafayette, LA 70501	
AGENDA, NOTES AND DECISIONS	
AGENDA ITEM	**DISCUSSION**
CALL TO ORDER & WELCOME	The meeting was called to order at 10:05am by Kelia Bingham, APC Watershed Coordinator. Opening Statement: *" Welcome to public meeting of the Acadiana Watershed District's Technical Advisory Committee Meeting. I am Kelia Bingham, Watershed Coordinator for the District.* *Agendas are available at the room's entrance and were made available through the AWD email distribution list and online at planacadiana.org. For our records to reflect your attendance, please sign-in at the table and any Board or TAC members online, please add your name to the chat box.* *The purpose of this public meeting is to consider items established by the agenda. Public input is welcome on these matters. For those wishing to speak in-person, please complete a speaker card and present it to the APC staff. Comments/questions will be read aloud during the public comment period. To ensure an orderly meeting, members of the public will speak at the time designated. Each organization may be permitted one representative to speak for 3 minutes on its behalf and individual public members are permitted 3 minutes. This will be strictly enforced. Thank you."*
PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE	Kelia Bingham led the Pledge of Allegiance, and all stood and recited the pledge.
ROLL CALL	Roll call was taken by Kelia Bingham.

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MEETING MINUTES REVIEW FROM JULY 17TH	Kelia Bingham reviewed the meeting minutes from July 17th. The TAC did not vote to adopt the minutes as the Board had previously approved the minutes at the August 28th meeting.
REGIONAL PROJECT CRITERIA UPDATE	Kelia Bingham stated that the Board did not have any questions on the criteria. However, they did want to review it more thoroughly before the final vote at the next Board meeting, which is scheduled for November 13th.
HYDRORISE PROJECT	Kelia Bingham introduced the Hydro-Rise project, a National Science Foundation-funded initiative involving six universities, including UL, to develop tools and strategies for reducing climate-driven water hazards. The team is developing a Flood Hazard Vulnerability Index for South-Central Louisiana, focusing on parishes in Region 5. This project aims to create an index that reflects the local flood vulnerability like flood insurance, access to transportation, or income challenges. The team will build the tool with local stakeholders to help guide flood risk reduction and resource allocation decisions.
SOUTHWEST LA & CENTRAL ACADIANA RESILIENT FUTURE PROJECT	This project is NOAA funded and implemented by Tulane University's ByWater Institute and involves all the parishes of AWD as well as LWI Region 4 and the indigenous tribes in the region. The project addresses our changing climate and its impacts through planning, projects, programs & policies. Dr. Simone Domingue and Dr. Sharon Hausam emphasized the project's focus on climate hazards The project involves two committees - a governance committee and a community committee - working to address multiple climate hazards including flooding, extreme heat, and wildfires. The team is conducting a community survey to gather input on local priorities and concerns, while also reviewing existing plans and coordinating with tribal nations and local governments to avoid duplicating efforts. The project aims to create a long-lasting regional coordination mechanism that will continue beyond the current funding period.
FLOOD RESILIENCE PLANNING TOOL	The planning tool was created by the Center for Planning Excellence (CPEX). Macey Williams and Dr. Denise Reed explained the tool's purpose, which is to support local and regional resilience planning in Acadiana by aligning strategies, evaluating projects, and fostering comprehensive resilience. The tool was developed through a collaborative process involving input from the Acadiana Planning Commission and the 2023 Louisiana Resilience Report. The presenters highlighted the tool's ability to

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	evaluate individual projects and their contribution to broader regional flood resilience goals, emphasizing its application at both local and regional scales.
MISCELLANEOUS UPDATES	The USFW National Fish Passage Program Notice of Funding Opportunity - provides technical and financial assistance to partners to remove instream barriers and restore aquatic connectivity, improve community safety, and support local economies. Fish passage projects benefit communities by reducing flood risk, improving recreational opportunities, and improving roads while supporting native fish populations and aquatic ecosystems. There is no cost-share, but this grant is highly competitive. The total program funding is $10M with $1M as the award ceiling for a project. Applications are due on December 31st. The LWI Nature Based Explorer Tool and Training is coming soon. At the January or April TAC meeting, the committee can bring projects to the meeting to run through the project regional criteria. This will be discussed more as the next meeting approaches.
NEXT MEETING	TBD – January 2026
PUBLIC COMMENT	There was no public comment.
ADJOURNMENT	Jessica Cornay made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and Brent Domingue seconded the motion. All were in favor. The meeting ended at 11:29am.
MEETING DETAILS	
CONTACT	Kelia Bingham, LWI Region 5 Watershed Coordinator kbingham@planacadiana.org or (337) 446-0807
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	ATTENDANCE RECORD

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ATTENDEES	**<u>Delegates Present:</u>** CPRA – Dion Broussard USACE – Issac Mudge At-Large Member – Jessica Cornay At-Large Member – Richard Greig At-Large Member - Brad Lambert for Cassidy Lejeune **<u>Others Present</u>** APC – Sara Gary APC – Kelia Bingham APC – Sean Reed APC – Kade Jones CPRA – Ivy Thibodeaux Evangeline Parish Police Jury – Jody Snoddy South Central Climate Adaptation Science Center – Dr. Sharon Hausum Tulane University ByWater Institute – Dr. Simone Dominuge Fenstermaker – Carly Phillips Bayou Vermilion District – Stephen Broussard Bayou Vermilion District – Karen Hail Vermilion Parish Police Jury – Tommy McGinnis
ABSENTEES	**<u>Delegates Absent:</u>** LA SWCD IV – Chris Vosburg Teche-Vermilion Watershed District – Donald Sagrera UL Watershed Flood Center – Emad Habib USDA NRCS – Andrew Coombs

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Minutes approved on _____by the Acadiana Watershed District Board.

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Mayor Roslyn White, Secretary/Treasurer
Acadiana Watershed District

2026 Acadiana Watershed District – Proposed Meeting Schedule – ACTION REQUESTED
Thursdays – 10am to 12pm

Technical Advisory Committee

- January 22nd
- April 16th
- July 16th
- October 15th

Board

- February 26th
- May 21st
- August 27th
- November 5th

Acadiana Watershed District
Regional Project Prioritization

Project Evaluation Questionnaire

PRIMARY POINT OF CONTACT

Name: _____
Company: _____
Title: _____
Email: _____
Phone: _____

Please provide complete answers for each question below.

PROJECT FEASIBILITY SCREENING

1. **Concept/Project Purpose.** Provide details on the concept and purpose of the project.

Additional Comments:

2. **Funding Request.** Provide the following project information. Consider the total project cost.

Total Project Cost	
Funding Request	
Other funding (source and amount)	
Additional Comments:	

3. **Shovel Ready.** Provide details on what makes the project shovel ready.

Additional Comments:

4. **Project Permits.** Describe the anticipated types of permits for this project and timeline to obtain those permits.

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Additional Comments:

5. **Jurisdictional Agreements.** Provide details on number of landowners involved and signed copies of any established agreements.

Additional Comments:

6. **Proposed Project Completion.** Phases of engineering, planning or construction phases will not be considered for funding. Explain how the proposed project provides a COMPLETE flood-risk mitigation solution.

Additional Comments:

REGIONAL STRUCTURES AND POPULATION BENEFITTED

7. **Population Benefitted.** Within the proposed project footprint, explain how many people will benefit from the mitigation project.

Additional Comments:

8. **Number of Critical Infrastructures Benefitted.** Explain how your project will mitigate loss of service from one or more critical facilities.

Additional Comments:

REGIONAL AREA BENEFITTED

9. **Number of HUC 12 Watersheds Benefitted.** Within the proposed project footprint, explain how many HUC 12 watersheds will benefit from the proposed mitigation projects.

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Additional Comments:

10. **Acreage of HUC 8 Benefitted.** Within the prosed project footprint, explain the acreage of the HUC 8 watershed that will benefit from the proposed mitigation project.

Additional Comments:

11. **10-Year Water Surface Reduction.** Explain the estimated water surface reduction that will occur at the 10-year storm if the proposed mitigation project is implemented.

Additional Comments:

PROJECT CONSTRUCTABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

12. **Life of Project Design.** Explain the estimated infrastructure life of the proposed project design.

Additional Comments:

13. **Operation and Maintenance Improvements.** Explain how the proposed project will be operated and maintained once the project construction has been completed. Specifically address the following: 1) Party(ies) responsible for operations and maintenance and any agreements indicating and/or 4) Long-term funding sources identified for O&M.

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Regional Project Criteria

POPULATION/REGIONAL STRUCTURES BENEFITED		NUMERICAL VALUE	SCORE
Priority Description	**Priority Value (Definition)**		***Mark only 1 number below***
Number of people benefited in proposed project area based on 10-year storm	Up to 1,000	**1**	
	1,001 to 5,000	**2**	
	5,001 to 10,000	**3**	
	10,001 or more	**4**	
Number of Structures Benefited (Critical Facilities)	Project will mitigate loss of service from one or more critical facilities (*1)	**1**	

REGIONAL AREA BENEFITED		NUMERICAL VALUE	SCORE
Priority Description	**Priority Value (Definition)**		
Number of Watersheds Benefited at a HUC 12	2 Watersheds Benefited	**1**	
	3 Watersheds Benefited	**2**	
	4 Watersheds Benefited	**3**	
	5 Watersheds Benefited	**4**	
Percentage of Watershed Impacted at a HUC 8	Up to 10% of Acreage in HUC 8 Watershed Benefited	**1**	
	11% to 25% of Acreage in HUC 8 Watershed Benefited	**2**	
	26% to 49% of Acreage in HUC 8 Watershed Benefited	**3**	
	50 % or more of Acreage in HUC 8 Watershed Benefited	**4**	
Water Surface Reduction - 10 year storm	Up to 3 inches of reduction	**1**	
	3.1 inches to 6 inches of reduction	**2**	
	6.1 inches to 12 inches in reduction	**3**	
	12.1 inches or more in reduction	**4**	

PROJECT CONSTRUCTABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY		NUMERICAL VALUE	SCORE
Priority Description	**Priority Value (Definition)**		
Life of Project Design	Up to to 25 years	**1**	
	26 years to 50 years	**2**	
	51 years to 75 years	**3**	
	76 years to 100 years	**4**	
	Mark all that apply. Scoring is cumulative in this section. Highest score is 2 points.		
Operation and Maintenance Plan	O&M Plan is included in application	**1**	
	Responsible parties/entities identified to operate and maintain identified	**1**	

OPTIONAL CRITERIA (extra points)		NUMERICAL VALUE	SCORE
	Mark all that apply. Scoring is cumulative in this section. Highest score is 4 points.		
Priority Description	**Priority Value (Definition)**		
Co-Benefits	Project positively affects the Socially Vulnerable	**1**	
	Project incorporates Nature Based Solutions	**1**	
	Project enhances floodplain connectivity	**1**	
	Project enhances aquatic connectivity	**1**	
	Project provides recreation for Rural Areas	**1**	
	Project increases economic activity	**1**	
		Sub-Total	
	Maximum Score = 33 points	**TOTAL SCORE**	

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Acadiana Watershed District
Bylaws Proposed Amendments – ACTION REQUESTED

Officer Elections

Officer elections shall be annually and occur every June. Officers may serve a term of one year from the date they were elected and can be re-elected to serve one more term. If an officer resigns within six months of their term, a new officer may be elected to serve the remaining six months of that one-year term.

If the present officer is not elected for a second term, that individual does have the option to be elected again after sitting out for one year. If the individual is elected again after the one-year hiatus period, then the individual can serve one more term and up to two years.

A current officer who wishes to serve in a different officer position can be elected for that position and serve up to two sequential terms.

Board Member Attendance – Option 1

Board members are expected to attend at least two of the four quarterly Board meetings each year. If a member is unable to meet this requirement due to a medical condition, their absence will not be counted against them. In cases where the medical condition is prolonged, the appropriate Parish or Police Jury President may appoint a replacement.

Failure to attend at least two meetings without a valid medical reason may result in the member being considered for removal. The respective Parish or Police Jury President will be notified of the appointee's lack of attendance. At that point, it will be determined whether the current member will remain on the Board or be replaced.

Board Member Attendance – Option 2

Board members are expected to attend at least two of the four quarterly Board meetings each year. If this criterion is not met, a member can be subject to possible removal by the appropriate appointing authority. Prior to the removal of said member for lack of required attendance, the appropriate appointing authority will send written notice, via US First Class certified or registered mail, to the member apprising the member of potential removal.

A member shall not be subject to removal if the absences are due to valid reasons beyond the member's control, including but not limited to medical conditions, military service or

orders, or other exceptional circumstances as determined by the appointing authority. In cases where the validated absence is prolonged, the appropriate Parish or Police Jury President may appoint a replacement.

Any member who receives notice of possible removal may submit a written appeal to the appropriate appointing authority within ten (10) days of receiving the notice. The appointing authority will allow the member to explain the reasons for their absences and will issue a decision within thirty (30) days of receiving the appeal. The decision of the appointing authority will be final.