

## **J. Government Structure**

### **1. Introduction**

The purpose of the Parish Government Element of the Comprehensive Master Plan is to examine the current structure of Plaquemines governmental organization, budget, and finances in order to improve its effectiveness and prepare for the future needs of a growing population and economic base.

The foundation for this document is the Parish Government Element of the Community Assessment Technical Appendix, which was prepared in August 2010 and is comprised of three sections:

1. Assessment of Existing Parish Government Organization;
2. Assessment of Existing Parish Government Budget and Finance; and
3. Issues and Needs for the Future.

The first section, Assessment of Parish Government Organization, addressed two levels of government structure:

1. Organization and roles of the office of President and Council; and
2. Parish staff organization.

The second section, Assessment of existing Parish Government Budget and Finance, addresses Parish government revenues by source and Parish expenditures by type for the period 2006-2009. It also reviews the structure of the Parish government funds and accounts and the Capital Improvements Program.

Each of these sections concludes with a summary future needs and a brief discussion of decisions and issues that must be addressed in anticipation of future conditions. See **Appendix C** for a comparison of Plaquemines' government organization and pay structure with adjacent parishes.

### **2. Findings and Conclusions of Assessment of Existing Government Organization**

Plaquemines Parish is comprised of a chain of small unincorporated communities located on a long, narrow peninsula that is divided by the Mississippi River and levees. There are two separate slivers of land to be serviced - the West Bank and East Bank – accessible only by a circuitous road system and two ferries that are 20 miles apart. Except for those in Belle Chasse, most Parish residents are remote from supply chains and service centers. The population lives at a very low density that is expensive to serve. The Parish provides a number of specialized services, including hurricane protection, coastal restoration, mosquito control, ferries, ports, oil and gas mineral rights, boat harbors and marinas, etc. The widely spread population distribution and the Parish's many specialized services make operating and administering routine government programs more expensive.

Plaquemines Parish government is organized in accordance with the 1986 voter-approved Charter for Local Self-Government. This Charter establishes a parish president and a nine-member council who serve the population in their respective districts.

Revisions to the Plaquemines Parish Charter require a voter referendum. In 2006 the Parish Council voted to establish a Commission or Committee to study Charter revisions, but the report recommendations have not yet been voted upon.

The Plaquemines Parish government administration exercises over 50 different functions and powers, including economic development, road and bridge construction and maintenance, drainage, water and sewerage, solid waste disposal, fire protection, parks and recreation, public health, ferry service, boats and harbors, oil and mineral leasing, coastal zone management, zoning and building permits, plus other public services.

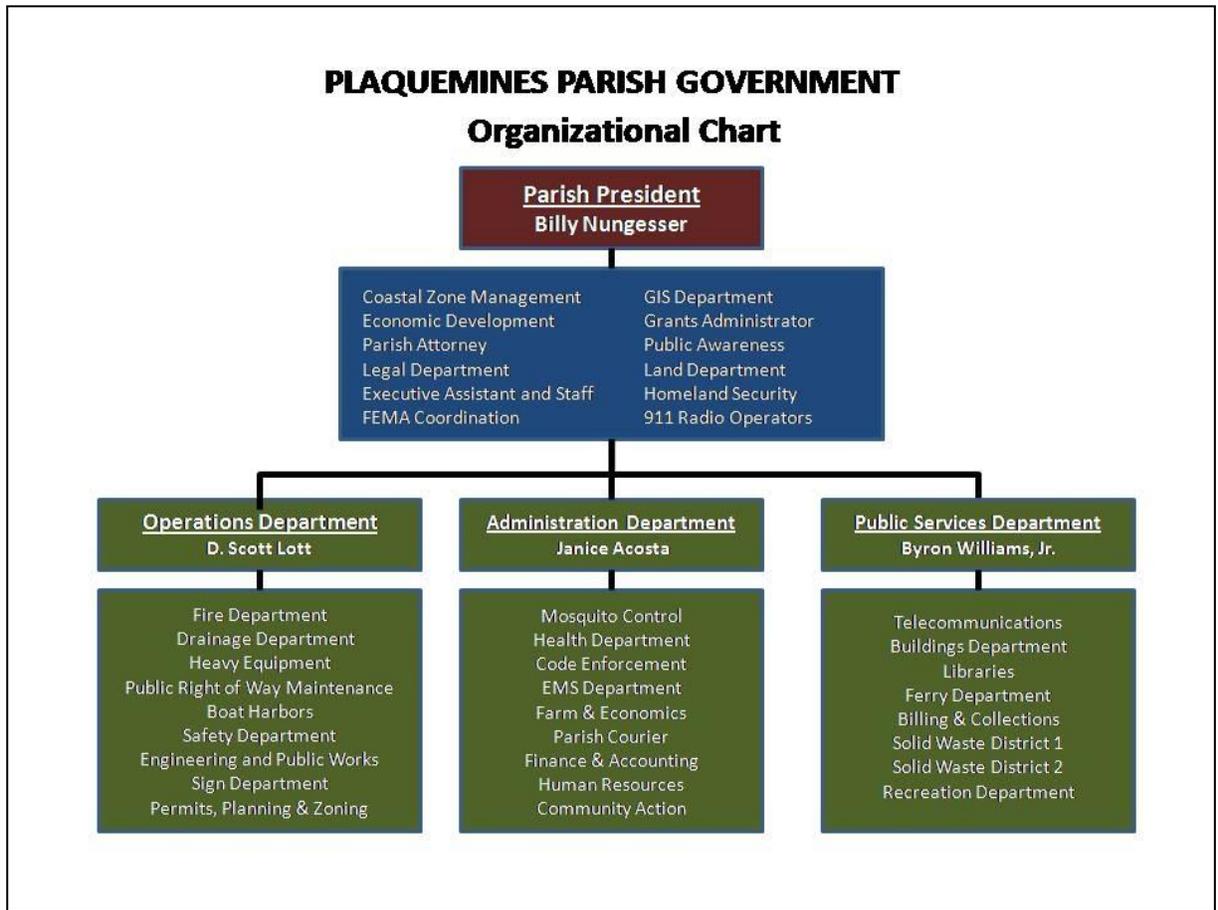
Under the Parish Charter, Plaquemines Parish government administration is headed by three key officials who serve as heads of the three primary Departments:

1. Director of the Department of Administration, responsible for finance, budget, grants, personnel, and law.
2. Director of the Department of Public Service, responsible for public utilities, telecommunications, solid waste, health, hospital, environmental control, recreation and recreation facilities, libraries, and community centers.
3. Director of the Department of Operations, responsible for planning, operations, maintenance, and capital improvements.

These three officials oversee over 50 different governmental functions and services.

**Figure J.1** shows this information graphically.

**Figure J.1: Organization Chart**



Other critical governmental functions fall under the purview of a set of elected constitutional officers such as the Sheriff, Coroner, Clerk of Court, Registrar of Voters, District Attorney, and Tax Assessor.

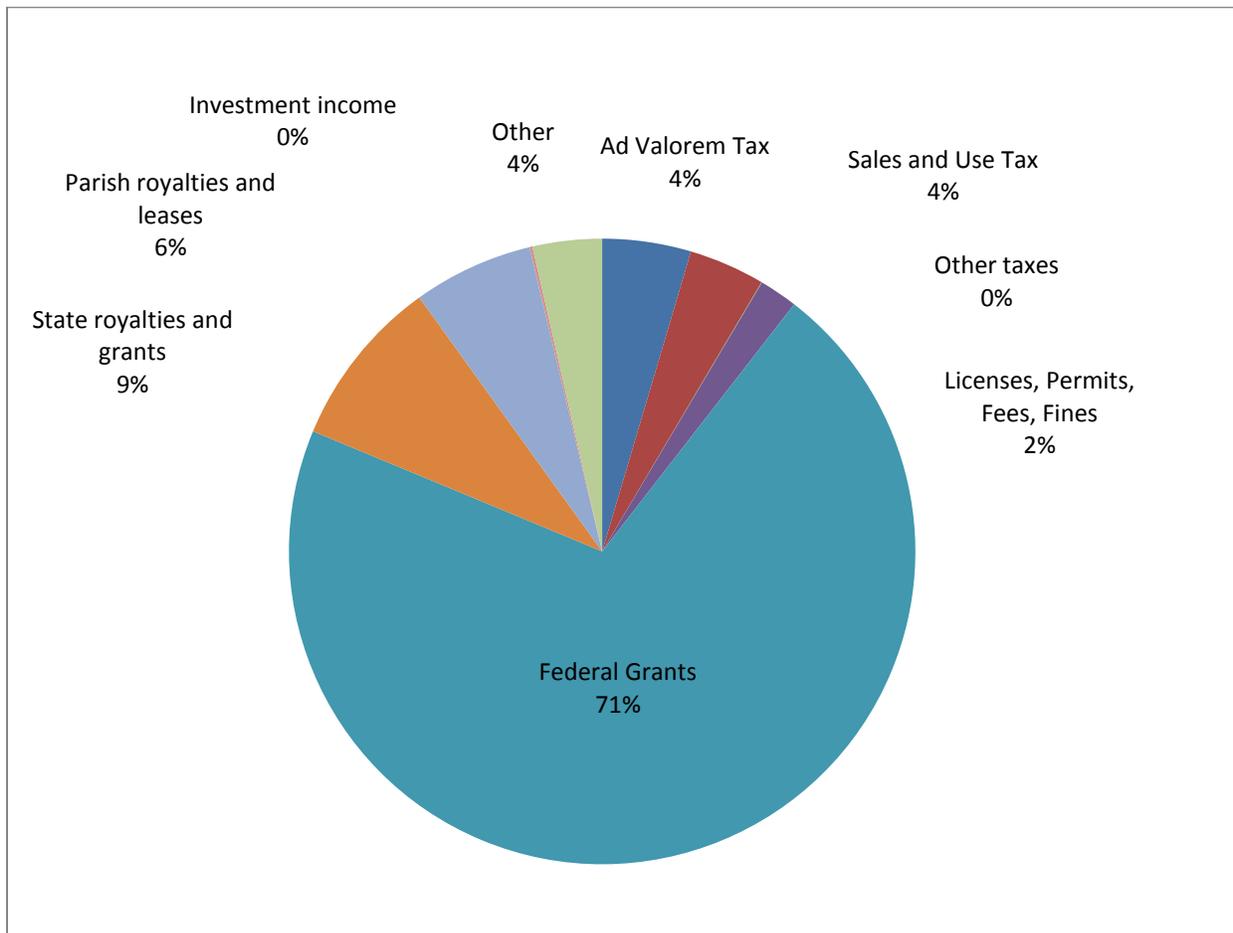
In order to evaluate effectiveness of this organizational structure in providing the Parish’s existing and future needs, this organizational structure was compared with the organizational structure and compensation levels of three other parish governments in the region. This comparison is found in the Appendix.

**3. Findings and Conclusions of Assessment of Existing Government Budget and Finance**

Figure J.2 shows the Parish’s 2009 revenue from all sources. Of the total revenues in the Governmental Fund in 2009, federal grants provided the largest share, 70.8 percent, state funds, including oil and gas royalties, provided 8.8 percent, and oil and gas royalties and other property leases provided 6.2 percent. More traditional sources of revenue such as Ad Valorem

(property) tax, sales and use taxes, licenses and fees, and investment income provided the remaining 14.2 percent.

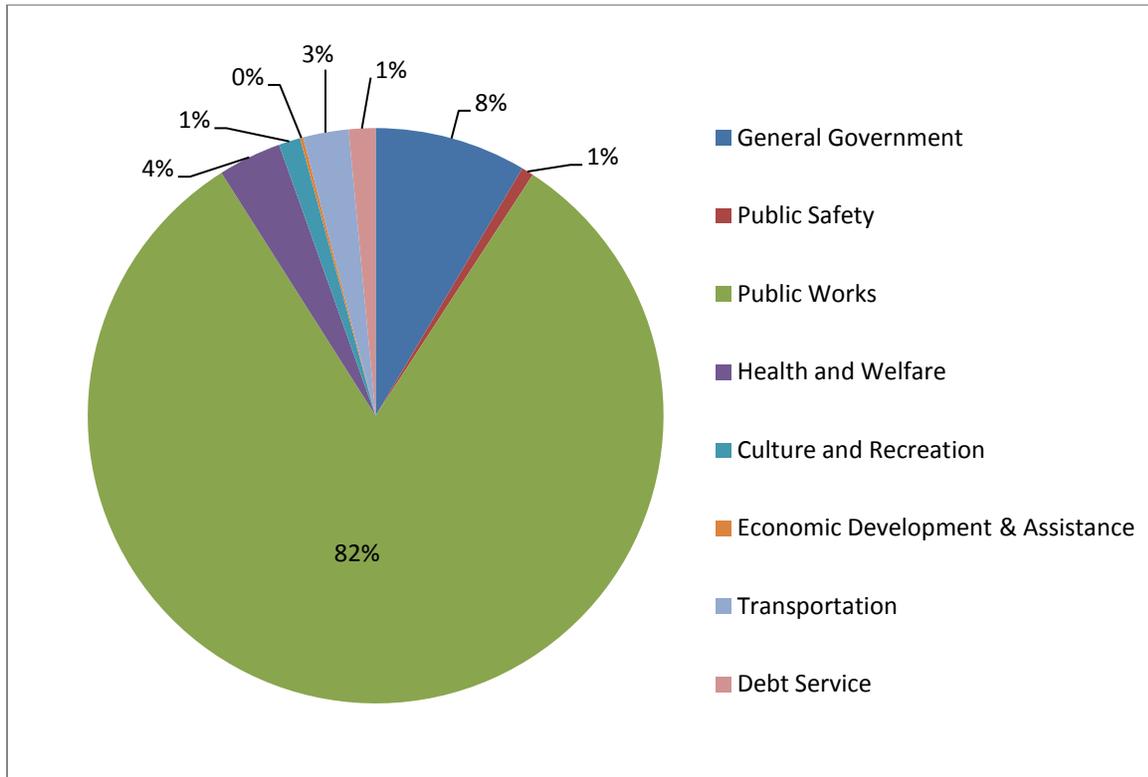
**Figure J.2     Plaquemines Parish Revenues by Source, 2009**



**Expenditures**

**Figure J.3** shows the distribution of Parish expenditures by category in 2008. The largest major expense category is Public Works, which constituted \$160 million or 82 percent of Plaquemines government expenses in 2009. Public Works are so high relative to other categories largely because much of the post-Katrina reconstruction efforts are financed by federal funds. Parish expenses have changed dramatically during the past five years. Overall the Parish’s total Governmental Funds expenditures grew from around \$83 million in 2006 to \$196 million in 2009; however, the majority of that increase is explained by increased Public Works expenditures using FEMA funds.

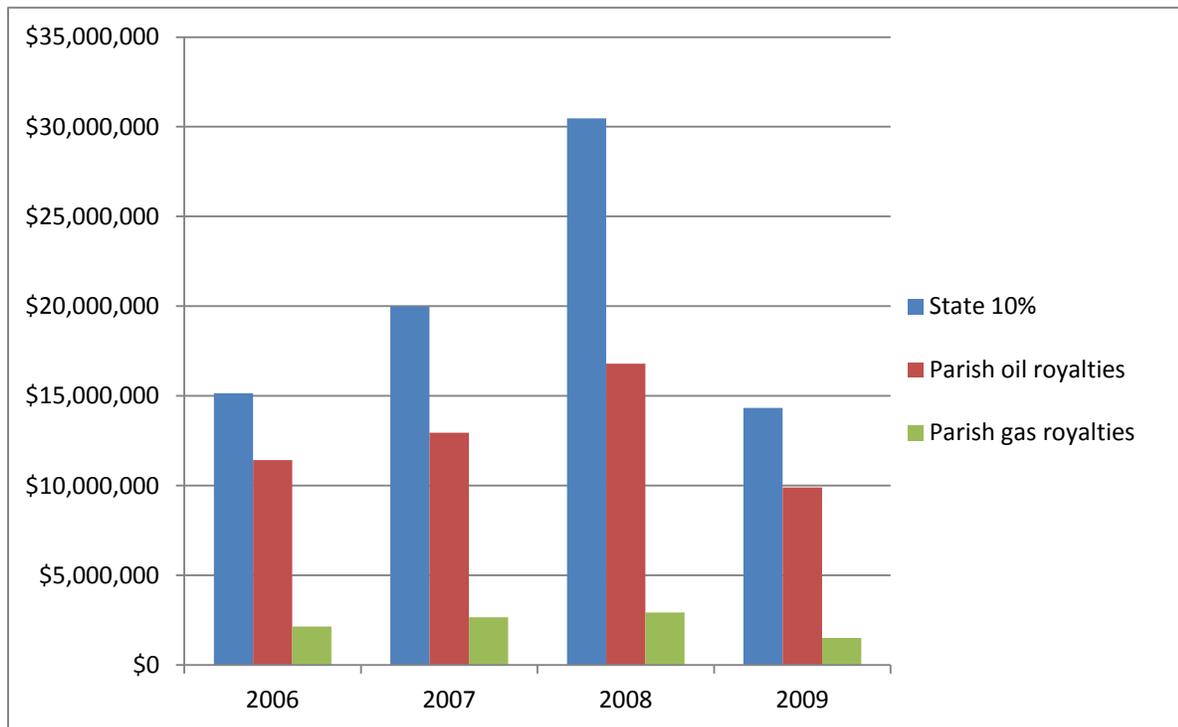
**Figure J.3 Plaquemines Parish Expenditures by Type, 2009**



Similarly, between 2006 and 2009 the total revenues in the Governmental Fund have more than doubled from under \$95 million in 2006 to over \$190 million in 2009. Most of this growth is attributed to a very large increase in federal grants, from \$36 million in 2006 to \$134 million in 2009.

The amount of revenue gained from oil and gas royalties varies with the price of these commodities. In the past three years, the price of oil and gas used for paying royalties rose to a peak in 2008 (\$110 per barrel) but fell by over 50 percent to \$58 in 2009. As a result of price changes, Parish revenues from oil and gas leases and royalties dropped in half in 2009, dropping to less than \$26 million, after a high of over \$50 million in 2008, as shown in **Figure J.4**.

**Figure J.4: Trends in Governmental Fund Revenues, by Source, 2006-2009**



Due to the magnitude of revenues from state and federal grants and oil and natural gas leases, the Parish has less dependency on other sources of revenues that are traditionally the foundation of local government, such as Ad Valorem property tax and sales tax. From 2007 to 2009, property tax revenues for the Parish’s general fund grew almost 20 percent, from \$10.1 million in 2007 to \$12 million 2009.

In November, 2009 Plaquemines Parish voters approved a 1-cent sales tax increase to fund a paid Parish fire department. Officials expect the extra cent, which will raise the Parish's sales tax to 8 percent, to generate \$7 million annually. The Parish’s annual revenues from sales tax in 2009 was \$7.5 million, down slightly from \$8.0 million in 2008.

Plaquemines Parish collects approximately \$10 million in fines, fees, and service charges each year from various sources, the largest of which are the Water and Sewer fees and Port Harbor fees. These fines, fees, and user charges are deposited to funds reserved for each respective service. In addition, the Parish collected approximately \$18 million from a number of Special Revenue and Enterprise Funds. Special Revenue Funds are set aside with dedicated revenue sources each year and include:

- Road Maintenance
- Public Health
- Solid Waste
- Library
- Transportation
- Criminal Court
- Judicial Court Reporter
- DWI Court Administration
- 911 System
- Witness Fee, and
- FEMA Management

After the massive FEMA Management Fund, the largest of the Special Revenue Funds is Solid Waste, with about \$3.5 million in revenues and expenditures. Typically the revenues cover about 90-95percent of the expenditures. The Public Health fund revenues range between \$1.4 million and \$1.8 million, but expenditures have consistently exceeded revenues by \$2.2 to \$3.6 million annually. The Road Maintenance fund is next largest, with revenues of about \$1.2 million per year, but expenditures have regularly been twice the revenues, resulting in annual deficits of \$1.3 - \$2.3 million per year. Three other funds- Library, Transportation, Criminal Court, and 911 System – fall at the level of \$1 million or less and all had positive revenue balances for the 2006-2009 period. The remaining funds are all small (less than \$50,000 per year) and generally maintain positive balances each year.

The revenues of Special Revenue Funds were relatively stable until FEMA funds were added in 2008. At that time, Special Revenue Funds leapt from around \$8 million to over \$140 million in 2009. The FEMA Management Fund doubled from 2008 to 2009 when it reached over \$132 million.

### ***Enterprise Funds***

Plaquemines Parish offers four special government services that are considered to be “business-type” activities and each has an associated Enterprise Funds. These are:

- Water and Sewer
- Port, Harbor and Terminal
- Boat Harbors and Shipyards
- Port Sulphur Golf Course

The costs of these activities are intended to be funded entirely from user fees and other direct revenues derived from the activity, not from the general fund. However, such business-type activities of the Parish reported a total operating loss of \$9.3 million in 2007 and \$7.8 million in 2009. In 2009, user charges covered only 46.9 percent of total operating costs. The largest subsidy among the various Enterprise accounts is the Water and Sewer fund, which lost over \$7 million in each of the three years from 2007 to 2009.

Overall, Plaquemines Parish has been operating ‘in the red’ on an annual basis. However, the Parish Council members have the power to transfer money between any budget accounts, to draw unspent money out of a previous year’s fund balance, or to draw money out of the bonded indebtedness fund to balance the budget and/or pay for special projects. Therefore, in order to cover excess cost in Enterprise Funds and to account for other expenditures exceeding revenues, the Parish Council has been reducing fund balances each year.

### ***State and Federal Grants***

State and federal grants are a major source of revenue for Plaquemines Parish. FEMA has contributed between \$40 and \$132 million per year to Parish revenues since the losses due to the 2005 hurricanes. These funds have been used for a wide variety of public safety and public works projects, ranging from resident relocation and shelter programs to major drainage and coastal restoration projects. Other federal grants have come from the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

### ***Capital Improvements Projects***

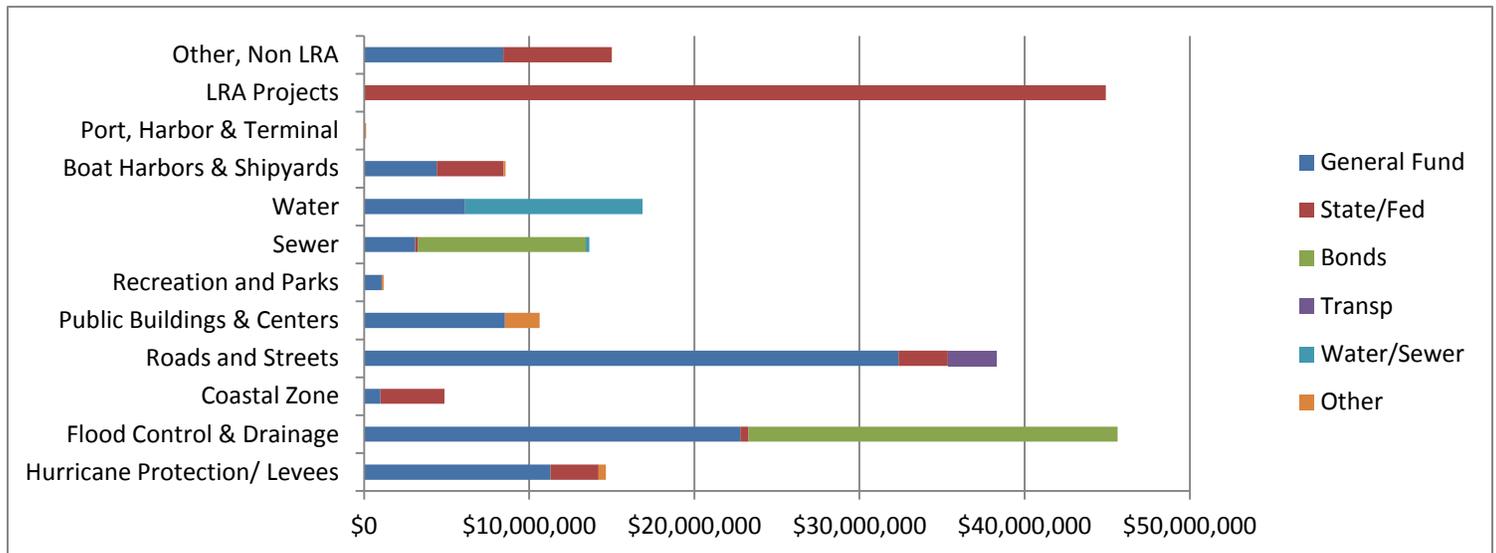
Plaquemines Parish has a five-year Capital Improvements Program with projects totaling \$218.8 million. The CIP includes \$14.6 million for hurricane protection and levees, \$45.4 million for flood control, and \$45 million for projects funded by the Louisiana Recovery Authority. Less than one-third of the total Capital Improvements Program was funded by state and federal grants; instead, most of these projects are funded from Plaquemines Parish’s general fund. Approximately \$32.5 million of capital projects are financed with bonds. In 2010, Standard and Poor’s gave Plaquemines Parish an ‘A’ bond rating with a favorable outlook. Moody’s investor Service upgraded Plaquemines Parish’s rating from ‘Baa’ to ‘A3’. **Figure J.5** shows the distribution of funding sources for these capital improvement projects.

### ***Lack of Property Ownership and Tax Digest Data in Geographic Information System***

The Parish currently lacks an adequate tax revenue database or corresponding Geographic Information System (GIS) map catalog. The existing map system has not been fully integrated with tax databases and some valuable data is missing and/or does not exist. The Parish should have an up-to-date and complete record of all parcels in its taxing jurisdiction, including owner, the physical address, value, the value of the improvements, mineral rights, and other related information, including whether taxes have been levied and collected. This would apply to property that has been acquired by the Parish for tax liens but not sold. This information would clearly establish which properties are owned by the Parish and other public agencies and which

properties are tax-exempt. The lack of a complete tax database and map system results in lost revenue opportunities for the Parish.

**Figure J.5:** Plaquemines Parish Capital Projects by Funding Source, 2009



#### 4. Issues and Needs in the Current Parish Government Organization

The following issues are discussed below:

- Change in Representation in Parish Council Districts following 2010 Census
- Span of control for managers
- Missing functions in Parish organization
- Adequate pay and classification
- Improving accessibility of government services to the population
- Reducing government cost through privatization
- Reapportionment of Parish Council Districts following 2010 Census
- Revision of Charter to re-organize Parish Council and Parish Administration
- Establishing a permanent location for the county seat

##### *Changes in Representation of Parish Council Districts following 2010 Census*

Since Hurricane Katrina, the population of Plaquemines Parish has had a series of readjustments. First, not all residents returned after the massive evacuations of 2005. For those who did return to the Parish, the return was gradual and resulted in a smaller total population and a redistribution of people from the southern end of the Parish to the northern end. An evaluation of recent population data is found in the Population Element of the Community Assessment and Community Agenda.

An estimated 70 percent of the population now lives north of Jesuit Bend. Given the population redistribution, voting district reapportionment will be necessary in order to maintain the minimum number of citizens per district and to secure a fair and equitable representation.

### ***Span of Control for Managers***

According to George P. Hatrup, a management consultant, span of control has to do with finding the optimal number of subordinates for each manager within an organization or business. Researchers such as Colonel Lyndall Fownes Urwick, one of the major theoreticians and historians of the management movement of the twentieth century, estimated that the optimal span of control is five or six based on the fact that managers have a limited attention, energy, and time. This was illustrated mathematically by A. V. Graicunas, whose work indicated that the number of potential interactions with subordinates will increase geometrically with respect to the manager's increasing span of control. For example, increasing the number of subordinates from four to five raises potential interactions from 44 to 100. Likewise, the addition of an eighth subordinate moves the potential from 490 to 1,080. And while only a small percentage of the potential number of interactions actually occurs on a daily basis, increasing the number of subordinates beyond five or six has been shown to tax the average manager's ability to perform effectively.

For Plaquemines Parish, the issue of span of control begins with the tight organizational structure that is established in the Charter. The President and three department directors are responsible for all functions of Parish government and oversee approximately 648 classified and unclassified employees; however, rearranging these responsibilities or adding additional departments would require a public vote to amend the Charter. While the average department head might typically have five to seven direct reporting employees, in Plaquemines, the largest of the three departments, the Operations Department, has nine managers reporting directly to the Director of Operations. Similarly, nine managers report directly to the Director of Public Services and some departmental foremen have as many as 24 direct reports. In addition to the three department heads, twelve administrators also report directly to the Parish President, for a total of 15.

### ***Missing Functions in Parish Organization – Community Planning and Development Department***

Louisiana Revised Statute 33:102 gives Plaquemines Parish the authority to adopt and administer zoning regulations and to make, adopt, amend, extend, add to, or carry out plans for development of the area. It also authorizes the Parish to create a Planning Commission (Plaquemines Parish Development Board) to prepare and maintain long-range master plans; however, Plaquemines Parish government does not include a Community Planning and Development Department headed by a professionally qualified community planner. A Community Development Planner would be responsible for updating and implementing the Parish's Comprehensive Master Plan, administering and updating the Zoning Ordinance, and assisting the Finance Department with the Capital Improvements Program. The Community Planning Department would also work closely with the Director of Economic Development and

Tourism and the Director of Public Works to alleviate infrastructure problems and otherwise encourage development, redevelopment, tourism, and other programs beneficial to the tax base and local employment. Finally, the Community Planning and Development Department would support the enhancement of neighborhoods and encourage the development of quality housing for persons of all ages and incomes.

### ***Adequate Pay and Classification***

Under the current Charter, although the Parish President has authority to appoint the three department heads, the Parish Council has authority to provide for the employment, benefits, and levels of compensation of other Parish staff. This includes the authority to establish and administer personnel policies.

In 2007, the Parish commissioned a study of the compensation and classification of Parish employees known as the “Archer Study.” Its purpose was to prepare a compensation and pay classification system with a recommended salary schedule and to create job descriptions for all job titles. This study included a formal analysis of the complexity of each of the Parish’s jobs and outlined the scope of responsibility and major job functions of each job. The analysis considered internal equity among positions in different departments with similar responsibility and complexity, as well as an assessment of the competitive wages of comparable jobs in the labor market, including other government agencies and private enterprises. Based upon this study, job descriptions were revised to be consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other applicable regulations. Job descriptions specify minimum qualifications in terms of education, experience and required knowledge, skills and abilities, and include performance indicators. The resulting pay and classification plan is a systematic set of pay grades, ranges, and stepped pay schedules for each job class, which can guide the hiring and promotions of employees in a consistent manner.

The Archer study recommends that “every employee be brought up to the minimum of the pay range recommended for his or her job as quickly as economically possible. For each experienced employee whose performance regularly meets the expectations of the Parish, it is suggested that their pay be adjusted to toward the midpoint of the recommended pay range as quickly as economically feasible. The midpoint for each recommended pay range represents a market based competitive figure, adjusted for internal equity that might be necessary to retain a fully experienced and capable employee whose performance is consistently meeting the Parish’s expectations. “

The Parish Council debated the recommendations of the Archer Study and voted to approve it in principle. It was implemented by Council in 2007. To meet the initial recommendations of the study, the Parish must spend approximately \$2 million in salary adjustments. It is recommended that the salary levels established in the 2007 study be revisited and updated periodically. The Parish Finance Department has prepared an estimate indicating that continuing salary adjustments of at least \$100,000 per year would be necessary to maintain salary levels at the prevailing norms for the various pay classes over time. See **Appendix C** for a

comparison of Plaquemines' government organization and pay structure with adjacent parishes.

### ***Improving Accessibility of Government Services to the Population***

The geography of Plaquemines Parish makes it difficult for a single, central government office to be accessible to the citizens. The facts are that the Parish is over 90 miles long, it is stretched along a single highway on the West bank and the East Bank extends in a parallel fashion on the other side of the Mississippi River, accessible only by ferry. These facts make a strong argument for decentralizing community-based services.

After Hurricanes devastated Plaquemines Parish in 2005, the Parish received funds from FEMA and the YMCA to rebuild four new consolidated Community Centers located as follows:

1. Davant (Reverend Percy M. Griffin)
2. Buras
3. Port Sulphur
4. Boothville-Venice

These facilities are consolidating a set of ten community centers that existed in various parts of the Parish before the hurricanes of 2005. The new facilities will be providing a limited number of direct social services as well as meeting space for community activities, and safe shelter from hurricanes. Initially the primary functions include recreation for youth and services for senior citizens. There will also be a clinic staffed by a visiting nurse or paramedic.

The initial construction cost of \$28 million was funded largely by state and federal funds. The \$462,000 annual operating costs are initially being funded under an agreement that allows a public-private agreement with the Parish Government, YMCA, United Way, and the Plaquemines Legacy Campaign. If the Parish ultimately takes over the long run staffing, maintenance and operations of these facilities, it could have a significant budget impact.

Ultimately these facilities could be set up like "little City Halls" to provide a wide array of direct services and also to provide direct computer hook ups to information and various applications for services that are managed in the Consolidated Parish Offices in Belle Chasse. Before that takes place, the Parish needs to perform an organizational study to determine what services need to be provided in satellite centers and what services could be provided more economically through websites and on-line, searchable databases and application processes as is done by many other local governments across the country.

### ***Reducing Government Cost through Privatization***

In interviews Parish officials indicated that some services provided by the Parish would be less expensive to the taxpayers if they were turned over to the private sector run. There are many variations of this form of government administration that are in use across the country. Examples that may be worth considering include in Plaquemines Parish include boat harbors and marinas, landfills, mosquito abatement, road and ditch maintenance. Where the Parish owns facilities or equipment, it could lease them to private business to operate subject to competitive bids, or even sell assets and turn the entire service over to a business that would enter an agreement to provide the service to the public for a fee that is subject to license and regulation by the Parish. However, the decision to privatize should be taken following a thorough feasibility study. Also it will be necessary for the Parish to hire a contract compliance specialist to handle the procurements and monitor the contracts to ensure that the vendor is adhering to the contract and that the public being served is satisfied with the service. In other words, it will cost money to save money with privatization.

### ***Reapportionment of Parish Council Districts***

As discussed, above, the shift in population documented in the 2010 U.S. Census could result in a redistribution of voting power in the Parish Council, with the vast majority of the District representatives being from the Belle Chasse area and relatively less District representation for citizens of the southern part of the Parish. An alternative would be to agree on a reapportionment of seats to provide for several at-large council members and fewer District members in order to provide more balanced representation overall for the whole Parish.

According to the Plaquemines Parish Charter, Section 4.10, the Parish Council is authorized to reapportion council districts following the official publication of the Federal Census by the U.S. Census Bureau. It requires that district boundaries should provide for “population equality” among the districts.

There has been considerable discussion of the impacts that the new Census population figures will have on the principle of “population equality”. Previously, LSU prepared a projection of Plaquemines Parish total population to be 22,440.

A study done in 2008 by GCR estimated the number of active electric utility accounts in each Council District. **Table J.1** provides an estimate of Plaquemines Parish population in 2010 by Council District using the distribution of utility meters portrayed by the GCR study as a proxy for population distribution. The assumption is that there is a direct proportional relationship between the population in each Council District and the population in each Council District.

**Table J.1 Estimate of population in Plaquemines Parish by Council District, 2010**

Council Districts	2008 #Accounts	2010 LSU Est. Pop	2010 RPC Est. Pop
1	630	1,937	2,607
2	1,392	4,280	5,761
3	1,284	3,948	5,314
4	610	1,876	2,525
5	1,210	3,721	5,008
6	800	2,460	3,311
7	431	1,325	1,784
8	290	892	1,200
<u>9</u>	<u>651</u>	<u>2,002</u>	<u>2,694</u>
Total	7,298	22,440	30,203

Two population estimates for 2010 are presented here. The first forecast is a projection from LSU and the second is a projection prepared for the New Orleans RPC.

If the number of Council Districts remains at 9, then in order to maintain proportionate representation, each council district would need to have approximately 2,500 – 3,500 persons, (total population divided by 9). This suggests an alignment whereby existing Council Districts 2, 3, 4, and 5 (combined population of would be subdivided into approximately 6 districts north of Alliance yielding a population of 2,300 to 3,100 each. South of Alliance, Districts 6, 7, 8, and 9 could be recombined to form 2 new districts with an approximate population of 3,300 to 4,500 each, with District 1 remaining intact with between 1937 and 2,607 persons.

Another possibility would be to reapportion to a fewer number of district seats, but add at-large seats. This would require a change in the Parish Charter, which requires a minimum of 9 Parish Council Districts and no at-large members of the Council. Having fewer members would make consensus easier, and adding at-large members could help to establish a broader view of Parish issues.

An alignment of seven Parish Council members, with five Parish Council Districts would result in one District Council member for every 4,500 to 6,000 persons in the Parish, plus two at-large members. This would allow Districts 2,3,4, and 5 to form 3 districts of approximately 4,600 to 6,200 residents), with one Council member serving the combination of District 1 and 9 (3,900 to 5,300 each) and one more for Districts 6, 7 and 8 combined (6,700 to 9,000). The at-large representatives would strengthen the ability of a minority of the Districts to solicit support from other at-large members. This could help to encourage more unified thinking on Parish Council, which is an issue that would be in the long-term interests of a prosperous community.

Changes to the number of members of the Parish Council and introduction of at large districts will require approval of the voters as well as review and approval by U.S. Justice Department and the Louisiana Secretary of State.

### ***Revision of Charter to re-organize Parish Administration***

The re-examination of the Charter concerning Parish administration and the duties of the Parish President and Parish Council is still in litigation and has not been concluded. Some of these changes would help to modernize the administration of Parish Government and make it more efficient. The failure of an October 2011 referendum to amend the Charter leaves identified structural deficiencies unresolved and makes them the object of future voter consideration.

### ***Establishing a New Location for the Seat of Parish Government***

Legally the seat of Parish Government is still Pointe a la Hache, although the former Parish Government Courthouse was burned by fire in 2002. Belle Chasse was made a temporary Plaquemines Parish seat. However the Parish still owns the property and the burned courthouse has been neither demolished nor restored. Since 2002 Parish court and government functions have grown and occupy a number of buildings at scattered locations. Recently a decision has been made to purchase the former State School facility on F. Hebert Boulevard and build a consolidated Parish government center on this property. This could result in a better organized administrative complex and improved technology, communication and energy efficiency. However, no decision has been made about the disposition of existing buildings that would be vacated by the Parish and the future of the historic courthouse at Pointe a la Hache. The failure of a recent referendum to move the Parish Seat to Belle Chasse leaves these issues unresolved.

## **5. Issues and Needs in Parish Government Finance**

The following issues are discussed below:

- Cost-Efficiency of Parish Government
- The “Crisis-Management” orientation of Parish Government
- Reliance on grant funds
- Rising maintenance and operating costs
- Reliance on oil and gas revenues
- Decrease in economic strength
- Deficits in certain Enterprise Funds
- Under-pricing of fees for use of facilities and services
- Capital project evaluation and selection

### ***Cost-Efficiency of Parish Government***

Three related issues may combine to increase the cost of government in Plaquemines Parish in the future:

1. the extended geography of the Parish
2. the reconstruction of community service centers throughout the Parish
3. the shift and growth of population in Belle Chasse

The extent of service area to be covered for most household based services, such as schools, fire protection, public safety, garbage collection, recreation, libraries, and social services is very large. The reconstruction of pre-Katrina facilities to their former extent, despite the very low density of population in the southern end of the Parish, will make these services inefficient and expensive to operate on a per capita basis.

Meanwhile the increase in population in Belle Chasse creates new service demands there that will also require construction or expansion of public facilities with the related cost of personnel, operating and maintenance cost once these facilities are constructed and opened for service.

### ***The “Crisis-Management” Orientation of Parish Government***

Hurricane Katrina required heroic efforts of Parish leaders in life-or-death circumstances. It required high dependency on rapid-fire centralized decision-making, and heightened dependence of the population on government assistance. It totally disrupted the measured and routine functions of service delivery. The Horizon oil disaster has caused a renewal of this ‘crisis-management’ style of government. This stress takes a toll on the people in government who also have to make sure that basic public services, safety, public works, and administrative functions remain operable. So far, major lapses in service have not occurred, and this is due to the dedication of the leadership. However, it is inevitable that some things, such as cost control, long-range planning, and management improvements, have had to wait and will need to be addressed in a more deliberate way once the crisis subsides.

### ***Reliance on oil and gas revenues***

Oil and gas revenues for the Parish are providing an important financial “cushion” to Parish budgets, providing an extra 20% to 30% to the annual budget. However these funds rise and fall according to oil prices that have been relatively volatile. The drop from 2008 to 2009 was particularly steep- over \$25 million reduction in a single year. Further study will be required to determine what the long-run impact of the Horizon oil spill and the related moratorium will be on oil and gas revenues for the Parish in 2010 and in future years.

### ***Reliance on Grant Funds***

As shown in Figure 11.2, in 2009, federal grants accounted for over 70% of the Parish's total Governmental Funds revenues. Most of these funds were from FEMA and are being spent for large scale coastal restoration and public works projects that relate to recovery from hurricane damage. These funds have made it possible for unprecedented efforts to protect the coastline and rebuild damaged infrastructure and public facilities. However there are at least two risks that need to be considered in the long run. One is that the current high level of federal participation in the recovery effort will change in the future, perhaps leaving some long-term projects incomplete. The second source of risk is that the construction of new infrastructure and facilities will commit the parish to increasing costs of maintenance and operation without a viable source of revenues for those costs.

### ***Rising Operating and Maintenance Costs***

Since the hurricanes of 2005 that devastated the Parish infrastructure, there has been an enormous capital outlay with the reconstruction of pumps, canals, levees, roads, water plants and distribution systems, wastewater treatment plants and collection systems, public utilities, boat harbors, schools, libraries, community centers, parks and general government facilities throughout the Parish. Capital programs built on federal funds and borrowing was used to finance this large investment. Many of the facilities are new and low-maintenance, but many also require new staff to manage, operate and maintain them. The Parish will need to prepare for its general fund budget and/or enterprise funds to support this new staff, as these positions will become long-term commitments of the Parish budget. Since so many of these facilities were built at about the same time, they will begin to age and wear out at about the same time. Therefore, the Parish must anticipate this bubble of repair and replacement costs and prepare an adequate financial plan for them.

### ***Decrease in Economic Strength***

The combined effects of the hurricanes of 2005 and the Horizon oil spill disaster have weakened the local economy, especially the water-related commerce. One of the first needs after the closure of the fishing and seafood industries was food for families and children of the unemployed. The Parish needs to launch an economic recovery study and plan to identify ways to diversify the economy and retrain workers in idle industries to earn their livelihoods in a new way. The economic recovery plan should also estimate what the long-run impact of the Horizon oil spill and the related moratorium will be on the local economy and fiscal health of Plaquemines Parish.

***Deficits in Certain Enterprise Funds***

Governmental Enterprises are services or activities that generate revenue from a specific fee or charge for services that are proportional to the use made of them by the public. They operate like a business, but are owned by the government, either because they are natural monopolies, or because their publicly-sponsored operation protects some vital public interest. According to the National Council on Governmental Accounting Statement No. 1 (NCGAS 1), entitled Governmental Accounting and Financial Reporting Principles, the purpose of an Enterprise Fund is “...to account for operations (a) that are financed and operated in a manner similar to private business enterprises — where the intent of the governing body is that the costs (expenses, including depreciation) of providing goods or services to the general public on a continuing basis be financed or recovered primarily through users charges; or (b) where the governing body has decided that periodic determination of revenues earned, expenses incurred, and/or net income is appropriate for capital maintenance, public policy, management control, accountability, or other purposes.”

While this definition does not mandate that the income derived from the Enterprise covers the cost of operation, that standard of self sufficiency has become closely identified with the efficient and competent administration of governmental Enterprises, because it supports the continuing maintenance and expansion of the Enterprise to meet public demand. By becoming self-sustaining, Enterprise Funds can provide the public with the assurance that the essential services they provide will be there, regardless of the demands placed on other government resources. Properly operated, self-sufficient Enterprise Funds constitute the foundation of public utility and economic development by insuring the capacity to respond internally to the service demands of the public and business.

Self sufficient Enterprise Funds offer another essential advantage to the public services they support – reduced cost of capital. Because most public enterprises and utilities are capital intensive, and have long useful lives, it is appropriate to borrow (bond) the cost of the improvement over the life of the investment. This insures that those who benefit from the investment over time will be the ones who pay for the service. Nevertheless, such borrowing can be costly, and responsible governments seek to reduce this cost to a minimum. By demonstrating to lenders that the Enterprise is self sufficient, a lower interest rate can be achieved. Over the typical long term of such debt, the savings can be significant.

Overall, Plaquemines Parish Enterprise Funds have averaged an \$8 million annual deficit, making water, sewerage, ports and harbors dependent on subsidy from the general fund. See **Table J.1**. These subsidy funds could otherwise be used to strengthen the Parish economy, improve other essential infrastructure in roads, parks, public facilities, etc, or be returned to the public in the form of lower taxes. Reliance on subsidy also undermines the Enterprise’s

incentive to improve efficiency, compete for patronage, and meet the needs of its customers, because the Parish extracts the subsidy from taxpayers who don't necessarily use those services. Subsidies necessitated by Enterprise Fund deficits also cause the services of the enterprise to be ill-used. Water is wasted, vessels lie derelict in their slips, and ports are tied up in unproductive trade because these businesses are not earning a sustainable return. The impact on the Parish can be substantial.

Overall, government operated Enterprises constitute a failing business in Plaquemines Parish. This failure puts their continued operation at risk, increases the cost of capital to improve them, and distorts demand for their services. To relieve Parish taxpayers of the burden of subsidy, prepare Parish Enterprises for growth and improvement, and to amplify their positive impact on the community, Plaquemines Parish should resolve make self-sufficiency goal by a date certain and undertake efforts necessary to modify services rates and fees to achieve that objective.

**Table J.1. Plaquemines Parish Enterprise Funds.**

Plaquemines Parish Enterprise Funds		Water & Sewer	Port, Harbor & Terminal	Golf Course	Boat Harbor & Shipyards	Total
2006	Revenues	3,246,997.00	1,644,413.00	0.00	0.00	4,891,410.00
	Expenditures	9,590,827.00	2,761,743.00	95,840.00	435,110.00	12,883,520.00
	<b>Deficit</b>	<b>6,343,830.00</b>	<b>1,117,330.00</b>	<b>95,840.00</b>	<b>435,110.00</b>	<b>7,992,110.00</b>
2007	Revenues	3,459,295.00	1,630,664.00	0.00	162,431.00	5,252,390.00
	Expenditures	10,599,698.00	3,471,776.00	68,727.00	474,316.00	14,614,517.00
	<b>Deficit</b>	<b>7,140,403.00</b>	<b>1,841,112.00</b>	<b>68,727.00</b>	<b>311,885.00</b>	<b>9,362,127.00</b>
2008	Revenues	4,016,408.00	3,430,716.00	0.00	246,346.00	7,693,470.00
	Expenditures	11,184,009.00	3,283,963.00	31,702.00	929,086.00	15,428,760.00
	<b>Deficit</b>	<b>7,167,601.00</b>	146,753.00	<b>31,702.00</b>	<b>682,740.00</b>	<b>7,735,290.00</b>
2009	Revenues	3,702,637.00	3,219,744.00	0.00	392,897.00	7,315,278.00
	Expenditures	11,408,458.00	2,899,825.00	0.00	832,898.00	15,141,181.00
	<b>Deficit</b>	<b>7,705,821.00</b>	319,919.00	0.00	<b>440,001.00</b>	<b>7,825,903.00</b>

***Under-pricing of Fees for Use of Facilities and Services***

This issue is related to the previous issue of enterprise funds not recovering their full cost. One likely cause of deficits in enterprise fund accounts may be that the related user fees are too low. However, there are many other fees for licenses, permits and other services in the parish that have remained at the same level for many years. These fee schedules also need to be examined to ensure that they are set at a level that are commensurate with the cost of delivering the service. This examination would consider the full cost of the service as well as a comparison of Plaquemines Parish's fee structure with that of other parishes to see if they are in line.

### ***Capital Project Evaluation and Selection***

The Plaquemines Parish's multi-year capital improvements program is relatively new and has grown very large. The list of projects is not drawn from an overall master plan and is subject to political considerations and frequent changes. Plaquemines Parish needs to establish a carefully organized and well-managed approach to identifying capital project needs, identifying and evaluating project feasibility and project alternatives, creating reliable cost estimates, prioritizing and capital projects, and considering their impacts on operating budgets and the environment.

## **6. Goals and Objectives for Parish Government Structure**

The following Goals and Objectives are based on the issues identified in the Community Assessment and are proposed to guide the preparation of recommendations, implementation strategies and an action plan for the future.

### **Goal 1: Ensure fair and equal representation of citizens by the Parish Council.**

Objective 1.1: Consider how best to re-apportion Parish Council Districts since the redistribution of the population that has occurred since 2005.

Objective 1.2: Identify changes to the Parish Charter that would result in better accountability of Parish Government to the needs of its citizens.

### **Goal 2: Provide convenient access to Parish government for citizens throughout the Parish.**

Objective 2.1: Establish a consolidated government center for all Parish services that is a "one stop shop" located within a 30 minute travel time for a majority of the population in Plaquemines Parish.

Objective 2.2: Establish satellite service centers at strategic locations that will serve Parish residents that are more than 30 minutes from the consolidated government center.

### **Goal 3: Improve the productivity, professionalism and quality of service provided by Parish personnel.**

Objective 3.1: Reorganize Parish administration so as to reduce the span of control for senior management in Parish government to no more than 5 direct reports.

Objective 3.2: Prepare performance measures to reflect the Parish's goals for quality and output from each department and sub-department unit of Parish government.

Objective 3.3: Prepare job descriptions and minimum qualifications for management-level employees within 1 year and for all employees within 2 years.

Objective 3.4: Fully implement the recommendations of the Archer Pay and Classification Study within two years and review the classifications for equity every three years thereafter.

Objective 3.5: Bid out services that could be provided more efficiently and more effectively by the private sector.

**Goal 4: Increase the capacity of Parish government to support long-term economic recovery.**

Objective 4.1: Add a fully staffed Planning Department to the Parish government organization for the purpose of preparing and implementing long range plans and coordinating economic development.

Objective 4.2: Identify effective public-private partnerships for economic development and tourism.

Objective 4.3: Identify effective incentives and public-private partnerships to produce and deliver green energy and the associated infrastructure.

## **7. Goals and Objectives for Future Parish Government Finance**

**Goal 1: Develop a Stable Long-Run Financial Structure**

Objective 1.1: Reduce Dependency on Oil and Gas revenues

Objective 1.2: Reduce Dependency on Federal Grants

Objective 1.3: Identify and Develop Alternative Funding Sources

**Goal 2: Foster Sound Fiscal Policies**

Objective 2.1: Prepare a Long-Range Financial Plan

Objective 2.2: Prepare an Economic Recovery Plan for Plaquemines Parish

Objective 2.3: Achieve Balanced Budget for Enterprise Funds by 2015

Objective 2.4: Prepare for increased maintenance and operating expenses

Objective 2.5: Select Capital Projects Based on Objective Evaluation Criteria

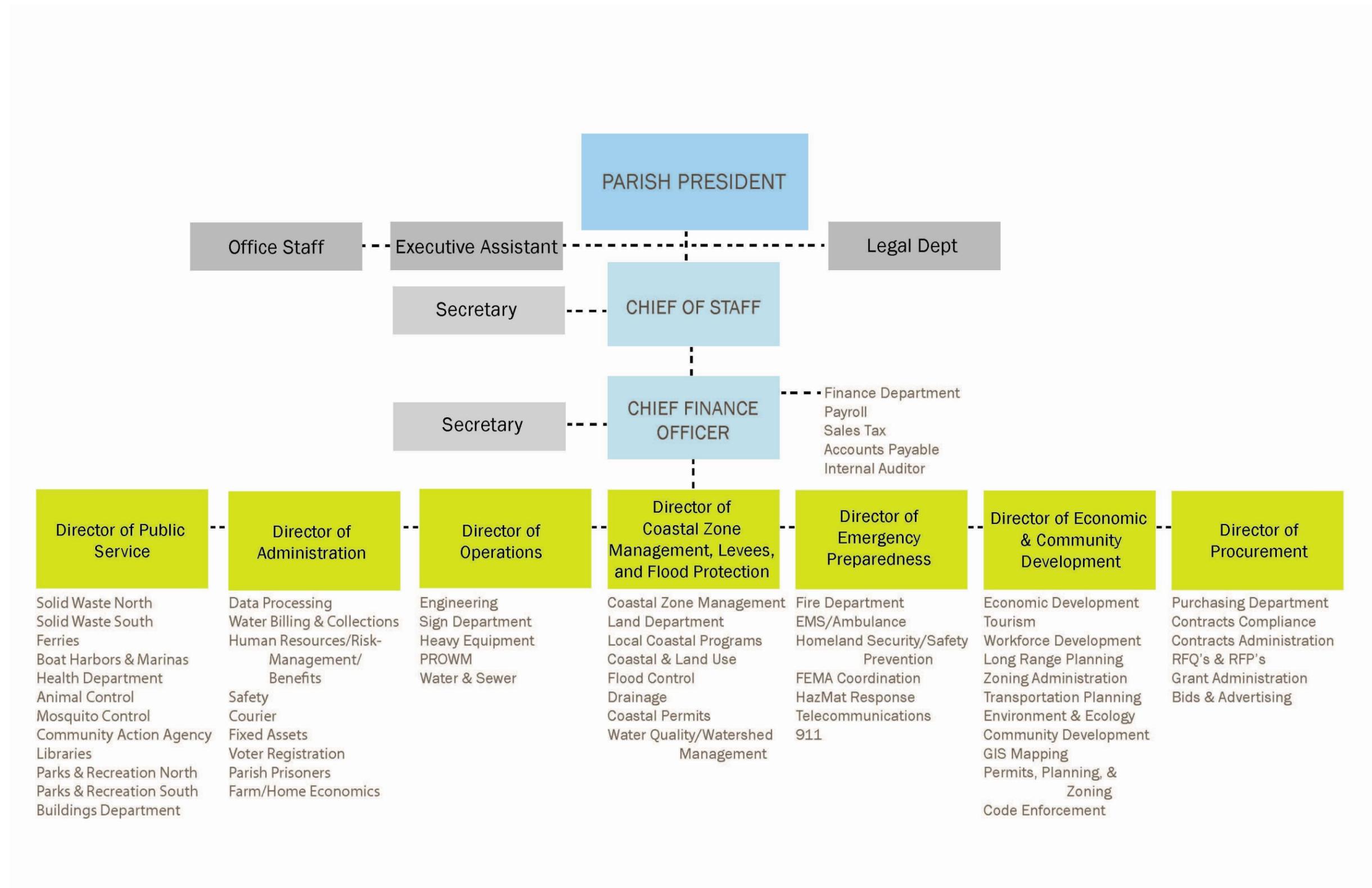
## **8. Recommendations for Parish Government Structure**

The following recommendations for reorganizing Parish government administration are developed from the assessment of current conditions, feedback from Parish staff, and examination of the goals and objectives developed in **Section 6** of this element of the Community Agenda.

### Recommendation #1: Re-structure Parish Government Administration

Repeatedly we have heard from members of the Parish administration that it is time to re-structure Parish government to increase staff productivity, reduce spans of control for senior managers, and improve quality of services for the citizens of Plaquemines Parish. In 2008 the Archer Company performed extensive staff interviews as part of their Pay and Classification Study and then prepared recommendations for staff organization. While it is not feasible, and should not be necessary, to repeat the Archer Study, it is appropriate to build on their efforts to propose an improved Organizational Chart for Plaquemines Parish Government. The recommended organization is shown in **Figure J.2** on the next page.

Figure J.2



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**Figure J.2** illustrates a dramatic change from the current organizational chart shown previously in **Figure J.1**. The following list highlights the major changes:

- Established a Chief of Staff who will report directly to the Parish President and who will direct day-to-day operations of Parish Government. This frees the Parish President to be more involved with the external affairs and policy direction of the parish.
- Establish a new Chief Financial Officer who would report to the Chief of Staff, managing finance, budget, payroll, sales tax, accounts payable and an information technology. The Chief Financial Officer would also provide oversight of Administrative Director ,
- Created an Office of Coastal Restoration reporting to the Director of Coastal Zone Management, Levees, and Flood Protection (new position). This office would also include the current role of the Land Department along with the Coastal Zone Management program.
- Created a Department of Economic and Community Development reporting through the Finance Director to the Chief of Staff. The new Department would be headed by the Director of Economic and Community Development with status equal to the Administrative Directors. It would allow enhancement and integration of the parish's economic development, tourism, and workforce development offices under an Economic Development Manager. The Community Development Manager would provide a range of new services, including long- range planning, zoning administration, housing and community development, transportation planning, environment and ecology (to be committed to preserving wetlands and other natural resources) and GIS/Mapping. The existing functions of Permits and Inspections and Code Enforcement would also fall in this Department.
- Created a Department of Emergency Preparedness reporting directly to the Chief of Staff. This Department would be headed by a new Director of Emergency Preparedness that would have similar function to that of Jefferson Parish. Under the Director would be two Managers – one for Public Safety (Fire Department and EMS) and one for Emergency Management. The Manager of Emergency Management would manage homeland security, FEMA coordination, Hazardous Materials response, safety and accident prevention, and 911 emergency communications.
- The Operations Department would be reorganized with three new Deputy Directors of Operations reporting to the Director of Operations – North Division, Central Division, and South Division. This would allow the Department to place personnel and equipment in strategic locations around the Parish in order to be more accessible and more efficient.

- The Administration Department would be reorganized with a new Human Resources Manager reporting to the Director of Administration. The Human Resources Manager would be responsible for overseeing personnel, risk management, and benefits, and also manage the existing units for Parish Prisoners and Farm & Economics.
- Establish an office of Director of Procurement, responsible for purchasing, contract administration, RFPs and RFQs, grant administration and bids and advertising. There would also be a new office of Contract Compliance that would handle contract administration and monitoring for all services that are being outsourced or privatized.
- The Public Services Department would be reorganized with three new Managers of Public Services reporting to the Director of Public Services:
  1. Utilities Manager - Water & Sewer, Solid Waste, Billings & Collections, and Ferries;
  2. Environmental Health Manager– Mosquito Control and Animal Control;
  3. Leisure Services Manager – Parks and Recreation, Libraries, Buildings, Community Action and Boat Harbors/Marinas

Other changes include the following:

- Move Code Enforcement out of the Administration Department and into the new Department of Economic and Community Development.

#### Recommendation #2: Evaluate Privatization of Selected Services

In addition, as discussed in the Public Services and Facilities section of the Community Agenda, we recommend that the Parish consider the feasibility of privatizing five services that are currently provided directly by the Parish government: Public Rights-of Way Maintenance (PROWM), Mosquito Control, Boat Harbors and Marinas, Ferry Operations, and Solid Waste Management. The decision to privatize is an important one that would only take place or not, based on a feasibility study that would make careful consideration of the options available to the Parish.

The first phase of the feasibility study would be to conduct a thorough audit of the value of current fixed and depreciating assets – land, facilities, and equipment needed to provide the service– as well as the operating cost and on-going expense for the existing services – labor, expenses for maintenance, operations, and supplies, insurance, security, depreciation, and administrative cost. These asset values and operating costs should be allocated to individual facilities wherever possible.

There should also be a survey of similar services offered by other local governments to determine what costs they incur compared to Plaquemines Parish and in the case of services provided for a fee (boat slips, ferry service and garbage pickup) what are the fees charged by surrounding local governments for similar services.

The Parish should consider that one of its options is continuing to provide these services, but only after taking internal steps to improve the management of these facilities and reduce cost overruns. Internal management improvements (short of privatization) might include:

- Set measurable service delivery goals and cost recovery goals for these services, then training parish staff on the accomplishment of these goals; then monitoring results and establishing disciplinary measures for staff that fail to meet goals and incentives for staff that exceed performance goals.
- Reduce the level of services to match the revenue stream by eliminating selected services that are too costly to maintain.
- Collect past due accounts or terminating services to those customers who have past due accounts for over 90 days in order to eliminate losses from these parish residents or businesses that have long-standing past due accounts.

Some considerations that would govern the decision whether or not to privatize include the following:

- 1) Whether or not there are enough qualified firms to choose from so that the Parish will receive truly competitive bids for the service;
- 2) Whether or not the private sector can actually create cost savings after all costs are accounted for and bids are evaluated;
- 3) Whether or not the private vendor will be as responsive to the public as the Parish has been;
- 4) Whether or not the desired service can be accurately specified in the RFP to ensure “apples to apples” comparison of proposals from different suppliers;
- 5) Whether or not the parish can hold down cost and rates paid by the customers over time with a contract that restricts unreasonable escalation of unit costs and customer fees;
- 6) What is the administrative cost of monitoring the contract for performance each year and periodically re-bidding services to keep the contracting terms competitive?
- 7) How will the decision to privatize affect the jobs (compensation, benefits and job security) of current Parish employees who provide these services today?

In addition, it is necessary to evaluate which is the best way to receive value from the capital assets such as land, facilities, buildings and heavy equipment that the Parish currently owns but will no longer be using. The options include sale, lease, or sale and lease back of the Parish’s current capital assets (land, structures and equipment) to the private entity operating the service.

The full cost of the privatization ‘deal’ will no doubt depend on evaluating the financing terms and who bears the risk of financing. This has to do with whether or not the bidder will need to purchase assets from the Parish or will lease them, whether or not the bidder intends to make major capital improvements, and how these major expenses will be financed. However, there are different interest rates and different tax implications of these

financing decisions based on whether the financing is done by the parish or the private entity. A public-private partnership may yield the best results.

Even if the parish elects to divest all its assets and privatize the operation in a “turn-key” service contract, there will continue to be costs to the Parish. The privatized services of the Parish should be overseen by a Contract Compliance Officer working in the Procurement Office of the Deputy Director of Fiscal Services located in the Administration Department. The Contract Compliance Officer would be responsible for ensuring that the contractor is fulfilling the provisions of the contract and would ensure that proper payments are made to the contractors. He/she would also monitor performance and customer satisfaction for the services rendered. The actual specifications of the services provided by each contractor would be prepared by the Department that is responsible for service delivery in each case. Service delivery problems detected by the Contract Compliance Officer would be resolved in consultation with the responsible Department.

### Recommendation #3: Evaluate New Parish Service Centers

Because the new Consolidated Parish Government Center is located in the extreme north end of the 100-mile long Parish, it will become more important to provide alternative locations in the Parish for field personnel, equipment storage and maintenance, and citizen access to localized services such as recreation and health services. We recommend that the Parish study the potential costs and benefits of establishing geographical districts with different offices to provide some or all of the services provided by the Operations Department and the Public Services Department. The three offices would be known as the Plaquemines Parish Government North Division, Central Division, and South Division. The North Division would operate in office space available in the new Consolidated Parish Government Center in Belle Chasse. It would directly serve citizens in the Belle Chasse- Myrtle Grove portion of the west bank. It would also handle central administrative duties for the Operations Department and the Public Services Department. The Central Division office would be located in existing buildings on the East Bank and the South Division office would be in existing space in the Buras/Port Sulphur area. The East and South Division offices would provide some or all of the services provided by the Operations Department and the Public Services Department.

### Recommendation #4: Reapportion Parish Council Districts

As discussed, above, some form of reapportionment of Parish Council Districts is necessary in order to restore proportional representation. A 5-2 Council District alignment has been proposed with five district members and two at-large council members to streamline the structure of Parish Council and improve consensus building for important Parish-wide decisions that are coming up. Having fewer members would make consensus easier, and adding at-large members could help to establish a broader view of Parish issues. The council district boundaries will need to be set based on 2010 Census data. The Parish has recently commissioned redistricting study which presented three options for the final redistricting lines. After careful review by Council final redistricting lines will be put out for referendum. The U.S. Justice Department has to approve the redistricting plan because Louisiana is subject to the 1965

Voting Rights Act. Also the Louisiana Secretary of State has to approve it. At the same time, a change in the Parish Charter is required to reduce the number of Parish Council Districts from 9 to 5 and allow two at-large members of the Council.

Recommendation #5: Make Revisions to the Plaquemines Parish Charter

In order to put some of the recommendations of the Comprehensive Master Plan into effect there will have to be changes to the Plaquemines Parish Charter. Changes to the Charter require a referendum. Changes to the Charter were previously studied and a new Parish Charter was proposed in 2009, but a referendum on those changes failed last year. The following is a list of several changes to the Parish Charter that should be considered in order to implement the recommendations of the Comprehensive Master Plan:

1. Article 1, Section 1.03 would need to be amended to provide for a different number of Parish Council districts, including at-large members, as discussed above.
2. Article 2 should contain a new paragraph giving the Parish authority to adopt and enforce a Comprehensive Master Plan for the Parish with a Future Land Use Map and land use policies that would be the guide for establishing future zoning maps and text consistent with the Comprehensive Master Plan.
3. Article 2 should be revised to remove language that provides that the Parish Council serve as the sole governing authority for the Plaquemines Parish Port, Harbor and Terminal District. A port commission needs to be set up composed of business leaders, representatives of government, and appointees of the administration/council to run the port.
4. Article 3 should be revised to add Administrative Directors for Emergency Preparedness and Economic and Community Development, and to empower the President to appoint these Directors.
5. Article 3 should be revised to remove reference to employment policies adopted by the Parish Council and provide that employment of personnel in Parish Government will be in accordance with the rules of the Civil Service Commission.
6. Article 5 would need to be revised to reflect the changes proposed to the Parish Government Organization. Telecommunications would be removed from the Department of Public Service to a new Department of Emergency Preparedness. Environmental Control would be removed from the Department of Public Services and placed in a new Department of Economic and Community Development. Planning would be removed from the Department of Operations and placed in a new Department of Economic and Community Development.

## 9. Recommendations for Parish Government Finances

The following recommendations for improving Parish Government budget and finances are developed from the assessment of current conditions, feedback from Parish staff, and examination of the goals and objectives developed in **Section 7** of this element of the Community Agenda.

### Recommendation #6: Adopt a Parish Comprehensive Master Plan

Plaquemines Parish needs a parish-wide comprehensive master plan with project priorities and funding goals that will help the Parish sustain sufficient state and federal grants to achieve goals in coastal restoration, flood control, economic recovery, restoration of infrastructure and utilities, and community development. This is such a huge and long-term effort that a strong Master Plan and continued active lobbying efforts in Washington are essential.

### Recommendation #7: Prepare an Economic Recovery Plan

The Parish needs to launch an economic recovery study and plan to identify ways to diversify the economy and retrain workers in idle industries to earn their livelihoods in a new way. The economic recovery plan should also estimate what the long-run impact of the Horizon oil spill and the related moratorium will be on the local economy and fiscal health of Plaquemines Parish. On Sept. 23, 2010 the U.S. Economic Development Administration, Department of Commerce advertized the availability of funding under *FY 2010 Gulf Oil Spill Supplemental Federal Funding* for communities in the Gulf Coast to prepare such plans.

### Recommendation #8: Realign fee structures to achieve cost recovery in Enterprise Funds.

A study is needed to examine who is benefitting and what they should be willing and able to pay, comparing fees for other nearby parishes. The study should examine the fee structure to evaluate the potential revenue, efficiency and equity implications of a variety of fee structures. Evaluate how fee structure will provide incentives for more efficient operation. Fee structures might include a graduated fee that increases with usage, or two-part fee structure, compared to a flat fee structure. Finally, the study should include an audit to see how much revenue is lost due to faulty collections or accounting of funds. Phase in the fee increases over a five year period so that they will be more acceptable to the customers. See Appendix A for a discussion of strategies for Plaquemines Parish to address the cost overrun in the Water and Sewer Enterprise Fund.

### Recommendation #9: Prepare a long-range financial plan for the Parish

Plaquemines Parish needs to take a strategic view of its financial future that will identify future trends in expenses and revenues and the strategies that it should pursue for achieving the goals of fiscal diversity and fiscal responsibility. It should forecast Parish revenues from the oil and gas severance fees and determine whether or not they may be falling in the long-run for reasons that the parish cannot control. It should identify new sources of revenues that will diversify the Parish's financial position. Taking a public-private partnership approach to developing green energy and electric power distribution might generate new Parish revenues.

**Recommendation #10: Create the position of Chief Financial Officer**

The Parish should create a Chief Financial Officer. This person should have strong leadership and control over the budget and spending process, develop stronger fiscal management procedures that will strengthen the capacity of Parish Government to use its funds wisely.

**Recommendation #11: Formalize the process of prioritizing capital projects**

The Parish should formulate a more formal, interdepartmental process for identifying and prioritizing future capital improvements projects using a generally accepted set of evaluation and project selection criteria that considers the life-cycle cost of new projects. The Capital Improvements project list should be based on the overall vision and recommendations of the Comprehensive Master Plan. The final prioritization of projects should also include an assessment of the operating and maintenance cost of proposed projects so that the Parish can budget general funds needed to sustain the new facilities that are part of the parish's inventory of capital assets in good operating condition over time.

**Recommendation #12: Set targets for improving financial performance.**

The Parish Chief Financial Officer should become a champion for improved financial performance. The CFO should revamp Parish financial policies and instill a message of strong fiscal responsibility and financial performance throughout the government. This includes adopting specific targets for cost recovery as it applies to Enterprise Funds, prioritization of capital improvements based on the Comprehensive Master Plan, and monitoring and closely evaluating the performance of services that are privatized to make sure the Parish is getting a competitive and responsive package of services from the private sector.

**Recommendation #13: Perform a comprehensive audit of department budgets and operations****Recommendation #14: Complete the update of the Geographic Information System and use it to identify missing tax parcels.**

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