

Village of Chatham, LA
Special Call Meeting
November 19, 2025

The Village of Chatham held a special call meeting on November 19, 2025, at 6:00pm.

The meeting was called to order, and roll was taken with the following members present: Mayor Gregory C. Harris, Councilmembers Bernadean James, Toni Malone and Sue Proffer.

Several members of the public were in attendance and the Village Attorney Gary Nunn.

The pledge of allegiance was led by Toni Malone and prayer was given by Bernadean James.

Councilmember Malone requested that Village Clerk, Lillian Pittman, read the Collection and Disconnect Policy out loud.

After reading of the policy, Councilmember Malone stated that it had come to the council's attention that sometimes the policy was not being followed on direction of the mayor. She stated that all office personnel and employees must follow the policies and procedures that are put in place. She further stated that we cannot pick and choose who gets cut off and who doesn't.

Councilmember Malone brought up the recent issue of a customer removing a lock from his meter which had been locked for non-payment. The meter was relocked and an employee was told to unlock the meter and turn the water back on even though the customer still owed money and had tampered with the water meter. Councilmember Malone stated that in her opinion this was not acceptable. She further stated that she did not want to see any of them get charged with malfeasance.

Mayor Harris stated that he does deviate from policy sometimes because sometimes people get in a bind, but he has never given away water. He stated that this wasn't the first person he's helped and would not be the last person. Mayor Harris said the customer was going to pay \$300.00 and pay the rest of his bill when he got his check on the first. Mayor Harris stated he did tell the customer he could get in trouble for removing the lock. Mayor Harris said the customer did not destroy the lock; the customer took it off and laid it in the water box. Mayor Harris said he took it upon himself, that since the customer had paid \$300.00 and promised to pay the balance on the first and the customer understood that if balance was not paid then he would be cutoff without any more questions. Mayor Harris said in the past he has turned people back on and that they have paid like they have said they would.

Mayor Harris asked if there was anyone who had been given water that hadn't paid.

Clerk, Lillian Pittman, gave a statement on how the cut off list was currently being handled: That the list is printed and the mayor looks over the list, and he tells her who can and cannot be turned off, who he will call.

Mayor Harris asked the clerk if those people come in and pay. The clerk responded most of the time they do and sometimes they do not.

Bobbi Chatham brought up the records of the lists. The clerk was asked to retrieve them. Ms. Pittman stated the records went back to August 2025. Ms. Pittman, after receiving advice from Gary Nunn, read off the names of who the mayor said not to turn off and the reasons why. She was asked about the other names on the list and she said that those people had been turned off.

Mayor Harris was asked how he picked out the ones that got turned off or not turned off. Mayor Harris responded that the cut off list looked at and if someone who is not consistently on the list is called and some he knows will pay if he calls are called and told to leave on.

Councilmember Malone wanted to know if every customer was called. She was informed by the mayor that not everyone was called.

Councilmember Malone asked Village Attorney, Gary Nunn, for an opinion of the action taken by Mayor Harris versus the policy in place.

Mr. Nunn responded that if there is a requirement of time (for payment), built into the policy, that is all that is allowed. If policy says to turn off a customer, then the customer should be turned off. He stated that the Mayor and Council could get into trouble for turning off some customers and not others.

Mr. Nunn asked if a notice was sent letting customers know what day cutoffs would take place. The clerk responded that the notice was printed on the bills.

Councilmember Malone made the comment that the purpose of the meeting was to have everyone one around the table and all the employees to not be in violation and not having the potential to get in trouble.

The public made multiple comments. One member of the public asked Mayor Harris directly if he (Mayor Harris) told an employee to go against the ordinance by turning water back on for the customer who took the lock out, breaking the law. Mayor Harris responded that he didn't believe he made anyone violate the law.

Village employee, David Risher, asked Mayor Harris "Was I or was I not told, if I didn't want to do my job, then you didn't need me?" Mr. Risher also stated that the mayor pulled him into a meeting and told him that if he (David Risher) did not do what he was told that there would be consequences. David Risher gave additional examples of the mayor asking him to go against policy and ordinances.

Gary Nunn made comments that the mayor is like the CEO of the Village and the council was like the Board of Directors. He further stated that he (Mayor Harris) is given some discretion but must follow the law and ordinances. Mr. Nunn also stated that an employee cannot be threatened with their job if employee is following the law.

Mayor Harris apologized for the way he has been handling things. He said his purpose was not to help himself but to help people.

Councilmember Malone questioned Mayor Harris if he was going to continue go against the ordinances. Mayor Harris stated "If you read between the lines, does that sound like what I'm saying? I'm apologizing for doing this." Mayor Harris reiterated that he was just trying to help people. Mayor Harris further explained that those he has allowed additional time and have promised to pay but didn't were turned off or had meter pulled. He stated that he has never given water away.

Councilmember Sue Proffer asked if the customer who had removed the lock from the water meter was off. She was informed that the customer's water was still on. She asked if he had paid his balance and she was informed that he had not. She commented that it should be turned off.

A motion was made by Toni Malone and seconded by Bernadean James and approved by all to have the cut off list reevaluated and be brought into compliance.

A motion was made by Toni Malone and seconded by Sue Proffer and approved by all to adjourn the meeting.

Lillian Pittman
Clerk
Village of Chatham