



ST. TAMMANY PARISH

MICHAEL B. COOPER
PARISH PRESIDENT

INTEROFFICE MEMO VIA HAND DELIVERY & EMAIL

DATE: December 15, 2025

TO: Katrina Buckley, St. Tammany Parish Clerk of Council
St. Tammany Parish Council Members

FROM: St. Tammany Parish President Michael B. Cooper *mbc*

SUBJECT: Reasons for VETO
Ordinance Calendar No. 7963AA
Ordinance to Adopt the 2026 Operating Budget

I, Parish President Michael B. Cooper, do hereby **VETO** the line items identified below of **Ordinance Calendar No. 7963AA** Ordinance to Adopt the 2026 Operating Budget for the following reasons:

Restore Funding to Safe Haven Campus

1. I ask the Council to reconsider the cuts made to Safe Haven. While I acknowledge the lack of funding in the General Fund and Safe Haven Fund, these cuts jeopardize a worthwhile campus that the community cares about and could ultimately cause the parish to lose additional revenue over time.
2. Current Safe Haven tenants include the St. Tammany Parish School Board, Florida Parishes Human Services Authority, Family Reach, and NAMI. The current budget reduction threatens to make the campus uninhabitable over time, resulting in a complete loss of revenue and what may become a parish owned blighted property.
3. Proposed services to be terminated include pest control and termite protection, grass cutting, abandoning generator maintenance, and performing only the most essential services to prevent complete degradation of the campus. If revenue from paying tenants is lost, all maintenance will be abandoned. This will all but ensure that the campus will be completely uninhabited over time, and the money spent bringing the campus to a usable condition will be lost. At a time when the Council is focused on blighted properties, this cut threatens to make Parish Government the owner of the largest blighted property in St. Tammany Parish.
4. I ask the Council not to override this veto, and to instead discuss the reality of these cuts with my administration to make sure the agencies housed at Safe Haven, the Council, and the public truly understand the implications of such a tremendous budget reduction.

Restore Cost of Living Wage Adjustments

1. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) in the southern U.S. has risen 26.43% since 2020, dramatically increasing costs for our employees. However, during the same period, employees have received Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs) of 5% in 2023, 3% in 2024, and 2% in 2025 for a total of 10% – far below the actual inflation rate. A COLA keeps wages aligned with real economic conditions and prevents our workforce from experiencing an effective pay cut.
2. The Council clearly understands the importance of a COLA, as at December's meeting, they adopted Ordinance Calendar No. 7939AA, which automatically increases Councilmember salaries next term and every term using a calculation based on the CPI. If the Council can afford to increase their own salaries, we can also afford to keep our employees from experiencing an effective pay cut.
3. The St. Tammany Parish Council removed the COLA over concerns about rising health-care costs. Yet, those same costs burden the employees who rely on our insurance plans, further reducing their take-home pay at a time when costs continue to rise. Removing the COLA acknowledges those costs but shifts the burden entirely to employees.
4. The 1% merit and wage adjustment pool exists to hire and retain dedicated, experienced employees. Losing trained staff results in the loss of institutional knowledge, causes operational disruptions, and increases training costs, reducing our ability to serve the community.
5. Removal of the COLA and wage adjustment pool only saves the General Fund a net \$21,000 after the Cost Allocation Plan but has a huge impact on the quality of life for our employees.
6. I ask that the Council consider the impact on employees and their families who are facing inflationary pressures, and not override this veto, allowing the requested COLA and merit pool to be kept in the proposed budget for 2026, as we cannot afford to lose dedicated, experienced employees. The impact of the cuts on our employees is immense.

I respectfully request that the Council consider the above and below referenced line-item funding cuts and elect not to override this veto in the interest of preserving the quality of life for the great people of this parish and our employees.

Respectfully submitted,



MICHAEL B. COOPER
Parish President

Line Item Amendments	Amendment as Adopted	Amounts Vetoed	Net Amendment	
All Parish Departments - Reduce the expenditure budget by the 2% COLA and 1% wage adjustment pool.	(955,103.82)	955,103.82	-	
000 - General Fund				
<u>Parish Council</u> - Reduce the expenditure budget for legal services.	(50,000.00)	-	(50,000.00)	
<u>Chief Administrative Office</u> -				
1. Reduce the expenditure budget for legal services.	(75,000.00)	-	(75,000.00)	
2. Reduce the expenditure budget for the purchase of a pool vehicle and associated costs.	(45,000.00)	-	(45,000.00)	
<u>Safe Haven</u> - Reduce the expenditure budget for all general funds subsidizing the cost of the campus.	(619,412.00)	619,412.00	-	
<u>Clerk of Court</u> - Increase the expenditure budget for state mandated expenditures for computer licenses.	244,000.00	(244,000.00)	-	
<u>Transfers Out</u> - Increase the expenditure budget to the risk fund for the costs of pending litigation.	350,000.00	(350,000.00)	-	
<u>District Attorney-Civil Division</u> - Reduce the expenditure budget for a 10% estimated health insurance increase.	(31,720.00)	-	(31,720.00)	
100 - Public Works Fund				
1. Transfer funding to capital for:	(6,190,000.00)	-	(6,190,000.00)	
Traffic Calming Program	Parishwide	(250,000.00)	-	(250,000.00)
Pine Crest Drive	District 1	(500,000.00)	-	(500,000.00)
Perry Road	District 3	(500,000.00)	-	(500,000.00)
Tammany Trace Bridge #24	District 5	(210,000.00)	-	(210,000.00)
Ethel Drive	District 6	(145,000.00)	-	(145,000.00)
Green Street	District 6	(210,000.00)	-	(210,000.00)
N. Pontchartrain Area Drainage	District 7	(250,000.00)	-	(250,000.00)
Hidden Pines Subdivision Drainage	District 7	(250,000.00)	-	(250,000.00)
Ordogne-Ruppert Rd.	District 7	(930,000.00)	-	(930,000.00)
Chantilly Loop	District 8	(300,000.00)	-	(300,000.00)
Cross Gates Boulevard	District 9	(520,000.00)	-	(520,000.00)
Mandeville Annex Turning Radii	District 10	(275,000.00)	-	(275,000.00)
Firetower Road	District 11	(495,000.00)	-	(495,000.00)
DeSoto Street	District 12	(510,000.00)	-	(510,000.00)
Abney Country Air Subdivision Drainage	District 13	(500,000.00)	-	(500,000.00)
N. 9th Street	District 14	(225,000.00)	-	(225,000.00)
E. Pearl River Street	District 14	(120,000.00)	-	(120,000.00)
2. <u>Public Works Administration</u> - Increase the expenditure budget for consulting services for an efficiency study	200,000.00	-	200,000.00	
102 - Environmental Services Fund - Reduce the expenditure budget for professional services for the sewer study.				
	(450,000.00)	-	(450,000.00)	
121 - Hwy 21 Economic Development Fund				
1. Reduce the expenditure budget for the Fairgrounds Master Plan Amendment.	(125,000.00)	-	(125,000.00)	
2. Increase the expenditure budget for design of a Slidell Recreation District Access Road.	250,000.00	-	250,000.00	
Lighting District and Internal Service Funds - Increase the expenditure budget for estimated increases in electricity costs.				
190-4621 - Lighting District 1	28,000.00	-	28,000.00	
190-4624 - Lighting District 4	63,000.00	-	63,000.00	
190-4631 - Lighting District 11	840.00	-	840.00	
190-4634 - Lighting District 14	2,100.00	-	2,100.00	
190-4636 - Lighting District 16	5,000.00	-	5,000.00	
606 - Justice Center Complex	115,000.00	-	115,000.00	
650 - Koop Drive Administrative Complex	27,000.00	-	27,000.00	
651 - Administrative and Justice Center Complex East	30,000.00	-	30,000.00	
612 - Safe Haven Complex Fund				
1. Reduce the revenue budget for the reduction of funds from the General Fund.	(619,412.00)	619,412.00	-	
2. Increase the revenue budget for a transfer in from the Fairgrounds Building Fund.	60,000.00	-	60,000.00	
3. Reduce the revenue budget for a lease that is anticipated to be terminated March 31, 2026.	(187,942.25)	-	(187,942.25)	
4. Reduce the expenditure budget and staffing for a major shutdown of the campus.	(620,500.00)	607,206.00	(13,294.00)	
5. Reduce the expenditure budget for new lawn mowers, an air handler unit, and retention pond irrigation.	(114,000.00)	-	(114,000.00)	
613 - Fairgrounds Building Fund				
1. Reduce the expenditure budget for the roof replacement project.	(60,000.00)	-	(60,000.00)	
2. Increase the expenditure budget to transfer the available funds to the Safe Haven fund.	60,000.00	-	60,000.00	
Reallocate Facilities Management staff from Safe Haven to other facilities.				
000-6201 - General Fund - St. Tammany Parish Jail	7,600.00	(7,600.00)	-	
100 - Public Works Fund - Tammany Trace Administration, Maintenance, and Fleet	22,600.00	(22,600.00)	-	
121-2403 - Hwy 21 Economic Development Fund - Fairgrounds Area and Lock 1, 2, 3	25,000.00	(25,000.00)	-	
122 - Culture, Recreation, Tourism Fund - Camp Salmen	2,700.00	(2,700.00)	-	
600 - Tyler Street Complex	10,100.00	(10,100.00)	-	
606 - Justice Center Complex	6,200.00	(6,200.00)	-	
650 - Koop Drive Administrative Complex	23,400.00	(23,400.00)	-	
651 - Administrative and Justice Center Complex East	46,100.00	(46,100.00)	-	
664 - Emergency Operations Center	1,200.00	(1,200.00)	-	
612 - Safe Haven Complex Fund	(144,900.00)	144,900.00	-	

	Amendment as Adopted	Amounts Vetoed			Adjustments due to CAP	Net Amendment
		Payroll	Operating	Interfund Charges		
Summary of Revenue Amendments by Fund	(6,937,354.25)	-	-	619,412.00	-	(6,317,942.25)
100 - Public Works Fund	(6,190,000.00)		-	-	-	(6,190,000.00)
612 - Safe Haven Complex Fund	(747,354.25)		-	619,412.00	-	(127,942.25)
Summary of Expenditure Amendments by Fund	(1,622,925.82)	955,103.82	(131,694.00)	619,412.00	(800.00)	(180,904.00)
000 - General Fund	(50,520.84)	218,524.84	(601,600.00)	417,128.00	0.00	(16,468.00)
Parish President	(8,212.38)	8,212.38				-
Parish Council	(66,622.88)	16,622.88				(50,000.00)
Chief Administrative Officer	(141,532.68)	21,532.68				(120,000.00)
Facilities Management	(41,204.05)	41,204.05				-
Department of Finance	(36,141.68)	36,141.68				-
Grants Management	(11,101.10)	11,101.10				-
Human Resources	(14,773.13)	14,773.13				-
Procurement	(15,615.29)	15,615.29				-
Public Information	(13,536.71)	13,536.71				-
Department of Technology	(37,515.69)	37,515.69				-
Interfund Charges	386,478.00			(223,256.00)		163,222.00
Bush Community Center	(850.00)			837.00		(13.00)
Levee Board Building	(740.00)			733.00		(7.00)
Health & Human Services Staff / Programs	(2,269.25)	2,269.25				-
Health & Human Services Interfund Charges/Support	(11,116.00)			5,238.00		(5,878.00)
Safe Haven	(619,412.00)			619,412.00		-
Clerk of Court	244,000.00		(244,000.00)			-
District Attorney - Criminal Court	(257.00)					(257.00)
District Attorney - Civil Division	(31,720.00)					(31,720.00)
Interfund Charges	28,243.00			1.00		28,244.00
Interfund Charges-Agency Support	(6,484.00)		(7,600.00)	14,025.00		(59.00)
General Expenditures	(138.00)			138.00		-
Transfers Out	350,000.00		(350,000.00)			-
100 - Public Works Fund	(398,152.19)	440,569.54	(22,600.00)	84,405.00	(2,609.35)	101,613.00
Department of Public Works						
Public Works Administration	132,842.91	67,157.09				200,000.00
Maintenance Barns	(215,969.13)	215,969.13				-
Fleet Management	(30,692.20)	30,692.20				-
Tammany Trace Maintenance	(23,667.70)	23,667.70				-
Geographical Information Systems	(8,727.04)	8,727.04				-
Tammany Trace Administration	(3,636.26)	3,636.26				-
Development	(16,747.92)	16,747.92				-
Engineering (5% Dev-Eng to Development)	(58,937.66)	61,547.01			(2,609.35)	-
Homeland Security & Emergency Operations	(12,425.19)	12,425.19				-
General Expenditures	(160,192.00)		(22,600.00)	84,405.00		(98,387.00)
101 - Drainage Maintenance Fund	(16,945.44)			4,686.80	3,680.44	(8,578.20)
102 - Environmental Services Fund	(487,917.17)	27,649.17		5,992.00		(454,276.00)
107 - Judicial Courts Fund	(55.00)			29.00		(26.00)
112 - Animal Services Fund	(59,606.01)	46,326.01		6,797.00		(6,483.00)
121 - Hwy 21 Economic Development Fund	139,759.00		(25,000.00)	9,562.00		124,321.00
122 - Culture, Recreation, Tourism Fund	421.68	757.32	(2,700.00)	1,297.00		(224.00)
123-2040 - Rooms To Go Economic Development District	(7.00)			7.00		-
126 - St. Tammany Parish Coroner Fund	(73.00)			61.00		(12.00)
128 - St. Tammany Parish Library Fund	-			618.00	(618.00)	-
129 - COAST/STARC Fund	-			182.00	(182.00)	-
135 - 22nd JDC Commissioner Fund	(39.00)			39.00		-
136 - Jury Service Fund	(109.00)			109.00		-
137 - Law Enforcement Witness Fund	(15.00)			15.00		-
190 - Lighting District Funds	96,988.00			865.00		97,853.00
600 - Tyler Street Complex Fund	8,040.00		(10,100.00)	1,878.00		(182.00)
606 - STP Justice Center Complex Fund	106,805.00		(6,200.00)	12,176.00		112,781.00
611 - Wellness Center Building Fund	(880.00)			860.00		(20.00)
612 - Safe Haven Complex Fund	(745,150.00)		607,206.00	12,182.00		(125,762.00)
613 - Fairgrounds Building Fund	(756.00)			693.00		(63.00)
650 - STP Government Koop Drive Admin Complex	40,227.00		(23,400.00)	9,507.00		26,334.00
651 - STP Administrative And Justice Complex-East Fund	72,145.00		(46,100.00)	3,589.00		29,634.00
664 - Emergency Operations Center Fund	(2,894.00)		(1,200.00)	3,756.00		(338.00)
502 - Utility Operations Fund	(191,976.99)	144,178.99		21,995.00		(25,803.00)
507 - Development Fund (5% Code/Permits to Drainage)	(112,181.86)	77,097.95		12,164.20	(1,071.09)	(23,990.80)
Capital Project Funds Not Presented	(20,033.00)			8,819.00		(11,214.00)