

# The Livingston Parish News

VOLUME 122, NUMBER 33

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# U.K COVID VARIANT IN LOUISIANA

## GOVERNOR MAKES ANNOUNCEMENT LAST SATURDAY, REPORTS SUGGEST NEW STRAIN IS MORE CONTAGIOUS

BY DAVID GRAY  
The Livingston Parish News

Louisiana has confirmed its first identified case of the U.K. COVID variant.

COVID-19 variant, SARS-CoV-2 B.1.1.7., frequently referred to as the U.K. variant.

Gov. John Bel Edwards made the announcement Saturday, saying the Louisiana Department of Health confirmed the state's first case of SARS-CoV-2 B.1.1.7. in an individual in the Greater New Orleans area.

The new COVID-19 variant is prevalent in the United Kingdom and is believed to spread more easily from one person to another than other viral strains currently circulating in the U.S.

At this time, the variant has not shown to cause more severe disease, and health experts believe current COVID-19 vaccines are effective against the variant strain, Edwards said.

In a statement, the governor also urged people to "double down on the mitigation measures that we know are effective in reducing the spread of the virus," especially since this new variant is believed to spread more

COVID PAGE 3

### BY THE NUMBERS: 01/19/2020 COVID-19

**372,089**

Cases in Louisiana

**298,614**

Presumed recoveries

**8,324**

Louisiana deaths

**1,905**

Hospitalizations

**249**

On ventilators

**4,930,816**

Total tests

**10,471**

Livingston Parish cases

**144**

Livingston Parish deaths

**95,129**

Livingston Parish tests



Councilman Garry 'Frog' Talbert was unanimously elected as the Parish Council chairman.

FILE PHOTO • THE NEWS

## TALBERT TAPPED AS CHAIR

DISTRICT TWO COUNCILMAN WILL LOOK TO MAKE MEETINGS MORE EFFICIENT

BY MCHUGH DAVID  
The Livingston Parish News

After a strange set of events to start 2020, the councilman from District 2 will get his chance to chair the Parish Council.

Garry 'Frog' Talbert, of the Watson area, was unanimously elected as the chairman of the Livingston Parish Council, with Jeff Ard elected vice chair.

Talbert told the News that his focus would be on making meetings more efficient. He said that in order to achieve that end, the council

will move through items at a more rapid pace, as well as keeping repeat comments during public hearings to a minimum.

The new chairman also said that, unless there is complete opposition to a new ordinance, introductions will simply be voted upon and the meeting would move on - there will be no ongoing discussion for introductions of new ordinances and items.

Committees will also see a small shakeup, Talbert said, but he wasn't sure of the final makeup for each group just yet. The council has committees for finance, ordinances,

and animal control. There is also an appointed group of individuals that make up a master plan committee.

Last year, the council split on electing a chairman which pushed the decision into February. At the time, recently elected member Randy Delatte (District 8) led the discussion against Talbert being the chairman, splitting the vote 4-4 with councilman Shane Mack (District 9) absent.

Eventually, the council agreed to have Mack remain chairman for another year and Talbert to move into the vice chair position for a year.

## TWO ARRESTED FOR PORT VINCENT BAR FIRE



SUBMITTED • LP SHERIFF  
Bridget Boutwell



SUBMITTED • LP SHERIFF  
Joseph Solar

BY DAVID GRAY  
The Livingston Parish News

Authorities arrested two people for allegedly setting fire to a vacant bar in Port Vincent, according to the

State Fire Marshal's Office.

Bridget Boutwell, 33, and Joseph Solar, 32, both of Prairieville, were each

BAR FIRE PAGE 7



## CASE VERSUS FIREHOUSE BBQ TO BE HEARD IN LIVINGSTON PARISH

BY DAVID GRAY  
The Livingston Parish News

After a months-long delay, a defiant restaurant will have its case against the state heard in its backyard.

The Louisiana Supreme Court on Tuesday denied a request from the Department of Health to decide whether its suit against Firehouse BBQ should be heard in Baton Rouge or in Livingston Parish, according to court records.

That means the state's suit against the restaurant for violating COVID-19 restrictions will be heard in 21st Judicial District Court, which encompasses Livingston, St. Helena, and Tangipahoa parishes. State attorneys had argued that cases involving the state should be heard in East Baton Rouge Parish.

The Louisiana Supreme Court's de-

cision, endorsed by all six of the seven state justices, came more than three months after the 1st Circuit Court of Appeals reached the same conclusion in late September.

In a Facebook post Tuesday afternoon, the restaurant celebrated the Louisiana Supreme Court's decision and called it a "great start to 2021," adding that patrons will be informed of the case "[as] more info comes available."

"A great start to 2021! I just got word from my attorney that in the first group of decisions to be made from the Louisiana Supreme Court, 6 out of 7 justices decided against the opposing counsel's application to move our case to East Baton Rouge Parish!" read the post. "We will be having the case heard in Livingston Parish!!!"

The state's case against Firehouse

BBQ dates back to the summer, when officials pulled the restaurant's food permit for failing to adhere to COVID-19 restrictions set by Gov. John Bel Edwards.

According to the business inspection in late July, Firehouse BBQ was docked for tables not being spaced appropriately and employees not wearing face masks. The restaurant was then served with a notice that ownership was to close their establishment "immediately."

In a filing the first week of August, owner Danielle Bunch's lawyer said she informed the inspector that her employees had various medical issues that prevented them from being able to wear a face mask while working, one of the exceptions to Edwards' mask mandate.

FIREHOUSE PAGE 6