

EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH

Schools chief calls probe ‘challenging’

Cole addresses investigation during parish’s annual back-to-school convocation attended by 6,000 employees



STAFF PHOTOS BY JAVIER GALLEGOS

Representatives from East Baton Rouge Parish schools parade around the arena holding banners of their schools during the annual back-to-school convocation at Southern University on Tuesday.

BY CHARLES LUSSIER
Staff writer

Baton Rouge schools Superintendent LaMont Cole broke his silence Tuesday on an ongoing investigation of him by the Louisiana Attorney General’s Office focusing on his time as a Metro Council member, part of a wider probe into corruption in city government.

“I am currently experiencing one of the most challenging times of my life,” Cole told an audience of about 6,000 East Baton Rouge Parish school employees gathered at the district’s annual back-to-school convocation.

The Advocate broke the news of the long-running investigation a

week ago, citing multiple sources. School officials subsequently confirmed the investigation in an email to district staff.

Cole went further Tuesday as he spoke at Felton G. Clark Activity Center at Southern University.

The superintendent said he has been encouraged by numerous texts and messages from well-wishers on staff, including biblical passages. One is from John 13:7, where Jesus speaks. Cole summarized it as, “You may not know now, but later you will understand.”

“I want to thank you for your support. I love you and I feel your appreciation,” Cole said. “And let me

➤ See **PROBE**, page **9A**



Superintendent LaMont Cole speaks during Tuesday’s convocation.



STAFF PHOTO BY LESLIE WESTBROOK

Betty Cormier, who has worked for a decade at the Pecan Island Food Store, says she doesn’t yet know how a SpaceX spaceport might change life in the small community she has come to know well.

Pecan Island residents react to SpaceX spaceport

‘It would be life-changing’

BY ALEX LUBBEN and JOEL THOMPSON
Staff writers

Betty Cormier tended the counter Tuesday at the Pecan Island Food Store, a quiet storefront and gas station on La. 82 in the southern reaches of Vermillion Parish.

Surrounded by marshland, wildlife preserves and hunting and fishing camps, it’s one of the only places to get food, fuel and supplies for miles around. But she’s heard that that may not be the case for much longer.

SpaceX, billionaire Elon Musk’s commercial aerospace company, is in talks with the state of Louisiana over a 130,000-acre tract of land nearby that sources say the company wants for launching rockets. A spaceport would reshape this remote community on Louisiana’s southwestern coast, bringing potentially thousands of jobs but also construction, noise and other changes. Having heard little from local and state leaders, Cormier and some of her neighbors are wary.

“Our store is not equipped to handle 1,500 extra people,” she said. “There’s a lot of concern about whether we can adapt.”

In interviews, parish officials have said they are enthusiastic about the opportunities SpaceX

➤ **SpaceX earnings call offers no hints of Louisiana plans.** PAGE 11A

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Entergy puts purchase of Texas power plant on hold

Questions about cost, data center mount

BY SAM KARLIN
Staff writer

Facing questions from investors and regulators, Entergy Louisiana has indefinitely postponed

proceedings in its controversial plan to buy a Texas power plant for \$1.8 billion, saying it is working on a plan to lessen the costs to residents.

Entergy on Monday asked a judge to suspend the procedural schedule in the case, postponing a hearing that was scheduled for September. Entergy told the judge

it needs additional time because of “complex and fact intensive issues in the case,” in which Entergy is asking for permission to buy the Cottonwood power plant from a private equity firm.

Entergy spokesperson Brandon Scardigli said in a statement that the company needs additional time to address “issues raised” by the

Public Service Commission staff. The PSC regulates Entergy.

He also said Entergy is working with the PSC to “identify ways to lessen the initial bill impacts of the proposed Cottonwood acquisition.”

It was not immediately clear what a reworked version of the deal would look like. But the move reflects mounting opposition to the

acquisition, which has put Entergy at the center of a debate over whether data centers will raise costs for residents.

A consultant hired by the Louisiana Public Service Commission, Entergy’s regulator, testified earlier this summer that the proposed

➤ See **ENTERGY**, page **8A**

WEATHER

HIGH 95
LOW 74

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