

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF  
THE CADDO PARISH COMMISSION'S  
JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMITTEE  
HELD ON THE 18TH DAY OF JUNE, 2020

The Caddo Parish Commission met in a Work Session, on the above date, at 2:00 p.m., via Zoom teleconference, with Mrs. Gage-Watts, Chairperson, presiding, and the following members in attendance constituting a quorum: Commissioners Burrell, Chavez, Gage-Watts, Taliaferro, and Young (5). ABSENT: None (0).

The invocation was given by Mr. Burrell, and Mr. Chavez led the Committee in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Also, in attendance were Parish Administrator Dr. Wilson, Assistant Parish Administrator Erica Bryant, Parish Attorney Donna Frazier, Juvenile Services Director Clay Walker, Assistant Juvenile Services Director Muriel Burns, and Judge Ree Casey Jones.

Mr. Chavez opened up the floor for Citizens Comments. At this time, there were no agenda additions and there were no public comments.

***CERTIFICATE OF TELECONFERENCE***

WHEREAS, the Governor of the State of Louisiana has issued Proclamation Number 33 JBE 2020, stating that, due to the current Public Health emergency declared in the Governor's Proclamation Number 25 JBE 2020, and citing the provisions of La. R.S. 29:721, et seq., granting him the authority to control the "ingress and egress to and from a disaster, the movement of persons within the area, and the occupancy of premises therein; and

WHEREAS, the Governor, in Proclamation Number 33 JBE 2020, has limited all gatherings of 10 or more people, for public safety purposes; and

WHEREAS, Governor has issued a general stay at home order "unless performing an essential activity," 33 JBE 2020, Section 3; and

WHEREAS, attendance at a Caddo Parish Commission Juvenile Justice Committee meeting is not stated in the list of essential activities, listed in 33 JBE 2020, Section 3; and

WHEREAS, the usual conduct of the meeting would require travel and the presence of a number of persons in excess of ten (10); and

WHEREAS, the Governor of the State, in Proclamation Number 30 JBE 2020, Section 4, issued on March 16, 2020, has invoked the aforementioned statutes authorizing him to allow attendance at essential governmental meetings via teleconference or video conference during the pendency of this emergency; and

WHEREAS, the Governor of the State, in Proclamation Number 41 JBE 2020, Section 13, issued on April 2, 2020, has extended the Stay-At-Home Order until Thursday, April 30, 2020; and

WHEREAS, on April 27, 2020, Governor John Bel Edward extended the Stay- At-Home Order until Friday, May 15, 2020.

THEREFORE, the Caddo Parish Commission hereby certifies that it will not be able to obtain a quorum and convene a meeting in a public forum on June 18, 2020 due to the Governor's

proclamations, and will be required to meet by video conference, and, if necessary teleconference, on that date as allowed by law and the Proclamations of the Governor listed above. Date: June 15, 2020

/s/Mario Chavez, President

Mr. Chavez welcomed everyone to the Juvenile Justice Committee, and stated that the Committee will be discussing the following item:

- Discuss Raise the Age Mandate
- Discuss Federal Mandate
- Discuss Juvenile Community Summit
- Discuss Alternatives/Expansion of Juvenile Justice Center

Mr. Clay Walker, Juvenile Services Director, stated that the Caddo Parish Juvenile Detention Center will start receiving all 17-year olds, violent and nonviolent offenders, beginning July 1, 2020. He also said that their concern is the capacity of the Detention Center, which has 24 beds. He also mentioned that normally in April and May, and again in September or October, the Detention Center normally hits capacity. He believes that this primarily has to do with the school system, but this year the April and May numbers have been completely off because of COVID. The Detention Center is down 50% this year compared to last year because of coronavirus. At this time, they are not really able to gauge the impact of nonviolent 17 year olds in the Detention Center because COVID has taken out so many of the kids coming in. He said depending on what the school session looks like, in September and again in October, he believes they will have capacity problems. To help alleviate the number of beds being used, they can release kids with ankle monitors with intensive probation officers to watch them. He also mentioned that it should be roughly an additional 60 children coming into detention with the 17 year olds.

Mr. Burrell wanted to know if this was a prior coronavirus number. Mr. Walker stated that it was based on looking at police data and sheriff's data over the last five year and the number of 17-year olds they get, and this obviously pre-COVID.

Mr. Burrell then wanted to know if that was an annual number. Mr. Walker stated that it was.

Mr. Burrell also wanted to know if the facility was equipped to handle violent offenders. Mr. Walker stated that the facility is designed for both violent and nonviolent offenders. He mentioned that they have had 15 and 16-year olds in the facility with armed robbery, rape, and murder charges. Mr. Walker further explained that the difference between a 15 or 16-year-old violent offender and a 17-year-old violent offender would be a bigger and stronger child.

Mr. Walker also explained that this has been in discussion for a number of years, so in the recent years, the Juvenile Services added additional staff to each pod—two adults per pod to take care of eight children. He also said that they are trained in de-escalation techniques since July 2013. He also said that they are prepared, but the staff does have some concerns because the children are bigger and stronger.

Mr. Walker also pointed out that the 17-year olds are not the ones who cause the trouble because they are more interested in getting out of detention. He said that the impulsive middle schoolers are the ones who cause all of the trouble.

Mr. Walker also said that in addition to the 17-year olds, the Detention Center is also getting the juveniles are being transferred to adult court based on new federal legislation. Under this new federal legislation, those children who are being transferred will be housed at the Detention Center until their case is heard instead of going to CCC. Those children will be the ones who will take up most of the beds.

Mr. Burrell reiterated that the issue with the 17-year olds is not discipline, but capacity and bed space. Mr. Walker said that the critical issue is bed space. He also said that detention by nature is meant for a short-term facility for pending trials. He also mentioned that the average stay for the Detention Center is 10 days, but those 17-year olds who are currently at CCC for months and months would now be at the Detention Center for months and months awaiting trial. He said that the current discussion has been constructing a new pod and determining the number of cells.

Dr. Wilson reminded the Committee that the Raise the Age Act is an unfunded mandated. He also explained that Juvenile Services used to be housed on Kings Hwy, but was later moved to the facility on Spring Street. He said that when it was built, there was not any additional monies for the operation of the facility. He explained that the 1957 millage was never adjusted, which is the reason for the \$4M deficit for operating costs of the facility. A few years ago, an architect was contacted to draft cost proposals for constructing two additional pods. The contractor gave an estimate of \$13M-\$14M to build it at the existing site. He also said that the 1957 millage is actually less money today than they received in 1957. He said that the problem with this thought is that they would be operating in even more of a deficit than they currently do now.

There was further discussion regarding a different option. Dr. Wilson said that in 90s, the Legislation gave the Parish authorization for a regional detention center. Since that time, Dr. Wilson and Mr. Bill Altimus have been in discussions to go ahead with this plan. He said that Mr. Altimus has 20 acres of land off of Hwy 80 in Bossier that could be utilized for the construction of the facility. Bossier Parish does not currently have a facility; Caddo, Lincoln, and Red River all need additional space or they do not have a facility. The thought is that these parishes could rent bed space in the facility, which would bring the operating cost down for everyone.

Mr. Burrell wanted to know the opposition regarding this option. Dr. Wilson stated that there currently is not any opposition that he has heard, but years ago there was opposition due to the fact that the facility was going to be located in Bossier and not Caddo. He pointed out that a regional center would need to be located some place, and Bossier Parish has that. Dr. Wilson also said that there will be further discussions regarding this. Once they have something substantive, that information will be forwarded to the full body.

Dr. Wilson also pointed out that if this comes into fruition, Caddo Parish would be out of the Juvenile Services business. He also said that the legislation explains that this would be operated by a fully autonomous board. Dr. Wilson said that this idea has not been brought forth to this Committee nor the Commission because they are still working on all the details.

Mr. Chavez said that there is a sentiment of "if you build, we will fill it" meaning that the Commission will find occupants of the facility if a bigger one is built. He understands the concern with that.

Answering a question from Mr. Young regarding the autonomous board levying taxes, Dr. Wilson stated that board would have the authority to raise taxes. Mr. Young wanted to know if they would be successful in raising those taxes. Dr. Wilson said that there would not be a guarantee, but it would be less of a political process.

Mr. Young also wanted to know if the board would replace the Caddo Parish Commission as overseeing Juvenile Probation programs. Dr. Wilson stated that it would.

Mr. Young also wanted to know how many transfer kids does Juvenile Services receive a year. Mr. Walker said that they receive an average of four transfer kids per year.

Mr. Chavez wanted to know the costs of the regional center. Dr. Wilson said that they do not currently have those figures just yet, but thought that the Parish would operate based on what they currently have. He also said that the existing space would be repurposed for something else.

Mr. Chavez wanted to know if the Parish is subsidized for the transfer kids. Dr. Wilson said that the Parish pays for those children. He also mentioned that there is discussion with building a courtroom in the regional facility, so children would not have to be transferred out.

Mr. Chavez wanted to know about the parishes who currently do not have a detention center. Mr. Walker explained that Red River Parish currently rents from the Ware Facility in Coushatta, along with several other parishes around that facility.

Answering a question from Dr. Wilson regarding the security level of the Ware Facility, Mr. Walker explained that it does meet the requirements to house 17-year olds.

Dr. Wilson also mentioned that Bossier Parish pays over \$1M per year to Ware.

Judge Casey-Jones wanted to know when the next meeting date is scheduled regarding the regional facility. Dr. Wilson stated that one has not been scheduled yet, but he will notify her when one is set.

Judge Casey-Jones talked about Mr. Chavez's statement regarding "build it and they will come". She said that the Juvenile Judges try to limit juvenile incarceration as much as possible. She said that the detention center should have been updated well before now.

She appreciated this meeting today, and wanted to bring to everyone's attention that the discussions need to be picked back up regarding the Raise the Age Act. Judge Casey-Jones said that if the regional center does not come into fruition, the question will come about to where to put the kids?

Mr. Burrell believes that the regional concept is good, but the only concern he has is with transportation. Dr. Wilson said that the proposed facility is on the public transportation line.

Answering another question from Mr. Burrell regarding repurposing the current facility, Dr. Wilson stated that they do not have the funds to operate two different facilities, so they would have to go "all in" on one idea. He also explained that the current facility could be repurposed for something else.

Mr. Young wanted to know what the current facility would be used for. Dr. Wilson stated that they do not have all of the details just yet, but they would not be operating two juvenile detentions.

Answering another question from Mr. Young regarding a timeline for the regional center, Dr. Wilson said that it would be about 18 months of construction time.

Mr. Chavez wanted to know which governing bodies would need to agree to have the regional center constructed. Dr. Wilson stated that Bossier Parish and Caddo Parish would need to agree. He also pointed out that the legislation already exists; all it needs now is to be implemented. Mr. Chavez wanted to know how to get the ball rolling. Dr. Wilson said that Legal would need to review it, and they would need to present it.

Mrs. Gage-Watts would like to call another meeting next week and reconvene to keep this ball rolling in the right direction. She thanked everyone for attending the meeting today.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 2:25 p.m.

/s/Michelle Nations  
Deputy Commission Clerk