

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
CADDO PARISH COMMISSION'S  
JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMITTEE  
HELD ON THE 19<sup>th</sup>, FEBRUARY 2019

The Caddo Parish Juvenile Justice Committee met in legal session on the above date, at 1:30 P.M., in the Government Chambers, with Mrs. Stormy Gage-Watts, presiding, and the following members in attendance: Commissioners Bowman, Dominick, Gage-Watts, and Middleton (4). ABSENT: Commissioners Lyndon Johnson and Louis Johnson (2).

Also, in attendance were Parish Administrator Dr. Woody Wilson, Assistant Parish Attorney Henry Bernstein, Commissioner Atkins, Juvenile Justice Director Clay Walker, Mr. Ted Cox and Juvenile Court Judge Young, Ms. Woods, and Assistant Juvenile Justice Director Muriel Burns.

Dr. Woody Wilson gave the invocation, and Mr. Bowman led the committee in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mrs. Gage-Watts opened the floor for public comments.

Mrs. Gage-Watts welcomed everyone to the meeting, and stated that today's meeting is to discuss the following items:

- Update on Raise the Age Act
- Discuss Juvenile Alternatives
- Discuss alternatives to house juveniles in other facilities

Clay Walker, director of Juvenile Services stated that everything is still in the same situation as the last meeting. March 1<sup>st</sup> is the target date to begin the new process of 17-year old juveniles being remanded to Juvenile Detention for juvenile non-violent crimes, then in July 2020 the change in dealing with violent crimes regarding juveniles. Director Walker stated that they are currently meeting with the smaller municipalities explaining the changes with the Raise the Age Act. They have also provided officers with a quick reference guide when dealing with juveniles.

Mr. Walker stated that they are working on their hiring process to increase staff in Juvenile Detention regarding the changes from Raise the Age. Director Walker provided a handout (graphing admissions) to Juvenile Detention by month highlighting 9-year average and 2018 numbers, his handout also showed daily population 2000-2018 and probation caseload 6-year average.

Judge Young detailed the number of juveniles currently being held at CCC and the nature of their charges and how that will affect the detention center:

1. Currently 7 non-violent offenders are being held that would be transferred to juvenile detention making an overcrowded situation.
2. Currently 8 violent offenders are being held and would be transferred to juvenile detention with the changes on July 2020. Again, with our current numbers the detention center would be overcrowded and this could push more dangerous non-violent offenders to the streets.

Mr. Walker stated that they have prepared to hire 4-9 probation officers depending on the numbers of juveniles coming into the system. They have added to the 5 slots in detention that are currently in the budget. Director Walker stated that they can hire as the need arises and can be done relatively fast but building a new detention center would take a long and drawn out process possibly taking multiple years. Director Walker also stated that they have also put out \$50,000 more in the budget for ankle monitors and other equipment, some have already been purchased.

Mr. Dominick stated that everyone knows we need a bigger detention center, we know we have money in reserves to build the detention center but what we don't have is the operating money to run that center. We already start each year in the hole and this would only compound an existing problem. Mr. Dominick stated that going to the people to raise their taxes is going to be a hard sale.

Answering a question from Mr. Dominick regarding juveniles of different ages and also different sexes and how that will work, Mr. Walker stated that there will be a pod of 16 and 17-year olds, pod 2 will have those boys 11-15 and pod three 11-17-year old females. He pointed out that currently they can mix females and younger males but they are fined to their room and are not allowed to roam the pod without supervision.

Mrs. Gage-Watts pointed out that at the Swanson facility 30 percent of those kids come from Caddo.

Answering a question from Mr. Dominick regarding how quick must a juvenile be adjudicated, Judge Young stated that they have 30 days to get cases adjudicated but have up-to 93 days in more serious crimes.

Judge Young pointed out that in cases where serious crimes may be committed by 13-16-year old juveniles they may be adjudicated in District Court but those juveniles could be held at Juvenile Detention up-to three years clogging up the bed situation at the facility.

Dr. Wilson did point out that \$1.78 million was added to the 2019 budget to help with equipment purchases (monitors) and operating money for hiring probation personnel. He also pointed out that this added to the already \$4 million deficit the Parish began with for 2019 in Juvenile Detention Fund.

Answering a question from Mrs. Gage-Watts regarding availability of grants, Dr. Wilson stated that they are searching for various grants that might be available but he pointed out that grants are for one-time monies and eventually the Parish has to take up that reoccurring cost and that gets right back into adding to the already out of control deficit in Juvenile Detention Fund.

Ted Cox pointed out that there are not as many grants available now as there was in years gone by and they are really competitive currently.

Director Walker stated that they will continue to search for grants and apply as available.

Mrs. Gage-Watts brought up for discussion juvenile alternatives and the possible use of Shreveport Jail where there is currently plenty of room.

Judge Young pointed out that he can not put juveniles in a City Jail, he has to put them in a juvenile facility where there is a staff trained to handle juveniles and their unique situations.

Mr. Walker pointed out that he was aware of the facility since it has been ear marked as the disaster facility if something happened to Juvenile Detention. He pointed out that the facility is basically a warehouse, dormitory style with one bathroom in an open area basically everything does not meet State juvenile regulations, the only way to use that facility would be to perform major construction bringing it up to regulations. He also pointed out by law juveniles can not be in sight or sound of adult inmates.

Mr. Dominick would like to keep open the ability to contract out juveniles from Caddo whether it be to a Bossier facility or somewhere else. He believes that may be the least expensive way to address the situation.

Judge Young believes the best course of action is to begin constructing additional pods at Juvenile Detention to be ready for July 1, 2020 and leading up to that going to the citizens asking for an increase to the Juvenile Fund Tax for operational monies.

Mr. Middleton understands what Judge Young is suggesting and agrees that we need to go to the citizens and let them decide if they want to fund juvenile services for the future.

Dr. Wilson pointed out that we would need to go to the citizens and ask for a 6 mill increase to put Juvenile Services on a good foundation for the future.

Mr. Dominick respectfully disagrees that you don't just build it and they will come. We may build more pods but we have to know that the citizens support it by passing an increase for operations otherwise we'll have 2-3 empty pods sitting over there and a whole lot of egg on the Commission's face. Mr. Dominick does not see the citizen's supporting a tax increase for Juvenile Services because the majority already feel they are overtaxed.

Mrs. Gage-Watts believes that alternatives to incarceration have been effective and she would like to see more of those type of programs in the future. Teaching and rehabilitation not building pods is what she favors.

At this time, there were no more discussion, the meeting adjourned.

          /s/Todd Hopkins  
Todd A. Hopkins  
Commission Clerk