

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
THE CADDO PARISH COMMISSION'S
JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMITTEE
HELD ON THE 24th DAY OF MARCH, 2021

The Caddo Parish Commission met in an Economic Development Committee Meeting, on the above date, at 11:30 a.m., via Zoom teleconference, with Mrs. Gage-Watts, Chairperson, presiding, and the following members in attendance constituting a quorum: Commissioners Burrell, Gage-Watts, Johnson, Taliaferro, and Young (5). ABSENT: None (0).

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

AGENDA ADDITIONS

It was **moved by Mr. Burrell**, seconded by Mrs. Gage-Watts, *to expand the agenda and approve consideration of items under La.R.S. 42:17.1. Motion carried by acclamation.*

CERTIFICATE FOR TELECONFERENCE

WHEREAS, the Governor of the State of Louisiana has declared a statewide Public Health emergency, inclusive of Caddo Parish, in Proclamation Number 25 JBE 2020; and,

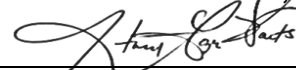
WHEREAS, the Governor, has further extended that declaration via Proclamations Number 158 JBE 2020 and Number 159 JBE 2020; and

WHEREAS, R.S. 42:17.1 allows members of political subdivisions to participate in its meetings electronically under certain limited circumstances.

THEREFORE, in accordance with the Provisions of R.S. 42:17.1, the presiding officer of the Caddo Parish Commission hereby certifies that this meeting is to address matters that are:

- (a) directly related to the public Commission's response to the Coronavirus Pandemic and are critical to the health, safety, or welfare of the public.
- (b) that if they are delayed will cause curtailment of vital public services or severe economic dislocation and hardship.
- (c) critical to continuation of the business of the Commission and that are not able to be postponed to a meeting held in accordance with the other provisions of Open Meetings Law due to a legal requirement or other deadline that cannot be postponed or delayed by the public body.
- (d) critical or time-sensitive and have been determined by the undersigned should not be delayed;*
consideration of matters under Paragraph (d) will initially require a two-thirds vote of those members present).

DATE: March 23, 2021



Stormy Gage-Watts, Chair

Mrs. Gage-Watts opened up the floor for Citizens Comments. At this time, there were no public comments.

NEW BUSINESS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the Committee and began the discussion with the first New Business item:

- *Re-entry Corporation of America's Presentation by Reginald Stewman*

Mr. Reginald Stewman came before the Committee and said that he is a partner with SignIsGPS and Shadow Track, a worldwide electronic monitoring system that provides biometric solutions to court systems and government agencies across the United States and internationally. They have electronic monitoring services that could be used for juvenile offenders instead of housing them in the detention center. SignIsGPS and Shadow Track has an app that is downloaded to a wristwatch and a phone—both mechanisms will be used to track those offenders. They can also offer a sobriety check and monitor the use of alcohol throughout the day. The wristwatch and phone allows the probation officer to communicate to that juvenile offender. The budget and costs have been provided to the Committee.

Mr. Burrell wanted to know the effectiveness of the program and how it is assessed. He also wanted to know how has this program reduced the re-entry rate for other juvenile systems. Mr. Stewman said that they are the number one provider of electronic monitoring in the world. They have a certain biometrics and performance measures that are included in the proposal which gives the Commission a measurement tool that they can build in terms of measuring the effectiveness. Mr. Stewman also mentioned that it costs approximately \$410 per day to house a juvenile, whereas his program would cost \$25 per day to monitor a juvenile.

Mr. Stewman also mentioned that they can build exclusion zones within their program. They also intend to set up a laptop in the Sheriff's Station, 911 Station, and the District Attorney's Office.

Mr. Burrell wanted to know if there are any performance measurements that the Commissioners can look at to assess the effectiveness of this program. Mr. Stewman said that they can provide that information as well as references to other agencies who are using the program to the Commission.

Mrs. Gage-Watts wanted to know if the wrist monitors are able to be disbanded. Mr. Stewman said that they are designed to be permanently placed on their wrists. If the watch is cut, the fiber optics will send a call to their center and units alerting them of that.

Mrs. Gage-Watts then wanted to know if the device is a bulky device and user-friendly. Mr. Stewman said that it looks just like an Apple Watch and is extremely user-friendly. They will train the juveniles on how to use and charge the watch. Mrs. Gage-Watts asked if the watch is submersible in water. Mr. Stewman stated that it is not.

Mr. Burrell wanted to know about the hygiene surrounding the watch. Mr. Stewman said that they provide training to them as it relates to how to properly utilize the product without incurring any personal issues. The juvenile would need to attest to that.

Mrs. Gage-Watts then asked about the costs of the program. Mr. Stewman said that there is an initial installation cost of \$375, which includes the watch, phone, and first month. After the first month, it will be \$750 per month and includes 24-hour monitoring as well as staff who will be available 24 hours of the day.

Mr. Johnson wanted to know how much it currently costs for ankle bracelets for the juveniles. Mr. Walker said that they use two different companies and pay per day for use. He believes that it equates to about \$1 per day, but he would have to review the contract to confirm that. Mr. Walker also explained that they pay \$379 per day per bed in the detention center, whether or not that bed is being used.

Mr. Johnson wanted to know if Mr. Stewman has any other products aside from the watch and phone. Mr. Stewman explained that they do not use the ankle monitors because of the embarrassment it may cause the juveniles or adults. He further explained that several adults have a difficult time finding a job with an ankle bracelet. The watch and phone provide more morale to juveniles and adults.

Mr. Johnson wanted to know if the phones could be used as a functional smartphone. Mr. Stewman explained that the phones would be Android Smartphones, but the offenders will not be allowed to download other apps or obtaining materials to the phone.

Mr. Young wanted to know what type of compliance and non-compliance issues do they have with the phones. Mr. Stewman said that they offenders normally treat the devices respectfully and have not experienced many issues with juveniles tampering with the devices.

Mr. Burrell wanted to know if they had any issues with the watch being disabled and an offender "escaping". Mr. Stewman said that if the watch is cut or tampered with, a notice is immediately sent to a law enforcement officer. Mr. Burrell also wanted to know what capabilities are there with the product if the system goes down. Mr. Stewman said that they can check the GPS location of that offender if the system goes down.

Mrs. Gage-Watts wanted to know if they have the capabilities of an employee testifying in a court statement. Mr. Stewman said that they have several employees to provide the actual testimony of the GPS tracking for a legal situation.

The Committee then moved onto the next New Business item:

- *Discuss Matters Relative to Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention*

Mr. Walker said that every year, Shreveport Police puts out an annual crime report. He's obtained those numbers since 1981 to determine the number of juvenile arrests since then. In 2019, the number of arrests are low. Part 1 Crimes—murder, rape, robbery, etc. are trending steadily and has decreased slightly. The Part 2 Crimes have decreased dramatically. Mr. Walker explained that in 1995-1996, a Zero Tolerance policy was implemented, which resulted in more arrests for minor offenses. Dr.

Goree made a policy change to the school system in 2014 that resulted in fewer children being arrested for minor offenses.

Mrs. Gage-Watts commended Dr. Goree, school programs, and Juvenile Services for the reduced arrests for minor offenses over the years. Mr. Walker said that it takes a village to raise a child, but sometimes that child does not have a strong home and village around them. The programs that Mrs. Gage-Watts' mentioned provide that "village" and is effective in raising that child.

In 2019, over 900 children in the school system, went to the School Fight Diversion Program, which reduced the arrest rate dramatically. Mr. Walker also explained that in 2019, only five were arrested for the more serious crimes, such as murder, attempted murder, armed robbery, etc. In 2020, only 292 juveniles were brought to the detention center. These are policies working with the Police Department, Sheriff's Office, and the School System coming to some agreements and civil consequences for juveniles. Mr. Walker said that they are trying to only use detention for more serious crimes.

In 2013, legislation passed that set the capacity for the Juvenile Detention Center at 24. Since then, the average number of juveniles inside the detention center has been below 24.

In 2019, there were five murder/attempted murder juveniles housed at the detention center. In 2020, there were twelve, and this year, there are six so far. Mr. Walker said that gun violence is on the rise.

Mrs. Gage-Watts wanted to know if there were any programs available such as gardening or planting trees. Mr. Walker said that they are using all sorts of programs like, but it depends on the seriousness of the child. Shreveport Green is a partner with Juvenile Services for community gardens and such. He also said that they also use other programs such as character building, mental health, after school tutoring, the Youth Challenge Program, etc.

Mrs. Gage-Watts then wanted to know if they utilize military recruitment for juveniles. Mr. Walker explained that the YCP program here has been recognized nationally, and is used for 16-year-olds and older. Some of the children do struggle with home life, so they try to utilize the Youth Challenge Program, then go straight to the military.

Mrs. Gage-Watts also wanted to know if there are programs to help 17-year-olds transition to independent living. Mr. Walker said that they use several programs for transitional living. He also explained that six months prior to a juvenile being released, a re-entry plan has to be established regarding education, counseling, social issues, employment issues, etc.

Mrs. Gage-Watts asked about arrests for gun violence. Mr. Walker explained that there has been an uptick in this type of violence. The youth are breaking into cars looking for guns, then they post pictures with guns on Facebook or other social media. That has graduated from posting pictures with guns to carrying guns on their person to actually using those guns on people. Mrs. Gage-Watts wanted to know the effectiveness of the "lock up your guns" campaign. Mr. Walker said that would be a question from Chief Raymond, but Mr. Walker said that it is a daily issue with juveniles breaking into cars and posting pictures on social media with guns.

Mr. Walker also mentioned that the Sheriff has had several meetings at CCC to bring everyone at the table to discuss handling gun violence and how to get guns off the street.

Judge Casey-Jones asked that Mr. Walker speak to the challenges Juvenile Services will face in December of this year. Mr. Walker said that there are currently fifteen children with serious charges; three of which are transfer children and are housed at the detention center. Twelve children are housed at CCC. With the number of children with serious charges, the Juvenile Detention Center will have two too many. The average length of stay for a child at the detention center is ten day; the children at CCC are going to be there for two years; the children that are tried as adults will be there for 18 months to two years. In December of this year, the State will be at risk of losing from the Commissioner Law Enforcement if proper procedures with regards to transfer kids are not followed. The bottom line is, we would not have enough beds to house all these juveniles that we need right now, he said. Mrs. Gage-Watts wanted to know what would happen come December. Mr. Walker said that the options are that the District Judges could rule that the children stay at CCC, but if they rule that the child needs to be at detention, Judge Casey-Jones and Judge Howell would have to release some juveniles to be at full capacity.

Mrs. Gage-Watts wanted to know what would happen if none of the children could be released. Mr. Walker said that they would have to refuse admission by the police once they've reached the full capacity of the detention center. Mrs. Gage-Watts then asked if Juvenile Services could rent bed space. Mr. Walker said that they could not because the only place to rent bed space is the Ware Facility, but they do not have any available beds to rent.

Judge Casey-Jones said that there are constant changes being made, so they will need to adjust, but also still be able to keep the community safe. She said that the numbers look great right now, but that could change going forward.

Mr. Burrell wanted to know the cause in the uptick in the shootings. Mr. Walker said that the juveniles have been breaking into cars and stealing guns, that graduated to posting pictures with them, playing with them, and now using them. He also said that the gang violence now is more so beefs between neighborhoods and complete foolishness. Mr. Burrell suggested launching a campaign in conjunction with law enforcement to educate the public to lock up their guns. Mr. Walker said that those sorts of efforts have been used by the City to lock up vehicles and secure weapons. He also suggested that an intergovernmental discussion between the City and the Parish could be had to educate the public.

Mr. Burrell wanted to know if there were some type of home assessments for the children going back to dysfunctional homes. Mr. Walker said that the judges and juvenile probation are using every tool in the community from mental health counseling, parenting classes, vocational efforts, safe housing, etc. to help the family and the child.

Mr. Johnson suggested that the juveniles could learn a trade while they're in the detention center. He also said that juveniles could be put into some type of school to learn a trade and have true training on that trade. Mr. Walker said that there are vocational programs, along with interview skills, resume building skills, and basic job skills.

Mr. Johnson also mentioned that the Parish owns CCC, so there should not be an issue with housing juveniles at the facility if the detention center reaches max capacity. Mr. Walker explained that in December, juveniles at CCC would have to be kept separate sight and sound from adult inmates, but they must also have access to services such as educational services. Mr. Johnson said that those children could be transferred to the detention center for classroom training. Mr. Walker pointed out that there must also be a one to eight staff ration during the day, so it would be also be a staffing issue during the school week. He also explained that it is a one to sixteen staff at night. The night shift employees are contracted with Northwest Security Services, but otherwise it is Parish employees who are at the facility.

Mr. Johnson suggested that the juveniles could sleep at CCC, but be transported every day to the detention center for rec time, educational services, etc., then go back to CCC at night. Mr. Walker explained that there could be safety issues with this many kids and the safety protocols that are put in place at the detention center in case an incident occurs between two juveniles.

Mr. Johnson also said that last year, Juvenile Services temporarily housed juveniles from South Louisiana during a hurricane. Mr. Walker explained that some juveniles from South Louisiana were housed in the gym, but that was only allowed because there was a statewide emergency declaration. He further explained that would not be an overflow option because of the Prison Rape Elimination Act. There are certain requirements that must be met for Juvenile Services to maintain its license.

It was **moved by Mr. Burrell**, seconded by Mrs. Gage-Watts, *to recommend to the full body an appropriation to launch a campaign in conjunction with the City of Shreveport to educate the public to lock up their guns.*

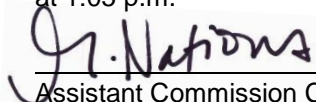
Friendly amendment by Mrs. Gage-Watts to reinstate the Gun Buy-Back Program. Mr. Burrell accepted.

At this time, Mr. Burrell's motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Burrell, Gage-Watts, and Johnson (3). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: Commissioners Taliaferro and Young (2). ABSTAIN: None (0).

Mr. Burrell suggested that a separate entrance be created at CCC to allow juveniles to utilize the bed space, if needed. Mrs. Gage-Watts and Judge Casey-Jones have scouted facilities to be utilized for detention space, but none of those facilities have been accepted and approved by the State. She said that this discussion should be had at another Juvenile Justice Committee meeting. She thanked everyone for joining in on the discussion.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned

at 1:05 p.m.



Assistant Commission Clerk