

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CADDO PARISH COMMISSION'S
JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMITTEE
HELD ON THE 15th, APRIL 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, Louis Johnson, and Middleton (5). ABSENT: Commissioners Lyndon B. Johnson (1).

Also, in attendance were Parish Administrator Dr. Woody Wilson, Assistant Parish Administration Randy Lucky, Parish Attorney Donna Frazier, Assistant Parish Attorney Henry Bernstein, Juvenile Justice Director Clay Walker, Ms. Laurie McGehee, and Commissioner Chavez.

Mr. Dominick gave the invocation, and Mr. Middleton led the committee in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mrs. Gage-Watts opened the floor for public comments. There being no one to speak, Mrs. Gage-Watts closed the public comments.

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

- Just Believe.Org Presentation—Mr. Jarmon Turner
Youth Outreach & Diversion Program Mentorship
- Discuss Restoration Crisis Center
Program designed for young girls—16 bed facility
- Juvenile Services Update

Mrs. Gage-Watts moved onto the first New Business item, *Just Believe Presentation—Mr. Jarmon Turner*. Mr. Turner founded the organization and has implemented this program through Christian schools. His wife just got stationed here through the Air Force. He brought the program to Shreveport, and it grew. He said that program is helping keep juveniles out of the detention center. Mr. Turner provided the following handout to the Committee:

Just Believe—Youth Outreach & Diversion Program exists to provide diverse outdoor experiences to youth from inner cities, lower income communities, and at-risk in urban communities. Our mission is to break the mold of traditional diversion programs, shed new light on sporting and outdoor activities, and to create interest in the pursuit of adventures not normally provided by after school programs.

Our goal is to create mentorship relationships that groom young men and women to be critical thinkers, problem solvers and less reliant on their surrounding for confidence and feedback. Extracurricular activities, such as sports, are commonly used to benefit the students that take part of it. Normally, we see activities such as football, basketball, soccer, track, baseball available to youth through schools and private organizations. Our goal is to mentor responsible youth as measured by reducing the juvenile detention rate. We want to soften the effects of withdrawn parental guidance. We provide substantial amount of activities, events, and positive reinforcement as an encouragement factor as well as an addition opportunity to traditional sports. Our expressed interest in inner city demographics is a major vantage point for this program.

The solution is to create an environment with a focal point on building positive, impactful relationships amongst peers through common interest. We want to create positive experiences through confidence building tasks and encouragement that will carry youth throughout a lifetime. We will do this by providing access to an array of outdoor activities that will challenge and groom young men and women outside of their comfort zones. We believe that by challenging young leaders, trust for adults is built and attitudes are changed.

This is why it is imperative that we create a city-sponsored riding program. Much like a community garden in which members of the community give some and take some, a community riding program and stable, easily accessible to those who need it, have the ability to give a lot and take a little. As program sponsors, my team will transport horses in and out of the city daily, to ensure full care and safety of the animals as well as respect city zoning laws. Students returning home from school will have access to participate daily in activities, games, and educational services that are part of Just Believe as an after school activity. Participants are currently required to sign a participation contract, stating that bi-weekly progress reports are required and a minimum "C" average is necessary to be a part of any and all mounted activity (i.e. activity on horseback). However, no student is turned away because of grades or behavior reflecting the progress report. As a motivating factor, children are allowed to come and contribute to the other students and receive tutoring from the program, but are not allowed to join weekend activities until they are back in good standing with program guidelines.

This both a diversion program for those on the edge or failing themselves, as well as a privilege based activity for those needing to explore their abilities. Each student involved will pull from and contribute to the program. By participating and learning content, students have the opportunity to reiterate their learning and pay forward their gained knowledge to those just beginning the program. With this a need for their service is identified. A child that knows he/she is needed can learn to evaluate his/her worth and begin to see the value of their contributions.

Relationship building is a fundamental tool in the rehabilitation process. Many times I see youth that are in with the wrong crowd. Our effort contributes to creating a positive relationships in a positive environment.

Each program is designed to target different groups of youth. With instruction, guidance, and trade building, students are encouraged to learn as well as become the teacher in each discipline of Just Believe.

The programs are as follows:

Cowboys on Concrete (equine introduction program)—this program is designed to teach and cultivate horsemanship safety skills, along with imparting knowledge about riding track, horse anatomy, caring for horses and creating a bond with the horse. Through a belt system similar to karate each child is responsible for learning how to manage, ride and protect their horse, graduating to a higher rank as they acquire more knowledge. We will participate in closed sessions with a focal point on building relationships amongst peers through common interest. We will display the tools that we learned in community activities, such as parades, trail rides, rodeo grand entries, and school functions. A number of our students currently involved in this program are beginners, and usually come from troubled backgrounds and dysfunctional homes.

Teach Your Creature (natural horsemanship)—this was designed as a second step to COC, where students will have advanced opportunity to interact with horses. Once they have met all prerequisite requirements, students have the chance to dive in and learn how to teach a horse. With accessibility to rescue and slaughter-bound horses, we will have the opportunity to rejuvenate life to horses deemed "at risk" and we have the chance to watch change in horses that became victims to their circumstances and surroundings. We teach skills that will add values to the horse and potentially give it a

shot at finding a new home. This portion also serves as part of a fund raiser to grow the program. This lopen to any youth learning the art of horsemanship. Here, our goal is to merge relationships between inner city youth and urban community youth with the common goal to become better horsemen, and create a positive crowd and a positive environment. We will utilize clinical time to learn to train our horses and evaluate our own problem solving skills.

Why Not—here we have a portion dedicated to motivation, from motivational speaking, to challenging youth to reach for things that do not seem obtainable because of their environment. Through organized visits, field trips, sponsorships, hands on classes, it is my goal to get these individuals plugged in doing something they are anxious yet and ambitious enough to follow. “Why Not” is set up to develop skill sets, trade ability and knowledge it takes to step out of comfort zones to try new things. Just Believe is a gateway to learning, cultivating our diversity and experiencing new talents.

Mr. Bowman wanted to know how to sign up for the program. Mr. Turner explained that he would like for five children to come from Juvenile Services and an additional ten other youth. He would like there to be at least fifteen children participating in the program.

Mr. Dominick wanted to know the request amount. Mr. Turner said that he is asking for \$25,000 from the Commission. He also explained that the original budget was approximately \$40,000, but he was able to decrease the request due to donations.

Mr. Dominick then asked about the horses. Mr. Turner explained that the Juvenile Services children would receive the untrained horses. They will be vetted and determined to be safe prior to the kids handling them. He said that these horses will be “project horses”, in which the children would have learns the “ins and outs” of a horse. Once the program is completed, the horse could go up for sale and the funds come back to the program or the child has the option of boarding the horse.

Mr. Chavez wanted to know if the Parish could legally fund this program. Attorney Frazier explained that if Juvenile Services were to send kids to this program and pay their tuition, then it would be doable. She also said that if the program targets low-income children, it could be funded through the normal NGO process. She suggested that Mr. Turner fill out an NGO application.

Mr. Chavez said that Mr. Valderez from Cabo Verde was able to receive a \$100,000 federal grant for Linwood School. He said that the students raised a garden and was able to can and sell salsa as a fundraiser for their school. He suggested that Mr. Turner look into that also as part of the agricultural piece to his program.

Dr. Wilson pointed out that there is a gardening program at Parks & Recreation. Ms. Senerica Smith goes to various neighborhoods and creates community gardens. They are currently in the MLK area.

Dr. Wilson also said that Animal Services confiscates horses on occasion due to abused horses. He will provide Mr. Travis Clark’s contact information to Mr. Turner.

Mr. Middleton commended Mr. Turner on his program. He hopes that this program will come into fruition. Mrs. Gage-Watts also applauded Mr. Turner on this program. She said that will teach the children responsibility, caring for the animal, organization, and more. Mrs. Gage-Watts said that this program will not only help an individual child, but entire neighborhoods.

Mr. Clay Walker, Director of Juvenile Services, said that they have already been in touch with Mr. Turner. They have to look at their budget in terms of payment per child who is referred to the program.

Answering a question from Mr. Dominick regarding the age groups for the program, Mr. Turner said that anyone is welcome, but he has to have five spots available for the children from Juvenile Services.

Mrs. Gage-Watts wanted to know if the Juvenile Services youth would be ordered by the judge. Mr. Walker stated that they could be. She thanked Mr. Turner for coming today.

Mrs. Gage-Watts then moved onto the next New Business item, *Discuss Restoration Crisis Center (RCCTH)*.

Mrs. Gage-Watts explained that this organization helps young girls who have been through traumatic experiences, i.e. human trafficking. She said there are no local facilities for those women. She said that this house is in District 12 with sixteen beds.

Mr. Walker said that there are several options locally which helps young women. Jewell House is operated by the School Board and helps young girls who are homeless. He said that this would be another option to help girls who have been through traumatic experiences.

Answering a question from Mrs. Gage- Watts regarding the number of beds at the Jewell House, Mr. Walker said that there are six. He also explained that Juvenile Services normally has one or two girls there. He also explained that they pay a per diem for each girl. He also explained that there is only one secured facility for girls in the whole state, and it is in Coushatta.

Mr. Walker also said that the biggest issue with this program is their request amount. Mrs. Gage-Watts provided them with a copy of the breakdown for RCCTH's budget. Mr. Walker suggested that Juvenile Services and Legal sit down to go over budgets with the Brandon Home, Jewell House, Johnny Gray Jones, etc.

Mrs. Gage-Watts believes that this is another tool in the toolbox for girls who do not need to be locked up in a prison.

Answering a question from Attorney Frazier regarding bed space rental contracts, Ms. Muriel Burns said that Juvenile Services has a contract with Johnny Gray Jones. Juvenile Services also has a partial with Jewell House based on the availability funds and the Johnny Gray Jones budget. Attorney Frazier explained that they would need to review the contracts to ensure that nothing is prohibited outside of those contracts.

Answering a question from Dr. Wilson regarding state licensing, Mrs. Gage-Watts said that they are licensed and are ready to go.

Mr. Walker clarified that the Jewell House deals with children who are homeless. Mr. Dominick wanted to know if the judges were on board. Mr. Walker stated that they were.

Mr. Walker also explained that the girls at RCCTH could be there for several months. He also said that they would not be treated as a perpetrator, but as a victim of a traumatic situation.

Attorney Frazier pointed out that the Commission funds youth outreach services for the Jewell House, as well as NGO funding for RCC.

Mr. Louis Johnson said that when he thinks of the word perpetrator, a male comes to mind, not female. He said that sometimes he forgets that young girls also go through the system, and this program would help rehabilitate those young girls. Mr. Walker mentioned that 28% of the children who go through Juvenile Services are female.

Attorney Frazier pointed out that the budget sheet provided is a monthly budget for all sixteen beds. Mr. Walker does not believe they will need sixteen beds.

Answering another question from Attorney Frazier regarding the costs per child at Johnny Gray Jones, Mrs. Bryant said that it cost \$165 per child per day. Jewell House costs \$100 per child per day.

Mrs. Gage-Watts mentioned that the facility has doctors, dentists, along with transportation to the high school. He wanted to know if this would fall under special projects in the Juvenile Justice budget. Mr. Walker explained that it would not. He also said that there is no more funding in the special projects budget because of they added the hours to the misdemeanor referral center because of the 17 year olds. He also said that there is no funding source for Juvenile Services.

Mr. Walker pointed out that equine program is exactly what this community needs, specializing in different areas such as boating, fishing, etc.

It was **moved by Mr. Bowman** to recommend to the full body an appropriation of \$25,000 from the Reserve Trust Fund or the General Fund on a per need basis to Restoration Crisis Center. Motion died due to the lack of a second.

Attorney Frazier cautioned that mandating a contract from the operational budget for this program would not be ok. She suggested that it should go to NGO for just appropriating funds for this program.

Mrs. Gage-Watts wanted more clarification. Attorney Frazier explained that this is a program to house youth, which is a part of the Commission's normal mandate as opposed to doing something that is done programmatically. For example, Facts of Life is not a requirement of Juvenile Services. She also explained that RCCTH program should be funded as an NGO, not set up as a contract with Juvenile Services and require the judges to send children to this program.

Mr. Ted Cox said that the judges are on board with this program. Attorney Frazier then suggested that additional funding be added to housing in Juvenile Services' budget.

Dr. Wilson does not question the validity of the program,, but he is concerned about the growing deficit in Juvenile Services.

It was **moved by Mr. Dominick**, seconded by Mrs. Gage-Watts, to have Administration study Restoration Crisis Center and make recommendation whether to use the program in current and future budgets.

Attorney Frazier pointed out that no motion is needed because this is already what Juvenile Services does. She said that this program presents another option which is cheaper than the one that is in place now. As long as there is no contract prohibition, this would just be another tool in the toolbox. She also pointed out that the Commissioner do not have the authority to go to different departments and advise them on who to make contracts with. This service is a part of the day-to-day operations at Juvenile Services, so no motion is needed.

At this time, Mr. Dominick withdrew his motion.

Mrs. Gage-Watts understands that Juvenile Services is in a deficit. She also said that these presentations are to get Juvenile Services ready if there is an influx of 17 year olds

Mr. Dominick would like Mr. Walker to review this program and look at the budget, then come back to Committee and make a recommendation based on his findings. Mr. Dominick pointed out that Mr. Walker is the subject matter expert. Mr. Walker said that they will put together a Housing Alternative Budget for the next budget.

Mrs. Gage-Watts then moved onto the next New Business item, *Juvenile Services Update*.

Mr. Walker mentioned that the detention center still has not reached capacity since the implementation of the Raise the Age Act.

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

 /s/Todd Hopkins
Todd A. Hopkins
Commission Clerk