

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
THE CADDO PARISH COMMISSION'S
JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMITTEE
HELD ON THE 6TH DAY OF JULY, 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. Taliaferro 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, and Judge Ree Casey Jones.

Mrs. Gage-Watts 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 Edwards 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 July 6, 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.

/s/Mario Chavez, President

Mrs. Gage-Watts welcomed everyone to the Juvenile Justice Committee, and stated that the Committee will be discussing the following item:

- Discuss Juvenile Detention options
 - Discuss creating a JDC Policy Review Taskforce
 - Discuss providing a study of assembling a youth education program
- At this time, Mrs. Gage-Watts moved onto the first New Business item, *Discuss Juvenile Detention options*

Mrs. Gage-Watts asked that Director Walker provide an update on the detention center.

Mr. Clay Walker, Director of Juvenile Services, said that there are seventeen children in detention. He said that due to COVID, the cases have slowed down, however, the cases that they do have are more serious.

Dr. Wilson said that he had discussions with Mr. Bill Altimus, Bossier Parish. He said that they missed the deadline to add this to the Bossier Parish Police Jury's meeting, but will be on a future agenda. Dr. Wilson also said that Mr. Altimus explained to him that there is not an urgent need from his leadership team to move forward with a regional center.

Dr. Wilson also explained that Bossier has twenty acres and the capital to go forward with a building project, if they so desire. He also pointed out that the legislation is already on the books. Dr. Wilson also explained that Desoto, Lincoln, and Red River Parishes do not have a facility, so the regional center could house their juveniles and become a revenue generator to help operate the facility.

At this point, Dr. Wilson is waiting on a response from Mr. Altimus regarding the regional center. He also said that it would then have to go to the Commissioners to see if the full body is in favor of the regional center. Once the particulars of how it would operate is decided, it would be turned over to a board to manage the whole operation. It would not be under the auspices of the Parish Commission or the Bossier Parish Police Jury.

Mrs. Gage-Watts asked for more clarification. Dr. Wilson stated that in the 90s, the legislation came out, but the political landscape was not conducive with going forward with a regional center. Dr. Wilson said that the question at hand is "whether we have the political will to go forward with this idea".

Answering a question from Mrs. Gage-Watts if there was a dedicated area for Caddo Parish, Dr. Wilson said that there is not a dedicated area to build a new facility. He also mentioned that they were looking at expanding the existing facility, and the price came out to about \$13M-\$15M, with an additional \$3M in operating costs.

Answering another question from Mrs. Gage-Watts regarding operating the regional facility, Dr. Wilson explained that it would be an independent board appointed by the Commission. He said that the board would have the authority to call for taxes independently of the Commission. Mrs. Gage-Watts said that they would need to contact the judges to see where they stand on that matter. She

also said that there might be some legal questions about the authority being that they are in Bossier Parish, and the Commission in Caddo.

Mr. Burrell wanted to know if Caddo's Juvenile Detention housed any of Bossier Parish's juveniles. Mr. Walker said that it is Caddo juveniles only. He also explained that there could be a case where a child is in the custody of the Office of Juvenile Justice (OJJ) and are from South Louisiana, but that child is staying in a group home in Shreveport. While in that group home, they commit some sort of offense, that child could go to Caddo's Juvenile Detention Center. He said that it is primarily Caddo Parish children.

Dr. Wilson also pointed out that Bossier Parish does not have a juvenile detention center, they contract out with another facility.

Mr. Young wanted to know if there would be any oversight over the board if a regional facility were built. Mr. Walker explained that the judges would have the authority to have the board answer to them; the Caddo Parish Commission would not. The Caddo Parish Commission would provide funding to the board, and eventually turn juvenile detention to the board.

Mr. Young asked Judge Ree Casey Jones what her preference was. Judge Jones stated that she would need additional information regarding the regional facility. One of the questions that she would like answered is the legality of an oversight board for being able to govern Caddo juveniles in Bossier Parish. She said at this time, she is not comfortable with a regional facility due to many unanswered questions. She said that she likes the setup that is currently in place to keep the Caddo juveniles in Caddo Parish.

Judge Jones also said that the space utilization is another question she has. She wants to know how it would be regulated.

Dr. Wilson mentioned that Bossier would prefer Caddo Parish personnel to run the facility. He also said that they would be working for the board.

Mr. Young then talked about the taxing authority. He wanted to know if the Commission would be giving up the juvenile millage. Dr. Wilson believes that the Commission would have to give up their tax collected towards the regional concept. Mrs. Bryant said that the Commission would ideally keep their taxes to use for a portion of the costs that they would incur. The new board would have the ability to call for a tax which would be in addition to what the other entities are paying. Caddo Parish Commission would not call for an additional tax, they would use what they currently have.

Mr. Young pointed out that when discussing the cost benefit of a regional facility, to take into consideration the cost of transportation. He also said that the existing building would need to be repurposed so it is not empty and creating blight. Dr. Wilson agreed and suggested that a feasibility study be conducted to answer all of those points.

Attorney Bernstein pointed out that the regional authority is that their legal authority would be to build and operate a facility. He mentioned that the responsibility of juvenile probation would continue with the Parish. He clarified that it would not supplant the Caddo Parish Juvenile System, it would simply be providing a facility to house the juveniles.

Judge Ree Casey-Jones made a comment regarding housing other children at the Caddo Parish Juvenile Detention Center. She explained that sometimes a runaway from another area ends up at the detention center, but they do their best to contact other jurisdictions to ensure that child goes back home. She also mentioned that if a child is there for safety purposes, they'll keep them there. She reiterated that the majority of the children housed at JDC are Caddo Parish children, however, there are some not from Caddo that may have to stay there on a temporary basis.

Mr. Chavez wanted to know if there was any funds leftover, after operating costs, to fund the detention center. Mrs. Bryant said that there are currently \$7M in expenses with \$3M in revenue, so Juvenile Services is currently operating in a deficit. She also pointed out that Caddo has a responsibility to pay for its juveniles, no matter where they are housed. Mrs. Bryant also explained that the Commission is currently making an annual transfer from the Criminal Justice Fund to cover the costs of detention.

Mr. Chavez wanted to know if there was a guarantee for the other parishes to house their juveniles at the regional facility. Dr. Wilson stated that would be the purpose of the feasibility study, to determine if the resources and customers are available to make the process work.

Answering another question from Mr. Chavez regarding another regional facility in Louisiana, Mr. Walker said that the Ware Facility in Coushatta serves multiple parishes. Mr. Chavez suggested to tour the facility and ask questions regarding the facility.

Mr. Burrell asked for more clarification regarding funding the regional facility. Dr. Wilson explained that the current facility is already operating in a deficit. The adjustments being made now are due to the unfunded mandate that 17 years olds cannot be housed with adult anymore. He further explained that there is a capacity problem with the current facility, and it is not big enough to potentially house all of those juveniles at one given time and still comply with OJJ standards.

Dr. Wilson also mentioned that the Parish built the existing facility in the 90s and tripled the size of the old facility, but did not add any additional operating money for a larger facility. He said that they are operating on a 1957 millage.

Mr. Burrell wanted to know if there would be a reduction in operating cost for the current facility if a regional center is built. Dr. Wilson explained that the idea would be in one facility. The current juvenile detention building would be repurposed.

Answering a question from Mr. Young regarding the cost of the feasibility study, Dr. Wilson said that he is unsure at the moment, but will provide more details as they become available.

Attorney Bernstein added that the board that would run the juvenile detention center is established as a political subdivision of the State with a territorial jurisdiction through Bossier and Caddo Parish only. He also explained that the board consists of eleven people: 1 member appointed by the Caddo Juvenile Court Judges, 1 member appointed by the Caddo Parish Commission, 1 member appointed by the Bossier Parish Policy Jury, 1 member appointed by the Bossier Parish district and city court judges, 1 member appointed by the Shreveport City Council, 1 member appointed by the Bossier City Council, 1 member appointed by the Bossier School Board, 1 member appointed by the Caddo School Board, 1 person appointed by the Bossier Sheriff, 1 member appointed by the Caddo Sheriff's Office, and 1 person appointed by the Office of Juvenile Justice. A quorum would consists of six members.

It was **moved by Mr. Chavez**, seconded by Mrs. Gage-Watts, *to recommend to the full body an allocation of up to \$25,000 for a feasibility study on the regional center.*

Friendly amendment by Mrs. Gage-Watts, *to ask Dr. Wilson to reach out to Sheriff Prator to see if he would be willing to work with the Commission.* Mr. Chavez accepted.

At this time, Mr. Chavez's motion carried as amended, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Burrell, Chavez, Gage-Watts, Taliaferro, and Young (5). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: None (0). ABSTAIN: None (0).

- Mrs. Gage-Watts moved onto the next New Business item, *Discuss creating a JDC Policy Review Taskforce.*

Mr. Walker stated that they visited Georgetown University in 2019 and learned about a plan to transform and improve juvenile probation. He said that the plan is a five-part plan to improve probation. The fifth part of the plan was creating a Citizens Review Committee with regarding to racial disparities in the juvenile justice system. He further stated that 88% of the children who enter juvenile detention are African-American. The idea would be to create a Citizens Review Committee that would look at the juvenile process and procedures from incident through the closure of the case. They would review what incident resulted in an arrest, the decisions were made to make an arrest, and the decisions were made to prosecute and incarcerate, that what was the sentencing. The Committee would review those and come up with recommendations for the community that might address racial disparities.

Mr. Young wanted to know what the previous four points were in the plan. Mr. Walker said that he will distribute the plan to Administration to distribute to the Commissioners.

Mrs. Gage-Watts said that this is an enormous opportunity to holistically improve the Juvenile Justice System.

Mr. Burrell wanted to know if the Committee will look at the juvenile justice system or if there are socio-economic issues. Mr. Walker said that the point of the Committee will be to review decision making points at every step from an incident in the community through the resolution of the case. He further stated that the Committee will look to see whether or not there was fairness and equity in decisions made. Mr. Walker continued in saying that the Committee would look at incidents and possibly find alternatives to detention.

Judge Casey-Jones suggested to meet once again for further discussion prior to creating this task force.

- Mrs. Gage-Watts moved onto the next New Business item, *Discussion providing a study of assembling a youth education program.*

Mrs. Gage-Watts explained that former Commissioner Matthew Linn introduced this program, which is a reform program for injured children who suffer from gunshot or knife wounds and are in recovery at the hospital. The coordinated efforts between the hospital and Caddo parish will be a method for educating the realities of major trauma and hopefully deter those at-risk youth from perpetuating a cycle that has no positive outcomes. Beginning in the hospital a time when a youth who suffers an injury resulting from violence are most likely to listen. We will then introduce alternatives. Currently, there are preexisting programs being administered within Caddo Parish juvenile reform that has been successful nationwide. The hospital could possibly offer classes with non-identifying photos and detailed education on the long-lasting scars and damage of bullets, or knives causes. The Committee is being asked to explore this option.

Mr. Taliaferro wanted to know if the Committee will be considering a conflict resolution educational program. Mrs. Gage-Watts said that it would be more of a coordinated effort with Caddo Parish and the hospital to deter youth from violence. She said that this program is more of a shadowing program to show the youth the effects of gun or knife violence.

Mr. Taliaferro clarified that this would be an investigation on what led one or both parties to the point where they used violence as a means of a resolution. Mrs. Gage-Watts agreed.

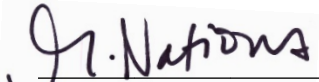
Mr. Taliaferro wanted to know who be charged with that responsibility. Mrs. Gage-Watts said that would be a part of the study.

Mr. Young believes that this is an excellent idea to talk to children who are at-risk. He would like to include things that could help distract kids from violent lifestyles, such as learning vital survival skills, gardening, fishing, archery, conflict resolution skills, etc.

It was **moved by Mr. Chavez**, seconded by Mr. Young, *to recommend to the full body a joint resolution to include the Caddo Parish School Board to provide a study for a Youth Education Program.* Motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Burrell, Chavez, Gage-Watts, Taliaferro, and Young (5). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: None (0). ABSTAIN: None (0).

Mrs. Gage-Watts will provide the description as stated in the beginning of this discussion.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 1:06 p.m.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Nations". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J".

Deputy Commission Clerk