

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CADDO PARISH COMMISSION'S
PANDEMIC TASKFORCE
HELD ON THE 2nd DAY OF AUGUST, 2021

The Caddo Parish Commission met in a Pandemic Taskforce Meeting, on the above date, at 3:30 p.m., via Zoom, with Mr. Jackson, Chairperson, presiding, and the following members in attendance constituting a quorum: Commissioners Epperson, Gage-Watts, Jackson, Johnson, and Taliaferro (5). ABSENT: None (0).

Mr. Jackson gave the invocation, and Mr. Taliaferro led the taskforce in the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA ADDITIONS

It was **moved by Mr. Epperson**, seconded by Mr. Jackson, *to expand the agenda and add Recommendation to the full body to hold future Work Sessions and Regular Sessions via Zoo.*

The Chair opened the floor for public comments regarding expanding the agenda. There being no one to call in support or opposition to the agenda addition, the Chair of the taskforce closed the public hearing.

At this time, Mr. Epperson's motion failed, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Epperson, Gage-Watts, and Jackson (3). NAYS: Commissioner Taliaferro (1). ABSENT: Commissioner Johnson (1). ABSTAIN: None (0).

CITIZENS COMMENTS

Candy Peavy sent the following public comment:

Thank you to all of you for continuing to work on this committee. I see according to your agenda that the topic is infection control and I'm glad you're addressing this topic. Dr. Paul Alexander worked with the W.H.O. on this pandemic, and then he joined the White House task force to work with Dr. Fauci. According to Dr. Alexander, there are really only two crucial things that should be done to help control the spread of this virus: 1. Frequent and thorough hand-washing 2. Isolation of only symptomatic sick people. So if you use Dr. Alexander's guidelines, that's pretty easy to address with your employees. (And just FYI, Dr. Alexander is scheduled as an expert witness next week in our State House of Reps Health & Welfare committee meeting which I will be attending). The procedure that many of our hospitals and clinics use to screen the people entering their facilities is also easy. My husband has had some significant health issues this past year and a half so we make frequent trips to the LSU Cancer Center and the Christus Schumpert Cancer Center. Always at the door, they take our temperature with a digital thermometer gun, have hand sanitizer available, and that's it. Sometimes they ask if we've been around anyone with COVID recently. Our State Capitol building will be having in person committee meetings next week. They will take everyone's temperature before they enter and if it is greater than 100.4 people will not be allowed inside the building. So maybe a quick daily temperature check for your employees would be worth exploring rather than a weekly highly unreliable test that is somewhat invasive, hence the illegality of the mandate per state law RS 29:764(h). And lastly, the pandemic response in general around the country has been geared almost exclusively toward vaccines. There has been essentially no push at the public/government level to develop early treatment and prevention protocols for us. ALL governmental efforts have been geared towards vaccines. I checked the NIH website last night for any updated early treatment guidelines for doctors, and there just aren't any other than to tell the patients to isolate and to use a pulse oximeter to measure their oxygen saturation levels, and to notify their doctors if they get worse. So I want to recommend that your committee take a good look at early treatments that are currently being used successfully in the private sector, because what we want to do is to keep people out of the ERs and ICUs and hospitals in general. I think we want to teach people how to get healthy, how to boost their immune systems, and how to stay healthy. I think we want to be proactive and not reactive. By teaching people how to boost their immune systems it can take some of the stress and fear away, which in and of itself can help boost your immune system! Thanks again to all of you for your work on this committee. Candy Peavy, PT

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;

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. (This does not affect the vote necessary for adoption or any motion).

Date: August 9, 2021
/s/Steven Jackson
Chairperson

NEW BUSINESS

The Committee moved onto the first item under New Business, *Authorize Parish Administration & HR to develop an Interim/Emergency Infection Control Policy for Parish employees.*

It was **moved by Mr. Epperson**, seconded by Mr. Jackson, *to authorize the Parish Administration and Human Resources to develop an Interim/Emergency Infection Control Policy for Parish employees to bring to the full body for consideration.*

Mr. Epperson said that it is up to Administration to make changes to the policy in regards to the health and welfare of the employees. It is his hope that administration will make those types of changes in the most expedited manner, especially while dealing with this pandemic.

Mr. Jackson said that this is to look at vaccination requirements and masking as optional, as well as an option to opt out. He said that he does not like the word "mandate". Mr. Jackson would also like there to be an educational component.

Mrs. Gage-Watts believes that it is their responsibility to advocate for vaccinations and masks. She said that these are the only two weapons against this infectious disease. Masks and vaccinations would help mitigate the spread of this virus, she said.

Dr. Wilson asked for direction regarding this request. He mentioned that Administration just recently sent out a memo in regards to all Parish employees must wear a mask whether they're vaccinated or not, as well as practice social distancing. Mr. Jackson said that this request is more of a comprehensive approach to craft a policy to send to the Commission for consideration.

Dr. Wilson also said that they sent out a survey to 180 employees regarding the proposed vaccination policy; 56% of those employees are already vaccinated. He also said that there is an array of reasoning behind why the employees who chose not to be vaccinated. Dr. Wilson also mentioned that some of the audience chairs in the Chambers have been taped off to encourage social distancing.

Mr. Taliaferro agreed with Dr. Wilson and said that there is already a policy in place regarding masking and social distancing. He also said that there are policies in place at Government Plaza to help mitigate the spread of the virus.

Mr. Taliaferro also mentioned that there is very little to no education in regards to how the citizens can boost their immune systems to treat the symptoms of COVID.

Mr. Hopkins agreed and said that the Parish Administrator has already instituted a policy for Parish employees to wear a mask and practice social distancing. He suggested taking temperatures as people come into the building. He said that those options are less intrusive than a vaccination mandate.

Mr. Young said that vaccinations should be voluntary and should not be a basis for discrimination against employees. He also suggested speaking with different physicians in regards to treating COVID symptoms.

Mrs. Gage-Watts agreed that everyone has choices, but this is bigger than those choices. She said that everything has been done to mitigate the spread of this virus.

Mr. Epperson agreed with Mrs. Gage-Watts. He said that this committee is providing a smorgasbord of information for Administration to put in the comprehensive plan in regards to the motion

that's on the floor. He pointed out that this motion is not mandating anything.

Mr. Epperson also suggested that Administration report a figure to the Commissioners, staff, and public if anyone is infected with the virus without providing any personal information of those who are infected, i.e. a person in the judicial courthouse has been infected with the virus. Dr. Wilson said that the Parish already does this, but he will reach out to the agencies and request that they do it as well.

At this time, Mr. Epperson's motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Epperson, Gage-Watts, Jackson, and Johnson (4). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: Commissioner Taliaferro (1). ABSTAIN: None (0).

The Committee then moved onto the next item under New Business, *Administrative update on Eviction Mitigation Program*.

Dr. Wilson said that the Parish Attorney's Office has extended offers to contract with three attorneys who maintain offices within Caddo Parish. One of the attorneys has accepted and the contract is out for review. It is their hope that all three contracts will be signed by the end of this week. The attorney's contact information will be placed on the ERAP website as attorneys to call for eviction assistance due to past due rent.

Dr. Wilson also explained that the attorney would need to obtain the caller's name and rental address, then contact the Parish to determine whether they are eligible for attorney services. Once that's complete and eligibility has been determined, the attorney can call the applicant.

Mr. Jackson suggested that Legal take the list of those who have applied for assistance and divide it between the three attorneys. Dr. Wilson also mentioned that the five community partners will also have the names and contact information of the attorneys. Mr. Jackson suggested a quicker way to get the applicants connected to an attorney.

Mrs. Bryant mentioned that the rules specifically prevent the Parish from providing identifying information of the applicants. Mr. Jackson said that the attorneys are now basically participants in the program.

Attorney Bernstein agreed with Dr. Wilson and Mrs. Bryant. He explained that the Parish cannot disclose the personal information of the people to the public. Additionally, there are attorney-client ethical considerations in terms of what we can do. The tenant needs to be the one asking for the lawyer; the Parish cannot tell them to go to a lawyer because it is unethical.

Mr. Epperson requested that a news release be sent out to the public with regards to an update on the ERAP.

Mrs. Barnett said that they have been going through a monitoring of their files. As of 2:00 p.m. today, the Office of Community Development has approved the first draw, and the request is being routed to GOSEP for approval. Once GOSEP approves the request, the Parish should receive those funds within five days.

Mrs. Barnett also said that they are still receiving applications, and as of this morning, 5,917 applications have been submitted. Of those files, 761 have not been pulled yet. She said that there still is interest in the program.

Mr. Jackson wanted to know if a cutoff date has been set for accepting applications. Dr. Wilson said that they are looking at September 30, 2021. Mrs. Barnett said that the deadline will have to take place once they start their recertification process to determine how many files are recertified.

Mr. Epperson announced that Pleasant Hill Baptist Church will be hosting a vaccination clinic on Sunday, August 15 from 11:30 a.m. until 3:30 p.m.

There being no further business, the Committee adjourned at 4:19 p.m.


Assistant Commission Clerk