

MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION OF THE
CADDO PARISH COMMISSION
HELD ON THE 17TH DAY OF AUGUST, 2020

The Caddo Parish Commission met in a Work Session, on the above date, at 3:32 p.m., via Zoom teleconference, with Mr. Chavez, presiding, and the following members in attendance constituting a quorum: Commissioners Atkins, Burrell, Cawthorne, Chavez, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Hopkins, Jackson, Johnson, Lazarus, Taliaferro, and Young (12). ABSENT: (0).

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

CITIZENS COMMENTS

Chris Alwhite submitted the following statement:

Hello, I'd like to address the allegations against CC Taliaferro in regards to him threatening to get a Caddo Animal Control employee fired, attempting to stop a transport of 91 animals from Caddo to rescues by contacting Hertz, as well as belonging to a FB hate group that is looking to privatize Caddo Animal Control, that posts false allegations and spreads rumors. I'm hoping this will be read and addressed during the Publics Comment section. Thank you for your time.

Tami Randall called in and gave the following statement:

I was hoping to address on today the subject of some of the community attacking and making the lives of our parish workers very difficult. And particular rescue groups that would like to attack Caddo Parish and the workers that work within CPAS/ I know personally how this affects the life .Because I actually used to be employed with Caddo Parish and I used to be the foster rescue coordinator at CPAS. And it is so rampant and it's so toxic and very upsetting that certain people within our community feel like they can call and harass Commissioners. Or just try to make everybody's life difficult who is in the trenches and working so diligently to rescue as many animals as they can. The shelter is really a reflection of within the community. It's time. I've been silent but I feel it is really important to address it and put it on the table. I no longer work with the Parish. I appreciate the Parish and I appreciate everybody's time and energy here. But at some point, we need-yes, if you work for the Parish you are a public servant-but at some point, we need to have community backing for the people who are in the trenches working with the animals in our community. Instead of them being allowed to be thrown under the bus and be ridiculed all over social media and within the community because there are those that would like to see Caddo Parish fail. And there are those who do not care about the quality of life for people who do work for the parish. And so, as a citizen of the Parish, I would like to address it and would like to ask- are there any measures of protection to back up the workers who are just being trashed all over the country right now on social media just being in the tranches and trying to save as many animals as they can and the best they can with the jobs they've been given to do.

Jon Glover called in and gave the following statement:

Yes, I was calling in regards with two agenda items: 1. 10.2 Resolution No. 64 of 2020 speaking to a special legal counsel. And reading the pdf that is attached there too trying to understand why outside of the scope of the attorneys we already have that we're asking for this to be addressed. I am and I wanted to finish the last part, Resolution 65 of 2020. There are total number of 16 NGOs that are being put forth for consideration. I would like to know the specifics of each and how they will impact the community. Thank you.

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 96 JBE 2020 and Number 97 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.

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- (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.

Date: August 12, 2020

/s/Mario Chavez, President

ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

- July 2020 Monthly Financials

Dr. Wilson reported that the July 2020 Financial Report has been sent out by email to the Commissioners and to inform him of any questions regarding the report.

Mr. Jackson asked for more clarification on the financial statement. Dr. Wilson explained that this is the expenses that the Parish incurred for the month of July.

Mr. Jackson then wanted to know if the Commission was “going broke”. Dr. Wilson stated that it was not. He also said that the Commission has been fortunate to receive reimbursement from the CARES Act for the items that have been submitted thus far. Mr. Jackson commended the Finance team for all of their hard work to ensure the Parish receives reimbursement.

- Additional Early Voting Satellite Locations
Request from Commissioner Epperson

Dr. Wilson said that there is \$100,000 in the 2020 Budget to create an additional early voting satellite location. Mr. Sibley, Registrar of Voters, said that R.S. 18:1309 authorizes the Parish to create an additional site. Due to COVID, there has been some issues with timing. Mr. Sibley informed Dr. Wilson that the site has to be done by October 13, and early voting starts on October 20.

Dr. Wilson also mentioned that Representative Sam Jenkins provided correspondence from the Secretary of State’s Office suggesting that the Oil City Museum be used as a site. He said that the building is a state building with a secure internet system.

Dr. Wilson also said that at this time, the best option would be for the Commission to select an additional site that it is currently authorized to do. He also explained that adding additional sites beyond this one would require a legislative act. He suggested that the Commission send a resolution urging the Legislature to revise the law to give the Parish the authority to add an additional site beyond the one that is currently authorized during its next legislative session. Dr. Wilson also pointed out that there are multiple libraries throughout the Parish that the Commission could use for the sites.

Mr. Atkins wanted clarification on whether or not the Parish has permission for an additional early voting site. Dr. Wilson stated that the Parish does have permission, but the Commissioners need to decide on where that site should be located. He reiterated that currently, the Commission is authorized to have one additional voting site.

Mr. Atkins wanted to know if Dr. Wilson has any suggestions regarding on where to put that additional site. Dr. Wilson said that there are libraries throughout the building, as well as state buildings and Parish owned buildings. Once a determination is made on where to put the site, they will work on the facility issue.

Mr. Atkins pointed out that there is currently an early voting site downtown. Dr. Wilson agreed, but also mentioned that the parking isn’t ideal. Mr. Atkins suggested having objective metrics for determining this position. Dr. Wilson agreed.

Dr. Wilson also explained that he spoke with the Registrar of Voters in regards to statistics. The data indicates that the percentage of people who would not have access by voting rolls is located in the south of the Parish.

Mr. Hopkins wanted to know what is considered the south part of the Parish. Dr. Wilson said that it would be Southern Hills, Keithville, etc.

Mr. Johnson pointed out that the City of Shreveport has the majority of voters. He said that the City has approximately 100,000 registered voters. I would say then if you’re looking at the numbers, the numbers would say that the second location needs to be inside the city limits, he said. Mr. Johnson also mentioned that when people move out to the rural parts of the Parish, they will be inconvenienced. He said that the Commission needs to look at the masses to increase voter participation and have a location where people can feel comfortable. He pointed out that the downtown location is not very accommodating with it being a small building and there being nowhere to park.

Mr. Johnson said that a few factors need to be taken into consideration when deciding on where to put the second location. One, how many machines will be available for early voting? And two,

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would that space be large enough to accommodate the voters, especially during inclement weather. He said that if the second satellite location is large enough to hold the voters inside, the downtown location could become a secondary location.

Dr. Wilson explained that the equipment is not an issue; the location of the early voting site is the issue.

Mr. Epperson pointed that East Baton Rouge Parish has approximately 281,000 registered voters and five early voting locations. He also suggested that the Parish needs to get the proper language to the Legislature for the additional early voting sites. Dr. Wilson agreed and said that they would need to find a sponsor for the legislation.

Mr. Burrell suggested that transportation needs be considered when deciding on the additional early voting site. Mr. Hopkins agreed. He pointed out that the city limits has bus lines, but not in the rural parts of the Parish.

- Request for Confirmation—Mr. Timothy A. Weaver, Director
Public Works Department, Parish of Caddo
- Dr. Wilson's response to Commissioners' requests

Mr. Epperson asked the status of the Confederate Monument. Attorney Frazier said that the technical provisions should be resolved by the end of the month. She also said that they should know the final location for the monument, at which point, the Parish can start issuing the RFPs.

Mr. Chavez wanted to know if there will be any issues regarding the General Motors Plant due to the vacancy of Mr. Scott Martinez. Dr. Wilson stated that Ms. Ashley Busada has taken Mr. Martinez's place at NLEP and will be the main point of contact in regards to the General Motors Plant. He also explained that she has been there through all of the discussions, so no progress will be lost.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Mr. Chavez talked about Caddo Parish Animal Services. He received several emails this weekend regarding the shelter. He said that the ultimate goal is to decrease the euthanasia rate. Currently, the shelter is just a few percentage points away from a "no-kill" shelter. He said that the rate for a no-kill shelter is 90% live release rate, and CPAS is currently at 88%.

He then talked about Act 302. Mr. Chavez said that he would like a resolution drafted urging the Governor to change the language in this act to allow for teleconference meetings. He said that there are Commissioners on this body that do not want to come to the Chambers because of health concerns. Mr. Chavez said that this should be taken into consideration.

He also explained that there was a process in putting items on the agenda in accordance to Act 302. Mr. Chavez and Mr. Johnson, in collaboration with Administration and Legal, worked together to put items on the agenda as they were allowed in accordance with the law.

Mr. Chavez also thanked Mr. Alan Clark, MPC Executive Director, for all of his hard work.

He then talked about the Census. He said that a background was created for Zoom calls if any Commissioner was interested in using it. Mr. Chavez would like to see Caddo Parish at as close to 100% as possible. He thanked the committee for working hard to get people counted.

Mr. Chavez then talked about the CARES Act. He said that he met with a consultant from South Louisiana to see what the Parish could do to maximize its reimbursements. The consultant commended Mrs. Barnett and Mrs. Bryant on all of their due diligence in trying to get the Parish as much reimbursements as possible.

He then talked about the COVID testing. He said that the Commissioners and staff have revved the efforts on the testing. He thanked all who were involved.

COMMISSION REMARKS

- Mr. Epperson gave the following remark:

I'm speaking relative to Act 302. I feel that it is an attack on our first amendment rights. It's vindictive; its punitive in this partisan politics. I think it forces elected officials, primarily African Americans, into an unhealthy, unsafe, and a life-threatening situation. It appears to send a false message to the public, that everything is okay relative to of safety related to the pandemic and public gatherings. Also, I would like to state that this is an attack on sovereignty as local elected government subdivisions. It [inaudible] respond to our local responsibilities given to us under the Home Rule Charter. Also, it is dangerous and deliberate. Once again, as I stated, toward African-Americans, whom our state demographic is African-American population is 31% of Louisiana, and approximately 70% of the death

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and infection of COVID-19. I think this is a deliberate effort to give a political advantage to the conservative political extremists within our nation in Washington, D.C. to Baton Rouge to the local stage. And I would warn each and everyone here today to remember the Tuskegee Health Studies. I think this tries to give the impression [inaudible] relative to the COVID-19 pandemic as it relates to age, age-groups, underlying conditions and threatened populations gathered in crowds. This article was not put in place, in my position, as to where it would increase our efficiency, our effectiveness, or any other things that we could do to enhance our relationships and our responsibilities to our constituents. We have met previously fully with a full agenda. As far as meeting virtually, there has been no issues. All things have been addressed, and all of our citizens have been served well.

Mr. Epperson then talked about the Caddo Parish Animal Shelter. He spoke about threats to elected officials and parish employees. Earlier this year, he asked the Parish Attorney to research statutes relative to threats to public officials, and if they are applicable to employees. He said that those statutes had been rescinded. Attorney Frazier agreed. Mr. Epperson repeated that a safety measure has been revoked and has enhanced the threats and name callings to Parish employees, citizens and elected officials.

Mr. Epperson then spoke about Caddo Alliance for Freedom. He said that the group circumvented the authority of the Caddo Parish Commission and the Metropolitan Planning Commission to get legislation put in place at the state-level. He stated that this Political Authoritism Movement is very dangerous and affects all levels of government.

Mr. Epperson then recognized and commended all medical, emergency response personnel, and essential workers during this trying time.

He then recognized the Coast Guard's 230th year anniversary and encouraged everyone to remember what they have done for this nation.

Mr. Epperson then recognized the Purple Heart Medal celebrating 238th year anniversary this year.

He then remembered Vanessa Gillian, a female soldier that was murdered in Texas, to shed light on sexism and sexual harassment in America today. He then applauded the Catholic Diocese, Houston, Texas, for hosting the memorial service for her death.

Mr. Epperson then called to remember the deaths of Marines in a training accident off the coast of California that occurred recently.

He also remembered August 7 as VJ Day, a victory over Japan in World War 2, and the people who served in that war.

Mr. Epperson encouraged everyone to wear a mask to help protect the vulnerable military veterans and active military personnel and that the National Guard is on the front line that help with COVID testing and hurricane relief.

Mr. Epperson stated that on August 18, 1920, the 19th amendment to the Constitution was ratified to allow white women to vote, but black women received the right to vote 50 years later.

He also mentioned that the 9th Annual Veterans Honor Ceremony & Parade has been cancelled this year due to COVID-19, but will host a virtual event for the Steven dePyssler Award.

Mr. Chavez acknowledged Mr. Epperson's love for the military and America and apologized for the cancelling of his event. He also thanked him for his service with the Commission and being a respectful leader.

- Mr. Johnson requested a report regarding the incident at the animal shelter from Administration by Thursday. He also asked that Attorney Frazier provide a copy of a Commissioner's role to all the Commissioners. He continued talking about the animal shelter and mentioned that sometimes animals are brought into the shelter in poor conditions and therefore would need to be euthanized.

- Mr. Johnson then discussed COVID-19. He warned that the pandemic is not over, and the virus is still killing people. He recommended that the Commission oppose Senate Bill 302 and ask for an amendment to Senate Bill 302, which should include language regarding high risk persons being allowed to attend the meetings virtually with the power to vote in those meetings.

- Mr. Burrell agreed with Mr. Johnson and Mr. Epperson. He is concerned with the politics surrounding the virus. He stated that minorities are disproportionately affected by the virus. He also feels that the President is committing genocide by intentionally halting testing in Democratic states as well as targeting population demographics.

He then voiced concerns over the President's attempt to defund the United States Postal Service. He urged his Republican cohorts to talk to state leaders and Congressional leaders for a change

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because the postal service affects the vote, public service, and the military. The postal service delivers checks and medicine through the postal service. He stated that silence is complicity in this issue.

- Mr. Jackson thanked everyone who participated in the face mask and backpack giveaway. He said that they gave away 500 backpacks at two different locations. He especially thanked the Shreveport Alumni Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta for their support for COVID testing and the backpack giveaway event.

Mr. Jackson also cautioned that COVID is still spreading and pointed out the photos of the people in his background who passed due to COVID. He insisted that forcing people to put their health in the way is disrespectful. He stated that people are not only getting sick but they are dying. He pleaded that the Commission returns to in-person meetings when Phase 3 occurs and that they continue to do social distancing and wear masks.

Mr. Jackson then talked about the incident at Animal Services. He said that lines should be drawn and people who do not work at Animal Services should not insert themselves in their daily operations. He said that the Commissioners have a right to question and disagree with what the departments are doing, but it is Administration's responsibility to handle the day-to-day operations.

Mr. Atkins agreed with Mr. Jackson in that the Commissioners provide a legislative role and to rely on the Administration to handle the daily operations of the Parish. Mr. Atkins prefers the Commission refrain from discussing national politics and stick to agenda items. He commended the Parish in supporting COVID19 testing and coronavirus funding. Mr. Atkins also acknowledged the desire to refrain from meeting in the chambers, and informed that everyone is doing their best to accommodate in person meetings while working around the law in place. He requested the Commission give each other grace.

- Mr. Burrell stated that national government passes laws that affects state and local governing bodies and the citizens. He declared that he has the right to make his concerns known as a citizen. He mentioned that if they do not send resolutions to the state, then they would do whatever they wanted. Mr. Burrell said that all politics are local.

- Mr. Young thanked the Administration and Parks and Recreation vision for the Walter B. Jacobs Park project and will apply for state funding for the project.

OLD BUSINESS

It was **moved by Mr. Jackson**, seconded by Mrs. Gage-Watts, *that Ordinance No. 5968 of 2020, an ordinance amending the Budget of Estimated Revenues & Expenditures for the Economic Development Fund and the Oil & Gas Fund for the year 2020 to provide an appropriation for Southern University at Shreveport's Nursing program and to otherwise provide with respect thereto* be moved to Thursday's agenda for introduction by title.

Mr. Jackson said that this was discussed in the Economic Development Committee. He also explained that this will go towards accelerating their Nursing Program, so students can graduate quicker and help fight the ongoing pandemic. He asked that the letters of support from the local hospital systems be attached to the next agenda.

Mr. Atkins reiterated that this came out of the Economic Development Committee, and this request was more defined and more precise than their previous requests. He said that he will be supporting this request.

Mr. Taliaferro said that SUSLA has come to the Commission for financial support for several of their programs. He is not against supporting this endeavor, he just wanted to know why SUSLA is the only higher-level institution to come before the Commission for financial support.

Mr. Taliaferro posed the following questions:

1. Number of students enrolled in the program
2. Number of students who dropped out of the program
3. Number of students who graduated
4. Where the graduates were placed.

Mr. Johnson pointed out that other higher-level institutions have come before the Commission in the past for financial help for programs, i.e. LSUS and their Computer Animation Program. He also pointed out that SUSLA is requesting help, so that more nurses can be on the front lines to help combat COVID-19.

Mr. Jackson mentioned that SUSLA submits a compliance report for the grants they have received. Attorney Frazier said that this information is provided on the report, but the personal identifying information of the student is not provided.

Mr. Jackson also pointed out that this grant will be reimbursed by the CARES Act.

Call for the Question by Mr. Epperson, seconded by Mr. Jackson. Motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Burrell, Cawthorne, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Hopkins, Jackson, Lazarus, Taliaferro, and Young (10). NAYS: Commissioners Chavez and Johnson (2). ABSENT: None (0). ABSTAIN: None (0).

At this time, Mr. Jackson's motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Burrell, Cawthorne, Chavez, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Hopkins, Jackson, Johnson, Lazarus, Taliaferro, and Young (12). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: None (0). ABSTAIN: None (0).

It was **moved by Mr. Hopkins**, seconded by Mr. Atkins, *that Resolution No. 64 of 2020, a resolution authorizing the Parish Administrator to retain special legal counsel and otherwise providing with respect thereto* be moved to Thursday's agenda.

Substitute motion by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Mr. Cawthorne, *to englobo and move the following resolutions to Thursday's agenda:*

- *Resolution No. 64 of 2020, a resolution authorizing the Parish Administrator to retain special legal counsel and otherwise providing with respect thereto*
- *Resolution No. 65 of 2020, second resolution amending and reenacting Resolution No. 34 of 2020 of the Caddo Parish Commission adding additional NGOs to exceptions of the suspended 2020 NGO program and to otherwise provide with respect thereto*

Mr. Johnson said that Resolution No. 65 came out of the Appropriations Committee. He said that this is the second round of organizations that are to be added back into the budget.

Mr. Chavez wanted to know why outside counsel was being retained for Resolution No. 64. Attorney Frazier explained that outside counsel who specializes in bankruptcy law would need to be hired to ensure that the Parish can make a claim and try to get as many of the funds that it is due under the Chesapeake leases.

At this time, Mr. Johnson's motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Burrell, Cawthorne, Chavez, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Jackson, Johnson, Lazarus, Taliaferro, and Young (12). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: None (0). ABSTAIN: None (0).

NEW BUSINESS

It was **moved by Mr. Jackson**, seconded by Mrs. Gage-Watts, *that Introduction of Ordinance No. 5971 of 2020, an ordinance amending the Budget of Estimated Revenues & Expenditures for the Oil & Gas Fund for the year 2020 to provide with respect thereto* be postponed. Motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Burrell, Cawthorne, Chavez, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Hopkins, Jackson, Johnson, Lazarus, Taliaferro, and Young (12). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: None (0). ABSTAIN: None (0).

COMMUNIQUES/COMMITTEE REPORTS

- Mr. Epperson said that the Commission provided \$500,000 to the LSU Digital Program. Mrs. Bryant said that she would need to verify that amount.
- Mr. Johnson pointed out that LSU Medical Center received \$175,000 from the Commission this year.
- Mr. Taliaferro said that he does not have the history that the other Commissioners have regarding allocating money for certain projects to higher learning institutions. He also said that he does not believe that it is unreasonable to look at the numbers when deciding on allocating monies.
- Mr. Atkins reminded everyone that the organizations listed in Resolution No. 65 were already approved and vetted through the process for the 2020 budget. He said that this is not new funding, this is simply re-establishing the already agreed upon amount.
- Mr. Chavez would like to see the monies allocated for SUSLA be for Caddo Parish students, and not students who are not residents of Caddo. Mr. Jackson pointed out that they do ask the students to sign commitments that they work in the area for a certain amount of time, but that is something that is not associated with this funding request. Mr. Johnson pointed out that in the past, the monies had to be for Caddo residents.

CONSENT AGENDA

- *Ordinance No. 5963 of 2020, an ordinance to set the General Purpose and Special Purpose Millages providing for millage rate adjustments, as allowed by Article VII, Section 23 of the Louisiana Constitution of 1974 and LA R.S. 47:1705 (B), levying and imposing taxes and assessments for 2020 on all the property*

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subject to taxation in the Parish of Caddo, and to otherwise provide with respect thereto

- *Ordinance No. 5964 of 2020, an ordinance setting the assessment of property classified as timberlands and to instruct the Assessor to include said assessment on the tax roll of the Parish of Caddo for the year 2020, and to otherwise provide with respect thereto*
- *Ordinance No. 5965 of 2020 an ordinance to adopt the values fixed, or to be fixed, by the Louisiana Tax Commission on all assessments and railways and other public service corporations, and to instruct the Assessor to extend such assessments and values on the tax roll of the Parish of Caddo for the year 2020, and to otherwise provide with respect thereto*
- *Ordinance No. 5965 of 2020, an ordinance amending the Budget of Estimated Revenues & Expenditures for the General Fund for the year 2020 to provide an appropriation for COVID-19 testing sites and small business support by issuing "COVID kits" and to otherwise provide with respect thereto*

At this time, there was no further discussion to come before the Commission, so the Commission adjourned at 5:24 p.m.

/s/Michelle Nations
Assistant Commission Clerk