

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CADDO PARISH COMMISSION
HELD ON THE 20TH DAY OF AUGUST, 2020

The Caddo Parish Commission met in legal and regular session, on the above date, at 3:30 p.m., via Zoom teleconference, with Vice-President Johnson, 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. Epperson, and Mr. Atkins led the Commission in the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA ADDITIONS

- It was **moved by Mr. Burrell**, seconded by Mr. Epperson, *to expand the agenda to request to authorize the Parish Administrator to inform the Caddo Registrar of Voters to authorize and establish an Early Voting Satellite location at 3015 Greenwood Dr. Shreveport, LA 71109 "Louisiana State Exhibit Museum" and add it under New Business.*

Mr. Burrell said that this location should be prepared for the 2020 early voting period for the presidential election beginning October 20 and ending October 27. He is recommending this location because it is located in the city, but also the western portion of the city. Mr. Burrell also mentioned that there is adequate parking available. He also said that it would be able to house people in case of inclement weather. Mr. Burrell also pointed out that the location would be easily accessible to those who ride public transportation.

At this time, Mr. Johnson opened the floor for public comments.

Ms. Jon Glover called in and gave the following statement:

I was trying to get an understanding as to who had the authority to add new locations for early voting. Is it you, the Parish? Or do you have to get approval from the State? Thank you.

There being no one else to speak for or against the agenda addition, Mr. Johnson closed the public hearing.

At this time, Mr. Burrell's motion failed, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Burrell, Cawthorne, Chavez, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Johnson, and Young (7). NAYS: Commissioners Atkins, Hopkins, Lazarus, and Taliaferro (4). ABSENT: Commissioner Jackson (1). ABSTAIN: None (0).

- It was **moved by Mr. Epperson**, seconded by Mr. Johnson, *to expand the agenda to request that the Parish Attorney would immediately initiate appropriate action to file a lawsuit on behalf of the Caddo Parish Commission for an injunction suspending the intent of Act. 302 enacted by the Louisiana State Legislature relative to Virtual meetings and agenda items of local governments with the appropriate judicial court system be added under New Business.*

At this time, Mr. Johnson opened the floor for public comments. There being no citizens to speak for or against the agenda addition, Mr. Johnson closed the public hearing.

At this time, Mr. Johnson's motion failed, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Burrell, Cawthorne, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Johnson, and Young (6). NAYS: Commissioners Atkins, Chavez, Hopkins, Lazarus, and Taliaferro (5). ABSENT: Commissioner Jackson (1). ABSTAIN: None (0).

CITIZENS COMMENTS

Michael Laffite called in with the following comment:

I'm calling in regards to voting locations. I think it's shameful that we have Commissioners here do not want us to have different locations when it comes to early voting. I believe it is truly shameful to go with that.

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.

(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 12th, 2020

/s/Mario Chavez
Caddo Parish Commission President

COMMUNIQUES/COMMITTEE REPORTS

- Mr. Atkins asked for more clarification regarding the early voting locations. It is his understanding that the Parish is authorized to have one additional early voting location. Dr. Wilson agreed. Mr. Atkins agreed with additional early voting sites, but he would like to see it demographically and politically balanced. He also suggested to take into consideration the distance citizens would have to travel with regards to the current early voting location site.

He also said that the Louisiana State Exhibit Museum has several logistical advantages, as mentioned by Mr. Burrell, but it is too close to the current early voting location site.

- Mr. Epperson pointed out that the Parish does have the authority and the funding for one additional early voting site. He said that it is up to the Commission to decide where that site will be located. Mr. Epperson also explained that this would be a temporary site just for this year. He further explained that next year, the Commission would have to ask a State Representative to sponsor through the legislative process any additional sites.

Mr. Epperson then talked about property taxes. He received a phone from a constituent saying that their property taxes tripled. Mr. Epperson asked that the process in which a constituent would have to go through if they do not agree with the evaluation process of their property taxes be provided. Dr. Wilson explained that there is an appeal process, but the citizen would need to contact the Tax Assessor's Office. He suggested that the citizen contact the Tax Assessor's Office as soon as possible. Dr. Wilson further explained that if the citizen is not satisfied with the Tax Assessor's evaluation, they can appeal to the Caddo Parish Commission. Mr. Epperson asked that this be articulated to the citizens. Mrs. Bryant agreed and pointed out that the citizens should contact the Assessor's Office by September 11.

Mr. Epperson then wanted to know the reason for the Special Meeting that was held today. The Clerk of the Commission advised due the new law in place and the publication deadline, a public hearing had to be scheduled in the Official Journal for those ordinances.

Mr. Epperson then talked about the issues at the Caddo Parish Animal Shelter. He said that the employees at the shelter do not deserve the negative action that has taken place at the shelter.

He then spoke about COVID-19. He said that the virus is serious, and there is still a pandemic. He said that schools are beginning to open up and hopes all safety precautions are being taken.

- Mr. Burrell talked about the additional early voting site. He does not feel that it would be balanced if the site was located up north, to the extreme west, or to the extreme south. Mr. Burrell said that geographically, he felt that the proposed location at the State Exhibit Museum would have been ideal. He said that there is a greater concentration of voters within the city limits. He asked that the Commissioners reconsider this option for an early voting site.

- Mr. Lazarus asked Dr. Wilson if he spoke with the Registrar of Voters regarding an early voting site. Dr. Wilson stated that he did. Dr. Wilson also said that the additional early voting site would boil down to two options: the number of people or the geographical consideration. Dr. Wilson also pointed out once again that the funding is available for one additional site.

- Mr. Burrell wanted to know if the Registrar could make the determination on where that location would be. Dr. Wilson said that the Registrar is relying on the Commission to make that decision. Dr. Wilson also said that they explored different options, such as the library system, but it is ultimately up to the Commission on where to put that additional early voting location.

Mr. Burrell then said that the south end of the Parish is wealthier, and those citizens “can go anywhere they want, but the difficulty is going to be the people who do not have transportation”. He also mentioned childcare and other socioeconomic imbalances throughout the Parish.

- Mr. Cawthorne also talked about the additional early voting location. Dr. Wilson explained that the primary site has to be within a certain proximity to the Caddo Parish Courthouse via state statute, but the additional site can be located anywhere within the Parish as long as it meets certain facility requirements approved by the Secretary of State’s Office. Dr. Wilson reiterated that the Commission has the authority and the funding for one additional site, but would need to go to the legislature for any additional sites beyond that.

- Mrs. Gage-Watts has been advocating for additional early voting sites for several years now. The goal has always been intended to be able to serve the entire Parish during the early voting season, she said. Mrs. Gage-Watts was hopeful that the agenda addition would have passed today for an additional site. She explained that the State Exhibit Museum is a larger venue and the citizens can practice social distancing while voting.

- Mr. Johnson wanted to know if the Animal Control Officers can arrest individuals for obstruction of law. Dr. Wilson stated that the ones who are post-certified can.

He also congratulated Dr. Wilson and Administration for the NACo Achievement Award for the community garden in the MLK area.

Mr. Johnson also announced that Commissioner Ken Epperson was appointed to the NACo Veterans & Military Sub-Committee. He also announced that he was appointed to the NACo Finance Pension & Intergovernmental Affairs Steering Committee as Vice-Chair.

He also talked about the violence in Shreveport. He suggested that there be serious discussions regarding guns and violence. Mr. Johnson said that this is due to the lack of education of the Second Amendment.

Mr. Johnson would like the two attempted agenda additions be added to the next agenda. He then talked about the early voting location. He pointed out that the Oil & Gas Museum and the State Exhibit Museum have the same infrastructure. He also said that the State Exhibit Museum is centrally located and is large enough for citizens to cast their votes while social distancing. He also mentioned that it is easily accessible, adequate parking, and would be a safe place for inclement weather.

ORDINANCES (for final passage)

It was **moved by Mr. Jackson**, seconded by Mr. Cawthorne, *that Ordinance No. 5967 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* be adopted.

Mr. Atkins pointed out that the numbers are “up to numbers” and the COVID kit distribution would be handled by the Parish. Mr. Cawthorne agreed.

Mr. Atkins then wanted to know how these expenditures would be tracked. Mrs. Barnett said that Legal would have to draft the CEA first to determine how the expenses were tracked.

Point of Clarification by Mr. Jackson. He wanted to know who the CEA would be with. Mrs. Barnett stated that the CEA would be drafted with the 100 Men of Shreveport.

Mr. Jackson then wanted to know about the COVID kits. Mrs. Barnett said that they would keep track of the items that go into the kits, and she would submit those expenses for reimbursement through the CARES Act.

Mr. Taliaferro wanted to know who the COVID kits would go to. Mr. Cawthorne said that they would be for businesses and would be distributed via the methodology in which the Parish could get reimbursements through the CARES Act.

Mr. Jackson had questions regarding the CARES Act. Mrs. Barnett explained that all of the funds have to be expended and the checks have to be cleared by the bank by September 30.

Mrs. Gage-Watts stated that she will be abstaining from this vote due to her employment with Oschner Health.

At this time, Mr. Jackson’s motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes:
AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Burrell, Cawthorne, Chavez, Epperson, Hopkins, Jackson, Johnson,

Lazarus, Taliaferro, and Young (11). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: None (0). ABSTAIN: Commissioner Gage-Watts (1).

ORDINANCE NO. 5967 OF 2020

BY THE CADDO PARISH COMMISSION:

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE BUDGET OF ESTIMATED REVENUES AND 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

and WHEREAS, the Parish of Caddo reported its first COVID-19 case on March 11, 2020;

WHEREAS, the Parish of Caddo currently has over 4,700 cases and 255 deaths due to COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, the stay at home order was lifted May 15, 2020 and the State moved into Phase 2 of its reopening plan on June 4, 2020;

WHEREAS, when entering Phase 2, cases and deaths trended upward in Caddo Parish and reopening seeks to support economic recovery; and

WHEREAS, the Caddo Parish Commission would like to provide additional testing for the public to help combat the spread of COVID-19 and provide "COVID kits" to small business which will include non-contact thermometers, large quantities of hand sanitizer, PPE and plexiglass for register areas; and

WHEREAS it is necessary to amend the 2020 Budget to provide an appropriation of \$272,000 to purchase masks; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED, by the Caddo Parish Commission in due, legal and regular session convened, that Budget of Estimated Revenues and Expenditures for the General Fund for the year 2020 is hereby amended as follows:

	<u>Budget Increase (Decrease)</u>
<u>General Fund</u>	
COVID-19	\$272,000
Fund Balance	(\$272,000)

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED, that if any provision or item of this ordinance or the application thereof is held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect other provisions, items or applications which can be given effect without the invalid provisions, items or applications, and to this end the provisions of this ordinance are hereby declared severable.

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED, that this ordinance shall take effect upon adoption.

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED, that all ordinances or parts thereof in conflict herewith are hereby repealed.

ORDINANCES (for introduction by title)

- *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*

RESOLUTIONS

It was **moved by Mr. Johnson**, 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 adopted.

Substitute motion by Mr. Jackson, seconded by Mr. Johnson, to englobo and adopt the following resolutions:

- *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. Epperson asked that Attorney Frazier provide an explanation regarding Resolution No. 64. Attorney Frazier explained that attorneys who specialize in bankruptcy should handle this matter since the Parish has several leases and may own royalties on those 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, Hopkins, Jackson, Johnson, Lazarus, Taliaferro, and Young (12). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: None (0). ABSTAIN: None (0).

RESOLUTION NO. 64 OF 2020

BY THE CADDO PARISH COMMISSION:

A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PARISH ADMINISTRATOR TO RETAIN SPECIAL LEGAL COUNSEL AND OTHERWISE PROVIDING WITH RESPECT THERETO.

WHEREAS, the parish has been notified that Chesapeake Energy has filed for bankruptcy;

WHEREAS, Chesapeake Energy is the lessee of several parish oil and gas interests; and

WHEREAS, the lessor/lessee relationship makes Caddo Parish a creditor of Chesapeake Energy and as such, entitles the parish to file certain claims with the bankruptcy court; and

WHEREAS, the Parish Attorney recommends to the Commission that it would be in the best interest of Caddo Parish for it to retain the services of R. Joseph Naus with the firm of Weiner, Weiss and Madison as Special Counsel to provide advice and counsel to the Commission as it pursues its entitlements as one of Chesapeake Energy's creditors; and

WHEREAS, the Commission does hereby concur with the Parish Attorney's recommendation to retain R. Joseph Naus and the firm of Weiner, Weiss and Madison. in the aforesaid matter.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the Caddo Parish Commission in due, regular and legal session convened that the Caddo Parish Commission does hereby authorize the Parish Administrator or his designee to retain on behalf of Caddo Parish Mr. R. Joseph Naus and the firm Weiner, Weiss and Madison at an hourly rate not to exceed \$250.00, with other terms of the engagement being set forth in a retainer agreement to be negotiated between the Parish Attorney and Mr. Naus.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that if any provision or item of this resolution or the application thereof is held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect other provisions, items or applications which can be given effect without the invalid provisions, items or applications, and to this end, the provisions of this resolution are hereby declared severable.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution shall take effect immediately.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that all resolutions or parts thereof in conflict herewith are hereby repealed.

RESOLUTION NO. 65 OF 2020

BY THE CADDO PARISH COMMISSION:

SECOND RESOLUTION AMENDING AND REENACTING RESOLUTION 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

WHEREAS, COVID19 is a national pandemic in the United States; and

WHEREAS, many jobs have been permanently lost as a result of COVID19; and

WHEREAS, individuals will need to expunge their records as they seek new means of employment; and

WHEREAS, the Parish may be eligible for reimbursement of this cost from CARES ACT Funding allocation as it relates to workforce development/retention related to COVID19.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED, by the Caddo Parish Commission in due, legal and regular session convened that the Caddo Parish Commission amends and reenacts Resolution 34 of 2020 to read as follows:

A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING ADMINISTRATION TO SUSPEND 2020 NGO PAYMENTS WITH CERTAIN EXCEPTIONS AND TO OTHERWISE PROVIDE WITH RESPECT THERETO

WHEREAS, COVID19 is a national pandemic in the United States; and

WHEREAS, national, state and local health emergencies have been declared due to the COVID 19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana citizens are contracting COVID19 in large numbers; and

WHEREAS, as a result of the pandemic, revenues used to fund the Parish's NGO program have declined; and

WHEREAS, this decline has caused a situation wherein the Parish does not have the revenue that was budgeted to fully fund the 2020 NGO program; and

WHEREAS, it is a violation of the State Budget Act for the Parish to pay expenditures when the revenue source does not have adequate funds to cover those expenditures; and

WHEREAS, there is enough revenue to pay a limited amount of the funds budgeted for the NGO program; and

WHEREAS organizations providing essential services should be paid.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED, by the Caddo Parish Commission in due, legal and regular session convened that the Caddo Parish Commission hereby authorizes Parish Administration to suspend NGO payments until a revenue analysis shows that the revenues in the requisite funds will cover the full amounts appropriated, with the following exceptions:

1. Caddo Council on Aging - \$75,000.00
2. Food Bank of Northwest Louisiana - \$90,000.00
3. Hope Connections - \$15,000.00
4. MLK CDC - \$10,000.00
5. Robinson's Rescue - \$25,000.00
6. Shreveport Green - \$7,500.00
7. St. Luke's Episcopal Mobile Medical - \$6,750.00
8. SuperMen for Christ - \$5,000.00
9. Legal Aid of Northwest Louisiana- \$20,000.00
10. Arc of Caddo Bossier-\$8,000.00
11. Shreveport Opera-\$4,000.00
12. SISTERS International, Inc. RCC- \$15,000.00
13. Social Justice Civic League-\$7,500.00
14. YWCA-\$10,000.00
15. Youth Outreach Services-\$10,000.00
16. YouToo, Inc.-\$10,000.00

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this resolution is effective immediately upon its passage.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all resolutions or parts thereof in conflict herewith are hereby repealed.

COMMUNIQUES/COMMITTEE REPORTS

- Mr. Jackson would like to schedule an emergency meeting to address some of the opportunities with COVID funding.
- Mr. Burrell, Mr. Jackson, and Mrs. Gage-Watts offered condolences for Ms. Lily Bradford who passed away due to COVID-19.

- Mr. Atkins addressed the early voting locations once again. He said that he is looking for a place to be demographically and politically balanced. He understands the logistical advantages of the State Exhibit Museum, but it is not his preferred location.

- Mrs. Gage-Watts warned everyone that there is still a pandemic going on. She encouraged all to practice social distancing, wearing masks, and washing hands.

She also reminded everyone that the Census deadline is September 30.

Mrs. Gage-Watts thanked Animal Services for all of their hard work in responding to the citizens' needs quickly. She also thanked all those who helped in her mask giveaway.

- Mr. Epperson offered his condolences to Mr. James Woodard who passed recently. He also encouraged all to wear their masks, wash their hands, and practice social distancing.

CITIZENS COMMENTS (late arrivals)


RJ Johnson sent in the following comment:

As a member of the Parish Board of Election Supervisors, I am in full support of the establishment of another satellite voting location. Our parish needs it and we should make the process easier or more convenient to them. This location has adequate parking, social distancing can be done, and it provides accessible facilities for the public. /RJ Johnson/Caddo Parish Board of Election Supervisors Chairman, Caddo Parish Democratic Executive Committee Secretary, Democratic State Central Committee Louisiana Democratic Party

There being no further discussion to come before the body, the meeting was adjourned at

4:56 p.m.

Michelle Nations
Assistant Commission Clerk



Mario Chavez
President