

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR SESSION OF THE  
CADDO PARISH COMMISSION  
HELD ON THE 3RD DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2020

The Caddo Parish Commission met in a Special Session, on the above date, at 3:30 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: None (0).

The invocation was given by Alex T. Ray, and Mr. Jackson led the Commission in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**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: September 1, 2020

/s/Mario Chavez, President

**CITIZENS COMMENTS**

Emily Settle Merckle submitted the following comment:

Commissioner Stormy Gage-Watts is to be commended for her leadership role in organizing yesterday's Call for Prayer. Stormy along with State Representative Tammy Phelps and councilwoman Tabitha Taylor are to be commended for this great event, Stormy joined many other leaders in addressing the need for all citizens seek God's guidance and assistance in fighting crime in our community. She was joined by Phelps, Taylor, Mayor Adrian Perkins and Caddo School Board members Mary Trammel and Dottie Bell who also spoke. The mother of child killed by gun violence also addressed the crowd expressing concern for her 16-year-old son and the need to fight the criminals on the street. Her comments left the crowd teary-eyed and virtually stunned. The Call to Pray should serve as a wake-up call to all citizens in Caddo Parish. As Stormy said, when a tough job is to be done women take the lead! Amen, Amen, Amen!

**ADMINISTRATOR REPORT**

- Michael Corbin, SWEPCO

Mr. Corbin gave an update on the damages caused by Hurricane Laura. SWEPCO experienced 136,000 outages with 23 transmission lines damaged, 20 substations damaged, and 600 utility poles that need to be replaced. He also said that they had a base camp set up at the Fairgrounds, but that has since been disbanded and moved to Natchitoches. There are over 3,000 additional utility workers here from SWEPCO from 15 states and Canada.

Mr. Epperson applauded Mr. Corbin and SWEPCO for working hard to get power restored to all citizens of Caddo and Louisiana.

Mr. Atkins thanked Mr. Corbin and SWEPCO for their prompt service for restoring the citizens' power.

Mr. Burrell asked for an update on tree trimming. Mr. Corbin said that they do as much trimming as the budget will allow. They regularly go to the Public Service Commission for additional funds for tree trimming. Mr. Corbin also explained that many of the limbs that were causing concern

either fell or were cut after the storm. He also said that they will begin an education campaign regarding tree trimming, especially in residential areas. Mr. Burrell said that many of the concerns the citizens have with the tree trimming is that they are not properly cut, so the tree dies or leans.

Mr. Epperson wanted to know if a resident is responsible for damage done from the pole to the house. Mr. Corbin explained that the customer is responsible for the weather head and the meter box on the house. SWEPCO will put a service draw from the utility line to the house. He further explained that if the weather head is damaged, they cannot reconnect power until that has been corrected by the customer and an electrician. Mr. Corbin also mentioned that SWEPCO is offering citizens a low cost insurance policy that would protect the weather head and meter box and pay for those expenses in case they are damaged. Mr. Epperson wanted to know if this was brought about via legislation through the Public Service Commission. Mr. Corbin said that the Public Service Commission is aware of it. He also mentioned that other utility services offer similar insurance policies.

Mr. Jackson wanted to know who would be responsible for the lights on Clyde Fant. Mr. Corbin explained that it is a combination. SWEPCO is responsible for parkway lights from Sci-Port to Shreveport-Barksdale. The City is responsible from Shreveport-Barksdale South to 70<sup>th</sup> Street.

- Otis Ellis  
Broadband Service in Rural Areas

Since the pandemic, broadband has become a national spotlight for school and work. He said that there is moral imperative to get rural and urban communities connected to the internet. Internet connectivity is an essential; it is a utility, Mr. Ellis said. He further explained that the Digital Infrastructure Committee has been working and learning from the school systems and library systems regarding internet connectivity. There is not a good roadmap or a sense of who's connected and who's not, he said. In working with the various stakeholders, they have identified that there is a need and high demand in the rural and urban parts of the community. Mr. Ellis further stated that they have been in contact with various internet service providers to devise a plan to get affordable and high-quality internet to the rural and urban parts of this area. Another component of broadband is workforce development. Mr. Ellis explained that high quality broadband service will support IT jobs as well as create new jobs.

Mr. Ellis requested that the Commissioners reach out to him to begin talking about ways to bring broadband to their districts. He also asked that the Commissioners help get the survey out.

Mr. Burrell thanked Mr. Ellis for updating the Commission on providing broadband throughout the Parish.

Mr. Chavez wanted to know the plan of action to achieve connectivity to the rural areas of the Parish. Mr. Ellis said that they are first doing a needs assessment. He further explained that there are a lot of monies that they would like to bring together for the respective Commissioners to determine which is the best network design. He feels that they could have the system completed anywhere between six to eight months, if they have the support from different elected officials, municipalities, and the school systems.

Mr. Burrell said that Congress is very interested in putting forth additional broadband as part of an infrastructure package. He plans to introduce a resolution of support for this.

Mr. Epperson suggested that this also be forwarded to the NACo Information & Technology Steering Committees.

Mr. Ellis also mentioned that Senator Cassidy, Senator Kennedy, and Congressman Johnson have been supportive of helping them they the word out in regards to the needs assessment. He said that there is already momentum for this project, and the ultimate goals is to get affordable, high speed internet access to the rural and urban parts of the Parish.

Dr. Wilson suggested that Mr. Ellis also reach out to Jack Skaggs and the Coordinating Development Council.

- Dr. Wilson's Response to Commission Requests

Mr. Young asked for an update regarding the Confederate Monument. Attorney Frazier said that the Daughters of the Confederacy have complied with their deadline to choose a location. They have chosen a battlefield in Mansfield. They will begin drafting the RFP shortly.

#### **COMMUNIQUES/COMMITTEE REPORTS**

- Mr. Young said that Resolution No. 69 of 2020 regarding evictions is no longer needed due to the CDC and the Executive Branch taking forceful action to prevent evictions.

He then talked about the early voting sites. He suggested that the Commission decide on a site so the Registrar can start working on setting up the early voting sites.

- Mr. Epperson thanked all of the healthcare workers and first responders who are helping with the COVID-19 Pandemic. He said that there are over 6 million cases of coronavirus in the United States with over 33,000 deaths. Louisiana is 11<sup>th</sup> nationally in the number of cases of coronavirus.

He also applauded the National Guard who are being deployed to hotspots and have been on the frontline of this pandemic.

Mr. Epperson urged everyone to continue wearing their masks and practice social distancing.

- Mr. Burrell said that there will not any additional extra days nor extended hours for early voting on November 3.

He also mentioned that Attorney General Jeff Landrieu issued an opinion saying that nay voter who was diagnoses with COVID-19 or is subject to a quarantine order while awaiting a COVID-19 diagnosis is qualified to vote by mail as long as a health professional certifies that the voter is disabled. He also said that the Secretary of State Kyle Ardoin is allowing mail-in ballots for those who are quarantined or in the hospital.

### **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Mr. Chavez commended Mrs. Gage-Watts for the Women In Prayer event that took place yesterday. He said that it was heartfelt and appreciated those who put it together.

He also talked about a Special Resolution of Recognition for El Cabo Verde, who was named the Best Mexican Restaurant in the State of Louisiana. He said that this will be presented at the next in-person meeting. Mr. Chavez also said that Cabo Verde is for Caddo Bossier and focused on everything organic.

### **PUBLIC HEARING ON ORDINANCES**

The President of the Commission opened the public hearing for the following ordinances:

- *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*

There being no one to speak in favor or against the ordinance, the President closed the public hearing.

### **ORDINANCES (final passage)**

It was **moved by Mr. Johnson**, seconded by Mr. Jackson, *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 adopted. 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).

### **ORDINANCE NO. 5968 OF 2020**

BY THE CADDO PARISH COMMISSION:

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE BUDGET OF ESTIMATED REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES FOR THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FUND AND THE OIL AND 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

WHEREAS, Southern University at Shreveport, Louisiana (SUSLA) is requesting an appropriation of \$100,000 to assist with costs associated with the university's Nursing Program; and

WHEREAS, SUSLA's Nursing Program Technology Program to support program expansion and enhancements to meet growing workforce demands; and

WHEREAS, SUSLA nursing curriculums range from a Certified Nursing Assistant to a two-year associate's degree with numerous nursing-related programs in between; and

WHEREAS, the Caddo Parish Commission recommends the Commission provide an appropriation of \$100,000 allocated to SUSLA's Nursing Program; and

WHEREAS it is necessary to amend the 2020 Budget to provide an appropriation of \$100,000 for Southern University at Shreveport; 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 Economic Development Fund for the year 2020 is hereby amended as follows:

	<u>Budget Increase (Decrease)</u>
<u>Economic Development Fund</u>	
NGO Appropriations –	
Southern University – Shreveport	\$100,000
Transfer from Oil and Gas	\$100,000
<u>Oil and Gas Fund</u>	
Transfer to Economic Development	\$100,000
Fund Balance	(\$100,000)

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. 5976 of 2020, an ordinance amending the Budget of Estimated Revenues & Expenditures for the Oil & Gas Fund for the year 2020 to provide an appropriation for a mental health hotline and to otherwise provide with respect thereto*
- *Ordinance No. 5977 of 2020, an ordinance amending the Budget of Estimated Revenues & Expenditures for the Oil & Gas Fund for the year 2020 to provide an appropriation for Providence House Emergency Rental Assistance Program and to otherwise provide with respect thereto*
- *Ordinance No. 5978 of 2020, an ordinance amending the Budget of Estimated Revenues & Expenditures for the General Fund for the year 2020 to provide an appropriation for the Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC) and to otherwise provide with respect thereto*
- *Ordinance No. 5979 of 2020, an ordinance amending the Budget of Estimated Revenues & Expenditures for the Oil & Gas Fund for the year 2020 to provide an appropriation for childcare centers for COVID-19 related expenditures and to otherwise provide with respect thereto*

#### **RESOLUTIONS**

It was **moved by Mrs. Gage-Watts**, seconded by Mr. Jackson, *that Resolution No. 63 of 2020, a resolution to study establishing a youth education program to interrupt the cycle of youth violence, to invite the Caddo Parish School Board, and local hospitals to participate, and otherwise providing with respect thereto* be adopted. 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. 63 OF 2020**

BY THE CADDO PARISH COMMISSION:

A RESOLUTION TO STUDY ESTABLISHING A YOUTH EDUCATION PROGRAM TO INTERRUPT THE CYCLE OF YOUTH VIOLENCE, TO INVITE THE CADDO PARISH SCHOOL BOARD AND LOCAL HOSPITALS TO PARTICIPATE, AND OTHERWISE PROVIDING WITH RESPECT THERETO.

WHEREAS, violence among young people is a significant problem in our community; and

WHEREAS, providing appropriate interventions with injured youth is seen as a tool in decreasing youth violence; and

WHEREAS, establishing a program to begin and conduct such interventions while injured youth are hospitalized will advance that program;

WHEREAS, also providing that program to youths under the jurisdiction of the Caddo Parish Juvenile Court would be advantageous;

WHEREAS, such a program would be best accomplished with participation from local hospitals and the Caddo Parish School Board; and

WHEREAS, such a program will require collaboration and deliberation among the stakeholders in the juvenile justice system, social services agencies, and local hospitals.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Caddo Parish Commission in due, regular and legal session convened, that the Caddo Parish Commission does hereby propose establishing a youth education program as a collaborative effort among local hospitals, social services agencies, and juvenile justice offices.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Caddo Parish Juvenile Services Department engage in those discussions with stakeholders and report to the Caddo Parish Commission Juvenile Justice Committee on those discussions at an appropriate time.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED 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.

It was **moved by Mr. Jackson**, seconded by Mr. Hopkins, *that Resolution No. 67 of 2020, a resolution requesting the Registrar of Voters and Caddo Parish Administrator to add an additional early voting location for the November 3<sup>rd</sup> 2020 Election at either the Shreve Memorial Hamilton Library or the Shreve Memorial North Market Library and otherwise providing with respect thereto* be adopted.

**Substitute motion by Mr. Johnson**, seconded by Mr. Burrell, *to Bill Cockrell Recreational Center as an early voting location for the November 3<sup>rd</sup> 2020 Election.*

Mr. Johnson said that a larger venue is needed for the early voting location. The gym at the rec center would provide ample amount of space for the citizens to practice social distancing while early voting. He also said that this location is easily accessible from 3132 and I-49, as well as being in a balanced area. He mentioned that this would be a temporary site, not permanent.

Mr. Burrell said that in receiving the letter from Registrar Sibley that it could take six months to a year to set up an early voting site. Mr. Chavez agreed and said that it is too late in the game to effectively set up a location.

Mr. Burrell also mentioned that the early voting site on Marshall Street is too small to practice social distancing along with lack of parking.

Mr. Cawthorne stated that the Commissioners need to decide on a location and let the Registrar set it up.

Mr. Chavez requested that a handicap valet service be provided for the disabled citizens. Dr. Wilson said that there is already provisions in place for people who are disabled, but the main issue is that there is not enough space. Mr. Epperson stated that this is not germane to the motion.

Mr. Taliaferro suggested that the Commission abandon this venture, and pursue multiple agreed upon locations going forward in 2021.

**Call for the Question by Mr. Epperson**, seconded by Mr. Cawthorne. Motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Cawthorne, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Hopkins, Johnson, Lazarus, Taliaferro, and Young (8). NAYS: Commissioners Atkins, Burrell, Chavez, and Jackson (4). ABSENT: None (0). ABSTAIN: None (0).

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

**Point of Clarification by Mr. Jackson.** He explained that if 2020 cannot be met, then it gives them an option to set one up for 2021.

At this time, Mr. Jackson's original motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Burrell, Cawthorne, Chavez, Hopkins, Jackson, Lazarus, Taliaferro, and Young (9). NAYS: Commissioners Epperson, Gage-Watts, and Johnson (3). ABSENT: None (0). ABSTAIN: None (0).

### **RESOLUTION NO. 67 OF 2020**

BY THE CADDO PARISH COMMISSION

RESOLUTION REQUESTING REGISTRAR OF VOTERS AND CADDO PARISH ADMINISTRATOR TO ADD AN ADDITIONAL EARLY VOTING LOCATION FOR THE NOVEMBER 3 2020 ELECTION AT EITHER THE SHREVE MEMORIAL HAMILTON LIBRARY OR SHREVE MEMORIAL NORTH MARKET LIBRARY AND OTHERWISE PROVIDING WITH RESPECT THERETO.

WHEREAS, the Caddo Parish Commission recognizes that early voting is an important part of elections; and

WHEREAS, it is the desire of the Caddo Parish Commission to ensure that early voting is as safe convenient as possible for citizens during COVID19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, the Caddo Parish Commission believes that adding early voting locations in addition to the Registrar of Voters' Office will increase convenience to the citizens, thus increasing voter participation; and

WHEREAS, the Shreve Memorial Hamilton Library and Shreve Memorial North Market Library provide convenient geographic access to diverse constituencies and each has growing population trends, making either of these sites feasible as the additional location.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Caddo Parish Commission, in due, legal and regular session convened, that the Caddo Parish Commission does hereby request the Registrar of Voters and Caddo Parish Administrator to take any and all necessary actions to add an additional early voting location for the November 3 2020 election at either Shreve Memorial Hamilton Library or Shreve Memorial North Market Library.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that if this additional location cannot be added in time for the November 3 2020 election, it will be added at one of the two locations prior to the 2021 election cycle.

BE IF RUTHER 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 of this resolution 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.

It was **moved by Mr. Young**, seconded by Mr. Atkins, *that Resolution No. 69 of 2020, a resolution urging and requesting Governor John Bel Edwards to establish a moratorium on evictions of tenants within the State of Louisiana, and otherwise providing with respect thereto* be removed from the agenda. 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. Burrell wanted to know if there was a way to block off that intersection to provide additional space for handicapped citizens. Mr. Burrell also requested that additional canopies or tents be set up down the sidewalk.

Mr. Burrell recognized Dr. Ghali who appeared at the Republican National Convention.

- Mr. Jackson wished everyone a Happy Labor Day.

He agreed with Mr. Burrell in getting tents set up for inclement weather during early voting.

He also mentioned that the Main Street Recovery Program still has about \$200M left from the CARES Act. It is hope that those dollars are not expended and can get redirected back to local government.

He commended Mr. Young for his resolution on the moratorium on evictions as well as the CDC.

- Mrs. Gage-Watts thanked Administration and staff for the prayer call event. She also thanked the citizen who called in today. She said that citizens are concerned with the gun violence in Shreveport. She said that this is a movement to bring the citizens together on one accord and fight against the violence.

- Mr. Cawthorne wished everyone a Happy Labor Day weekend and said that the labor force is the backbone of this society.

- Mr. Johnson requested that a protocol be put in place regarding how the Commissioners will go back in to the Chambers and how the citizens are brought into the Chambers.

Mr. Johnson suggested that block of Marshall Street be blocked off during early voting. Dr. Wilson pointed out that the prisoners' entrance is on the opposite side of that street, so the road cannot be blocked off.

Mr. Johnson also said that each of the Commissioners are passionate about the items they put on the agenda. There are times that they need to agree to disagree and not bully or threaten other Commissioners.

- Mrs. Gage-Watts wished everyone a Happy Labor Day Weekend. She reminded the citizens that COVID-19 is still here and asked that the citizens still practice social distancing, wear their masks, and wash their hands.

There was no further discussion to come before the Commission, so the meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

  
Michelle Nations  
Assistant Commission Clerk

  
Mario Chavez  
President