

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
CADDO PARISH COMMISSION'S  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
HELD ON THE 10<sup>th</sup> DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2020

The Caddo Parish Economic Development Committee met in legal session on the above date, at 2:00 p.m., via teleconference, with Mr. John E. Atkins, Chairman, presiding, and the following members in attendance: Commissioners Atkins, Chavez, Epperson, Gage-Watts, and Young (5). ABSENT: None (0).

Also, in attendance were Assistant Administrator Erica Bryant, Parish Attorney Donna Frazier, Finance Director Hayley Barnett, and Commissioner Hopkins.

The invocation was given by Mrs. Gage-Watts, and Mr. Epperson led the Committee in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**CITIZENS COMMENTS**

Angie White, NLEP, submitted the following comment:

The North Louisiana Economic Partnership (NLEP) would like to offer the following comments to the Caddo Commission Economic Development Committee related to our NGO FY 2021 funding request and to provide an update on NLEP's economic development activities during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The North Louisiana Economic Partnership (NLEP) sincerely appreciates the Caddo Parish Commission's past support. The Commission's contribution helps fund our efforts to attract new companies, assist existing companies considering expansion, improve our area workforce, and advocate for a good business environment. Thank you for investing in our mission to bring more capital investment and new jobs to the community and improve the quality of our workforce and other economic development assets.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, NLEP developed a new five year strategic plan that promotes economic recovery for North Louisiana, targeting new opportunities to attract companies and grow our economy, identifying existing companies that have new opportunities to grow or are at-risk and will require assistance to remain in operation, working with displaced workers who need upskilling or retraining for new career paths, and advocating for effective public policies that support economic recovery for our state and region.

Our **Business Development Program** helps nurture and grow existing businesses and recruits new companies to the region. In order to recruit new companies during this time, NLEP project managers conduct virtual site tours, attend virtual conferences and conduct zoom meetings with site influencers. We are working with our partners at the US Department of Commerce and Select USA to enhance our reshoring efforts in North Louisiana. As part of our economic development services, NLEP's Business Retention and Expansion Program works with existing businesses to overcome impediments to their growth, whether it's identifying workforce solutions or assisting them with applying for incentives that may help lower costs. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we surveyed companies in our 14-parish region to gauge the impact of the pandemic on their business operations and staffing. We continue to work with our existing businesses to see where they might need assistance to resume operations. Our **Workforce Program** has the goal to ensure a strong pipeline of talent exists in North Louisiana to support current and future employers. The program also nurtures an education, training and workforce development ecosystem that prepares all residents to participate in the economy. Since the COVID-19 pandemic shut down the Louisiana economy in March, we have focused our workforce-related efforts on helping unemployed residents find employment, assisting companies that need workers to connect with job seekers, and working with state and local workforce development ecosystem partners such as City of Shreveport Office of Workforce Development, Northwest Louisiana Technical Community College, SUSLA, Coordinating and Development Corporation and others to align data and funding that will be used to re-train and re-employ unemployed residents. Our **Advocacy Program** unites northwest and northeast legislative delegations into a single, powerful voice to develop policies that support economic development for North Louisiana. This will be accomplished through the development and implementation of proactive, engaged, and strategic initiatives focused on strengthening and protecting critical North Louisiana assets. During the 2020 legislative session and subsequent special session, NLEP shared information with legislators and closely followed legislation impacting the ability of North Louisiana businesses to return to full operation after pandemic-related shutdowns. NLEP's Advocacy Program also tracked legislation that impacted K-12 and post-secondary students as they adjust to a new remote learning environment. The legislation we monitored covered issues ranging from direct financial assistance programs to ensuring support for the childcare industry to advocating for the removal of barriers to broadband access for rural communities. We appreciate your continued support of economic development in North Louisiana. The NLEP is respectfully requesting \$75,000 for F2021 to support our program of work, including new business attraction, existing business support including workforce assistance, support of our multi-year strategic plan, and enhanced research capabilities. The resources you have graciously provided are essential to North Louisiana standing out in the rigorous competition for economic development projects. Unlike many of our competitor regions and communities, particularly those in neighboring states like Texas, NLEP depends on voluntary contributions to carry out its mission through the programs described above. We appreciate the Caddo Parish Commission's consideration of our request. Please let us know if we can answer any questions or provide additional information to assist the committee in the decision-making process. Thank you for your consideration.

**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 9, 2020**

/s/ Mario Chavez  
Caddo Commission President

Mr. Atkins welcomed everyone to today's meeting and stated that the Committee will be discussing the following items:

- *Discuss appropriation process and funding for Economic Development requests regarding the 2021 Budget cycle*

Mr. Atkins said that this is the first step in a multi-step process. He asked that the Committee aspires to stay within the budget range proposed by the Finance Department, which is about \$400,000. The total number of requests is at \$870,000. He also explained that this committee's budget is provided by the video poker revenue which has been adversely affected by the coronavirus.

There are six organizations from the list that are not currently in compliance: Fit For Life Ministries, Southern University, African-American Chamber of Commerce, Successfully Preparing Our Teens, and Strand Theater.

Mr. Chavez asked for clarification on not being in full compliance. Mrs. Barnett said that it means that they are not in compliance with the grant guidelines, so receipts, reports, financial statements, or other documents have not been submitted.

It was **moved by Mr. Epperson**, seconded by Mrs. Gage-Watts, *that all organizations not in compliance be discussed at a later date. Motion carried*, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Chavez, Epperson, Gage-Watts, and Young (5). NAYS: None (0). ABSTAIN: None (0). ABSENT: None (0).

Mr. Epperson suggested that the committee forward the rest of the organizations to the full body for further discussions. Mr. Atkins explained that the requested number would be \$533,000 which is above the proposed budget range from Finance.

It was **moved by Mrs. Gage-Watts**, seconded by Mr. Epperson, *that the Committee move the rest of the organizations to the full body with the total funding requests being \$533,000.*

Mr. Young wanted to know if these organizations would be considered on the floor or during another Economic Development Committee. Mr. Atkins said that the motion is to send these organizations to the full body, and changes can be made during that time. Mrs. Gage-Watts suggested that the difference comes from the Oil & Gas Fund. Mr. Epperson

Mr. Chavez wanted to know if the \$533,000 was over the proposed budget. Mr. Atkins said that it was by \$133,000. Mr. Chavez then wanted to know if a 10% decrease in funding across the board would achieve the desired number. Mr. Atkins said that it would not; it would bring the budget down to \$480,000. Mr. Chavez then suggested a 20% decrease in funding across the board.

It was **moved by Mr. Young**, seconded by Mr. Chavez, *to reduce the funding across the remaining organizations by 20%. Motion carried*, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Chavez, Epperson, Gage-Watts, and Young (5). NAYS: None (0). ABSTAIN: None (0). ABSENT: None (0).

Mrs. Barnett said that the new funding request is \$426,400. Mr. Jackson wanted to know about the Safe Summer funding. Mrs. Barnett said that Safe Summer was not included in the \$426,400, but it would bring the total funding requests to \$446,400. Dr. Wilson explained that it is a Commission driven program, not an exterior organization. Mr. Atkins said that it belongs in Appropriations, not Economic Development. Dr. Wilson said that he will include the Safe Summer funding will rollover into 2021.

There be no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned.

  
Michelle Nations  
Assistant Commission Clerk