

MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION  
OF THE CADDO PARISH COMMISSION  
HELD ON THE 18<sup>th</sup> DAY OF NOVEMBER, 2024

The Caddo Parish Commission met in a Work Session, on the above date, at 3:30 p.m., in the Government Chambers, with Mr. J. Young, presiding, and the following members in attendance constituting a quorum: Commissioners Atkins, Blake, Burrell, Cothran, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Jones, Kracman, Thomas, G. Young, and J. Young (11). ABSENT: Commissioner Lazarus (1).

Former Commissioner Handy Giles gave the invocation, and Mr. Kracman led the Commission in the Pledge of Allegiance. There were no Agenda Additions, Citizens Comments, nor Visitors, so the Commission moved onto the Administrator Report.

**ADMINISTRATOR REPORT**

- Juvenile Detention

Parish Administrator, Erica Bryant, said that there are seventeen children in the Detention Center; three of which are OJJ. There are three 17-year olds, and thirteen children at CCC. There are 482 children on probation.

- Special Session of the Louisiana Legislature

Mrs. Bryant sent an email with a summary of the tax reform bills to the Commissioners and how it would affect Caddo Parish.

- October 2024 Financial Statements

Mrs. Bryant advised that a copy of the October 2024 financial statements are attached to the agenda, as well as being placed at each Commissioner's station.

- Toys for Tots

Mrs. Bryant said that the Toys for Tots Drive will be held on December 6, 2024 at 9:00 a.m. in the Government Plaza lobby. She encouraged all to participate.

**COMMISSION REMARKS**

- Mr. Epperson talked about Resilient Way. He explained that the Parish funded \$2M towards this project, but AEP SWEPCO wants the road to be private.

Mr. Epperson has been advocating for opening up Dawson Road for several years to improve economic and residential development.

He said that AEP SWEPCO does not want the road to be accessed due to security concerns for the building. Mr. Epperson said that public funds should be dedicated to public use, not private interests. If they want a private road, then they should return the public money, he said.

Mr. Burrell wanted to know if the road is a private road. Mr. Epperson said that road dead ends, but he would like to get access from Dawson Road tied to Greenwood Road. Mr. Epperson further stated that AEP SWEPCO would like Resilient Way to go up to the facility and that's it. He suggested that AEP SWEPCO build a fence to alleviate security concerns.

Mr. Cothran asked for more clarification with regards to the road. Mr. Epperson explained that the road is a dead end road, and for security purposes, AEP SWEPCO does not want through traffic.

Mr. Burrell wanted to know if there were other roads that the Parish has invested in that are private roads. Mrs. Bryant said that they would need to look into this further. Mr. Atkins requested that this information be provided to all Commissioners.

Mr. Epperson wanted to know if there was a cooperative endeavor agreement. Mrs. Bryant said that she would need to verify that there is. Attorney Frazier will review this further and have the information by Thursday.

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Mr. J. Young reminded everyone to wear their mustaches on Thursday.

**OLD BUSINESS**

It was **moved by Mrs. Gage-Watts**, seconded by Mr. Thomas, *that Ordinance No. 6477 of 2024, an ordinance to adopt Chapter 2, Article V, Division 4 of the Parish Code of Ordinances relative to parish contracts, to provide for the payment of a living wage by contractors with the Parish, and to otherwise provide with respect thereto* be moved to Thursday's agenda for introduction.

Mr. G. Young said that this is something that has been discussed extensively. There was a favorable vote out of the Committee, he said. Mr. G. Young said that the country is looking to making the working class a priority.

Mr. Atkins reiterated that he is supportive of providing a living wage to the Commission employees, but feels that this is government overreach.

Mrs. Bryant explained that this would not apply to any contracts that they bid out. This would only apply to contractors who have 16 or more employees. She also said that a good deal of the current contractors already pay at least \$15 per hour to their employees. Mrs. Bryant also explained that the companies would self-certify. There would also be a portal in place for people to report any companies who are not in compliance with the ordinance.

Mr. Cothran said that the due diligence has been done in Legal and Administration.

Mr. Kracman feels that this is an overreach of government. He does not feel that the Commission should legislate quality of life issues or morality. We're here to protect rights, he said.

Mr. Thomas applauded the Economic Development Committee for bringing this legislation forward. He said that this Commission does have the right to legislate a standard.

At this time, Mrs. Gage-Watts' motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Burrell, Cothran, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Jones, Thomas, G. Young, and J. Young (8). NAYS: Commissioners Atkins, Blake, and Kracman (3). ABSENT: Commissioner Lazarus (1). ABSTAIN: None (0).

### **NEW BUSINESS**

It was **moved by Mr. Kracman**, seconded by Mr. Thomas, *that Ordinance No. 6510 of 2024 Ordinance No. 6510 of 2024, an ordinance to close and abandon an 80- foot wide street dedication in Section 20, Township 21 North, Range 14 West, in the Parish of Caddo, and to otherwise provide with respect thereto* be moved to Thursday's agenda for introduction. Motion carried unanimously of those present.

It was **moved by Mr. Kracman**, seconded by Mr. Atkins, *that Ordinance No. 6511 of 2024, an ordinance to increase the Caddo Parish portion of the salaries of Constables and Justices of the Peace, and otherwise providing with respect thereto* be moved to Thursday's agenda for introduction.

Mr. Kracman said that the last raise the Constables received was in 2009.

Mr. J. Young wanted to know if the Commission pays their salaries. Mrs. Bryant said that the State sets their minimum salaries, but the Commission can pay more.

Mr. Cothran wanted to know how much the Constables and JOPs receive. Mrs. Bryant said that they receive \$345 per month, with the Parish paying \$225.

Mr. G. Young urged his counterparts to be consistent in their views.

Mr. Atkins reminded the Commissioners that he is in support of the Commission providing living wages for Parish employees, but not in support of telling third-party companies what they should pay their employees. Mrs. Blake agreed with Mr. Atkins.

At this time, Mr. Kracman's motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Blake, Cothran, Jones, Kracman, Thomas, and J. Young (7). NAYS: Commissioners Burrell, Epperson, Gage-Watts, and G. Young (4). ABSENT: Commissioner Lazarus (1). ABSTAIN: None (0).

It was **moved by Mrs. Gage-Watts**, seconded by Mr. Thomas, *that Resolution No. 77 of 2024, a resolution giving written public notice of the regularly scheduled meetings of the Caddo Parish Commission for the calendar year 2025, and otherwise providing with respect thereto* be moved to Thursday's agenda for consideration. Motion carried unanimously of those present.

It was **moved by Mr. Jones**, seconded by Mr. Epperson, *that Resolution No. 78 of 2024, a resolution in support of Louisiana's Motion Picture Production Program, statutorily known as the Motion Picture Production Tax Credit, and otherwise provide with respect thereto* be moved to Thursday's agenda for consideration.

Mr. Jones said that this is an investment. He said that Louisiana brought in \$1.2B per year when there was a Louisiana Film Tax Credit. Mr. Jones further said that Louisiana, and this Parish, has many stories to tell, including the courthouse, lakes, and other historical landmarks. Because of Mr. Curtis Jackson's festival, the City achieved a significant milestone: sixteen days without violent crimes. The Humor & Harmony Festival gave the citizens of the Parish something to look forward to, he said. Mr. Jones believes

that investing in the film industry should be a priority.

Mrs. Gage-Watts agreed with Mr. Jones. She stands in solidarity with the film industry and said that the Film Tax Credit is crucial for supporting about 10,000 jobs and generating significant revenues for local businesses. Removing the tax credit could devastate the local film economy and result in thousands of job losses. If the tax credit is eliminated, there's a risk that production crews will move to other states or countries with better incentives, potentially undermining Louisiana's position as a leading filming destination. While there are discussions about their return on investment from the film tax credit, many workers point out that the relatively small annual allocation of \$150M is critical for their jobs in the State's economy. In contrast, the petrochemical industry receives much larger tax incentives raising questions about fairness in economic support. Critics argue that the Film Tax Credit does not yield enough revenue for the State, suggesting that it may be a financial burden. Nevertheless, the film industry remains a crucial economic driver, and many workers fear the consequences of diminishing support as the debate over tax incentives continues. Our state will suffer vastly if this happens, Mrs. Gage-Watts said. She then asked the Commissioners for their support on this resolution.

Mrs. Blake asked for additional information on the resolution regarding the status of it. She said that there are several moving parts. She doesn't feel comfortable voting on a resolution where she doesn't have complete understanding on where it is right now.

Mrs. Gage-Watts mentioned that this could be a drawn out process.

**Substitute motion by Mr. Atkins**, seconded by Mrs. Blake, *that Resolution No. 78 of 2024, a resolution in support of Louisiana's Motion Picture Production Program, statutorily known as the Motion Picture Production Tax Credit, and otherwise provide with respect thereto* be postponed until the December 5 Regular Session.

Mr. Atkins would like to delay this resolution in order to gain clarity on the Film Tax Credit.

Mr. Thomas feels that this is an appropriate way for the Commission to send their opinion to Baton Rouge.

**Call for the Question by Mr. Epperson**, seconded by Mrs. Gage-Watts. Motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Blake, Cothran, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Jones, Kracman, Thomas, and G. Young (9). NAYS: Commissioners Burrell and J. Young (2). ABSENT: Commissioner Lazarus (1). ABSTAIN: None (0).

At this time, Mr. Atkins' substitute motion failed, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Blake, and Kracman (3). NAYS: Commissioner Burrell, Cothran, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Jones, Thomas, G. Young, and J. Young (8). ABSENT: Commissioner Lazarus (1). ABSTAIN: None (0).

At this time, Mr. Jones' motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioner Burrell, Cothran, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Jones, Thomas, G. Young, and J. Young (8). NAYS: Commissioners Atkins, Blake, and Kracman (3). ABSENT: Commissioner Lazarus (1). ABSTAIN: None (0).

It was **moved by Mr. Thomas**, seconded by Mr. Jones, *that Resolution No. 79 of 2024, a resolution opposing Senate Bill 2 of the 2024 Third Extraordinary Session of the Louisiana Legislature relating to restrictions on adult prosecution of juveniles and otherwise providing with respect thereto* be moved to Thursday's agenda for consideration.

Mrs. Gage-Watts discussed this item in depth. The Louisiana Senate recently approved a bill that could lead to more 14-16-year olds being sentenced to adult prison for a wider range of crimes. The vote was 28-9, and the proposal moves to the Louisiana House and will require voter approval next year. This new amendment will allow lawmakers to set laws that let minors be tried as adults for any crime—not just the serious ones that are currently allowed. I, along with children's advocates, strongly oppose this bill, arguing that it will weaken protections for young people in our justice system. Currently, Louisiana allows specific violent crimes for minors to be prosecuted as adults, but this amendment would open the door for younger teens to face adult charges for less severe offenses. Supporters claim that the bill is necessary to address serious crimes, like a recent carjacking, but those responsible were already charged as adults under this existing law. Critics argued that this amendment removes the public say in the decision about when young people should face adult charges, giving their power to lawmakers instead. Additionally, a new law that treats all 17-year olds as adults was passed earlier this year, but data shows that many of those arrested were for nonviolent offenses. Sheriffs are now struggling to manage this change facing challenges in complying with both state and federal regulations regarding housing younger offenders separately. In summary, she added, this highlights concerns over expanding adult sentencing for minors, the potential erosion of youth protections, and the practical challenges facing law enforcement. She asked the Commissioners for their support on this resolution.

Mr. Atkins requested that the language of the resolution be provided prior to the final vote on Thursday.

At this time, Mr. Thomas' motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioner Atkins, Burrell, Cothran, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Jones, Thomas, G. Young, and J. Young (9). NAYS: Commissioners Blake and Kracman (2). ABSENT: Commissioner Lazarus (1). ABSTAIN: None (0).

It was **moved by Mr. Thomas**, seconded by Mrs. Gage-Watts, *that Special Resolution recognizing the 110<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Stoner Hill Baptist Church* be moved to Thursday's agenda for consideration. Motion carried unanimously by those who were present.

It was **moved by Mr. J. Young**, seconded by Mrs. Gage-Watts, *that the Shreveport-Bossier Tourism be a Visitor during Thursday's Regular Session.* Motion carried unanimously by those who were present.

It was **moved by Mr. Epperson**, seconded by Mrs. Gage-Watts, *that the End of the Year Appointments* be moved to the December 5 Regular Session for consideration.

Mr. Epperson asked that each appointment and reappointment provide a letter of intent and bio prior to the final vote.

At this time, Mr. Epperson's motion carried unanimously by those who were present.

### **COMMUNIQUES & COMMITTEE REPORTS**

- Mr. Cothran attended several community events highlighting veterans, as well as providing meals to those who were less fortunate.

- Mr. Thomas announced that there will be a Thanksgiving giveaway event on Saturday, November 23 at 9:00 a.m. at Valencia Park. This event is organized by the Summerhill Neighborhood Action Group in collaboration with Caddo Parish Magnet High School.

He also attended a brunch recognizing Sickle Cell Anemia. It was well attended.

- Mr. Jones thanked his colleagues for their prayers and support during the difficult time he had.

- Mr. Epperson said that the Northwest Louisiana Ambassador for the Boot will host a meeting on November 21 at 2:00 p.m. He encouraged all to attend.

He also mentioned that the Veterans Memorial on Clyde Fant Parkway was vandalized, but was cleaned before Veterans Day.

- Mr. Burrell said that the Louisiana State Fair has come to an end, and was successful.

- Mr. Cothran thanked Tim Weaver and the Public Works Department for their help in the community. He also recognized Animal Services for all of their hard work in the community as well.

- Mr. J. Young received several txt messages due to excess dog barking in a neighborhood. Animal Services has responded multiple times, but the issue persists. He said that the house might be being used as a business in a residential zone.

### **CONSENT AGENDA**

*Ordinance No. 6477 of 2024, an ordinance to adopt Chapter 2, Article V, Division 4 of the Parish Code of Ordinances relative to parish contracts, to provide for the payment of a living wage by contractors with the Parish, and to otherwise provide with respect thereto*

*Ordinance No. 6505 of 2024, an ordinance to amend Volume II of the Code of Ordinances of the Parish of Caddo, as amended, the Caddo Parish Unified Development Code, relative to dwelling-manufactured home and the use matrix, with all their provisions included herein, and to otherwise provide with respect thereto*

*Ordinance No. 6506 of 2024, an ordinance to amend Volume II of the Code of Ordinances of the Parish of Caddo, as amended, the Caddo Parish Unified Development Code, by amending the zoning of property located northwest corner of Blanchard Furrh Road and Lucas Lane, Caddo Parish, Louisiana, from R-A, Rural Agricultural Zoning District, to R-A PUD, Rural Agricultural Planned Unit Development Zoning District, and to otherwise provide with respect thereto*

*Ordinance No. 6507 of 2024, an ordinance to amend Volume II of the Code of Ordinances of the Parish of Caddo, as amended, the Caddo Parish Unified Development Code, by amending the zoning of property located northwest corner of Woolworth Road and Tanner*

*Road, Caddo Parish, Louisiana, from I-1, Light Industrial Zoning District, to R-A, Rural Agricultural Zoning District, and to otherwise provide with respect thereto*

*Ordinance No. 6508 of 2024, an ordinance to accept the streets in Simpson Acres Unit No. 4 into the Parish of Caddo Road System, and to otherwise provide with respect thereto*

*Ordinance No. 6509 of 2024, an ordinance to close and abandon a street dedication in the Happy Trails Subdivision, in Section 4, Township 14 North, Range 15 West, in the Parish of Caddo, and to otherwise provide with respect thereto*

*Public Hearing for the 2025 Operating & Capital Improvements Budget*

*Consideration of allocation of ARPA funds for Galilee Baptist Church for \$500k to establish a community lighthouse*

At this time, there was no further discussion to come before the Commission, so the Commission adjourned at 4:40 p.m.

  
Assistant to the Commission Clerk