

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CADDO PARISH COMMISSION'S
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
HELD ON THE 6TH DAY OF NOVEMBER, 2023**

The Caddo Parish Economic Development Committee met in legal session on the above date, at 12:00 noon, in the Government Chambers Conference Room, with Mr. Johnson, Chairman, presiding, and the following members in attendance: Commissioners Burrell, Chavez, Johnson, Jones and Lazarus (5). ABSENT: Commissioners Atkins, Epperson, and Gage-Watts (3).

Mr. Jones gave the invocation, and Mr. Chavez led the Committee in the Pledge of Allegiance.

There were no agenda additions or public comments, so the Committee moved to the next agenda item.

NEW BUSINESS

- *Discuss addressing food deserts in the MLK area*

Mr. Johnson talked about the food desert and lack of fresh produce in the MLK area. To address this concern, he is proposing that a grocery store and shopping center be built at the Newton Smith Elementary School site. The school is currently closed. Mr. Johnson said that they would need to discuss this proposal with the Caddo Parish School Board. He is suggesting that the School Board lease the land for \$1 per year for 99 years. There have also been several discussions with national chains to locate to the proposed shopping center, along with Goodwill, a fitness center, fast food restaurant, and two office spaces.

Along with the School Board's donation of the land, Mr. Johnson said that there would need to be discussions with the City of Shreveport to help make this happen. The request for the project is \$2M, but he is recommending \$500k-\$1M over the course of three years.

Mr. Johnson also mentioned that there would be an area for Southern University. Mr. Burrell wanted to know what type of area. Mr. Johnson said that it has not been defined just yet.

Mr. Chavez asked for clarification on the ownership of the property. Attorney Frazier said that the School Board will not be leasing a building, but the land itself. Answering a question from Mr. Chavez about who would be demolishing the existing structure, Mr. Johnson said that it would be the contractors.

Answering a question from Mr. Lazarus regarding the use of the requested funding, Mr. Johnson said that it would be used to demolish the existing structure then build the proposed facility. Mr. Lazarus pointed out that if the Parish leases the property, the Parish of Caddo would never actually own the property.

Mr. Chavez agreed and wanted to know the Parish's return on investment (ROI). Mr. Johnson said that the ROI would be the increased property values of the areas surrounding the facility.

Answering a question from Mrs. Bryant regarding who would be responsible for maintaining the property, Mr. Johnson said that the School Board would for 99 years.

Mr. Chavez questioned whether this project meets the eligibility requirements of this Committee. Attorney Frazier mentioned that there would need to be an ROI.

Mr. Burrell suggested that the Caddo Parish School Board deem this property surplus. Mr. Johnson said that the purpose of this meeting is to gather questions and bring it to the stakeholders.

Mr. Chavez understood but still questioned how the Parish would get an ROI on the buildout of the facility. Mr. Johnson stated that this facility would improve the quality of life for the citizens who live in that area.

Mr. Johnson also mentioned that years ago, Charlotte and Shreveport were supposed to be "sister cities", but the progressive thinking in this area is lacking. Charlotte is thriving, but Shreveport is not.

Mr. Burrell requested that an ROI be submitted to this committee. Mr. Johnson said that there are several things that need to happen like the School Board would need to relinquish the property first, then the City would need to obtain grants from the federal government, etc. Mr. Burrell wanted to know if this Committee could move forward based upon that criteria. Mr. Johnson said that they could, and these questions would be brought to the stakeholders.

Mr. Chavez pointed out that Brookshires is only one mile away from the proposed site. He then wanted to know the criteria that deems an area a food desert. Mr. Johnson pointed out that Brookshires is one of the companies that they are looking to locate in the shopping center. Mr. Chavez agreed with the idea of this proposal, but does not feel that this is the appropriate platform to request the funding.

Mr. Johnson understood and reiterated that the purpose of this meeting is introduce the proposal and gather questions or concerns. He would also like to bring forth a dollar amount to the stakeholders. Mr. Lazarus said that it is difficult to decide on a dollar amount due to the several unknowns. Mr. Jones agreed and does not want the Parish to be on the hook for more funding. Mr. Johnson said that there are several variables that need to happen prior to the project starting.

Mr. Chavez said that he does not want to do a duplication of services. He wanted to know what would be the impact of the area and what services are currently being done in that area. Mr. Johnson said that on the Census, the Cooper Road has about 10,000 people. The Food Bank does more for the rural areas, than it does the urban areas. He pointed out that all of those services are canned goods, not fresh produce.

Mr. Chavez then wanted to know why Brookshires would not fund the build-out. He said that the Parish could abate their taxes for a certain amount of years. Mr. Johnson said that incentives need to be put on the table to bring Brookshires to the area. He also suggested that it could be a TIF, but that would require the City of Shreveport's cooperation as well.

Mr. Jones stated that he needs more information before voting on this project.

Mr. Johnson understood and scheduled a follow-up meeting on Thursday, November 9 at 2:00 p.m.

Attorney Frazier wanted to know if there was another private-public partnership with the same developer that she could review. Mr. Johnson said that he did one in Charlotte, and he'll send the information.

There being no further discussion, the Committee adjourned at 12:49 p.m.



Michelle Nations
Assistant to the Commission Clerk