

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CADDO PARISH COMMISSION'S
LONG RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE
HELD ON THE 7th DAY OF DECEMBER, 2023

The Caddo Parish Long Range Planning Committee met in legal session on the above date at 2:00 p.m., in the Government Plaza Chambers Conference Room, with Mr. Chavez, presiding, and the following members in attendance: Commissioners Burrell, Chavez, Hopkins, Jackson, and Young (5). ABSENT: Commissioners Gage-Watts and Johnson (2).

The invocation and Pledge of Allegiance were done in a previous Committee meeting.

There were no Agenda Additions, so the Committee moved forward to Public Comments.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Candy Peavy came before the Committee and gave the following comment:

The reason I wanted to come today—I knew they were going to do this demonstration, but I also was present at that hearing last week for the Sheriff's election. There was only about forty or fifty other in the room, no cameras—there was nobody allowed to film. So, the only record there is in our heads that we saw that was going on. A lot of communication is actually body language, not so much what's said—so it was important to—I know Commissioner Blake was there, and I'm sorry that more Commissioners couldn't be there because it was really enlightening. So, none of the testimony in the courtroom [inaudible] because there is nothing in Title 17 in our election law that addresses auditor [inaudible], so it was all focused on the paper ballots and the affidavits and so forth and so on. Literally—and this is not a personal, I don't want anyone to take this personally, but all of the testimony fell on the shoulders of our Registrar of Voters. It became very apparent for me that he needs to do his job better because it would not have been all of these discrepancies and irregularities. [inaudible] which he was not following. So, there wouldn't have been double votes, illegal affidavits, or the indigent voters that were voting. All of that is in our law, our Title 18 election law. So, for me concerning what actually was brought out as fact in this [inaudible] that he's not doing his job. He may not even know the law and that's why he's not following it. He's not supervising his staff. He need supervision himself to show accountability to you guys and to us because he's a lifetime appointment by your Commission, and we need to know that he's doing his job. He seems like a super nice person, and somebody I would like to know, but I think he needs supervision for the work that he is supposed to be doing. Our Secretary of State- Elect, Nancy Landry, has admitted and testimony in front of our legislature that there were a hundred and eighty thousand ineligible voters on last year's voter rolls. Today, we don't even know how many there are, but we've had national experts that we are connected to who have predicted there are as many as six hundred thousand invalid voters throughout the State on the registration rolls—that is 20% of the names on the voter rolls. That can affect an election. So, as a Commission, you guys hire the Registrar and we, the citizens, really need for y'all to inquire whether or not he's following the law. I didn't have time to make this list today, but I am willing to work on a list by looking at Title 18, possibly the Home Rule Charter, and learning for myself exactly—I'll do bullet points for the Commission—what his responsibility for the Title 18 is hard to read, but you know—So, I do have a couple of important sections in Title 18, Section 178 and Section 193. One place you could start is asking him for a two-year list from the Clerk of Court's Office of the returned jury notices. The Clerk is required to send him notices of people who have not been able to have been served a jury notice. Right? Because they don't live there anymore. So, this list can be cross-checked with active and inactive voters to see whose names appear. That's just one place you can start.

NEW BUSINESS

- *Make recommendations regarding Ordinance No. 6402 of 2023*

It was **moved by Mr. Jackson**, seconded by Mr. Chavez, *to recommend to the full body Ordinance No. 6402 of 2023 as amended.*

Mr. Jackson talked about the definition of first responders. Mrs. Bryant explained that there are specific requirements that have to be met to qualified as a first responders, which is specified in the legislation. She said that Public Works would not qualify because they have to have a certain number of hours acting in that capacity. She also said that this is not a part of the Public Work's employees core responsibilities. Fire, law enforcement, EMTs, etc. are examples of first responders.

Mr. Chavez said that the first responder has to be employed with a Caddo Parish agency for a minimum of three years before being eligible for the additional \$500 exemption. He wanted to know how SPD or SFD could take advantage of this. Mrs. Bryant explained that they would qualify because they reside in Caddo Parish and the agency is in Caddo Parish. Mr. Chavez suggested that the language be modified to reflect this.

Answering a question from Mr. Jackson regarding State Police, Mrs. Bryant said that their employer would be East Baton Rouge. They would not qualify for the Caddo Parish exemption.

Mr. Jackson then talked about the dollar amount for the assessments. Attorney Bernstein pointed out that the language in the statute states ‘the number for the assessment value’, which is 10% of the real value.

Friendly amendment by Mr. Chavez *to change the language to reflect agencies located within Caddo Parish.* Mr. Jackson approved.

At this time, Mr. Jackson’s motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Burrell, Chavez, Hopkins, Jackson, and Young (5). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: Commissioners Gage-Watts and Johnson (2). ABSTAIN: None (0).

- *Discuss and make recommendations about Resolution no. 20 of 2023, regarding paper ballots and other issues related to election integrity*

Mrs. Brenda O’Brock, Ms. Diane, and Mrs. Bonnie Pharr gave a demonstration with paper ballots and ballot tally sheet. Mrs. O’Brock said that this method has been developed and used in Missouri and Louisiana.

Mrs. Blake wanted to know how would the counters be designated. It was explained that each party would designate counters, just like it is done with poll watchers, then trained by the Clerk of Court. The counters can be trained in public library meeting rooms and have to submit documents stating that they have been trained. If the parties cannot find the counters, then a public service announcement will be advertised for anyone who is interested in the position. It is a paid position.

Mrs. Blake then wanted to know the avenues for the Commission to establish a process such as this. Mr. Young said that he sponsored a resolution to recommend to the Secretary of State and the Legislature to institute a paper ballot regime for the elections.

Mr. Chavez wanted to know after how many ballots are counted before they stop to agree. It would be up to the group to determine when to stop the batch. Mr. Chavez said that there needs to be standard.

Mr. Atkins asked why Mike Spence, Clerk of Court, is opposed to paper ballots. Ms. Diane said that Mr. Spence is not fond of paper ballots because “nobody knows how to use them”.

Ms. Diane stated that the machines that the State is proposing to purchase are hackable. Mr. Atkins wanted to know why she felt there was less nefarious actions with paper ballots versus electronic ballots. Mrs. O’Brock said that with the current process, there is no way to audit it, but with the paper ballots, they can check and double-check the votes.

Mrs. Blake has concerns with hiring qualified people as counters.

Mrs. O’Brock argued that paper ballots would be more cost-effective than the machines. She said that there is immediate cost-savings, along with no maintenance.

Mr. Chavez wanted to know if this could be brought to the voters to see if they prefer paper ballots. Attorney Bernstein stated that the Commission could not.

Mr. Chavez would like there to be some language added to the resolution regarding a receipt or tally of what the voter voted for. Mr. Young explained that there still is no guarantee that the receipt will print what the voter actually voted for.

It was **moved by Mr. Young**, seconded by Mr. Hopkins, *to recommend to the full body Resolution No. 20 of 2023, a resolution urging and requesting the Louisiana Legislature, Governor, and Secretary of State to implement hand-marked paper ballots, and otherwise providing with respect thereto with the amendment of the date ‘before the fall election of 2023’.*

Mr. Jackson feels that this resolution is subjective. He agreed that “we need to tighten up the system”, but does not feel that this is the way to go. Mr. Young believes that this will be an improvement because it is cheaper and auditable.

At this time, Mr. Young’s motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Chavez, Hopkins, and Young (3). NAYS: Commissioner Jackson (1). ABSENT: Commissioners Burrell, Gage-Watts and Johnson (3). ABSTAIN: None (0).

Mrs. Blake wanted to know to the authority the Commission has over the Registrar of Voters. Attorney Bernstein explained that the ability to take action with the Registrar of Voters is with a state board. The Caddo Parish Commission appoints the Registrar, but the State would have the authority to remove him. He also explained that the Commission could forward a resolution passed by the super majority of the members asserting one of four specific parameters to remove the Registrar. Mr. Chavez asked that this information be sent to the Commissioners.

Mr. Chavez wants the Registrar to clean up the voter rolls.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned
at 3:24 p.m.



Michelle Nations
Assistant to the Commission Clerk