

MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION
OF THE CADDO PARISH COMMISSION
HELD ON THE 5th DAY OF FEBRUARY, 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. John Paul Young, presiding, and the following members in attendance constituting a quorum: Commissioners Atkins, Blake, Burrell, Cothran, Epperson, Gage-Watts-, Giles, Kracman, Lazarus, Thomas, G. Young, and J. Young (12). ABSENT: None (0).

The invocation and Pledge of Allegiance were given during a previous meeting, and there were no Agenda Additions, so the Commission moved onto the next item on the agenda, *Citizens Comments*.

CITIZENS COMMENTS

Kirsten Russell came before the Commission and gave the following comment:

Since becoming aware of SWEPCO smart meter installation, I immersed myself in the subject. I have learned a lot and have quite a few questions related to smart meters in the areas of cost, safety, and security. Most consumers see their bills increase following smart meter installation. How will this additional income be used? SWEPCO anticipates a cost savings of \$24.78 million after deployment of smart meters. Will these savings be passed on to consumers? AEP received a \$27.8 million federal grant for smart grid enhancement. How did that grant impact SWEPCO's decision to install smart meters? Is grant money being used to install the smart meters? An analog meter has a life expectancy of 30 years. In LPSC testimony, SWEPCO estimated the life of smart meters at 7 years. The smart meter tariff is for 8 years. What is the estimated life of a smart meter? Will consumers be expected to pay for the replacements? According to Good Jobs First, a website that tracks government subsidies to companies, SWEPCO has received \$117 million in subsidies from Louisiana since 2000 in the form of property tax abatement. How was that money used? SWEPCO is currently asking the LPSC for \$151 million in storm relief. If approved, how much will customers see their bills increase? AEP made \$4.9 billion in 2022, up \$8 billion from 2021, and the average US household income is down \$3,000 from 2021. Wouldn't AEPs use of these profits to cover storm damage instead of passing it on to consumers make more sense? Are you aware that Canada's smart meter installation has cost much more than anticipated with the cost/benefit analysis being much lower than anticipated, with some experts calling it a costly failure? What is your plan to avoid this? A SWEPCO representative stated that no meter readers will lose their jobs related to smart meter installation. If that is the case, why did SWEPCO report to the LPSC that severance costs to meter readers will be approximately \$575,473? A SWEPCO employee who testified at the LPSC hearing actually began with SWEPCO as a meter reader and is now Director of Grid Modernization. How will SWEPCO continue to provide opportunities for high school graduates? It appears from LPSC testimony that many more jobs besides meter readers will be impacted by the installation of smart meters. What is the expected number of jobs lost vs jobs gained? SWEPCO promised the LPSC that it would provide notice to consumers via mail, email, and the SWEPCO website on the details of the smart meter deployment including the timeline and details of the smart meter Opt-Out Tariff. SWEPCO has installed meters in large parts of Bossier and many residents have received no advance notice of the installation or information about opting out. Multiple cases have been reported of residents who wished to opt out having meters installed with no advanced notice or opportunity to opt out. How do you plan to rectify this situation? Consumers who wish to opt out of the program are charged a one time fee ranging from \$119.02 to \$220.73 and then \$22.45 monthly thereafter to cover meter reading and billing costs. Why are we being asked to pay for a meter that is already installed and a service (meter reading and billing) that we are already paying for? Multiple fires related to smart meters have been reported. Smart meters in Canada are even being removed due to the number of fires. What information do you have about Aclara smart meters and their fire risk? RFR emitted by smart meters and the network required to service them impacts birds and animals. What information do you have regarding the impact of RFR on wildlife? How are the analog meters disposed of? You claim that smart meters emit low levels of radiofrequency radiation (RFR) but that does not include all of the RFR that will be emitted as consumers purchase more smart appliances that communicate wirelessly with the smart meter. Have any studies been done on the increased amount of RFR they will emit when communicating with the smart meter? According to SWEPCO testimony to the LPSC, up to 7000 residential smart meters will communicate through RFR to an access point installed on a power pole. It is very likely that this access point will be near a residence. Have studies been done to show how much RFR will be emitted from these access points? RFR is known to cause headaches, ear ringing, heart palpitations, and a generalized ill feeling. If a resident begins to exhibit these symptoms following smart meter installation, what is the procedure for having the meter replaced? Will they be charged the opt out fees? Experts have raised concerns about "dirty electricity," which is a biologically active, penetrating, electromagnetic physical agent that travels into the home through wiring from the smart meter. What studies have been done assessing the RFR related to "dirty electricity" and its impact on health? More than 10,000 studies have shown that RFR increases health risks. Most of the time, the impacts are cumulative after years of exposure. By comparing the use of RFR in cell phones and computers to the levels emitted from smart meters, you claim that they are not harming us. But on the contrary, smart meters add to electrosmog which has a cumulative effect over a lifetime. How was the decision made that the benefits of smart meters were worth the health risks? Across the country brownouts, where the voltage of electricity to homes and businesses is reduced, have become common. They have led to consumers being unable to keep their homes at a comfortable temperature. Some are unintentional but others are intentional. What are SWEPCO's plans regarding brownouts? Will they be used to change behavior? The goal of the smart grid is to integrate renewable technologies and distributed, decentralized power generation. How do smart meters contribute to that?

According to LPSC testimony, smart meters will be used to drive customer behavior. AEP has instituted peak hour pricing in other states. Peak hour pricing is where a provider charges more for electricity used during peak hours, usually between 3 and 8 pm. What are SWEPCO's plans for peak hour pricing? Multiple experts claim that the transition to green energy will require massive reduction in energy usage by Americans. What role will smart meters play in this transition? In Arkansas in 2017, smart meter data was accessed by police without a warrant and was used to charge a man with murder. The man filled his hot tub with water. Later that night his friend died at his home likely related to a high blood alcohol level. The police claim the man used the excess water to clean up the crime scene. Who will have access to smart meter data? Has AEP data ever been turned over to law enforcement without a warrant? Smart meters provide storage of energy usage data including information about energy disruptions for over a year. After the 2021 ice storms, an amateur hacker in Dallas was interested in finding out who maintained power during the storm. He purchased a smart meter on Ebay and hacked it. He was able to access the data from thousands of meters. Since an amateur hacker in Dallas was able to hack into the meters, don't you believe that smart meters significantly increase the chances of bad actors attacking the grid? How is this an improvement? Smart meter data can reveal times people are home, sleep routines, specific appliances used, and if they have an alarm system or plug in vehicles. Who owns SWEPCO's smart meter data? SWEPCO, the consumer, or both? Where is that documented?

VISITORS

- Andrea Mona Bowman
Special Resolution of Recognition

The Clerk of the Commission read aloud the Special Resolution of Recognition for Andrea Mona Bowman.

Ms. Bowman thanked the Commission for honoring her today. She said that she tells everyone where she is from wherever she goes.

Mrs. Gage-Watts congratulated and commended Ms. Bowman for all of her achievements beyond this special resolution. She wished her greatness on her future endeavors. Mr. Thomas, Mr. Giles, and Mrs. Blaked echoed the same sentiments and congratulated Ms. Bowman.

- Michael Corbin
SWEPCO

Mr. Corbin explained that AMI are the industry standards, and the meters that are on the homes now are radio frequency meters. SWEPCO is the final utility in Louisiana to request the conversion to AMI meters. They've already been implemented in Texas and Arkansas, he said. Mr. Corbin said that they are 100% complete with the conversion in Bossier Parish, and about 50% complete with the conversion in Caddo Parish.

Mr. Corbin also said that Dallas uses discounted days/times for power. He does not know if that will come to Louisiana or not, it would depend on the Public Service Commission.

Mr. Corbin further explained that smart meters can provide the customers with data to help them make decisions. He also pointed out that microwaves, smart phones, and Wi-Fi emit more radio frequency than smart meters.

There are also opt-out fees between \$119-\$200, with a monthly fee of \$22.45. This monthly fee is going to cover the cost of sending a person out and checking the meters in person versus looking it up on the computer.

Installing the smart meter takes about 5 minutes to complete. During this time, there will a small power outage. With AMI meters, SWEPCO will know whose power is on and whose is off.

Mr. Burrell wanted to know if this will affect the average monthly bill (AMP). Mr. Corbin said that it will not, but this will provide more information with regards to utilizing their utilities.

Mr. Atkins thanked Mr. Corbin for educating the Commission on this matter. He had questions regarding peak demand pricing for residential customers and commercial customers. Mr. Corbin said that they work with some of their major industrial customers on a one-on-one basis, but there isn't currently anything for residential customers. Mr. Atkins wanted to know if there is a plan for providing peak and nonpeak hours for the residential customers. Mr. Corbin said that he looks for that in the future, but it would need to go before the Public Service Commission first. Mr. Atkins thanked SWEPCO once again for providing mostly constant power to the citizens.

Mrs. Gage-Watts asked about pre-paid customer service. Mr. Corbin said that one of the first items on their list is a pre-pay option. He said that the Public Service Commission gives SWEPCO the authority to implement those options.

Answering another question from Mrs. Gage-Watts regarding the safety of the utilities, Mr.

Corbin said that utilities have the most resilient security systems in the world. He said that there are concerns with water, but electricity received an A+ when it was discussed during Washington Mardi Gras.

Mr. Kracman wanted to know where the analog meters would come from. Mr. Corbin said that the majority of those have been replaced 15-20 years ago. Mr. Kracman also wanted to know what kind of contract does SWEPCO have with the smart reader company. Mr. Corbin said that SWEPCO is purchasing these meters, so it won't be a lease contract. He said that they are confident about the product they have.

Mr. Kracman then wanted to know the procedures for disconnecting power. Mr. Corbin said that the process will not change. He also mentioned that SWEPCO has the ability to turn power back on, just as easily as they can turn it off. Mr. Kracman is concerned about this, especially for the elderly and impoverished. Mr. Corbin reiterated that the disconnect process will not change when smart meters are installed. Mr. Kracman said that this is intrusive, and it is a shame that a person would have to pay to opt out.

Mr. Giles wanted to know how accurate the smart meters are. He also wanted to know if there was going to be education available for the citizens. Mr. Corbin pointed out that the citizens can look online or call customer service with any questions.

Mr. Cothran wanted to know if SWEPCO received a grant for this. Mr. Corbin stated that it was not true, but did receive grant funds for grid resiliency.

Mr. Cothran then asked about the opt-out. Mr. Corbin said that the opt-out customers in Texas are less than 1% and often opt in after awhile.

ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

- Juvenile Detention

Mrs. Bryant said that there are twenty-two children in the Detention Center; four of which are OJJ. There are four 17-year olds, and fifteen children at CCC. There are 603 children on probation.

- Joey Jones
Crime Lab

Dr. Jones introduced himself to the Commission as the Assistant Director of the Crime Lab. He explained that each year, they are required by law to send their budget out to the 29 parishes in their service area. Half of these parishes are required to approve their budget.

Mr. Atkins said that the budget was a negative budget, and the reserves have been eroded significantly. Dr. Jones stated that they are in a better position than they've every been. He further explained that this lab for the past fifty years has basically been bankrupt, and a lot of that stems from them being financed by court costs. He said that this is not normal in the world of forensic science. Dr. Jones said that they need about \$6M to run this crime lab, which equates to about \$400 per case. Caddo Parish is currently paying \$139 per case, which is a bargain. Dr. Jones said that the average nationally is \$661 per case. Currently, they are relying on emergency funding from the Legislature to survive. Mr. Atkins wanted to know the plan to resolve this situation. Dr. Jones said that Governor Landry called for an emergency session on crime, so hopefully, this will be resolved next week.

Dr. Jones also pointed out that this crime lab addresses 85% of the drugs in the entire state of Louisiana. Without this lab, the State's forensic science will collapse.

Mr. Burrell wanted to know the rate of participation from the other parishes. Dr. Jones said that all 29 parishes participate and have reported revenue. Dr. Jones also pointed out that the legislation states that whenever there is an emergency, the parishes "may" send additional revenue, not "shall".

Mr. Burrell wanted to know if the State is looking to build additional crime labs. Dr. Jones said that there are no plans to add additional crime labs. The Bond Commission has set funds aside to rebuild a crime lab for the State Police in Baton Rouge.

Dr. Jones mentioned that they do provide contract testing for parishes outside of the 29-parish region, and this has been a revenue stream for the North Crime Lab. Dr. Jones also said that the facility that houses the North Crime Lab is a state of the art forensic pathology facility, but the majority of the space is not being utilized in that manner. He also explained that he does not have the authority to hire or lease out any of the space.

Mr. G. Young wanted to know if the original contract states that the space in the facility has to be used specifically for the forensic pathology. Dr. Jones explained that the original contract was with LSU, not Oschner, and it was a 50 year contract. For that agreement, LSU would have exclusive rights to the meeting facilities, and they would work together on sharing the space, if necessary. Whenever Oschner took over the contract, it hits a standstill each year. Dr. Jones also declared that there are not enough forensic pathologists to handle the amount of deaths that occur in Caddo Parish each year. Ethically, a forensic pathologist can only handle 900 bodies per year—there are over 1,900 bodies in the northern 29

parishes. Because of this, the bodies have to be sent elsewhere to be medically investigated.

Mr. G. Young wanted to know why Dr. Jones was here today. Dr. Jones explained that there were some questions regarding their budget. He further explained that the funding source for the crime lab is flawed and should be revisited.

Mr. Burrell wanted to know what should be done to put this back on track. Dr. Jones said that Louisiana does not take forensic science seriously. He further explained that there should be a system where the Crime Lab invoices each parish for each body they work on at the cost of \$400 per body. He also pointed out that Caddo Parish alone is 20% of their workload.

Mr. Atkins encouraged Dr. Jones to convey the needs and critical importance of this issue to the Legislature.

Mr. J. Young asked that Legal forward the legislation for the Crime Lab's funding. He also asked that Administration review the funding to provide Caddo's fair share of the Crime Lab's funding. nMr. J. Young also directed Mr. Epperson to schedule Public Safety Committee regarding these findings.

- OMV Update

Mrs. Bryant announced that the State approved 6005 Raspberry Lane as the new site for the Office of Motor Vehicles, and will be opening soon.

- HB37

Mrs. Bryant brought HB37 to the Commissioners' attention. She said that Representative McCormick is proposing to exempt a significant amount of food and beverages from sales tax. This could have a negative impact on the Parish and small towns.

NEW BUSINESS

It was **moved by Mr. G. Young**, seconded by Mr. Kracman, *that Ordinance No. 6417 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 east side of David Raines Road of Audrey Lane, approximately 530' north of 7th Street, Caddo Parish, Louisiana, from R-A, Rural Agricultural Zoning District to R-1-7, Single Family Residential Zoning District, and to otherwise provide with respect thereto be postponed until the March 4, 2024 Work Session.*

Mr. G. Young asked for clarification on this zoning ordinance. Mr. Stephen Jean, MPC, explained that this is an existing low-income housing complex that would like to expand out into the Parish. It did go before the PZC, and now it is before the Caddo Commission for consideration. During the PZC hearing, there were several people in attendance in opposition. The PZC ultimately voted unanimously to approve this zoning change.

Mr. G. Young talked to several stakeholders within the community, who seemed to be sensitive to the idea that everybody needs a house, but opposed to more low-income housing. Mr. G. Young said that "at the end of the day, we are trapping people or desensitizing people for trying to accelerate their aspirations into social mobility because they become content". Mr. G. Young believes that this is for creating poverty highways. He is against this proposal. Mr. G. Young said that projects such as these are creating instability in the community.

Mr. Atkins wanted to know if the residents of this proposed housing project would be paying rent. Mr. Jean said that they would. He also explained that the existing property is well-kept and cameras and additional lighting will be installed. Mr. Atkins understood and appreciates homeownership, but the market should have both types of product.

Mr. J. Young wanted to know if any steps were put into place to prevent this project from becoming a slum. Mr. Jean said that they are looking into how to make neighborhoods more stable.

Mr. J. Young then wanted to know if the proposed builder a landlord in Caddo Parish or Shreveport. Mr. Jean said that they are. Mr. J. Young then wanted to know if they are registered with the MPC under their landlord registration policy. Mr. Jean is not sure. Mr. J. Young asked that Mr. Jean find out and let the Commission know the state of their other properties.

Mr. Burrell wanted to know if this is low-income housing or affordable housing. Mr. Jeans said that they are participating in the low-income tax program. The owner did not indicate if this was going to be subsidized housing.

Mr. G. Young said that anytime you take oppressed people in an area together, it becomes a breeding ground for crime. He said that Shreveport is evident of this.

Mrs. Blake said that this is an issue across the board in Caddo Parish that is a concern. She wanted to know if it was a private developer. Mr. Jean said that it is a private developer who applied

for those tax credits. Mrs. Blake asked that the developer come and speak with the Commission.

Mr. Kracman said that this project came before the Commission, but it didn't pass, so they tried to get it annexed through the City. The City also shot it down. Mr. Kracman said that people need affordable ownership, not more rental properties. He is against this project.

At this time, Mr. G. Young's motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Blake, Burrell, Cothran, Epperson, Gage-Watts-, Giles, Kracman, Lazarus, Thomas, G. Young, and J. Young (12). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: None (0). ABSTAIN: None (0).

It was **moved by Mr. Cothran**, seconded by Mrs. Gage-Watts, *to englobe and move the following items to the Regular Session agenda:*

- *Resolution No. 8 of 2024, a resolution to change the designation of the polling place for Precinct 10-8 (formerly Precinct 92) from Ridgewood Middle School, 2001 Ridgewood Drive, Shreveport, LA 71118 to Forest Hills Elementary School, 2005 Francais Drive, Shreveport, LA 71118, and otherwise providing with respect thereto*
- *Resolution No. 10 of 2024, a resolution applying for code text amendment to the Unified Development Code relative to short-term rentals, to amend provisions relative to revocation or suspension of a short-term rental permit thereunder, and otherwise providing with respect thereto*
- *Special Resolution proclaiming Black History Month*
- *Special Resolution recognizing American Heart Month & Go Red Day*
- *Special Resolution recognizing good Samaritans who helped citizens to get home safely during the Ice Storm to Daryl Lane, Marco Edwards, and Jeffrey Kendrick*
- *Special Resolution honoring Maxine Sarpy*
- *Special Resolution proclaiming March as National Kidney Month*
- *Ratify Special Resolution recognizing 2024 Human Trafficking Awareness Month*
- *Recommendations of the Property Standards Hearing Committee*

At this time, Mr. Cothran's motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Blake, Burrell, Cothran, Epperson, Gage-Watts-, Giles, Kracman, Lazarus, Thomas, G. Young, and J. Young (12). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: None (0). ABSTAIN: None (0).

It was **moved by Mrs. Gage-Watts**, seconded by Mr. Atkins, *that Resolution No. 9 of 2024, a resolution authorizing the Caddo Parish Administrator to enter into an agreement with Cape Construction, LLC, obligating the Parish to pay 20% of the \$434,150 construction cost of the Boom or Bust Scenic Byway, and assume all legal liability for, and all maintenance and operating costs of the subject Boom or Bust Scenic View Project No. H.013315, and otherwise providing with respect thereto* be moved to Thursday's agenda for consideration.

Mr. Patrick Wesley, Director of Parks & Recreation, explained that this project has been on their capital improvement books since 2016, and now they are ready to execute a contract. He said that this project is to get the tourists off of the interstates and encourages the tourists to take the by-ways. DOTD has been working slow, but Cape Construction was the low bidder. The State will pay 80% of the cost, and the Parish will pay 20% pending on this resolution.

Mr. Kracman wanted to know what the Parish would be paying for. Mr. Wesley said that the Parish would pay for the visitor center. Mr. Kracman said that Hwy 1, Hwy 530, and Hwy 538 are in horrible condition and wouldn't want tourists to drive down. Mr. J. Young said that they do not want tourists to drive down the road near Ryan's Produce.

Attorney Frazier explained that the Commission has appropriated the funds, but the State requires the Commission to pass the resolution.

At this time, Mrs. Gage-Watts' motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Blake, Burrell, Cothran, Gage-Watts-, Giles, Kracman, Lazarus, Thomas, G. Young, and J. Young (11). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: Commissioner Epperson (1). ABSTAIN: None (0).

COMMUNIQUES AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

- Mr. Kracman asked that Administration provide the numbers on how much water was distributed during the Ice Storm.

CONSENT AGENDA

- *Ordinance No. 6413 of 2024, an ordinance amending the Budget of Estimated Revenues & Expenditure to appropriate funds for a Caddo Community Lighthouse Pilot Project, and to otherwise provide with respect thereto*
- *Special Resolution of Recognition to Calvary*
- *Appointments to the Charter Review Committee (Term to expire December 31, 2024)*
- *Appointments to the Health & Human Services Board (Term to expire January 1, 2026)*
- *Appointments to the Citizens Disaster Response Committee*

At this time, there was no further discussion to come before the Commission, so the Commission adjourned at 5:40 p.m.


Assistant to the Commission Clerk