

MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION  
OF THE CADDO PARISH COMMISSION  
HELD ON THE 18th DAY OF MARCH, 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 earlier meetings. There were no Agenda Additions or Citizens Comments, so the Commission moved onto Visitors.

**VISITORS**

- Carla Buntyn, Compassion for Lives

Ms. Buntyn said that she was invited today to talk about the concerns with Voters' Rights with inmates. Her organization, Compassion for Lives, has been partnering with CCC for several years. Her staff goes in and provides career readiness, substance abuse help, mental health help, and GED/HiSet. The staff discovered that post-release individuals were not knowledgeable of their voters rights. About six months ago, voters rights and voting restoration has since been incorporated in their curriculum.

Ms. Buntyn explained the election code with regards to pre-trial detainees, post release, inmates, etc. According to the Election Code, LA.R.S. 18:101 Registration to vote; qualifications; more than one residence; presidential election, LA.R.S. 18:102 Ineligible persons, and LA.R.S. 18:104 Application for registration; form.

If a person is convicted of a felon, after five years on probation or parole, or the completion of their sentence, including probation or parole, whichever comes first, their right to vote is restored. To register to vote, the individual must provide documentation to prove that they have completed probation or parole or they have not been incarcerated within five years. The person can get a voters rights certificate from the probation office and take it to the Registrar's Office. She also said that a person does not lose their voters rights if they have a misdemeanor. If a person is on pre-trial with no conviction, they would need to get a letter prior to the election signed by Commander Ferris. This is on a case by case scenario if they are able to send in a verification for approval to the Registrar's Office.

She also said that each pod has a digital sign with the instructions on how to vote, if the inmate is eligible. Ms. Buntyn said that the inmates have been informed and are constantly being instructed and reminded of how to vote, but she feels that the pre-trial detainees have voters' apathy due to the stress of being incarcerated.

Mr. J. Young thanked Ms. Buntyn and Compassion for Lives for all of their hard work in providing the necessary resources to the inmates.

Mr. Thomas recently went on a tour of CCC, and is pleased on how the voting process is being done in the jail. He was impressed on each facility within CCC. He knows that the inmates are receiving the information, but they need to participate in the process.

Mr. Burrell wanted to know how long this process has been going on. Ms. Buntyn said that Compassion for Lives has been doing it for the past six months, but CCC has been doing the process for quite some time. She reiterated that the pre-trial detainees are not participating in the process.

Mr. Kracman thanked Ms. Buntyn for all of her hard work within the jail. He said that Compassion for Lives has been working hard with the inmates to get them the information they need with regards to voting.

Mr. Atkins echoed Mr. Kracman's "thank you". Mr. Cothran echoed those same sentiments, as well as thanking Ms. Buntyn for all of her hard work with the inmates post-release.

Mr. Giles also thanked Ms. Buntyn for all of her hard work within the community. He wanted to know if Compassion for Lives helps illiterate people. Ms. Buntyn said that they do.

Mr. G. Young said that Ms. Buntyn and the staff of Compassion for Lives deals with the toughest people in this community, and they do it day in and day out. He also said that Ms. Buntyn is deeply involved with recidivism and appreciates all that she does within the community.

Mrs. Blake echoed the same sentiments as the previous Commissioners and thanked Ms. Buntyn and her staff at Compassion for Lives for everything they are doing in the community.

Mr. J. Young thanked Ms. Buntyn once again.

**ADMINISTRATOR REPORT**

- Juvenile Detention

Mrs. Bryant said that there are twenty-three children in the Detention Center; eleven of which are OJJ. There are eight 17-year olds, and fourteen children at CCC. There are 588 children on probation.

Mrs. Gage-Watts asked about the OJJ children. Mr. Randall, Director of Juvenile Services, said that the majority of those children were committed to OJJ custody at the end of last week, but they are awaiting transport. He also said that the children at CCC have been charged as adults.

- SLB Tour—March 27 at 9:00 a.m.

Mrs. Bryant reminded the Commissioners to RSVP for the SLB tour.

- Defibrillator Update

Mrs. Bryant explained that they cost about \$2,500 for each defibrillator, along with a \$25 per month service fee. She also said that there would need to be individuals certified to use the defibrillator. Administration will compile the costs and provide it to the Commissioners to determine if they would like to move forward with a budget amendment.

- February 2024 Financial Statements

Mrs. Bryant said that the 2024 February financial statements are at the Commissioners' stations as well as being attached to the agenda.

- Rabies Vaccinations Clinic

Mrs. Bryant thanked Caddo Animal Services and Communications for a successful event. They were able to give 436 rabies vaccinations and 361 microchips. She thanked Dr. Bradland and Dr. Morgan for all of their help and staying late in order to give those vaccinations.

- Laurence Guidry, Caddo Community Action Agency

Mr. Guidry came before the Commission and gave a brief overview of the Head Start program. He said that this program was founded in 1966, and each year the Commission votes to renew its lease. There are eleven centers throughout Caddo Parish.

The grant that operates the program is over \$15M, which comes to the Caddo Parish Commission and is then disseminated to the CCAA.

For over fifty years, tens of thousands of children has come through the Head Start Program. Parents have access to the Parents Centers year round where they can learn things like cooking, or take GED classes.

Mr. Guidry also said that the Former Mayor Cedric Glover was in the first Head Start class. He encouraged any of the Commissioners to come out and check out the centers, without notice. He said that if any Commissioner sees something going on that shouldn't, they should contact him and let him know.

Mr. Burrell said that the Community Foundation came to the Commission recently and receiving funds for what the CCAA is doing. Mr. Burrell asked for Mr. Guidry's input. Mr. Guidry said that the childcare industry is not an easy one.

Mr. Giles thanked Mr. Guidry for his hard work within the community. He said that he is a pillar in the community and he is compassionate for lives to the young men and young girls in the community.

Mr. J. Young said that the Commission values the work that Mr. Guidry and CCAA does.

- Commissioner Requests

Mr. Burrell requested an update from Comcast with regards to broadband. Mrs. Bryant said that she will follow up with that request.

Mrs. Gage-Watts said that some of the internet discount programs have been cut. She asked that Administration look into it and provide an update at a later time.

Mrs. Gage-Watts then asked for an update on precinct number changes. Mrs. Bryant said that the signs have been ordered and will be up for the election. Mrs. Gage-Watts also mentioned that some of the citizens have changed their party affiliations and cannot vote for certain items on the ballots. She would like this information to be disseminated to the citizens, possibly on the website. Ms. Krystle Beauchamp, Communications Director, said that they've sent out advertisements explaining to the citizens that their precinct numbers may have changed, but not their voting locations. She also said that it is on the

caddovoters.org website as well.

Mrs. Gage-Watts then asked for an update on Everbridge. Mrs. Bryant said that they are working with the Caddo Office of Homeland Security and the City of Shreveport to rebrand the name and reviewing ways for the citizens to identify with it.

Mrs. Gage-Watts asked for updates on the Legislative Session, in particular, with the traffic cameras. Mrs. Bryant said that legislation is going to committee this week. She requested a letter on her letterhead opposing this legislation. She is in support of those traffic cameras of being those extra eyes and ears while they are combatting the spike in crime.

Mr. Epperson would also like a letter on his letterhead opposing the traffic camera legislation. He suggested that the Government Liaison Officer go to Baton Rouge and lobby for the Commission's opposition on this legislation.

Mr. J. Young wanted to know if the lobbyist could attend that committee meeting and express the Commission's opposition. Mrs. Bryant said that they could. She also mentioned that the Commission passed an ordinance allocating funds for the traffic cams, so that is the reason they are saying the Commission is in opposition of the newly proposed legislation banning traffic cameras. Mr. Atkins reminded everyone that not everyone voted for traffic cameras in the Parish, but it was adopted by the majority vote of the Commission.

Mr. Atkins said that if you go to the website and click on a Commissioner's picture, only District 8 maps come up. He asked that IT look into it further.

Mr. J. Young said that he originally voted against traffic cameras, but knocked on the doors in Dixie Garden, and his constituents want traffic cameras. If the vote came up today, Mr. J. Young would vote in support of them.

### **COMMISSION REMARKS**

- Mr. Epperson thanked the staff for assisting with the grand opening of the new Louisiana Office of Motor Vehicles.

Mr. Epperson then asked about WERLA. He would like to find a way to give them a stipend to deal with issues that CPAS cannot deal with.

- Mr. Atkins said that the Audit & Finance Committee met and discussed the following audit schedule for this year: Animals Services and Parks & Recreation.

- Mr. Burrell wanted more information on the legislation with regards to traffic cameras. He wanted to know if toll roads would be exempt. Mrs. Bryant said that Legal is looking into it. Mr. Burrell said that the State is starting to restrict local government in their authority to take care of their citizens in terms of public safety. He would like a letter on his letterhead opposing this bill.

- Mr. Thomas applauded Animal Services for their successful rabies event. He also invited the public to volunteer at the shelter and adopt an animal.

- Mrs. Gage-Watts agreed with Mr. Thomas and said that she was "ear guzzling" at the grocery store and people were talking positively about the Rabies Clinic.

- The Clerk of the Commission, Mr. Jeff Everson, introduced the newest member to the Commission Clerk's Office team, Ms. Ashlyn King.

### **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Mr. J. Young announced that CPAS gives pellets that prevents mosquito larvae to citizens who requests them. He also asked that Administration deploy the mosquito drone as soon as possible this year because the mosquitos are out.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

It was **moved by Mr. Atkins**, seconded by Mr. Kracman, *that Ordinance No. 6421 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 northeast corner of Southern Loop and Wallace Lake Road, Caddo Parish, LA from R-A, Rural Agricultural Zoning District to C-UV(PUD) Urban Village Commercial Zoning District Planned Unit Development Zoning District, and to otherwise provide with respect thereto* be moved to Thursday's Regular Session for introduction.

Mr. Atkins thanked the MPC for their assistance with this matter. He said that this is a service station on Southern Loop and Wallace Lake Road.

At this time, Mr. Atkins' 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. Lazarus**, seconded by Mr. Atkins, *that Ordinance No. 6422 of 2024, an ordinance to close and abandon Sea Street in the Colworth Place, Unit No. 2 Subdivision, in Section 27, Township 16 North, Range 15 West, in the Parish of Caddo, and to otherwise provide with respect thereto* be moved to Thursday's Regular Session for introduction. 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. Epperson, *that Ordinance No. 6423 of 2024, an ordinance amending the Budget of Estimated Revenues & Expenditures for the Riverboat Fund to appropriate funds for the Caddo Parish Grab & Go Feeding Program and to otherwise provide with respect thereto* be forwarded to Thursday's agenda for introduction.

Mr. Patrick Wesley, Director of Parks & Recreation, came before the Commission and said that this program provides grab and go snacks for youth ages 4 years old to 17 years old. This has also contributed to the increase in participation in the summer programs.

Mrs. Gage-Watts said that this program has been successful and helps supplement foods needs during the summer months.

Mr. Cothran did not know what Caddo Parish had in terms of facilities and parks. He would like to set up a tour in the future.

Mr. G. Young wanted to know how the vendors were determined. Mr. Wesley said that they go to Sam's, Raising Canes, or any other quick delivery services that can provide food to the children. He wanted to know if they reach out to local restaurants. Mr. Wesley said that they normally don't.

Mr. Thomas asked that Communications share the overview for distribution. He said that sometimes, this is the only meal that these children receive.

Mr. J. Young encouraged Mr. Wesley to reach out to local restaurants for this program.

At this time, Mrs. Gage-Watts' 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. Thomas, *that Ordinance No. 6424 of 2024, an ordinance amending the 2023 Budget to amend the Budget of Estimated Revenues & Expenditures for the Housing Voucher Program Fund* be moved to Thursday's agenda for introduction.

Mrs. Hayley Barnett, Finance Director, explained that they received more than they anticipated, so this ordinance would reflect that change.

At this time, Mrs. Gage-Watts' 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. 16 of 2024, a resolution to authorize the Caddo Parish Administrator to request and authorize the Louisiana State Mineral & Energy Board and the Office of Mineral Resources to accept nominations and advertise for oil, gas and mineral leases, accept bids, and award and execute oil, gas and mineral leases on certain mineral interests owned by the Parish of Caddo, and otherwise providing with respect thereto* be forwarded to Thursday's agenda for consideration.

Mr. J. Young wanted to know if there was noise management plan for this drilling. Dr. Ward said that there would be. Mr. Young encouraged them to use Quiet Fleet.

At this time, Mrs. Gage-Watts' 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. Thomas**, seconded by Mr. Cothran, *that Special Resolution of Recognition for Commissioner Shirley Wills* be moved to Thursday's agenda for consideration.

Mr. Thomas said that Ms. Wills was the first African-American woman Commissioner for District 3.

**Substitute motion by Mrs. Gage-Watts**, seconded by Mr. Burrell, *that the following items be englobed and moved to Thursday's agenda for consideration:*

- *Special Resolution of Recognition for Commissioner Shirley Wills*
- *Special Resolution of Recognition for Fire Chief Clarence Reese*

- *Special Resolution of Recognition for Katrina Worsham*
- *Proclamation recognition Parish Government Month*
- *Special Resolution of Recognition for LaTonya Marshall*
- *Special Resolution of Recognition for Daytriona Coleman*
- *Special Resolution for Krystle Beauchamp*
- *Visitor from Governor's Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Preparedness representative Todd Derrick for April 1 Work Session*
- *Alcohol Beverage Committee's Recommendations*
- *Student Commissioners for a Day*
- *Reappoint Tiffany Hyde to Lakeview Waterworks District. Term to expire March 17, 2028*

Mr. Epperson said that Student for A Day will be held on April 4, 2024. He advised the Commissioners to send their information to the Commission Clerk's Office.

At this time, Mrs. Gage-Watts' 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).

### **COMMUNIQUES AND COMMITTEE REPORTS**

- Mrs. Gage-Watts wanted to know how would a citizen apply for damage during the ice storm. Mrs. Bryant said that they would need to reach out to the Caddo Community Action Agency.
  - Mr. Cothran said that the Appropriation Committee will meet on Thursday, March 21 at 2:00 p.m.
- He also said that he and a few Commissioners bowled this past weekend and looks forward to more events such as this in the future.
- Mr. Thomas wished everyone a Happy 318 Day and announced that this week is 318 Restaurant Week. He encouraged anyone to walk the Coates Bluff Nature Trail. He also announced Valencia Park and Caddo Heights alumni will have a picnic this Saturday.
  - Mr. J. Young requested that Mr. G. Young, Chair of the Economic Development Committee, discuss a tournament size Pickle Ball arena.
  - Mr. Burrell is concerned about the potential oil and gas drilling in the inner city.
  - Mrs. Blake said that the Geaux Bald Day was a successful event.

### **CONSENT AGENDA**

- *Ordinance No. 6420 of 2024, an ordinance declaring certain adjudicated properties to be surplus and to authorize the Parish Administration, or a designee, to sell the Parish of Caddo's tax interest in certain surplus adjudicated properties, and to otherwise provide with respect thereto*
- *Resolution No. 15 of 2024, a resolution recognizing the detriment of gun violence in Caddo Parish, requesting Parish stakeholders to gather and promulgate a plan to combat gun violence within Caddo Parish, requesting the State to consider declaring gun violence to be a public health emergency within Caddo Parish, and otherwise providing with respect thereto*
- *Women's Month Special Resolutions and presentations*

At this time, there was no further discussion to come before the Commission, so the Commission adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

  
Assistant to the Commission Clerk