

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL SESSION OF  
THE CADDO PARISH COMMISSION  
HELD ON THE 8th DAY OF JANUARY, 2024

The Caddo Parish Commission met in a Special Session, on the above date, at 10:00 a.m., in the Government Plaza Chambers, 505 Travis Street, Shreveport, with Mr. Burrell, presiding, and the following members in attendance constituting a quorum: Commissioners Atkins, Blake, Burrell, Cothran, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Kracman, Lazarus, Thomas, G. Young, and J. Young (11). ABSENT: None (0). VACANT: District 6.

The invocation was given by Mrs. Gage-Watts, and Mr. Epperson led the Commission in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Clerk of the Commission stated that the purpose of this meeting is to administer the Oaths of Office for the 2024-2028 Commissioners.

***SWEARING IN OF THE CADDO PARISH COMMISSIONERS  
2024-2028 TERM***

At this time, Mr. Mike Spence, Clerk of Court, came forward to administer the Commissioners' Oaths. He congratulated the newly elected Commission body and wished them well.

Mr. Kracman recognized his father, wife, son, and co-workers who are with him today.

Mr. G. Young recognized his wife and friends who are with him today.

Mr. Thomas recognized his mother, aunt, uncle, family members, friends, grandmother, and great-grandmother who are with him in spirit today.

Mr. J. Young recognized his mother, father, grandmother, friends, and partner who are with him today.

Mr. Burrell recognized his wife and Dr. Vinson who are with him today.

Mrs. Gage-Watts recognized her husband, sons, mother-in-law, friends, and family who are with her today.

Mrs. Blake recognized her husband, son, daughter, and friends who are with her today.

Mr. Atkins recognized his wife who is here with him today.

Mr. Cothran thanked everyone for coming to today's swearing-in, then recognized his grandson, son, and family members who are with him today.

Mr. Lazarus recognized his wife who is here with him today.

Mr. Epperson recognized his wife, family, and friends who are with him today.

***SELECTION OF 2024 COMMISSION OFFICERS***

The Clerk of the Commission stated that it was now time to select the Commission officers for the upcoming year.

It was **moved by Mr. Atkins**, seconded by Mr. Lazarus, *to nominate Mr. John-Paul Young to serve as President for 2024*. Motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Blake, Burrell, Cothran, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Kracman, Lazarus, Thomas, G. Young, and J. Young (11). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: None (0). ABSTAIN: None (0). VACANT: District 6.

It was **moved by Mr. Epperson**, seconded by Mr. J. Young, *to nominate Mrs. Gage-Watts to serve as Vice-President for 2024*. Motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Blake, Burrell, Cothran, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Kracman, Lazarus, Thomas, G. Young, and J. Young (11). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: None (0). ABSTAIN: None (0). VACANT: District 6.

It was **moved by Mr. Cothran**, seconded by Mrs. Gage-Watts, *to nominate Mr. Ken Epperson, Sr. to serve as Parliamentarian for 2024*.

**Substitute motion by Mr. Lazarus**, seconded by Mr. Atkins, *to nominate Mrs. Grace Anne Blake to serve as Parliamentarian for 2024*.

At this time, the Clerk of the Commission conducted a roll call vote for each nomination and are as follows:

Mr. Epperson received the following AYE votes: Cothran, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Thomas, and G. Young (5).

Mrs. Blake received the following AYE votes: Atkins, Blake, Burrell, Kracman, Lazarus, and J. Young (6).

Mrs. Blake received the plurality of the votes and will serve as the 2024 Parliamentarian.

Following a brief recess, the Commissioners took their seats with Mr. J. Young presiding as president.

### ***NEW BUSINESS***

The Commission then moved onto the next New Business item, *adopt selection process for Interim District 6 Commissioner*.

The Clerk of the Commission explained that there is a vacancy in District 6 because no one qualified during the October 14, 2023 Election. A special election has already been called, as well as the qualifying period. It is the responsibility of the Caddo Parish Commission to appoint someone to fill the vacancy within twenty days. If no such appointment is filled, the Governor will select the Interim Commissioner.

It was **moved by Mrs. Gage-Watts**, seconded by Mr. J. Young, *to begin receiving applications today with a deadline of January 16, 2024. Motion carried*, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Blake, Burrell, Cothran, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Kracman, Lazarus, Thomas, G. Young, and J. Young (11). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: None (0). ABSTAIN: None (0). VACANT: District 6.

The Clerk of the Commission pointed out that the person appointed as Interim Commission must meet the same requirements as a person being elected to that seat. Attorney Frazier suggested that the appointment be done during a Special Session. She also suggested that a deadline be established.

Mrs. Gage-Watts suggested that the deadline be 10:00 a.m. on January 16, 2024. Mr. Epperson asked that all of this information be in writing for the Commissioners to peruse. Mr. Cothran agreed.

Attorney Frazier stated that the person interested in the position must meet the same requirements as someone who would run for the seat in an election, i.e. living in the district for at least one year. Mr. J. Young questioned if that person would meet those requirements if their address is in the old District 6, but is not included in the redistricted District 6. He stated that the districts are not a year old. Attorney Frazier said that would be a case of first impression and would need a ruling.

Mr. Epperson suggested to get an Attorney General's Opinion regarding this question. Attorney Frazier said that they can certainly try.

Mr. Atkins wanted to know when this Interim appointment would be decided. Mr. J. Young said that there will be a Special Session prior to the Work Session.

It was **moved by Mr. G. Young**, seconded by Mrs. Gage-Watts, *to begin receiving applications for the Interim District 6 seat today with a deadline of January 16, 2024 at 10:00 a.m., as well as, seek an Attorney General's Opinion regarding if a person who lives in the previous Commission District 6 would be eligible for the Interim District 6 seat due to the redistricting lines not being a year old. This motion also includes calling a Special Session on January 16, 2024 prior to the Work Session to select the Interim District 6 Commissioner. Motion carried*, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Blake, Burrell, Cothran, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Kracman, Lazarus, Thomas, G. Young, and J. Young (11). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: None (0). ABSTAIN: None (0). VACANT: District 6.

The Commission then moved onto the next New Business item, *closing comments and recognitions*.

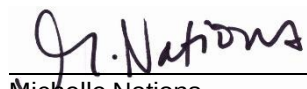
Mr. J. Young presented outgoing President Burrell with a plaque commemorating his service as Caddo Commission President for 2023. Several Commissioners gave accolades and praises for Mr. Burrell's hard work through the past year.

Mr. Burrell provided highlights for the past year, which included the following:

- Adopted a new redistricting plan, first since 2011
- Adopted the first precinct realignment in 30+ years
- Managed storm response (Debris removal, food giveaways, etc.)
- adopted 2024 budget (with funding for many NGO's and other exciting projects)
- Supported Economic developments such as GE-Prolec, Amazon, SLB, etc.

- Held Job Fairs, public support and awareness campaigns
- Prepared for receipt and use of opioid settlement funding
- Administered and supported programs like the Ring Doorbell Program, Rental Assistance Program, and other ARPA projects
- Funded capital projects like the Medical Arts building at LSU Health, the new Little League park and the Ronald McDonald House
- Oversaw the changing of a regime as Woody Wilson retired and Erica Bryant became the new Administrator, Clay Walker as the New Assistant Administrator, and Andrew Randall as the new Juvenile Services Administrator
- Managed the transition of 3 District 8 representatives from exiting Jim Taliaferro, to interim Ron Cothran, to newly elected Grace Anne Blake
- Began the projects and approved the bond sale for the renovation of Walter B. Jacobs park
- Held an election on Juvenile Justice
- Provided funds for the new low barrier homeless shelter run by Hope for the Homeless
- Pivotal in the creation of a new Office of Motor Vehicles office in West Shreveport,
- A large and successful safe summer internship program
- Supported the move of the State office to downtown Shreveport
- Adopted traffic enforcement pilot program
- Added a public safety funding committee who created a citizen's disaster response committee
- adopted new blight and litter ordinance
- Appointed active committees who held nearly twice the average number of committee meetings

There being no more business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 11:21 a.m.

  
 Michelle Nations  
 Assistant to the Commission Clerk

  
 John-Paul Young  
 President