

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL SESSION OF
THE CADDO PARISH COMMISSION
HELD ON THE 18th DAY OF JANUARY, 2024

The Caddo Parish Commission met in a Special Session, on the above date, at 2:00 p.m., in the Government Plaza Chambers, 505 Travis Street, Shreveport, with Mr. Young, 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 Mr. Cothran, and Mr. Epperson led the Commission in the Pledge of Allegiance.

CITIZENS COMMENTS

Dr. Jimmy Jones came before the Commission and gave the following comment:

I'm coming today to speak on behalf of Mr. Handy Giles, and his appointment associated to the Commission with the vacancy with Steffon Jones. Mr. Handy Giles has been an avid mentor in my life on numerous occasions, numerous times. He's been a major contributor to the community. It's been many times in my life where, you know, I needed a shoulder to lean on from a financial standpoint—from a just, an overall spiritual standpoint. Not only is he a business owner in the Cedar Grove community, he's also a pastor. As we know if that area, we have a lot of youth and a lot of crime in that area. I can stand here today and say that Mr. Giles—from my experience knowing him in—I'm 35, but Handy Giles has been cutting my hair since I was five years old. It's been many times where my family didn't have the funding to pay for haircuts, and Mr. Handy would take on me and my brother and just cut our hair weekend after weekend after weekend. Sometimes, when my mom would have to go to work late at night, Mr. Giles would babysit us in the barber shop, no cost. So, these are some of the major things and impacts he's had on my life. Even through my educational journey, Mr. Giles is one of the first individuals who avidly donated and invested in my own company when nobody else would. Just being a beacon of light; being a beacon of hope for me; and continuing to be a person in the community who drives for the success of those individuals. I personally seen Mr. Giles render aid to those in need, those who may be going through mental health issues—he's event stopped crimes; he's stopped drive-bys; he's stopped those youth from committing those crimes that are often associated with marginalized communities. Those are just some of the few things, and I hope you all take that into consideration with the appointment of Mr. Handy Giles. Thank you.

Steffon D. Jones came before the Commission and gave the following comment:

I stand on this afternoon in support of Dr. Handy Giles for the appointment of Caddo Parish Commission District 6. I've known Dr. Giles for a great bit of my life. Believe it or not, but I used to have a head full of hair, and I would go to his barber shop on the regular basis, every week. I would ride my bike. He became a pillar in our community, and I got to see firsthand from a teenage boy, event into my adulthood, some create jobs, create careers, create opportunities for gentlemen in our area and our neighborhood, who could not find those opportunities anywhere else. It also became a place and a safe haven for young people to be able to come hang out. Even if you weren't getting your hair cut, you could just come get some good conversation—barber shop talk. For those of you who go to the barbershop, you know how that goes. So, it became a place of safety for a lot of people to just keep us off the streets. He's always been heavily involved. He's lived in District 6 as far back as I can remember. He's one who knows of the dynamic of the district and one who cares about seeing the entire district become what it needs to be. I believe he's impartial; he's a fair person; and he gets out and gets his hands dirty. He doesn't mind knowing the work of the community, but what's most impressive, he's a man of God; he's a man of integrity; and his word is his bond. So, what he says, he means it. His yes means yes; and his no means no. I think what our district needs at this time is a steady hand and firm leadership. Someone who's going to do the right thing and vote their conscious. I think Dr. Handy Giles will be the perfect person for this position, and I pray that you would consider him. Thank you.

Sandra Roberson came before the Commission and gave the following comment:

Good Afternoon, Commissioners. I work at Bossier Parish Community College, Director of the Cavalier Care center. I'm here on behalf of Ms. Francine Brown, who not only is a student, but just graduated from Bossier Parish Community College, and also, she's an upstanding citizen. In our city, she helps in our community. She's present with everyone in the community. She's also a pillar in the community, and I would love to really look you all and think about the person you want to represent this district. She will be the perfect person to represent District 6 for Commissioner. Ms. Francine Brown. Thank you.

Antiska Harris came before the Commission and gave the following comment:

Good Afternoon board. My name is Antiska Harris. Thank you. I am here on behalf of Ms. Francine Brown. She did ask me to read her letters of recommendation. So I'm just going to briefly go through those really quick, but before I start on those I'm just going to give my encounter with Ms. Francine. I met her a couple years ago through a mutual acquaintance and her energy was really high, and her passion was very much impressing as to her willingness to help her community. At the time, she was

working on a project, and I felt her heart. So you know, just the brief things that I know about Ms. Francine from my encounters with her. She's an entrepreneur um, she lives within the district and she is willing to advocate on behalf of those citizens in her district. I do pray that you guys consider her. Me, myself, being a citizen of that district. I also had my accounting business within that district that. I just recently moved downtown but I do still own a property in the area. I want someone in that area who will voice and speak up with the people as though I would. And that's one of the reasons why I invested into that community because it wasn't necessarily just to make a dollar but to provide a better standard of living for those who live in that area on the Hollywood side. So, with that being said um miss Francine she does have That is a recommendation from the Community Renewal Dr. Russell Minor, Director of the Haven House. He has provided a letter of recommendation on Miss Francine's behalf. Dr. Raymond Hicks and Mr. Denny Duron. They all have great things to say about Ms. Francine and how they would stand with her to be our next Interim Commissioners, and/or lead to our Commissioner for District 6. Thank you.

Pastor Tommy Nard came before the Commission and gave the following comment:

Good Afternoon to the Commissioners. I'm Pastor Tommy Nard, Family Life Church—Shreveport and the owner of The Animals Crawfish. I met Ms. Brown back in 2016. My son introduced her to me. She was doing something for the community, and she needed some support. We thought that we would support her by providing the food necessary for the event that she was having and the initiative for the community. Since that time, I've had other conversations with Miss Brown, and it has always been in regards to what can I do to better this particular district in the Cedar Grove area. I came today because not often do I stand to advocate for anyone, but when I have this kind of moment that I've had with Ms. Brown, I really sense in my heart that she is the perfect person to hold this position as it regards to helping the community—to better the community, and I really do believe within my heart that if you were to consider her, you won't feel disappointed in making your, I mean, this position available for Ms. Brown. Thank you so very much.

Satonia Small came before the Commission and gave the following comment:

I'm a Cedar Grove community advocate that does several things just about for Cedar Grove. Mr. Hand is one of the most wonderful person I have ever known that has come from Cedar Grove. He's very active. I do just about everything for Cedar Grove, and he is one of my biggest supporters. He helped the young men in the community; he helped the young women; he's just wants to make Cedar Grove great again. He does all he can to help everybody. He's the same. If I have anything going on with an event, I can always call him. He's going to support me. He's one of the reasons now that I'm actually about to start a non-profit because I do so much for Cedar Grove. He has been encouraging me. He's been out in the neighborhood. He's a pastor. He's connected with all the pastors pretty much in the Cedar Grove, and they all support Mr. Handy. I support Mr. Handy. Cedar Grove, in general, supports Mr. Handy. He will be the perfect fit for District 6 because he's not just talking about what he's done. He's actually got receipts for what he do. Everybody knows what he do in the Cedar Grover area—not only in the Cedar Grove area, but Shreveport in general. That's all I have to say. Thank you very much.

Travis O'Neil came before the Commission and gave the following comment:

How's everybody doing? My name is Travis O'Neil. I've been up under Handy Giles for the last past 20 years. I seen him done helped many people with many many things as far as anything goes. You can always go over there and talk to him, give a helping hand to him. [inaudible] but he's been a very very great person to me. I tried to get in the shop like a few times, and everybody turned me down. He was always like, 'come over here. I'll help you out.' He took me in, under his wings, and showed me the ropes. You made a lot of things happen. You just an all over great person. I think it'd be a very good choice for him to represent the Cedar Grove area. That's all I have to say. Thanks.

Jonathan Ikner came before the Commission and gave the following comment:

I've been working for Handy for about 23 years cutting hair. He got me when I was just coming out of high school. So Yeah, I've known him for a while. It's a good guy, fantastic. You know, so I think he'll be a good representative to represent the Cedar Grove area. That's all.

Avery Louis came before the Commission and gave the following comment:

Handy Giles has been very good to me and my family. We came here from New Orleans and we didn't have anything. And he gave us a chance to cut hair. He's a good person up and down, straightforward, and um, he's just a good wonderful person and so many things I just can't say everything about it. Thank y'all.

Bob Brown came before the Commission and gave the following comment:

I'm here in support to support of Monroe Brown. Only to her energy that I've seen demonstrated time and again in the community whether it being in political campaigns or community activities. I think she would bring that same type of energy to any appointment that she was given by this commission to fill the seat that's now open. Thank you.

Prentiss Smith came before the Commission and gave the following comment:

I'm here to support Miss Brown because I've watched what she's done in her community. Uh, she's the leader of non-profit for elderly, Seniors First. I've seen her give out bicycles. I've seen her just work in the community. That's what we want on the Commission—is someone that has a giver's heart, a servant's heart, and not necessarily look for anything in return. Someone that just does something because it's there and it's available. She does. I believe you can go to Cedar Grove and speak to the people in Cedar Grove, and they'll tell you about Monro Brown. Many of them will attest to her charity, attest to her forthrightness. I think she has integrity, and that's what we need. We need integrity. She will be someone that I think you will be proud of. I don't think she will embarrass because of Commission or anything like that. I just think that she'd be someone that would do the job that's out in front of her. I hope that you make this decision and make it in a way that lets everyone in the City knows that it was fair. I appreciate you.

Adele Shafferman submitted the following electronic comment:

Most citizens in every district are aware that our elections have been mishandled since November 2022, and the blame lies in the office of the ROV and the Board of Election Supervisors. Since you are addressing the ROV, he must be accountable, as are other city workers. If the water department is suspected of over-billing, they hear about it. If the sanitation workers miss a street, they hear about it. And in the private sector, if my lawn service is sloppy, they hear about it. The complaints generally result in better performance by all workers, even though none of us likes complaints. Yet, regarding a most important and well-paid job in Caddo Parish, the Registrar of Voters, the problems are not corrected. The problems are SAID to have been corrected, but they have not. Trust has been lost. It is an onerous task to fire any ROV in Louisiana, but some things are worth the trouble. If you, commissioners, are afraid of public reaction, remember that our election debacles are widely known. In fact, many would applaud the Commission for acting to correct this problem. In the long run, you may be relieved that you solved a number of issues emanating from the ROV office. It is a difficult and uncomfortable situation, but your first duty is to the citizens of Caddo Parish.

Pastor Billy Target came before the Commission and gave the following comment:

Good afternoon Commissioners, I'm Pastor Billy Target of the Evergreen Missionary Baptist Church in Cedar Grove. I'm here to speak on behalf of my son in the ministry, Pastor Handy Giles, who has been a phenomenal individual in the Cedar Grove community. An old saying, 'it is not what you say, but what you do'. Only what you do for Christ is going to last. I have a recommendation here from Louisiana State Representative, Joy Walters, sent by email her support of Handy Giles. I think he would be a great individual to speak on behalf of those who serve. I hope and pray that you would take on the consideration of Brother Giles. I know he and Francine, but we can't support everybody; we gotta support somebody. I'm grateful that I had the privilege to stand before you today and ask you to carefully consider him, and thank you very much.

Lynda Bayles came before the Commission and gave the following comment:

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, I do not live here. I live 100 miles away but I worked with Francine Brown on behalf of the Mavericks. And, I'm here a lot several times a week and stuff. I know her personally and from a professional standpoint. She would be a great person to help those that do not have a voice. She stands up for people. She's a Christian. I thank you for letting me have this opportunity, but I feel that she would be a great individual to represent many people and children and stuff that maybe have no voice. I would hope that you would consider that. I'm grateful to have this opportunity, and I appreciate it. I hope that y'all will take this with utter most consideration. Thank you, and God bless you.

Jon Glover came before the Commission and gave the following comment:

I met Francine a few years ago with regards to the Mavericks. I think Bob said 'energetic'. She is beyond energetic, but more than that, she's dedicated. She's dedicated to a cause that is put before her. At the time I met her, she was promoting the Mavericks. I became overtime an intricate part of who she is. I've had conversations with her. Her objective, if she is indeed chosen to be the Interim, what she wants for Cedar Grove. I don't live in Cedar Grove but I have a sister-in-law that has lived and lived in Cedar Grove and has been there for more than 60 years. And I have not heard her say anything in opposition of either one of those persons that are being brought before you all to consider. But I do know from my own perspective, for my own relationship with Miss Brown that she really wants to raise Cedar Grove to the height that it needs to be. We have heard so much about how to disadvantage and things are in Cedar Grove. And we do indeed need just as we do for all of our districts, those persons who are committed to taking care of the issues, and our districts, not personal issues, but issues that will affect each and every one of us, collectively and then see the grove individually. So, if it is and I do ask that you give consideration from its Francine Brown. Thank you.

NEW BUSINESS

The Commission then moved onto the first New Business item, *Selection of Interim Member for District 6*.

The Clerk of the Commission mentioned that one of the candidates, Mavice Thigpen, withdrew her application.

It was **moved by Mr. Epperson**, seconded by Mrs. Blake, *to nominate Ms. Francine Brown as the Interim Commissioner for District 6.*

Mr. Epperson wanted to know how many workdays would this appointment serve. Attorney Frazier said that it would be from now until the March 24, 2024 election.

Mr. Epperson also mentioned that he's known Ms. Brown for a number of years, and she's helped the Cedar Grove community tremendously.

Mrs. Blake stated that she's known Ms. Brown for about 25 years. She said that Ms. Brown has a servant's heart.

Mr. Atkins appreciates both candidates for being willing to put themselves up for this process and being willing to serve for the interim time period.

Substitute motion by Mr. Burrell, seconded by Mrs. Gage-Watts, *to nominate Mr. Handy Giles, Sr. as the Interim Commissioner for District 6.*

Mr. Burrell expressed his concern about the ongoing election and selecting someone who's already participating in that election. Mrs. Gage-Watts agreed with Mr. Burrell's concerns.

Mr. Epperson pointed out that Mr. Jones has been a Commissioner for two years, and "that's a head start". He does not see anything wrong with supporting Ms. Brown.

At this time a roll call vote was taken as shown by the following votes:

Francine Brown received three votes: Commissioners Blake, Epperson, and Kracman (3).

Handy Giles, Sr. received eight votes: Commissioners Atkins, Burrell, Cothran, Gage-Wilson, Lazarus, Thomas, G. Young, and J. Young (8).

At this time Handy Giles, Sr. was appointed as Interim Commissioner for District 6. The swearing-in and oath of office was administered by Caddo Parish Clerk of Court, Mike Spence.

Mr. J. Young welcomed Mr. Giles to the Caddo Parish Commission.

Mr. Giles thanked everyone for this opportunity to serve. He gave thanks to God. Mrs. Giles spoke and said that her husband loves people and loves Cedar Grove.

Mr. Atkins, Mr. Epperson, and Mr. Burrell all congratulated and welcomed Mr. Giles to the Caddo Parish Commission.

There being no more business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 2:55 p.m.


Michelle Nations
Assistant to the Commission Clerk


John-Paul Young
President