

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CADDO PARISH COMMISSION'S
AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN COMMITTEE
HELD ON THE 6TH DAY OF NOVEMBER, 2023**

The Caddo Parish American Rescue Plan Committee met in legal session on the above date, at 2:30 p.m., in the Government Chambers Conference Room, with Mr. Burrell, Chairman, presiding, and the following members in attendance: Commissioners Atkins, Blake, Burrell, and Young (4). ABSENT: Commissioners Gage-Watts and Johnson (2).

The invocation and Pledge of Allegiance were given during the previous Committee meetings. There were no agenda additions or public comments, so the Committee moved to the next agenda item.

NEW BUSINESS

- *Update and status report of American Rescue Plan related projects and budgets*

Mrs. Barnett distributed the working list for the ARPA projects. She pointed out that there were a few that did not meet the parameters of the ARPA guidelines, i.e. Lakeview Waterworks and Pinehill Waterworks.

Answering a question from Mr. Young regarding the Public Defender's Office, Mrs. Barnett explained that they are not eligible for ARPA funding due to their type of entity. She also said that they were able to give their underpaid attorneys an increase in salary with the funds that the Commission allocated. This will retain the current employees to hopefully reduce their significant backlog. Mr. Atkins explained that this backlog keeps people incarcerated for longer because they cannot be moved out of CCC without their trials.

Mrs. Bryant agreed and said that the District Attorney's Office and the Public Defender's Office have a huge turnover due to low salaries.

Answering a question from Mrs. Blake regarding the Public Defender's revenue sources, Mrs. Bryant said that they are primarily funded through the State and court costs, but unfortunately, court costs are down. She further explained that if they do not collect enough money, the Parish has to pick up the shortfall.

Attorney Frazier said that the way criminal defense is funded in the State is broken, and the Legislature has declined to fix it thus far—the State will not provide adequate funding for the State system of public defense as a whole.

Mr. Young wanted to know if the Parish was allowed to keep this money, then redistribute it through other funds. Mrs. Bryant pointed out that these funds have to be obligated by the end of 2024. It would be easier for the Parish to put these unallocated funds bank into its own projects that do meet the parameters.

Mrs. Bryant also mentioned that last year, the Commission provided them with a \$200k appropriation, but it was not appropriated to them, nor did they ask about it. She explained that they need to communicate and provide the reason for additional appropriations. Mrs. Barnett said that they have not requested additional funds.

Mrs. Barnett further explained that several of the projects are still in progress and moving forward. She also said that they would put the funds for the projects that did not meet the parameters back into capital projects. Mrs. Bryant added that this could, in turn, help the criminal justice deficit.

Mrs. Bryant pointed out that projects cannot be district specific. Mr. Young asked about rainwater tanks for CCC, but Mrs. Bryant said that it is cost prohibitive. Mrs. Bryant said that she will review it once again. She also said that some of the projects for CCC and the courthouse include new generators.

Mr. Young wanted to know more about the upgrades for the Ward II Industrial Park. Mr. Atkins said that there will be additional lighting, improved water, install WiFi, and railroad spurs.

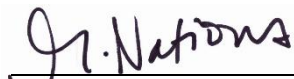
Mrs. Barnett also mentioned that the Lighthouse Project does not meet the parameters of ARPA. She said that the funds could be put back into green infrastructure, if the Commission chooses to do so.

Mr. Burrell asked about the sports programs. Mrs. Barnett said that TruFund was reduced and that money was put towards the Sports Commission for revenue replacement.

There was then discussion regarding the Ring Doorbell program. Mrs. Bryant said that the first group has been completed, and they are asking that it not be continued due to it being a difficult program to implement. She said that it has been difficult getting citizens to comply with their requirements, i.e. username and password with the Real Time Crime Center, of having the Ring Doorbell installed. She also said that the citizens are requesting technical services that the Parish of Caddo cannot provide; the subscriptions are expiring; etc. Mrs. Bryant said that it is a good program, but is difficult for the citizens to comply with the requirements of the program. Mrs. Blake wanted to know if this program was the same as the Real Time Crime Center. Mr. Young said that it is.

Mrs. Barnett said that the rest of the programs are working as planned. She also explained that they will compile a list of Parish projects that do meet parameters at the next meeting to use up the dollars from the projects that are not eligible. Mrs. Barnett said that the funds need to be obligated by the end of 2024. Mrs. Bryant said that they will not be turning any ARPA funds away.

There being no further discussion, the Committee adjourned at 3:04 p.m.



Michelle Nations
Assistant to the Commission Clerk