

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
CADDO PARISH COMMISSION'S  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
HELD ON THE 22ND DAY OF FEBRUARY, 2024

The Caddo Parish Economic Development Committee met in legal session on the above date at 2:00 p.m., in the Government Plaza Chambers Conference Room, with Mr. Greg Young, presiding, and the following members in attendance: Commissioners Atkins, Cothran, Gage-Watts, Thomas, G. Young, and J. Young (6). ABSENT: None (0).

The Pledge of Allegiance and invocation were given during a previous committee meeting. There were no agenda additions or public comments, so the Committee moved onto New Business.

**NEW BUSINESS**

- Discuss implementation of a living wage ordinance including limitations and possibilities

Mr. G. Young said that he would start the conversation with regards to living wages. He said that living wages reduce crime, increase productivity, increases economic activity, and allows people to move from the lower class to the middle class. A living wage, as defined by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is a wage an individual must earn to support themselves and/or their family. The value of a living wage is varied by location and family size.

Mr. G. Young then talked about minimum wage, which was created by Congress in the 1930s. The last time the federal minimum wage was increased was 2009, and to this day, it is still \$7.25 per hour. Tip earners' wage is \$2.13 per hour because the majority of their compensation is tips.

He continued to say that there are thirty states that have a state minimum wage that is above the federal minimum wage. There are five states—Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, South Carolina, and Tennessee—that do not have a state minimum wage.

Mr. G. Young explained that this proposed ordinance would require anyone entering into a contract with the Caddo Parish Commission provide a payment of a living wage to their employees; all departments, agencies, and organizations within the Caddo Parish Commission provide a payment of a living wage to their employees; and all contractors performing services to the Caddo Parish Commission provide a living wage to their employees. Mr. G. Young said that this would be an internal ordinance affecting the people who do business with the Commission.

Mr. J. Young wanted to know if an ordinance would be needed to implement this policy. Mrs. Bryant said that they would like to have an ordinance because this would more than likely increase wages. They would need to do research to determine what that wage is, along with the potential to increase salaries. She said that they would also have to monitor the compliance of this.

Mr. J. Young then wanted to know if there were any employees who make less than \$12 per hour. Mrs. Bryant said that there are a few employees who make less than \$12 per hour. Mrs. Barnett said that most of the employees who make less than \$12 per hour are part-time employees, such as the Registrar of Voters (ROV) clerks. Mr. Atkins wanted to know if the Commission sets their wages. Mrs. Bryant said that they do not. Mrs. Barnett mentioned that the lowest paid person, who is actually a Parish employee, makes \$12.51 per hour.

Mr. G. Young said that, according to MIT, the living wage for Louisiana is \$19 per hour. Mrs. Bryant pointed out that they did research this based on other cities who had ordinances similar to this. They found that New Orleans pays \$15 per hour for their minimum wage.

Mr. G. Young said that the one thing that impacts loss of jobs and wages is technology, not increasing the minimum wages. He gave examples of the invention of the wheel, self-checkout, automation in factories, etc.

Mr. Atkins feels that the employer should be able to decide on a wage. If an employer is not paying enough for the work to be done, then that employer is not going to get any labor. This has generally work fairly well, he said. Mr. Atkins agreed that you cannot support a family on minimum wage.

Attorney Frazier said that the State can only set a minimum wage. She also pointed out that the City of New Orleans has not been challenged with their raising the minimum wage ordinance. Attorney Frazier also mentioned that there is a state statute that prohibits local governments from passing a minimum wage law.

Mr. G. Young explained that this ordinance would not set the minimum wage for the Parish, it would only articulate how much contractors would have to pay their employees if they did business with the Parish.

He also said that when he was running for office, he ran on crime reduction. Mr. G. Young said that the majority of crime comes from poverty, which is the lack of financial resources, education, and emotional trauma. He said that people in affluent neighborhoods have more resources, so that is the reason there is little crime.

Mr. Atkins said that everything rising is not necessarily good for the economy because of inflation, which would make things more expensive. He respects what Mr. G. Young is saying, but fundamentally, he is different. Mr. G. Young understood.

M. J. Young feels that the Caddo Parish could probably raise the wages gradually over time, but in order to figure out what those numbers would be, they need some advice from Finance. He asked that Finance could provide those numbers. Mrs. Bryant pointed out that they consistently give COLA raises, and it is traditionally 3% per year. She said this is outside of the merit increases. Mr. J. Young is comforted in knowing that the Caddo Parish Commission is close to providing the living wage to its employees.

Mr. Atkins said that the economy is complicated, and feels that this is over simplifying a complicated issue.

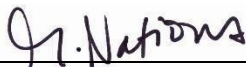
Mr. G. Young argued that economics is not based on logic, but based on reasoning. What worked at one time may not work at another time, he said. Mr. G. Young talked about a lady he met who was employed at McDonalds for 31 years making \$8 per hour. The government had to subsidize her food, transportation, and child care during that time so she could work.

Mr. G. Young said that he will continue to be an advocate for people who do not have a voice.

Mrs. Gage-Watts thanked Mr. G. Young for bringing this to the table. She agreed that resources are needed, such as living wages, to decrease crime. She pointed out that there were initiatives introduced last year, like universal basic income, that the Parish was able to provide a certain amount of money partnering with the Mayor's initiative. She also said that some small businesses may not be able to afford raising their wages. Mrs. Gage-Watts would like there to be more vetting and conversations about this issue.

- Determine whether to recommend legislation to the Commission to implement a living wage within Caddo Parish
- Discuss how to support and encourage the establishment of a State mandated living wage
- Discuss and make recommendations about a resolution to the Governor and Louisiana Legislature requesting state adoption of bill granting the legal authority to implement local, Parish level mandated minimum living wage regulation

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 2:57 p.m.

  
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Michelle Nations  
Assistant to the Commission Clerk