

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CADDO PARISH COMMISSION'S
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
HELD ON THE 15TH DAY OF APRIL, 2024

The Caddo Parish Economic Development Committee met in legal session on the above date at 1:30 p.m., in the Government Plaza Chambers, with Mr. Greg Young, presiding, and the following members in attendance: Commissioners Atkins, Cothran, G. Young, and J. Young (4). ABSENT: Commissioners Gage-Watts and Thomas (2).

The Pledge of Allegiance and invocation were given during a previous committee meeting.

AGENDA ADDITIONS

It was **moved by Mr. G. Young**, seconded by Mr. J. Young, *to expand the agenda and add discussion regarding Kappa Alpha Psi conference.*

At this time, the Chair opened the floor for anyone to speak in favor or against this agenda addition. There being no one to come forward, the Chair closed the public hearing.

At this time, Mr. G. Young's motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Cothran, G. Young, and J. Young (4). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: Commissioners Gage-Watts and Thomas (2). ABSTAIN: None (0).

There being no public comments, the Committee moved onto New Business.

NEW BUSINESS

- Administrative response to requests regarding impact, authority, and research related to a Living Wage Ordinance

Mrs. Erica Bryant, Parish Administrator, stated that they reviewed the staffing levels. There are fourteen full-time employees that do not earn \$15 per hour, and fifty-four part-time employees who do not earn \$15 per hour—the bulk of which are compactor operators. To raise the fourteen people, it would cost approximately \$50k, but that does not take into consideration those employees who are currently at \$15 per hour. She said that other employees may also have to be adjusted. To raise the part-time employees, it would cost approximately \$35k. Mr. J. Young wanted to know if this would be an annual adjustment. Mrs. Bryant said that it would. She also mentioned that full-time employees receive a merit increase and COLA increase annually; part-time employees receive an annual COLA increase.

Answering a question from Mr. Atkins whether the Commission has the right to impact compensation, Attorney Frazier said that the Commission has the right to set a minimum, but the impact to other employees' would be under the authority of Administration. Mr. Atkins understood and said that he is ok with recommending a living wage with Parish employees, but is not comfortable with the Commission telling other entities and businesses how to compensate their employees.

Mr. J. Young wanted to know why other people would need to receive a raise if one employee received a raise. Mrs. Bryant said that adjustments would need to be made due to the pay steps and grades within the organization. She asked that the pay increases be made during the 2025 budget, so that it does not impact the budget numbers that have already been adopted.

Mr. Cothran agreed with everything that has been said. He would like to “fix the bottom, and fix it going forward”. Mr. Cothran asked that the breakdown for the salary increases be provided via email to the Committee members prior to bringing it to the full body. Mrs. Bryant agreed and explained that the Commission would essentially be setting a minimum, the Administration would have to go through the process of implementing and adjusting the pay scales to match that.

Mr. Epperson said that he's always been an advocate for those employees at the low end of the pay scales. He is in favor of this ordinance.

Mr. Atkins feels that this is a very manageable and appropriate for the Commission's situation.

Mr. G. Young wanted to know if the turnover ratio was higher or lower in comparison with lower paying positions within the Parish versus higher paying positions within the Parish. Mrs. Bryant said that nature of those positions is what creates a turnover, not necessarily the salary. She gave an example of a kennel worker at Animal Services. She said that people typically do not want to make a career of cleaning kennels. Mr. G. Young understood and said that morale is a huge contributing factor to productivity.

Mr. G. Young gave examples of the Parish shutting down and the valuable positions, such as compactor operators, animal kennel workers, etc. Mrs. Bryant agreed and said that COVID showed just that. She explained that they had to make adjustments in accordance with the Governor's Stay-At Home Order. Mrs. Bryant agreed that those positions are very needed for the Parish to operate, even though they may not be paid at certain levels. She also mentioned that no Parish employee makes the minimum wage amount of \$7.50 per hour; all employees make more than minimum wage.

It was **moved by Mr. Cothran**, seconded by Mr. J. Young, *to recommend to the full body to set a minimum wage of \$15 per hour within the Caddo Parish organization beginning with Budget Year 2025.*

Mr. Cothran said that this ordinance would boost employee morale and shows the Commissioners appreciate the Parish employees. Mr. J. Young agreed and said that this sets an example for other businesses and entities.

At this time, Mr. Cothran's motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Cothran, G. Young, and J. Young (4). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: Commissioners Gage-Watts and Thomas (2). ABSTAIN: None (0).

- Continued discussion and possible recommendations regarding implementation of a Living Wage Ordinance

Mr. G. Young said that this was discussed during the previous New Business item, so the Committee moved onto the next New Business item.

- Discussion regarding Kappa Alpha Psi conference

The Clerk of the Commission provided an economic impact statement to the Committee members with regards to the Kappa Alpha Psi convention that will be held in Caddo Parish from April 24-April 28.

Mr. Andrew Randall came before the Committee and said that the Kappa Alpha Psi's Southwest province, consisting of Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Mississippi, will host a convention later this month. Currently, there are 894 registered delegates for the conference—this does not include family members and other persons participating in the conference. It will be held at the Shreveport Convention Center. There are currently two overflow hotels to accommodate the delegates.

Mr. Randall explained that they are before the Committee requesting funds because in 2020, this area was slated to host the event, but it was cancelled due to COVID. The Commission allocated \$10k for the conference at that time. Things have changed since then, he said. The direct impact is over \$450k, and the indirect economic impact is over \$600k. They are asking that the Commission allocate dollars again for the upcoming conference.

Mr. Randall said that these funds will allow the organization to expand the programs, such as mentoring young men, promotion of literacy, mental health focus, etc.

Mr. Atkins wanted to know what the funding request is. Mr. Randall said that they are asking for an allocation of \$25k.

Mr. J. Young wanted to know what the funds would be spent on. Mr. Randall said that it would be spent on the execution of the programs he listed previously. He said that it is for community initiatives and programs. Mr. J. Young then asked if this appropriation would normally go through the NGO Committee. Mr. Randall said that he thought it would go through the Economic Development Committee because of the economic impact study. Mr. J. Young understood. Mr. Atkins mentioned that ROI through local taxes is \$26k.

Mr. J. Young then wanted to know if there would be local vendors and businesses for the conference. Mr. RJ Johnson said that they will be supporting local businesses throughout the convention.

Mr. Cothran asked what the City of Shreveport was providing to help out with this conference. Mr. Randall said that they are not providing any economic impact dollars relative to the organization. He further explained that they are before the Commission because of the previous allocation that was cancelled due to COVID. Mr. Johnson said that the City is not contributing anything to the conference. He said that the City's process is very different from the Parish as it relates to getting economic development dollars. Mr. Johnson said that the program is a parish-wide organization, not City specific.

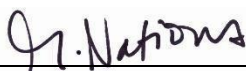
Mr. Atkins is not in favor of last-minute requests. He wanted to know why this request is coming so late. Mr. Johnson explained that they did not know that they would be hosting the conference until recently.

Mr. Epperson wanted to know if they asked the City of Shreveport of providing pro bono services. Mr. Johnson said that did not because they do not have the ability on the local level to negotiate any contracts. Mr. Epperson suggested that they get in contact with the national organization and provide this information.

It was **moved by Mr. J. Young**, seconded by Mr. Cothran, *to recommend to the full body an appropriation of \$15,000 for the Kappa Alpha Psi conference. Motion carried*, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Cothran, G. Young, and J. Young (4). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: Commissioners Gage-Watts and Thomas (2). ABSTAIN: None (0).

The Clerk of the Commission mentioned that this appropriation would not be able to be allocated until after the event. Mr. Johnson said that would be fine and would be able to provide a full and accurate economic impact study.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 2:25 p.m.



Michelle Nations
Assistant to the Commission Clerk