

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CADDO PARISH COMMISSION'S
PUBLIC SAFETY AD HOC COMMITTEE
HELD ON THE 15TH DAY OF APRIL, 2024

The Caddo Parish Public Safety Funding Ad Hoc Committee met in legal session on the above date at 2:00 p.m., in the Government Plaza Chambers, with Mr. Epperson, presiding, and the following members in attendance: Commissioners Epperson, Gage-Watts, Thomas, and J. Young (4). ABSENT: Commissioner G. Young (1).

Mrs. Gage-Watts gave the invocation, and Mr. J. Young led the Committee in the Pledge of Allegiance.

There were no Agenda Additions or Citizens Comments, so the Committee moved onto New Business.

NEW BUSINESS

- *Discussion of voting/election process overview to include mail-in ballots, absentee voting, early voting, precinct and polling place management*

Mr. Epperson welcomed everyone to today's meeting and said that the purpose of this meeting is to discuss any issues or concerns expressed by citizens related to this election, previous elections, or future elections. There have been several accusations of voting irregularities, he said. Mr. Epperson then asked Mr. Mike Spence, Clerk of Court, to come forward and brief the Committee on any issues with elections or the voting process.

Mr. Spence came before the Committee and said that this election came down to one vote, and was probably one of the cleanest elections that this Parish has had. There were very few problems, he said. Mr. Spence also mentioned that the voter turnout was low, but other than that, they only received one phone call with an issue.

He also explained that two people did vote twice—one person mailed their ballot in on Wednesday, and it was received by the Registrar on Friday. The supplemental poll list was received at the precinct around 7:10, but the person had already voted and left. The second person voted over the word "previously voted", which was an error by the Commissioner of the precinct.

Mr. J. Young talked about handicap accessibility to the voting places. He wanted to know if that was handled by The Clerk's Office or the Registrar of Voters (ROV). Mr. Spence explained that the locations are handled by the Caddo Parish Commission.

Mr. Kevin Lawrence, Facilities & Maintenance Directory, said that the location was at Donnie Bickham and was not moved. He further stated that it has been at the same location for a long time. Mr. J. Young wanted to know if the entrance was changed. Mr. Lawrence said that it was not changed. He also mentioned that the person who complained about the location hadn't voted in about ten years.

Mrs. Gage-Watts pointed out that all of the voting locations have to be ADA compliant. Mr. Spence agreed.

Mrs. Gage-Watts also thanked Administration and Facilities & Maintenance for the precinct signs. She said that this is being discussed on a state level as well. Mr. Spence agreed and said that the Legislature is considering permanent signage. They also asked that the Clerks of Court list voting precincts on their websites.

Mrs. Gage-Watts then talked about absentee ballots. She said that additional information was being requested on the ballot. Mr. Spence said that the address being written on the flap was to help the voters. He said that if a voter forgets to write the address, then the vote will not be disqualified because it is already printed on there with the precinct number. Mr. Spence then said that it is a requirement by law to have the voter's mother's maiden name written on the flap. If the name is not written, then the vote is not counted. He also mentioned that the Secretary of State is going to redesign the flaps to make it easier for the voters.

Mrs. Gage-Watts wanted to know what could be done to prevent duplication of voting in the future. Mr. Spence said that they have a process now where they are texting the Commissioners at the polls. They also had all of the absentee ballots there prior to Election Day beginning. He also said that there have been discussions with the Secretary of State and the Legislators to move the date up to Wednesday because they are received four to five weeks ahead of the election. He said that it might take some legislation. Mr. Spence said that it is being worked on.

Mrs. Gage-Watts also mentioned that she made a call to the ROV to confirm that her mother-in-law's ballot was correct, but did not receive a call back. She said that would be a different conversation at another time. Mr. Spence wanted to know if she was talking about curing her ballot. He said that most people don't cure their ballots. He also mentioned that he is not part of that process. Mr. Spence also said that the majority of the issues were that a husband and wife getting their neighbor to witness their ballots, and them not witnessing each other's ballot. Mr. Spence suggested that the voters need to be

educated. He also pointed out that the mailout the ROV inserted into the early voting ballots helped out tremendously.

Mr. J. Young talked about the poll commissioners. He wanted to know if there were enough poll commissioners and if their pay was enough. Mr. Spence said that the Legislature increased their pay this year to \$250-\$300. He said that the reduction in the number of precincts help out. Mr. Spence then talked about the process. He explained that they have to have die, they pick numbers, then the computer picks the name by the number associated with how many Commissioners are in that precinct. He also mentioned that there are still precincts with no commissioners who have signed up. Mr. Spence also said that there aren't many young people working the polls. Mr. J. Young wanted to know if there was anything this body could do to encourage young people to sign up. Mr. Spence suggested Facebook, social media, etc.

Mr. Spence then talked about early voting. He said that the voter goes in and the commissioner gives the voter a card, then that card gets inserted into a machine, and the voter's ballot pops up. Mr. Spence also mentioned that the machines were built between 1991-1993. He said the Legislature stated last year that there has to be a paper aspect in all elections. The Secretary of State audits all elections.

Mr. Spence also said that the Secretary of State puts out an RFP for the machines, then they have to go through the legislative part of the machines where the public get input. He said that it is about a two-year process to get the machines.

Mr. Thomas talked about the absentee ballots and curing process. He wanted to know the timeframe between a voter submitting their ballot and it being checked to determine if there are any issues with it. Mr. Spence said that the Registrar's Office is checking the flaps as they come in, then contact the voter if they need to be contacted.

Mr. Epperson said that he received a complaint about a voting location opening late. He wanted to know if the Commission engages in a cooperative endeavor agreement (CEA) advising them on what needs to be done and when it needs to be done with regards to being a polling place. Mr. Spence said that they use an app to txt the Commissioners reminding them of an election the night before. They also send a text that morning reminding them of the elections. They all receive a wake-up call. Mr. Spence explained that if the custodians are running late, the commissioners take the voters' names. The voters can then choose to stay or leave. If they leave and come back, they go straight to the front of the line.

Mr. Spence said that elections are like a big spider. It starts with the delivery man, or the Drayman, who works for the Secretary of State. The drayman delivers the machines—two employees from the Clerk of Court's office follow the drayman to ensure the right machine is delivered to the right precincts. Sometimes the school principals don't like where the machines are, so they push them around and get the machines mixed up.

Mr. Spence also said that one church on Greenwood Road doesn't have ac or heat, so there are several complaints about that.

Mr. Epperson suggested that the absentee ballots should be minimized, i.e. the date of the election. Mr. Spence said that the date of the election on the flaps is important because the ROV may still be getting ballots from the previous election. He said that the mail-in ballots has lots of room for error.

Mr. Spence and Mr. Epperson reiterated that only spouses can witness each other's ballots. Mr. Epperson feels that this should be stated on the ballot somewhere. he also pointed out that there was an extra sleeve this time—he doesn't feel that the sleeve is necessary. They then talked about signatures. Mr. Spence said that 'x' is an eligible signature.

Mr. J. Young wanted to know if it was possible to provide indoor ac units on election day, then remove them after the election is over. Mr. Spence said that the room is too big for it to make a difference. Mrs. Gage-Watts pointed out that there has been discussion on moving this precinct to another location.

Mr. Kevin Lawrence said that the precincts have to be in the same districts.

Mr. Epperson mentioned that any voter can check the status of their absentee ballots by going to sos.la.gov and entering their information. Mr. Spence said that this information is on his website, but he will provide the ROV's number on it as well.

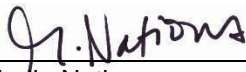
Mr. Spence talked about the length of time it took to get the results from the previous election. He said that the process changed so much during the last election cycle that it took longer to get the results, but they are working on a policy manual for the next election.

Mr. Epperson would like to hear from Mr. Spence and the Clerk of Court's Office on what machines would be best. Mr. Spence understood, but said that everything has to go through the bid process.

The Commission Clerk, Mr. Jeff Everson, said that the Legislature passed a bill that says that everyone has to be notified when there are changes on the ballot. He wanted to know if this is written down anywhere. Mr. Spence said that it is written in the Code. Mr. Everson would like a duty sheet or a

flowchart for any changes in the Code.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 2:51 p.m.



Michelle Nations
Assistant to the Commission Clerk