

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CADDO PARISH COMMISSION'S
JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMITTEE
HELD ON THE 1ST DAY OF JULY, 2024

The Caddo Parish Juvenile Justice Committee met in legal session on the above date at 2:00 p.m., in the Government Plaza Chambers, with Mrs. Gage-Watts, presiding, and the following members in attendance: Commissioners Blake, Cothran, Gage-Watts, and Thomas (4). ABSENT: Commissioner J. Young (1).

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

- *Presentation from Pastor Lacey related to juvenile justice, public health, and mental health*

Pastor Brand Lacey came before the Commission and said that he has served as a pastor for this city for 7 years. Pastor Lacey said that he came here as an advocate of higher education and the impact that it has had on his personal life. In terms of juvenile justice, mental health and public health is an unbreakable bond, he said. He noticed that in the underserved communities have low levels of education which contributes to poverty and juvenile crime. He said that higher education not only provides people with better paying jobs, but also teaches problem solving, conflict resolution, financial literacy, and other strategies for success. Pastor Lacey would like to create pathways to higher education for people in the underserved communities.

Pastor Lacey suggested implementing a tuition reimbursement program for Parish employees, or even create funding for students to obtain a degree. Mrs. Bryant pointed out that the Parish does have this program in place. Mrs. Gage-Watts wanted to know if the Parish has a tuition reimbursement program for citizens. Mrs. Bryant said that the Parish does not.

Mr. Cothran requested a packet of what Pastor Lacey's university is offering at this time, not just degrees, but also technical certifications as well.

Mrs. Blake thanked Pastor Lacey for coming today and providing this information for our youth. Mr. Thomas agreed with Mrs. Blake and Mr. Cothran and requested the different programs being offered.

Mrs. Gage-Watts said that this is another part of the prevention crime index she has in mind for the juveniles.

- *Conversation with City Marshal James Jefferson regarding gun safety*

Marshal Jefferson is hosting a gun safety camp at the City Marshal's Training Center. He said that this camp will educate children on how to shoot a gun, but also the safety of a gun. He explained that children nowadays do not understand the severity of shooting a gun, so this camp will show them and educate them on the consequences of pulling a trigger. He would like fifty students to attend the half-day camp.

Mrs. Gage-Watts agreed with this camp will educated children by showing them the reality of what happens once you pull a trigger. She thanked Marshal Jefferson for initiatives such as this. Marshal Jefferson also said that once school starts, his team is willing to go to the schools and teach the students about gun safety in conjunction with D.A.R.E.

Marshal Jefferson said that the camp is scheduled for July 19 from 9:00 a.m. until 12:00 noon. He also said that a deputy can come by to pick up the applications as well.

Mrs. Blake thanked Marshal Jefferson for his service and appreciates this initiative to teach children about the power of a gun. She also asked that Marshal Jefferson teach the dangers of a gun, but also the positive of a gun in sportsmanship, law enforcement, and military.

Mr. Cothran said that this camp is much needed, especially the 4th or 5th grade age group that the City Marshal's Office is targeting. Marshal Jefferson said that children play Call of Duty and think they can do exactly what the video game does and respawn. He said that Call of Duty has ruined children's lives. He said that these kids are seeing the video games and want to try it.

Marshal Jefferson provided a flyer for the event.

- *Presentation from Ms. Huckaby with GEMS, Inc. (Girls Empowered for More Society, Inc.)*

Ms. Huckaby thanked the Commission for allowing her to come today and talk more about GEMS, Inc. She said that there will be several lemonade stands that the girls will get up and running during the summer months.

She then talked about a STEM Camp for 25 girls, 4th graders – 6th graders. During camp,

they will be teaching the girls that the brain is a muscle, and it can strengthen. If they have a growth mindset, they will succeed, she said.

GEMS is also hosting a self-care Saturday to teach girls that a part of leadership is to replenish your cup and to avoid burnout. She said that they will receive a pedicure, manicure, health breakfast, exercise, and a motivational speaker will come and talk to the girls. Ms. Huckaby thanked Mrs. Blake for donating journals for the girls, which is another form of self-care.

Ms. Huckaby also talked about an event where successful leaders within in the community will sit down and each girl will have an opportunity to speak with them—sort of like speed dating, she said.

The last program Ms. Huckaby talked about was the Etiquette Netiquette program. She said that this will teach girls how to conduct themselves online, as well as the dangers of social media. Ms. Huckaby said that social media provides more vulnerabilities for young girls to be sex trafficked. A forensic investigator will come and speak to the girls during this program.

Ms. Huckaby also envisions taking the girls to an all-girl college in Atlanta.

The long-term goal is to have the girls take everything they've learned through the different programs and become business owners, medical professionals, etc. in Caddo Parish.

Mrs. Gage-Watts thanked Ms. Huckaby for coming to today's meeting. She talked about the importance of the safety aspect of the Etiquette Netiquette program. She also encouraged Ms. Huckaby to get in touch with Mrs. Laurie McGehee.

Mrs. Gage-Watts wanted to know how would anyone register for the programs. Ms. Huckaby said that the programs are available at www.gemsinc.org. Mrs. Gage-Watts said that she was unaware of the resources GEMS provides. She thanked her once again for coming today.

Mrs. Blake said that growing up, most women were taught beautification. She said that GEMS is teaching women to have a thriving life through employment, leadership, and entrepreneurship. You're teaching from the inside out, not the outside in, she said. Mrs. Blake looks forward to working with Ms. Huckaby in the future.

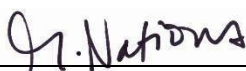
Mr. Thomas said that this program is targeted to young women. He loves the etiquette portion of the program and supports these endeavors.

Ms. Huckaby provided the juvenile justice group referral forms, and Judge Ree Casey Jones is working to get this part of the court orders. She also said that they are working with increasing capacity. Currently, there are fourteen volunteers along with the board members. Ms. Huckaby also said that she sat in on the NGO meeting, but unfortunately, an NGO has to be in operation for at least two years before she can apply for funding.

- *Update on the Establishment of the Youth Council*

Mrs. Gage-Watts said that she would like to have a youth council comprised of two students from each high school. Mr. Cothran would like to see the packet prior to voting on this. Mrs. Gage-Watts would like to have the Youth Council established prior to school starting. Mrs. Blake agreed and would like this to be discussed further.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 3:06 p.m.



Michelle Nations
Assistant to the Commission Clerk