

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
CADDO PARISH COMMISSION'S  
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE  
HELD ON THE 3<sup>rd</sup> DAY OF NOVEMBER, 2022

The Caddo Parish NGO Appropriations Committee met in legal session on the above date, at 2:30 p.m., in the Government Plaza 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Conference Room, with Mr. Johnson, Chairman, presiding, and the following members in attendance: Commissioners Atkins, Chavez, Epperson, Hopkins, Johnson, and Lazarus (6). ABSENT: Commissioners Burrell and Gage-Watts (2).

Dr. Wilson gave the invocation, and Mr. Chavez led the Committee in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**NEW BUSINESS**

- *Discuss Southern University Foundation*

Mr. Johnson said that there was a mix-up between Southern University and the Southern University Foundation and asked for an explanation of what occurred with their application. Mrs. Barnett responded that Southern University Foundation did not get an application, because they were not funded in the prior year. She explained that the Parish's typical process automatically sends applications to NGOs that were funding in the prior year. Mrs. Barnett said that the Southern University Foundation requested an application after the deadline had passed and that was why the Foundation did not receive an application. Mr. Johnson stated that Southern University Foundation's request was for \$10,000 to provide educational scholarships for students at the university and for their cooking class. Mrs. Bryant pointed out that the classes were not hosted in the last couple of years. Mr. Johnson wanted to know if there is anything the Commission could do to allow Southern University Foundation to have their cooking class event this year.

Mr. Epperson wanted to know where the Committee's budget stands. Mrs. Barnett responded that the Riverboat Fund has a total budget revenue of \$805,000 with total expenses being \$1.1 million. Mrs. Barnett recommended that if the Committee wishes to fund anything moving forward, then the Fund would need a funding source. Mrs. Barnett said that the Riverboat Fund is negative \$321,000, although the fund balance is about \$678,000. She suggested not to go lower than that balance amount. Mr. Johnson stated that \$5,000 will not break the budget.

It was **moved by Mr. Epperson**, seconded by Mr. Johnson, *to recommend to the full body an appropriation of \$5,000 for Southern University Foundation.*

Mr. Atkins commented that the Committee did well with their preliminary budget and suggested that the Committee try not to make additions. Mr. Chavez commented that he is in favor of the motion and reminded the Committee that they would do additions only if it is an emergency. Mr. Johnson commented that the appropriation for Southern University Foundation is a one-off deal. Mr. Johnson explained that the current year's appropriation process was electronic, and the Southern University Foundation did not receive an application. Mr. Johnson said that his next motion will try to resolve this issue, so the Committee will not have to work backwards.

At this time, Mr. Epperson's motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Chavez, Epperson, Hopkins, Johnson, and Lazarus (6). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: Commissioners Burrell and Gage-Watts (2). ABSTAIN: None (0).

It was **moved by Mr. Johnson**, seconded by Mr. Epperson, *that the 2024 budget cycle will send electronic applications to NGOs funded in the last three budget cycles.*

Mr. Johnson explained that his motion is to refrain from this kind of situation again. Mr. Atkins commented that NGOs could request for an application. Mr. Chavez commented that Southern Hills Neighborhood Association reached out to him because they forgot to apply for funding this year. Mr. Chavez said that he had a hard conversation with them about the change in the rules. Mr. Chavez explained that he would rather not voluntarily email everybody a link. Mr. Chavez explained that NGOs who need funding would go out and get revenue for their operation. Mr. Johnson mentioned that NGOs may not receive the emailed link, because it could end up in a black hole. Mr. Jackson suggested making a public announcement like a NOFA, meaning note of funds available. He explained that a NOFA would give everybody notice and it would put responsibility on the organization to find out about the funding. Mrs. Bryant commented that due to the volume of applications they would receive, the Administration would usually not do that. Mrs. Bryant explained that it is a difficult process to go through, which is why the Administration has been more selective in sending out the application. She further explained that applications would be sent to anyone that requests it and if a commissioner requests an application be provided. Dr. Wilson mentioned that there are about 3,000 non-profits in the community.

Mr. Johnson gave an example of staff turnover in an organization which could result in an organization not applying to the Parish. Mr. Johnson said that the unfamiliar staff may not be aware of the application deadline. Mr. Lazarus commented that this is "like waving a red flag at a bull because you are going to get a flood". Mr. Johnson pointed out that post-COVID organizations are starting new things and that the Committee decides on who receives funding. Mr. Jackson commented that public officials need to balance access and that the Commission is supposed to put out applications to as many people as possible. Mr. Jackson commented that the Commission would get accused of being selective and that announcing

when applications become open would give everybody a chance.

**Call for the question by Mr. Epperson**, seconded by Mr. Johnson. Motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Chavez, Epperson, Hopkins, Johnson, and Lazarus (6). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: Commissioners Burrell and Gage-Watts (2). ABSTAIN: None (0).

At this time, Mr. Johnson's motion failed, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Epperson, and Johnson (2). NAYS: Commissioners Atkins, Chavez, Hopkins, and Lazarus (4). ABSENT: Commissioners Burrell and Gage-Watts (2). ABSTAIN: None (0).

- *Discuss Community Foundation of NWLA*

Mrs. Kristi Gustavson, CEO of Community Foundation of North Louisiana, commented that the Community Foundation had the same deadline every year for five years with the exact same date and time. She said that people have gotten used to the date, but every year there are a couple of calls about missing the deadline.

Mrs. Gustavson updated the Committee about their 2021 grant from the Parish for their early childhood education fund. She said that the Community Foundation raised \$1 million and earned a \$1 million match from the State, which helped 224 children enter type 3 early childcare centers. Mrs. Gustavson explained that during covid there was a debt for two years of children going to preschool. She said that there are about 700 children in preschool this year compared to last year. Mr. Johnson asked that Mrs. Gustavson speak about the application process. Mrs. Gustavson thanked the Committee and concluded that the children are doing two to three times better than children that are not in school.

Mrs. Gustavson commented that the Community Foundation is focused on proactive grant making by locating a data point in a community and work with experts in that community to develop a plan. She explained that in response to an overrepresentation of people with mental health issues, the Community Foundation convened a group of leaders from the City of Shreveport and Caddo Parish to help citizens with mental health issues that have a rotating door through jail for non-violent misdemeanor arrests. Mrs. Gustavson said that with the early childhood education program, the Community Foundation spent two years planning how the program would work before they began fundraising. She explained that some systems were already in place for the early childhood education program, but the mental health court pilot program needs to have a budget established to stand up in mental health court. Mrs. Gustavson said that the Community Foundation is providing \$100,000 to the mental health court pilot program and is fundraising \$100,000 each from the City of Shreveport and Caddo Parish. She said that the City of Shreveport agreed to pay but has not provided the Community Foundation with a check yet. Mrs. Gustavson said that the mental health court pilot will test the program, study the data, and if the program works, be presented to the community to hear the results. Mrs. Gustavson explained that defendants would be referred to the program from City and Parish courts, parole, from pre- or post-adjudication or from psychiatry departments at Brentwood Hospital. She further explained that the defendant would be screened, then referred to a community provider for treatment. Mrs. Gustavson said that in a traditional diversion court, the court hires providers, but there are mental health providers in the community that can assist through Medicaid coverage. Mrs. Gustavson explained that defendants are evaluated by a treatment team and if a defendant meets the criteria for the program, then the defendants would enter the program. She further explained that the treatment team makes recommendations to the court and defendants could be referred from District Attorney, Sherriff's Office, Shreveport Police Department (SPD), probation/parole, family members, judges, and attorneys. Mrs. Gustavson said that once funding is approved, Community Foundation will develop the coordinated response with the First Judicial District Court, the Shreveport City Court and the judges from both courts, defense attorneys, prosecutors, behavioral outreach teams, law enforcement, jail, mental health and substance abuse providers. She said that the mental health court pilot would take place from January and June 2023. Mrs. Gustavson said that the Community Foundation will not charge administrative fees for the work they do. Mrs. Gustavson said that in the last year a small steering committee consisting of a city court judge, a parish court judge, a city prosecutor, and herself have researched best practices and models in the country for financial efficiency with this type of program. They found that the 9<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court (JDC) in Alexandria, LA is one of the best. She explained that Judge Koch from the 9<sup>th</sup> JDC has run a behavioral health court for years and has provided the Community Foundation with the paperwork and structure to develop how the court will work. Mrs. Gustavson said that the City of Shreveport's portion of funding would be applied to city defendants and Caddo Parish's funding would be applied to parish defendants, however the staffing of the mental health court could be a shared expense. She also said that the judges are not paid and there are three judges interested in staffing mental health court.

Mr. Epperson said that the prosecutor acts on behalf of the State and wanted to know if the State is contributing towards the mental health court pilot. Attorney Frazier responded that the judge would be performing normal duties in the mental health court and the prosecutor would have to appear in the court with their client. Mr. Epperson clarified that he was referring to financial contribution. Attorney Frazier said that it would be in kind. Mr. Epperson commented that the Parish has a \$4 million deficit in juvenile and the Parish could not get any collaboration in alleviating that burden. Mr. Epperson said that the Parish is spreading itself thin getting into other criminal justice items. He also said that funding should come from the State to remedy the situation. Mr. Epperson recalled when the State ran a mental institution in Pine Hill, Louisiana, and questioned what occurred with the funding for that mental institution since it closed.

Mr. Chavez pointed out that Frontline meets monthly at the Holy Cross Church on every first Tuesday and there are 60 different organizations collaborating on mental health issues. He said that

there are two on-call SPD officers to grow into a platoon to help people in the community before people become adjudicated. Mrs. Gustavson commented that she has been a part of the Frontline discussion since it began. She said that Dr. Patterson and the two SPD officers are the driving force behind the mental health idea. Mr. Chavez wanted to know who has the political responsibility to set up an additional court. Mrs. Gustavson responded that the 9<sup>th</sup> JDC manages it as a non-sanctioned court and the Louisiana Supreme Court is aware of and supports the 9<sup>th</sup> JDC mental health court. She explained that the 9<sup>th</sup> JDC has more flexibility and less cost to operate a mental health court. Mrs. Gustavson said that the mental health court in the 9<sup>th</sup> JDC started from a \$100,000 budget and operates for less than half a million dollars per year. Mrs. Gustavson gave an example of a meth addict that comes to the mental health court and that Judge Koch can require the meth addict to take a tox screen each court date. She explained that if the tox screen results showed the meth addict had marijuana in their system but not methamphetamine, then the meth addict could stay in the non-sanctioned court program to continue treatment. Mrs. Gustavson said that a sanctioned court would not be able to do that. Mrs. Gustavson explained that the requested funds are for administrative uses and that the treatment is paid for through Medicaid. She further explained that she must bring a whole group together to take care of someone who is unable to care for themselves.

Mr. Chavez wanted to know how the Parish is involved in the legalities of the mental health court. Attorney Frazier responded that the Parish does not have much to do with the legalities of the mental health court. Attorney Frazier asked Mrs. Gustavson how the court would receive referrals. Mrs. Gustavson responded that Judge Koch receives referrals from the city and parish courts in their district and that Judge Koch does not have control of the adjudication of a person. She explained that an adjudicated person can become a productive citizen, because that adjudicated person received a continuum of care for their mental health issues. Mr. Chavez wanted to know if the mental health court judge is simply a glorified probation officer. Mrs. Gustavson said that a probation officer could refer a person to the court. Attorney Frazier clarified that criminal cases would still go through the criminal court, but while the case is pending the judge could refer the case to the mental health court as a condition of their sentencing.

Mrs. Bryant pointed out that the Parish is obligated to fund district court services outside of the judge's salary. She explained that if the Community Foundation starts the mental health court and the mental health court loses funding, then the Parish would be on the hook. Mrs. Gustavson said that this is a pilot and there are no permanent funding promises for the pilot. She explained that the pilot will operate for a couple of years to gather data and determine if the court lightened the load of the criminal court, police officers, and overcrowded jails.

Mr. Jackson said that if the district court decides to maintain the program and sends a bill to the Caddo Parish, then Caddo Parish is obligated to pay the bill. Mr. Jackson wanted to know if the pilot program is a result of a crisis intervention work group in Alexandria. Mrs. Gustavson explained that she started researching a mental health court a few years ago and was asked to be a part of that work group when it started. Mrs. Gustavson said that the parish of the 9<sup>th</sup> JDC is not paying for the mental health court located in Alexandria. Mr. Jackson said that after he spoke to District Attorney Stewart, the District Attorney told him that the District Attorney's Office is not ready to support the mental health court pilot program. Mr. Jackson explained that the SPD, Sherriff's Office, and a parole officer cannot take people to court, because the District Attorney's Office or a prosecutor must take a person to the court. Mr. Jackson pointed out that the Parish has appropriated \$200,000 to the Public Defender's Office. Mr. Jackson suggested including the District Attorney and the Caddo Parish Public Defender in the discussion about the mental health court pilot program, because both of their office's costs come to the Parish of Caddo. Mrs. Gustavson commented that the District Attorney and the Public Defender are going to be involved in the process, and that she is trying to get all people to work together despite historical overlaps and gaps between all the offices. Mr. Jackson reiterated that the District Attorney's Office told him that it is not ready to move forward with the pilot program. Mr. Jackson reiterated that by statute and constitution the District Attorney's Office can direct somebody to court. Mrs. Gustavson commented that the mental health court would be a non-sanctioned court and does not have to accompany a person to court like the District Attorney's diversion court. Mr. Jackson requested the District Attorney's Office give the Parish guidance on the inner workings of the court.

Mr. Atkins suggested operating the pilot without Parish dollars and to concentrate their resources on what is important.

Dr. Wilson commented that the Parish administration has seen many programs that start off well and end up becoming the Parish's responsibility.

Mr. Chavez asked Mr. Jackson to clarify whether the District Attorney had heard of the Community Foundation's mental health court pilot program. Mr. Jackson responded that he spoke to the District Attorney about setting up a mental health court and the District Attorney had not discussed it. Mr. Jackson said that the District Attorney is trying to staff their office to screen and determine where cases go. Mr. Jackson explained that the District Attorney gave the example of a mental health case that escalated when a woman shot someone and at the Sherriff's gas tank. He further explained that the District Attorney must determine whether to prosecute as a crime or a mental health issue.

Mr. Johnson said that the Parish gets bombarded with mental health agencies and organizations, because mental health issues are the trend. Mr. Johnson said that people are giving others the excuse that they are mentally impaired. Mr. Johnson said that if a person is high on drugs, such as weed, meth or cocaine, then that person is chilling and in their own little world. He explained that once a crime is committed, that person is excused for the crime for being under influence of the drugs. Mr. Johnson said that if a person has enough sense to take a drug to avoid jail or certain penalties, then they are not mentally impaired. Mrs. Gustavson commented that the mental health court would not be eligible for violent

offenders. Mr. Jackson wanted to know if the District Attorney's Office would determine the type of offense. Attorney Frazier said that Mr. Jackson is correct and that criminal charges would still exist. Attorney Frazier explained that the mental health court would operate parallel with the prosecution cases.

The Chair requested that Parish staff provide a reason for Mrs. Gustavson's return before the Committee. Mrs. Barnett responded that the Community Foundation was sent a link to attend the mandatory training, but the Community Foundation's firewall retracted it. Mrs. Barnett said that Community Foundation was able to complete a recorded training and that was why Community Foundation was not included originally.

It was **moved by Mr. Lazarus**, seconded by Mr. Epperson, *to postpone any action for the Community Foundation until the first meeting in 2023.* Motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Chavez, Epperson, Hopkins, Johnson, and Lazarus (6). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: Commissioners Burrell and Gage-Watts (2). ABSTAIN: None (0).

At this time, there was no further discussion to come before the Committee, so the meeting adjourned at 2:54 p.m.



Linda J. Montgomery  
Office Specialist I