

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
CADDO PARISH COMMISSION'S  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
HELD ON THE 3rd DAY OF JULY, 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, with Mr. Greg Young, presiding, and the following members in attendance: Commissioners Atkins, Burrell, Cothran, and G. Young (4). ABSENT: Commissioners Gage-Watts, Thomas, and J. Young (3).

The Clerk of the Commission noted that Mr. Burrell was added to this Committee during its last meeting, but he was not listed on the agenda.

Mr. Cothran gave the invocation, and Mr. Atkins led the Committee in the Pledge of Allegiance.

There were no Agenda Additions nor any public comments, so the Committee moved onto New Business.

**NEW BUSINESS**

- *Discuss Pickle Ball Project*

Mr. Patrick Wesley, Director of Parks & Recreation Department, said that Pickleball is one of the fastest growing sports in America. He proposed constructing a Pickleball court in Caddo Parish. After several meetings of the Parks & Recreation Master Plan, the dominant conversation was about Pickleball. He consulted with Dr. Scott Wysong to conduct a feasibility study.

Dr. Wysong explained that Pickleball is smaller version of tennis, but you use a paddle instead of a tennis racket. He said that there are almost 9M Pickleball players in the United States—this is an 87% increase since 2022. Dr. Wysong also mentioned that there are several facilities in Caddo Parish that has pickleball courts, i.e. Southern Hills, Querbes, YMCA, etc.

He is recommending this facility have 19 pickleball courts, clubhouse, pro shop, and snack bar. The estimated cost of this facility is between \$8M-\$12M. Dr. Wysong showed renderings of what the facility would look like. (these are attached to the agenda and placed in the meeting folder.) He also said that this facility could generate revenue with people coming to play and renting out the courts each. It could also generate revenue by hosting regional championships. There would be a \$1M economic impact if five tournaments were played per year.

If this facility were to be constructed, resources such as marketing, i.e. free beginner clinics, pop-up pickleball demos, \$2 Tuesdays, etc. would be needed. There would also need to be a minimum of five full-time employees at the facility.

He provided several options for the construction of this facility. The first option is to lease the YMCA land and partner with the YMCA. He said that Caddo Parish has an opportunity to carve out a niche as a "Pickleball Destination".

Mr. G. Young wanted to know, worst case scenario, how much would the Parish put towards this endeavor. Mrs. Bryant said that the cost of the project is \$8M.

Mr. Atkins wanted to know Dr. Wysong's charge with the feasibility study. Dr. Wysong said that with any feasibility study, he is going to look at the negatives. In this instance, there were several positives. Mr. Atkins said that he didn't see anything regarding expenses. He wanted to know what the bottom line debt to income statement. Dr. Wysong said that it would cost approximately \$15k-\$18k per month to run the facility if they were to go with a third-party. He also mentioned that it would cost less if it

were done internally.

Mr. Atkins then asked for the justification for nineteen pickleball courts. Dr. Wysong said that this number of courts would attract the regional games. Mr. Atkins suggested a utilization analysis to justify building this many courts versus a smaller number.

Mrs. Gage-Watts thanked Dr. Wysong for the presentation. She is excited for the opportunity of Caddo Parish being a pickleball destination.

Mr. Burrell wanted to know how would they develop the young pickleball players to utilize these courts. Mr. Wesley said that if this was brought into fruition, they would work with the Y to draft and train people for pickleball.

Mr. Burrell asked about converting current tennis courts to pickleball courts. Mr. Wesley said that it is in their capital projects to look into that.

Mr. Wesley said that in 2023, sport travelers spent \$51.5B. He said that Caddo Parish is not getting any of it because "we are not serious about sport travels". Mr. Wesley reiterated that this is the fastest growing sport in the nation right now. This is not a situation where if you build it, they may come; this is a situation where if you build it, they will come, he said, the numbers are there.

Mr. G. Young is excited about this. He said that Mr. Wesley is prepared to do the work.

Mrs. Stacy Brown, Executive Director of the Shreveport-Bossier Tourism Bureau, said that they can do a deeper dive into all the concerns and questions the Commissioners have. She said that a central location for these courts that is close to amenities will drive people to have their tournaments at the Parish courts.

Mrs. Blake said that she is excited about this and hopes this comes into fruition. She said that this will lead people to downtown. Mrs. Blake believes that this vision will grow other areas of the Parish.

Mr. Atkins believes that the Caddo Parish Commission should lead, but should do so responsibly. He said that they have convinced him on the vision, but not the structure of the vision.

Mr. G. Young said that he would like to get the ball rolling and letter of intent from this Commission body in support of Pickleball.

It was **moved by Mrs. Gage-Watts**, seconded by Mr. Cothran, *to recommend to the full body that Administration pursue Pickleball courts in Caddo Parish. Motion carried unanimously.*

Mrs. Gage-Watts said that this is a fast-growing sport and could provide something else for the youth to do and compete in.

**Some of the audio is garbled.**

- *Discuss establishing a film and entertainment sub-committee*

Mr. G. Young said that time is short, but he would like to discuss this agenda item further. He said that the film industry could bring in major revenue. Mr. G. Young also said that there are so many talented people in this Parish and would like to explore this idea further in two weeks.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 3:16 p.m.

*M. Nations*

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Michelle Nations  
Assistant to the Commission Clerk