

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
CADDO PARISH COMMISSION'S  
JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMITTEE  
HELD ON THE 22<sup>nd</sup> DAY OF AUGUST, 2024

The Caddo Parish Juvenile Justice Committee met in legal session on the above date at 1:30 p.m., in the Government Plaza Chambers Conference Room, with Mrs. Gage-Watts, presiding, and the following members in attendance: Commissioners Blake, Cothran, Gage-Watts, Jones, Thomas, and J. Young (5). ABSENT: None (0).

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

**AGENDA ADDITIONS**

It was **moved by Mrs. Gage-Watts**, seconded by Mr. Thomas, *to allow a presentation from Mr. Eddie Spencer and Mr. Berkics Jackson.*

There being no one to speak in favor or against the agenda addition, the Chair closed the public hearing.

At this time, Mrs. Gage-Watt's motion carried unanimously.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

(Kamara) came before the Committee and gave the following comment:

I would like to say good afternoon (inaudible) to the commission. I am Pastor (inaudible) I am a resident of the City of Shreveport affected actively involved in (inaudible) unfortunately had children's that had mental health challenges. Those challenges played out in the classroom where the teachers may not be equipped to address those behaviors the children gets labeled you know for bad behaviors rather than trying to find out what the problems were; and so of course in the State of Louisiana of course a lot was going on in 1999 and many of you may be aware of the Southern Poverty Law center as well as the U.S. Harbor Justice lawsuit against the State of Louisiana because of the way children were being treated in custody in the State of Louisiana and ask the result of a lot of work that it has gone forward through grants with effort as well as other pro bono lawyers such as the criminal justice project of Louisiana, I served as the organizer for the Shreveport, Bossier area for families and friends of Louisiana's incarcerated children which is a nationally known a grassroot organization that is working to derail that pipeline. We work and are more successful in passage of the act 2003 of act 1225 of 2003 which is the Jewel of Justice reform act and a following that they passed in 2004 Act 555 of 2004 those acts mandated certain things be done within the local area; and I just can't unfortunate and have been kind of disappointed with Caddo that we've not been following the law under act of 555 of 2004 that mandates every district have a children and youth services planning board in place. You have a Juvenile Justice committee but it does not follow the guides specified by the law. So, I did want to just you know bring that to your attention because there were several things that I brought copies of it I can make that available to you all. I do often recommend and suggests that you all read those different components and make sure that what you do follows what the law specifies; thank you.

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

**NEW BUSINESS**

- *Update on Ordinance 6440 regarding funding for additional Harbor needs through Volunteers for Youth Justice: Ordinance No. 6440 of 2024*

Mrs. Gage-Watt's mentioned she had an allowance of \$8,700 for the juvenile project—\$3,500 for the STD kits and \$5200 for. The harbor is a resource center that citizens can use to acquire these materials. The shelf life for the kit doesn't expire. Pilot programs will receive up to 100 tests and a discussion can be had for additional funding or if that state can pick up. We need to complete 20-30 times more testing to see change in the epidemic. The Harbor is a resource center where citizens can get much help in one place. The test is ready for children in the system and not. The commission wants to educate the public and direct the public on where to get tested and how to receive treatment. Packets are being made for those who have been assaulted so they can seek treatment.

It was **moved by Mrs. Gage-Watts**, seconded by Mr. Thomas, *to recommend to the full body an appropriation of \$ 8,700 for STD kits. Motion carried*, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Blake, Cothran, Gage-Watts, Thomas, and J. Young (5). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: None (0). ABSTAIN: None (0).

- *Presentation by Mr. Eddie Spencer and Mr. Berkics Jackson*

Mr. Eddie Spencer and Mr. Berkics Jackson want to introduce a program for youth and get them involved in music. They can their program RAPS (Recording Audio Production and Sound). The components they want to incorporate will better children's lives. The course is designed to introduce you to audio and engineering, to create a lucrative career in audio technology. Audio technology is a broad

dimension and it's more than just being a performer. They want to allow the youth to choose. He mentioned that using social media is lucrative and has caused people to become millionaires. This will be vital for the interested youth; they want to equip the youth with a variety of concepts. Their mission is a community-motivated atmosphere to become successful in the music industry and to give them confidence. They feel that these tools will help the youth make better decisions. There will be a 6-month classroom course in several subjects the other 6 months of the program will be applied and look like a job in the role chosen. Everyone will have the opportunity to intern in each role. They will know how to operate because they were allowed a certain number of hours in those various roles. The youth will benefit from this program because they will have better character and skills to change their mindset and thrive.

Mr. Young asked how many kids could participate. They advised it is scalable between 8 and 16 kids, unsure of the age. It was advised a program option will be available at BPCC. The facility where this program will take place has two rooms which gives them the potential to expand the studio. The cost per curriculum will be based on the time the program happens whether over the summer or the school year. Meals were questioned and could offset costs as well. The cost is to be determined for participation in the program.

It was asked how soon could the program be ramped up, it was advised with 90 plus days, beginning in 2025. At the end of the program, the youth will be presented with a certification. The number of hours each child will need to acquire will be based on age and where they are in the program. RAPS program is coordinating with the colleges and other schools so that these students can acquire college credits.

Instead of "At-risk youth", Mr. Cothran would prefer "Urban Learning". The younger the child starts the more opportunity they have to advance rather than starting later.

- *Presentation from Curtis Davis regarding the 2<sup>nd</sup> Chance Youth Prevention Project*

Mr. Davis came up and advised he only brought copies for the commissioners. He has a reentry organization. His organization gives people who were incarcerated a second chance. He wants to give the youth a chance to do something special. Mr. Davis gave a little background on himself and his career. He advised he was accused of second-degree murder for a crime he didn't commit, he was incriminated from 1990-2016. In 2016 Conviction Integrity the DA and Rod Demery researched his case. A man named Henry Walker wrote him letters that motivated him and encouraged him to be free. He partnered with Gov. Edwards. Justice Reinvestment, he traveled to all 64 parishes educating people on polices. He was able to assist 1600 men with getting their GED. He says his turn is now with the youth. He wants the youth to learn the game of chess in life. He says he wants to change the statistics and teach life skills, communication, money management, and much more. Mr. Davis says being smart about situations and not putting yourself in situations because of the consequences. In the process of his program, he wants to teach self-preservation. He says our kids are Urban Learners. He says the teachers/parents should be held accountable for the youth's behaviors. He wants to give the youth a chance to learn effective decision-making and install a second program "LACE" Ladies Achieve a Charm Etiquette" They want to go into the Juvenile Centers, AMI's, and alternative schools to give them the tools to navigate through urban life.

Mr. Thomas loved the proposal and is looking forward to speaking more about the program. Mrs. Blake thanked Mr. Davis as well and his presentation has given her hope. Mr. Jones appreciated that this program was outside the box of athletics and had a lot to offer the youth. He was asked how can the Parish help him in his program. He states that on the adult side, they can handle that but as far as youth they need assistance with funding. He wants the commission to hold them accountable because he states he wants to push the program through and educate people about having convicted felons working for them.

Mr. Cothran asked what is a child's worth in this parish. Mr. Davis says in school it's 7,000-12,000 for schools 150,000 if they are in juvenile detention. Mrs. Gage-Watts says she is grateful to have so many on the accord, and hopes to have a plan of action in 2025.

- *Discussion related to a Youth Planning Commission*

Mrs. Gage-Watts advised that we have established a Youth planning board and there are enough members to call a quorum. Mrs. Gage-Watts wanted to suspend the rules to allow the citizens to talk. Mr. Clerk gave a brief summary of how the committee would be able to function and be viable, he advised some of the positions were delegated without changing state requirements. The commission appointed these people according to the blueprint but after members not showing to meetings in 4 years they had to reappoint. The citizen advised she wants us to follow the law and see if the items were published publicly. It was advised that they were and the board has been established since 2023 and we are abiding by those laws under the leadership of our legal team. The Commission does press conferences and public notices to ensure the right message gets out to the community. Mr. Thomas advised that he would have liked to appoint Mrs. Kamara. Mrs. Blake wants to get with Bossier and combine information.

It was **moved by Mr. Thomas**, seconded by Mr. Cothran, *to recommend to the full body to establish the Caddo Parish Youth group. Motion carried*, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Blake, Cothran, Jones, Thomas, Gage-Watts, and J. Young (6). NAYS: (0). ABSENT: (0). ABSTAIN: None (0).

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned  
at 3:30 p.m.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ashlyn King". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Ashlyn King  
Office Specialist