

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CADDO PARISH COMMISSION'S
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
HELD ON THE 5th DAY OF AUGUST, 2024

The Caddo Parish Appropriations Committee met in legal session on the above date at 2:00 p.m., in the Government Plaza Chambers Conference Room, with Mr. Ron Cothran, presiding, and the following members in attendance: Commissioners Burrell, Cothran, Gage-Watts, Jones, Thomas, G. Young, and J. Young (7). ABSENT: Commissioner Atkins (1).

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

AGENDA ADDITIONS

The Clerk of the Commission advised that there were two potential agenda additions: Discussion of Grace Project funding at E. Edward Jones and Capacity Builders Workshop. At this time, there was not a quorum so a vote could not be had. The Clerk of the Commission opened the floor for anyone to speak for or against these agenda additions. There was no one to speak in favor or opposition.

There were no Public Comments, so the Committee moved onto New Business.

NEW BUSINESS

- *Make recommendations regarding expanded funding for Volunteer for Youth Justice recommended by Caddo Parish Commission Juvenile Justice Committee*

Mr. J. Young said that each Committee of the Commission has a topic and authority as describe in the Commission's By-Laws. The description for this committee is: "To this committee shall be referred legislation relating to the following subjects: appropriation of parish funds from the Riverboat Fund; the creation or modification of any special fund in the parish treasury to which proceeds from parish taxes, fees, or other charges are dedicated; budgetary requirements and procedures; comprehensive parish capital budget".

Mr. J. Young continued and said that this particular appropriation was recommended by the Juvenile Justice Committee to be funded out of the General Fund, not the Riverboat Fund. He is unsure as to why it is being discussed in this committee. Constantly having each committee review another committee's votes and recommendations could cause delays to important matters.

Mr. J. Young also said that Volunteers for Youth Justice (VYJ) is a trusted partner with Caddo Parish and has been for decades. He talked about The Harbor, a one-stop shop for children in need to receive services, such as mental health services, counseling, tutoring, etc. He said that the Parish side of it has been paid for, but the City side has not. Mr. J. Young also mentioned that the building is under-utilized because of several areas identified by Ms. Kelli Todd. She recently asked for funding to incentivize parents to sign their children up for mentoring and create long-term incentives to show kids the beneficial services that are available to them at The Harbor; to get refrigeration for fresh milk; test children and their family members for STDS; etc.

Caddo Parish has among the highest STD rates in the world. The girls at the Juvenile Detention Center were tested at one time, and one in three girls had an active infection at that time. This is a rampant disease environment among children, adults, and especially poor people. If this is delayed, then somebody's daughter/granddaughter is going to go undiagnosed and untreated for STDs. If untreated for six months, it can cause permanent sterilization.

Mrs. Bryant said that VYJ is an NGO and will be subjected to the same scrutiny as the other NGOs and will be have the same reporting requirements.

Mr. Cothran wanted to know how this funding request ended up in the NGO Committee. Mrs. Bryant explained that it matches the requirements for NGOs, so the previous committee made a recommendation that it be forwarded to this committee for recommendation.

Mrs. Bryant also pointed out that the Appropriations Committee could be considered any appropriation. She also said that everything in the budget is an appropriation, whether it be salaries, NGOs, etc.

Point of Information by Mr. J. Young. Mr. J. Young said that the motion was made by Mr. Cothran from the Juvenile Justice Committee to remand it to this committee.

Mr. Thomas wanted to ensure that other agencies had access to the recording studio. His main concern was that they open that space to other community groups.

Mr. Thomas also wanted to know if the health unit conducts STD testing. Mrs. Bryant said that it is her understanding that they do. Mr. Thomas wanted to know what the additional funding was for. Mr. Walker explained that they would reserve a room for confidentiality purposes at the Harbor, and the Health Unit's staff and testing materials would be an additional cost.

Mr. G. Young asked if VYJ should go through Juvenile Justice or Appropriations. Mrs. Bryant said that Administration is suggesting a consistent process that all NGOs follow regardless of the funding source.

Mr. G. Young then asked about the STD testing. He wanted to know who determines whether the child is tested or not, and following the testing, who pays for the treatment. Mr. Walker said that in the Juvenile Detention, they are the "ward", so they can test the juveniles. The ones who tested positive were then taken to LSU for treatment. It is communicated to the parents, and the Parish pays for it. Mr. G. Young wanted to know why would the Parish pay for this if the majority of the children are on Medicaid. Mr. Walker explained that once they come into detention, Medicaid is cut off. Mr. J. Young said that would not be the case at the Harbor. Mr. Walker agreed. He also explained that they've asked for several years that the juveniles retain Medicaid even when they are in detention, but it is federal law that the Medicaid is shut off when they are in Juvenile Detention.

Mr. J. Young said that the children at the Harbor would be tested and treated, but Medicaid would pay for it. Mrs. Bryant further explained that VYJ is asking for funding for essentially a clinic at the Harbor with staff, so it would be convenient for children and families to get tested for STDs and treated for them if they are positive. She said that the goal of the Harbor is to reduce the number of places and locations a family has to go—a one-stop shop for the family.

Mr. Cothran wants to know why this is being discussed if it has no business of it being in this committee. Mrs. Bryant said that there is a recommendation from the Juvenile Justice Committee for \$38k.

Mr. Burrell wanted more clarification on the topic of discussion. Mrs. Bryant reiterated that there is a recommendation from the Juvenile Justice Committee to recommend to the full body an appropriation of \$38k for the Volunteers for Youth Justice. Currently, this committee is discussing whether or not this recommendation should be in this committee, and not before the full body. Mr. Cothran wanted to know what is proper at this point. Attorney Bernstein said that it is a matter of their internal governance. From his standpoint, there is not an answer to which way is more proper. Mrs. Bryant said that for the most part all NGOs are funded out of the Riverboat Fund, and if there is not enough availability of monies, Administration transfer into that fund from somewhere else. Administration does not want NGOs all over in the General Fund, Juvenile Justice Fund, Public Works Fund, etc.

Mrs. Blake wanted to know if this is going to be a requirement to get people to the Harbor. She said that this could be seen as controlling and overstepping if the Health Unit is already doing this.

Mr. Thomas said that bundling several different projects into one funding request opens up a lot of different questions about the projects.

Mr. Thomas then wanted to know if staffing from the Health Unit would be there permanently in the hopes of someone coming in and getting tested; or, will that employee be called in when someone comes in wanting to get tested. Mr. Thomas has concerns with the foot traffic at the Harbor.

He also wanted to know if other organizations will be able to use the recording studio.

Mr. G. Young wanted to know what is the appropriate committee to addressing the By-Laws. Mr. J. Young said that it would be in the Personnel, Policies & Procedures Committee.

Mr. Burrell said that this would be additional services for an NGO that is already receiving funding. Mrs. Bryant explained that if VYJ is asking for ongoing funding for this, then it should be put in their application for 2025.

Mr. Cothran said that there are two different discussions going on at this moment: one, the By-Laws, and two, questions regarding the funding request for \$38k.

He asked for clarity on what the \$38k is going to be used for, and if there is a plan for spending the funds. Mr. Cothran said that there was discussion at a previous meeting for funding in the middle of the stream.

Mr. Thomas said that the Commissioners did receive a document explaining what the funding would be used for. Mrs. Bryant agreed and said that the funds will be used for: recording studios for youth to learn how to make and produce music and sounds; expand food banks including refrigeration for cold and frozen food; incentives measures and STD testing kits, along with a prevention program that the Harbor will put on by LSU med students. Mrs. Bryant said that people are coming in asking for refrigerated food. From Administration's standpoint, they support VYJ. Administration just wants to make sure to honor the Commission's process for funding NGOs.

Mr. Burrell wanted to know if this is an emergency appropriation. Mrs. Bryant said that if this were to be funded out of 2024, VYJ would have until December 31, 2024 to spend all of their funds.

It was **moved by Mr. J. Young**, seconded by Mr. Burrell, *to keep the Juvenile Justice Committee's recommendation to forward this funding request to the full body for consideration.*

Mr. J. Young said that STDs are running rampant in Caddo Parish. He also said that positive infections, if left untreated, can have long-lasting consequences such as infertility. Mr. J. Young also mentioned that there is an ongoing youth violence crisis, so the Harbor is trying to incentivize juveniles to come and straighten out their behavior and get the help they need. He also explained that there has been a food security emergency in Caddo Parish for quite some time, and a food pantry at the Harbor would be beneficial to the people who are coming in to get treated. It is time to act on something, he said.

Mr. J. Young said that all NGOs that receives money from the Riverboat Fund should go through this committee. Other funding requests, should be allowed to flow to their perspective committees, and the Administration can determine which fund needs to be transferred. He feels that this committee should administer the Riverboat Fund, and they should be on a schedule. The other committees work year-round and should not have to wait for the NGO process to fund emergencies.

Mr. G. Young mentioned that the full body has to vote on any recommendations coming from the committees.

Mr. Thomas said that he will be upset if this is funded, and the studio only consists of a microphone, headphones, and some handheld cameras. He would like to ensure that the studio is a place

where the students are going to learn.

Call for the Question by Mr. J. Young, seconded by Mr. Burrell. No audible vote was taken.

At this time, Mr. J. Young's motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Thomas, G. Young, and J. Young (3). NAYS: Commissioners Burrell and Cothran (2). ABSENT: Commissioners Atkins, Gage-Watts, and Jones (3). ABSTAIN: None (0).

Mr. J. Young suggested that the Committee members contact Kelli Todd for any additional questions regarding this funding. Mr. Thomas asked that a plan be provided from Ms. Todd with regards to this funding request.

- *Update on timeline of 2025 NGO Grant Cycle to include status of received applications and determining timeline for review and approval of applications*

Mrs. Barnett said that they received 75 applications, so now, Finance is busy putting together the summary sheets, score sheets, and prior year outcome reports from each entity. She said that the NGO and Economic Development should be meeting on August 19 and August 22. This allows two full weeks to summarize and pull together a packet for all 75 entities. Finance will provide each Commissioner with a USB drive. Mr. Burrell is concerned with the flash drive. He likes making notes on paper.

Mrs. Barnett said that the sooner they have the score sheets, the better. She also reminded the Commissioners that they do not score the organizations as a team. She said that she would like for them to be completed by August 26. She also suggested that the NGO Committee meet on August 29.

It was **moved by Mr. J. Young**, seconded by Mr. Cothran, *to expand the agenda to include considering Grace Project and Capacity Builders.*

There was no one to speak for or against expanding the agenda. No audible vote was taken.

Mr. Thomas said that he would like to pull Capacity Builders from the agenda additions.

He then talked about Grace Project, which will come out of the E. Edward Housing Trust Fund. The group has received \$500k from the State, and they are requesting \$143k from the Parish. The Louisiana Housing Corporation will match this \$750k. They do not need the funds this year, but would like to have a statement or resolution committing to those funds.

The Clerk of the Commission stated that this is to renovate six family sized units.

It was **moved by Mr. Thomas**, seconded Mr. Burrell, *to recommend to the full body an appropriation of \$143k for Grace Project for funding year 2025. Motion carried by acclamation.*

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 3:21 p.m.



Michelle Nations
Assistant to the Commission Clerk