

MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION
OF THE CADDO PARISH COMMISSION
HELD ON THE 3rd DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2024

The Caddo Parish Commission met in a Work Session, on the above date, at 3:30 p.m., in the Government Chambers, with Mr. J. Young, presiding, and the following members in attendance constituting a quorum: Commissioners Atkins, Blake, Burrell, Cothran, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Kracman, Lazarus, Thomas, G. Young, and Mr. J. Young (11). ABSENT: Commissioner Jones (1).

The invocation and Pledge of Allegiance were given during previous committee meetings, so the Commission moved onto Agenda Additions.

AGENDA ADDITIONS

It was **moved by Mr. Cothran**, seconded by Mr. Thomas, *that the agenda be expanded and Proclamation declaring September as Suicide Prevention & Awareness Month be placed under New Business.*

The President opened the floor for anyone to speak in favor or against this public hearing. There being no one to speak, the President closed the public hearing.

At this time, Mr. Cothran's motion carried unanimously.

There were no Citizens Comments or Visitors, so the Commission moved onto Administration Report.

ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

- Juvenile Detention

Parish Administrator, Erica Bryant, said that there are thirteen children in the Detention Center; two of which are OJJ. There are two 17-year olds, and sixteen children at CCC. There are 496 children on probation.

- Intergovernmental Meeting

Mrs. Bryant said that the Intergovernmental Meeting will be rescheduled to a different date. She will provide more details as they become available.

- Public Defender's Office Request

Mrs. Bryant also said that Administration received an appropriation request from the Public Defender's Office to help with operating costs, such as raising salaries.

Mr. Epperson suggested that this be discussed during the Public Safety Committee that is scheduled for September 19.

- Budget Retreat

Mrs. Bryant reminded the Commissioners that the budget retreat will be held this Friday at the Petroleum Club.

COMMISSION REMARKS

- Mr. Atkins asked for an update regarding the elevators at the courthouse. Mr. Kevin Lawrence, Facilities & Maintenance Director, said that they are experiencing issues with Elevator 3, but they are working to get it back online. He also mentioned that they are requesting that all the elevators be replaced in next year's budget.

- Mr. Epperson talked about Labor Day. He encouraged businesses to get together at the Fair and tell people what their business is and how many people they employ.

He also said that September 29 is Gold Star Mother's Day. Mr. Epperson asked that people recognize the mothers who lost their children while at war. He would like these people to be recognized at the second Regular Session in September.

There was not a President's Report or Old Business, so the Commission moved onto New Business.

NEW BUSINESS

It was **moved by Mr. Atkins**, seconded by Mr. Thomas, *to englobe the following ordinances to Thursday's agenda for introduction:*

- *Ordinance No. 6456 of 2024, an ordinance setting the Parish Millage for the purpose of paying principal and interest, due in 2024 on outstanding Parish bond issues and to instruct the Assessor to include said millage on the tax roll of the Parish of Caddo for the year 2024, and to otherwise provide with respect thereto*
- *Ordinance No. 6457 of 2024, an ordinance to adopt the values fixed, or to be fixed by the Louisiana Tax Commission on all assessments for railways and other public service corporations, and to instruct the assessor to extend such assessments and values on the tax roll of the Parish of Caddo for the year 2024, and to otherwise provide with respect thereto*
- *Ordinance No. 6458 of 2024, an ordinance to set the General Purpose and Special Purpose Millages providing for an increase in the millage rates not in excess of the prior years maximum rates, as allowed by Article VII, Section 23 of The Louisiana Constitution of 1974 and La R.S. 47:1705 (b), levying and imposing taxes and assessments for 2024 on all the property subject to taxation in the Parish of Caddo, and to otherwise provide with respect thereto*
- *Ordinance No. 6459 of 2024, an ordinance to set the General Purpose and Special Purpose Millages providing for millage rate adjustments, as allowed by Article VII, Section 23 of the Louisiana Constitution of 1974 and La R.S. 47:1705 (b), levying and imposing taxes and assessments for 2024 on all the property subject to taxation in the Parish of Caddo, and to otherwise provide with respect thereto.*
- *Ordinance 6460 of 2024, an ordinance setting the assessment of property classified as timberlands and to instruct the Assessor to include said assessment on the tax roll of the Parish of Caddo for the year 2024, and to otherwise provide with respect thereto*

Mr. Atkins encouraged his colleagues to take a look at Ordinance No. 6458 and Ordinance No. 6459.

Mrs. Bryant explained each of the Ordinances per Mrs. Gage-Watts' request. She said that these millages are adopted annually and instructs the Tax Assessor to put the rates on the tax rolls for the Parish of Caddo. Mrs. Bryant said that this is an assessment year, so Ordinance No. 6458 adjusts the rates downward; and Ordinance No. 6459 keeps the rates the same.

Mr. Epperson wanted to know where can these funds be used. Mrs. Bryant said that these ordinances are establishing the rates. Mrs. Bryant also mentioned that typically, the Commission has accepted the lower adjusted rates.

Mr. Cothran asked for literature regarding the millage rates to distribute to the citizens. Mr. G. Young agreed.

Mr. G. Young then wanted to know why this doesn't go to the ballot. Mrs. Bryant explained that the Commission has to set the property tax millages annually, which will be used to calculate property taxes. Every four years, properties are reassessed by the Tax Assessor. In 2024, property values increased. Now, the Commission has to decide whether or not to reduce it or leaving it the same in order to collect additional revenue. If the assessment went down, there is a different process.

At this time, Mr. Atkins' motion carried, as shown by following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Blake, Burrell, Cothran, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Kracman, Lazarus, Thomas, G. Young, and Mr. J. Young (11). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: Commissioner Jones (1). ABSENT: None (0).

It was **moved by Mr. Thomas**, seconded by Mrs. Gage-Watts, *that Ordinance No. 6461 of 2024, an ordinance to sell surplus property under Chapter 19, Article II, Division 3 of the Code of Ordinances relative to donation of adjudicated property acquired by the Parish under La. R.S. 47:2236 et seq., to authorize the donation of property to Gods of Grind, LLC, and to otherwise provide with respect thereto* be moved to Thursday's agenda for introduction. Motion carried, as shown by following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Blake, Burrell, Cothran, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Kracman, Lazarus, Thomas, G. Young, and Mr. J. Young (11). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: Commissioner Jones (1). ABSENT: None (0).

It was **moved by Mr. G. Young**, seconded by Mrs. Gage-Watts, *that Ordinance No. 6462 of 2024, an ordinance to sell surplus property under Chapter 19, Article II, Division 3 of the Code of Ordinances relative to donation of adjudicated property acquired by the Parish under La. R.S. 47:2236 et seq., to authorize the donation of property to Caddo Parish Fire Protection District One, and to otherwise provide with respect thereto* be moved to Thursday's agenda for introduction. Motion carried, as shown by following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Blake, Burrell, Cothran, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Kracman, Lazarus, Thomas, G. Young, and Mr. J. Young (11). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: Commissioner Jones (1). ABSENT: None (0).

It was **moved by Mrs. Gage-Watts**, seconded Mr. Atkins, *Resolution No. 56 of 2024, a resolution relative to hazard mitigation, to adopt an updated Hazard Mitigation Plan, and otherwise providing with respect thereto* be moved to Thursday's agenda for consideration.

Mrs. Gage-Watts asked for clarification regarding this resolution. Attorney Bernstein said that this is a requirement from the State with regards to Emergency Preparedness.

Mr. Epperson asked that this be incorporated into the Citizens Disaster Committee's manual.

At this time, Mrs. Gage-Watts' motion carried, as shown by following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Blake, Burrell, Cothran, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Kracman, Lazarus, Thomas, G. Young, and Mr. J. Young (11). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: Commissioner Jones (1). ABSENT: None (0).

It was **moved by Mr. Thomas**, seconded by Mrs. Gage-Watts, *to englobe and move the following resolutions to Thursday's agenda for consideration:*

- *Resolution No. 57, amending Resolution No. 48 of 2023, which established a Citizens Disaster Response, Recovery, and Review Committee in Caddo Parish, and otherwise providing with respect thereto*
- *Resolution No. 58 of 2024, a resolution amending the Rules & By-Laws of the Caddo Parish Commission to provide for a permanent Public Safety Committee, and otherwise providing with respect thereto*

At this time, Mr. Thomas' motion carried, as shown by following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Blake, Burrell, Cothran, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Kracman, Lazarus, Thomas, G. Young, and Mr. J. Young (11). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: Commissioner Jones (1). ABSENT: None (0).

It was **moved by Mr. Thomas**, seconded by Mr. Cothran, *that Resolution No. 59 of 2024, a resolution requesting that the Louisiana Legislature adopt legislation authorizing the creation of land banks by local jurisdictions in Louisiana and establishing the structure and authority therefore, and otherwise providing with respect thereto* be moved to Thursday's agenda for consideration.

Mr. Thomas said that the Economic Development Committee discussed this in detail. He yielded to Mr. G. Young for further discussion.

Mr. G. Young said that this could help remove blight in the community.

At this time, Mr. Thomas' motion carried, as shown by following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Blake, Burrell, Cothran, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Kracman, Lazarus, Thomas, G. Young, and Mr. J. Young (11). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: Commissioner Jones (1). ABSENT: None (0).

It was **moved by Mr. Burrell**, seconded by Mr. Epperson, *that Resolution No. 60 of 2024, a resolution regarding Executive Order No. 24-132 directing schools to not teach Critical Race Theory, expressing the Caddo Parish's opposition to the order, and otherwise providing with respect thereto* be moved to Thursday's agenda for consideration.

Mr. Burrell said that Critical Race Theory is not in K-12. He believes that this is a political statement by the Governor and creates disinformation and divisiveness.

Mr. J. Young suggested adding the language "it is not currently being taught in K-12". He also said that he only encountered Critical Race Theory (CRT) in law school.

Mr. G. Young said that he has a fundamental issue with the Governor's Executive Order. He said that it never explains what CRT is.

Substitute motion by Mr. Atkins, seconded by Mr. Kracman, *that Resolution No. 60 of 2024, a resolution regarding Executive Order No. 24-132 directing schools to not teach Critical Race Theory, expressing the Caddo Parish's opposition to the order, and otherwise providing with respect thereto* be tabled indefinitely.

Mr. Atkins does not feel that this is germane to the business of Caddo Parish.

Mr. Burrell said that the Caddo Parish Commission is a local government, even though they are not directly over the education of the children. All politics are local period, he said.

Call for the Question by Mr. Kracman, seconded by Mr. Atkins.

Mr. J. Young said that there is a standing rule that the Commission body allows

Commissioners who have not spoken on a matter, to speak.

Mr. Epperson and Mrs. Gage-Watts agreed with Mr. Burrell whole heartedly.

The Chair said that the Call for the Question is not necessary, so the Commission moved onto voting on the substitute motion made by Mr. Atkins.

At this time, Mr. Atkins' motion failed, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Blake, Kracman, and Lazarus (4). NAYS: Commissioners Burrell, Cothran, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Thomas, G. Young, and J. Young (7). ABSENT: Commissioner Jones (1). ABSTAIN: None (0).

At this time, Mr. Burrell's motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Burrell, Cothran, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Thomas, G. Young, and J. Young (7). (4). NAYS: Commissioners Atkins, Blake, Kracman, and Lazarus (4). ABSENT: Commissioner Jones (1). ABSTAIN: None (0).

It was **moved by Mr. Epperson**, seconded by Mrs. Gage-Watts, *to englobo and move the following resolutions to Thursday's agenda for consideration:*

- *Resolution No. 61 of 2024, a resolution to authorize the Caddo Parish Administrator to approve the assignment, bill of sale, and conveyance of State Agency Lease #22227 from Cypress Energy Partners, LLC, to Paloma Natural Gas, LLC, and otherwise providing with respect thereto*
- *Resolution No. 62 of 2024, a resolution to authorize the Caddo Parish Administrator to approve the assignment, bill of sale, and conveyance of State Agency Lease #22214 from Cypress Energy Partners, LLC, to Paloma Natural Gas, LLC, and otherwise providing with respect thereto*
- *Resolution No. 63 of 2024, a resolution to authorize the Caddo Parish Administrator to approve the assignment, bill of sale, and conveyance of State Agency Lease #22215 from Cypress Energy Partners, LLC, to Paloma Natural Gas, LLC, and otherwise providing with respect thereto*

At this time, Mr. Epperson's motion carried, as shown by following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Blake, Burrell, Cothran, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Kracman, Lazarus, Thomas, G. Young, and Mr. J. Young (11). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: Commissioner Jones (1). ABSENT: None (0).

It was **moved by Mr. Epperson**, seconded by Mr. Atkins, *that Resolution No. 64 of 2024, a resolution relative to citizen access to high-speed internet access, to urge the Louisiana Office of Broadband/Connect Louisiana to use available BEAD funding for improving broadband service in public housing and other multi-family dwellings, and otherwise providing with respect thereto* be moved to Thursday's agenda for consideration.

Mr. Burrell said that this resolution came about to use additional BEAD funding to connect urban and rural constituents to the broadband. Mr. Atkins agreed.

Mr. Epperson mentioned that the CCAA Board will have a similar resolution to submit the Louisiana Office of Broadband.

At this time, Mr. Epperson's motion carried, as shown by following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Blake, Burrell, Cothran, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Kracman, Lazarus, Thomas, G. Young, and Mr. J. Young (11). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: Commissioner Jones (1). ABSENT: None (0).

It was **moved by Mr. Thomas**, seconded by Mr. Cothran, *that the following items be englobed and moved to Thursday's agenda for consideration:*

- *Special Resolution of Remembrance for Willie J. Singleton*
- *Special Resolution declaring September as Sickle Cell Anemia Awareness Month in Caddo Parish*
- *Special Resolution declaring Hunger Awareness Month in Caddo Parish*
- *Special Resolution declaring Hispanic Heritage Month in Caddo Parish*
- *Special Resolution of Remembrance for Mrs. Bobby T. Henderson*
- *Special Resolution of Recognition for Greenwood Chamber of Commerce 20th Annual Pioneer Days Heritage Pancake Breakfast*

- *Special Resolution of Recognition for Town of Greenwood's 50th Anniversary of Pioneer Heritage Days*
- *Special Resolution declaring September as Suicide Prevention & Awareness Month in Caddo Parish*

At this time, Mr. Thomas' motion carried, as shown by following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Blake, Burrell, Cothran, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Kracman, Lazarus, Thomas, G. Young, and Mr. J. Young (11). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: Commissioner Jones (1). ABSENT: None (0).

It was **moved by Mr. Kracman**, seconded by Mr. Atkins, *that the following items be englobed and moved to Thursday's agenda for consideration:*

- *Reappointment of Jennifer Fant to the North Caddo Medical Center Board*
- *Reappointment of Kenneth Cochran to the North Caddo Medical Center Board*
- *Reappointment of Phyllis Hart to the Parish Zoning Commission*
- *Appointment of Jessica Tullis to the Parish Zoning Commission*
- *Appointment of Henry Swearington as Interim Constable for Ward 2 Oil City*

Mrs. Gage-Watts wanted to know if these were new appointments, and if there were vacancies on the board. The Clerk of the Commission explained that the Ward 2 Constable died in office, so there needs to be an interim appointed.

Mrs. Gage-Watts then asked about the appointment of Jessica Tullis to the Parish Zoning Commission. Mr. Kracman said that he would like to replace someone on the board. Mr. J. Young asked for clarification on if the Commission can replace board members. Attorney Bernstein said that there is currently an incumbent in this position. He also mentioned that this was done a meeting or so ago with another board. Mrs. Gage-Watts said that this is different from the water board situation.

Mr. Epperson agreed and said that this was different from the water board situation. He also asked who was currently in the position. Attorney Bernstein said it was Damien Humphries. Mr. Epperson then wanted to know if he submitted his resignation. Mr. Kracman said that he has not resigned. He further explained that Mr. Humphries was supposed to abstain from some votes and conversations, but did not. He feels that there are ethical issues involved. Mr. Kracman also said that Mr. Humphries stated, "I may as well as stayed at home" during the last meeting, so he is attempting to grant that wish.

Mr. J. Young would like more information regarding this. He asked for the minutes of the PZC.

Substitute motion by Mr. G. Young, seconded by Mrs. Gage-Watts, *to postpone the appointment of Jessica Tullis to the Parish Zoning Commission to the September 16 Work Session, and move all the appointments mentioned above to the Thursday's Regular Session for consideration.*

Mr. G. Young said that the Commission does have the authority to remove board appointments without cause. He also explained that the previous removal of the water board members was that they requested to be removed from the board.

Mr. Kracman said that Mr. Humphries has interjected himself in situations that could benefit himself. Mr. Kracman also said that he is not "throwing members off the board all willy nilly".

Mr. Atkins said that removing board members is a "slippery slope".

At this time, Mr. G. Young's motion carried, as shown by following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Blake, Burrell, Cothran, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Kracman, Lazarus, Thomas, G. Young, and Mr. J. Young (11). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: Commissioner Jones (1). ABSENT: None (0).

It was **moved by Mr. Cothran**, seconded by Mr. Thomas, *that the recommendations from the Property Standards Board be moved to Thursday's agenda for consideration regarding the following cases:*

- *Property Standards Case #1 – 9582 Mailhes, Shreveport, LA 71106*
- *Property Standards Case #2 – 0 Dansby (Anderson) Road, Shreveport, LA*
- *Property Standards Case #3 – 13929 Highway 1, Vivian, LA*

- *Property Standards Case #4 – 11020 General Patton Ave. Shreveport, LA*
- *Property Standards Case #5 – 3853 Dansby (Anderson) Road, Shreveport, LA*

At this time, Mr. Cothran's motion carried, as shown by following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Blake, Burrell, Cothran, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Kracman, Lazarus, Thomas, G. Young, and Mr. J. Young (11). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: Commissioner Jones (1). ABSENT: None (0).

It was **moved by Mr. Thomas**, seconded by Mrs. Gage-Watts, *that the following action be taken:*

- *Caddo Parish Tax Assessor Charlie Hennington be a Visitor at Thursday's Regular Session to present information related to the Tax Board of Review Appeals hearing*
- *Airport Park Community Choir be a Visitor at the September 19, 2024 Regular Session*

At this time, Mr. Thomas' motion carried, as shown by following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Blake, Burrell, Cothran, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Kracman, Lazarus, Thomas, G. Young, and Mr. J. Young (11). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: Commissioner Jones (1). ABSENT: None (0).

COMMUNIQUES/COMMITTEE REPORTS

- Mr. Atkins said that each Commissioner has a right to speak on matters on the agenda, but it is also his right to keep a tight agenda.
- Mr. G. Young said that he still does not know what Critical Race Theory is, and it simply lacks any merit.
- Mr. Cothran wanted to know if Dale Sibley and Mike Spence were going to come and speak to the Commission. The Clerk of the Commission said that they are scheduled to come to the September 16 Work Session.
- Mr. Burrell respects anyone's position on what they would like to express around the horseshoe. All politics are local, he reiterated.
- Mrs. Blake reminded everyone that National Night Out is scheduled for October 1. She encouraged everyone to get out and meet their neighbors.
- Mrs. Gage-Watts talked about the PROTECT program. She said that the legislation to create this program started with the Caddo Parish Commission. Mrs. Gage-Watts is looking forward for this initiative to come into fruition.

She also asked for volunteers to work with her on the Expungement Summit.

- Mr. Thomas wished Mr. Jones a Happy Birthday and announced that his birthday is tomorrow.
- Mr. Burrell requested a list of the National Night Out events.

CONSENT AGENDA

- *Ordinance No. 6450 of 2024, an ordinance prohibiting the placement of certain monuments on parish property and otherwise providing with respect thereto*
- *Ordinance No. 6452 of 2024, an ordinance declaring the intent of the Parish under LA.R.S. 47:2236 to acquire full ownership interest in a parcel of property identified by Caddo Parish Tax Assessor's Geographic Number 171410-011-0031-00 and described as Lot 18, and west half of Lot 19, Block 10, Queensborough Annex, Shreveport, and to otherwise provide with respect thereto*
- *Ordinance No. 6453 of 2024, an ordinance adopting Article VII of Chapter 26 of the Code of Ordinances, relative to enforcement of speed limits by means of traffic cameras and other electronic devices, and to otherwise provide with respect thereto*
- *Ordinance No. 6454 of 2024, an ordinance declaring the intent of the Parish under LA.R.S. 47:2236 to acquire full ownership interest in seven parcels of property in the Stovall Subdivision, Unit No. 3, all within Section 26, Township 18 North, Range 14 West, Caddo Parish, Louisiana, and to otherwise provide with respect thereto*

- *Ordinance No. 6455 of 2024, an ordinance to amend Article VI of Chapter 26 of the Code of Ordinances of the Parish of Caddo relative to Section 26-182, Schedule A, Speed Limits, on Dixie Garden Drive, and to otherwise provide with respect thereto*

At this time, there was no further discussion to come before the Commission, so the Commission adjourned at 4:58 p.m.


Assistant to the Commission Clerk