

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
CADDO PARISH COMMISSION'S  
JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMITTEE  
HELD ON THE 28th 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 (4). ABSENT: Commissioners Jones and J. Young (2).

The invocation and Pledge of Allegiance were given during a previous committee meeting. There were no agenda additions nor public comments, so the Committee moved onto New Business.

**NEW BUSINESS**

- *Follow up discussions from August 22 presentation to include Second Chance Youth Prevention Project, R.A.P.S. program, etc.*

Mrs. Bryant said that the R.A.P.S. program might need to be forwarded to the NGO Committee.

Assistant Parish Administrator, Mr. Walker, said that there are programs that Juvenile works with. Over the years, the Commission has funded the School of Greatness; VYJ has a program called Power of Choice; etc. There are lots of good ideas, but limited amount of money, he said. Mr. Walker suggested reviewing all of the programs that are already in place.

Mrs. Gage-Watts agreed. She also wanted to know if the Commission has access to federal funds for these programs. Mr. Randall said that the Parish does not have access to them in a direct way. He also explained that he did meet with Mr. Davis and the Second Chance team, but the discussions were in the exploratory phase of their desire to run a facility similar to Jewell House or the Restoration Crisis Center.

Mrs. Gage-Watts also mentioned Johnny Gray Jones. She said that there was a meeting of possibly re-opening it. Mr. Randall said that they were not invited to that meeting. Mrs. Bryant agreed and said that Caddo Parish is not interested in owning a facility such as Johnny Gray Jones. She further explained that in the past, Caddo juveniles were housed there, but Caddo Parish did not own the facility.

Mrs. Gage-Watts wanted to know if there was enough capacity to address the issues with the girls in partnering with RCC, Jewell House, and the Kennedy Center. Mr. Randall said that there is.

Mr. Cothran asked about the children who are at CCC. Mr. Randall explained that the children at CCC are under the auspices of the Sheriff's Office. Mr. Walker also said that there is a specialized unit for children who are under the age of 18.

Mrs. Gage-Watts requested that a list of all the services that Juvenile Services is partnering with.

Mr. Walker talked about the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act. He explained that the juveniles could learn trades and work for other companies as apprentices. The WIOA will pay their wages.

Mrs. Gage-Watts said that it is the responsibility of the Commission to connect Juvenile Services to other organizations in the community. She said that all of these resources should be put in a book as a reference for everyone.

Mrs. Blake asked about the WIOA program. She heard rumors that the barber program at LA Tech is struggling and possibly closing. She asked if cosmetology would be included in the WIOA program. Mr. Walker was not sure. Mrs. Blake said that she will look into it further.

- *Continued discussion regarding the establishment of a Youth Planning Commission*

Mrs. Gage-Watts provided a synopsis of the Youth Planning Commission. She said that this initiative has been successful in other counties across the country. There would be up to fifty members from public high schools (10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> graders) appointed to this Commission. Each Commissioner would appoint four students to the Commission.

Mrs. Gage-Watts is requesting that Mrs. Nations and Mrs. McGee oversee this program as directors. Human Resources and the Commission Clerk's Office will work together to develop guidelines and would be government focused.

Mr. Cothran wanted to know how this initiative would differ from the City's initiative. He also asked about the logistics of the program, such as transportation. Mrs. Gage-Watts does not feel that there will be any issues with transportation. She said that the program would run from September to May, with summers off. Mrs. Gage-Watts also said that they can partner with Uber and Lyft to help the students to get to the meetings.

Mr. Thomas feels that there should be programs to capture as many students as possible.

Mrs. Blake asked for a Mission Statement. Mrs. Gage-Watts said that the mission statement should mirror the example that is provided. The mission is to provide Caddo Parish youth with a vehicle to learn about government, participate in the process, and to represent and articulate the need of the youth in this Parish.

Mrs. Blake then wanted to know if there was a GPA requirement. Mrs. Gage-Watts said that there is and it would be the same as the state requirements. Mrs. Blake said that there are concerns with the "middle student" who could be missed. She said that the middle student is one who is too smart to be part of certain programs, but struggled too much to be part of exceptional programs.

Mrs. Blake then wanted to know if the students will have a polo or patch to distinguish these students from the rest of them.

Mrs. Gage-Watts would like this to begin in January. Mrs. Bryant said that there are several details and logistics that need to be ironed out before the first meeting is scheduled. Mrs. Bryant also said that a resolution would be needed from the Commission body.

Mr. Thomas suggested that the application process opens in January and closes in May for the next school year (2025-2026). He said that this would allow counselors to make recommendations.

Mr. Cothran suggested that the Youth Commission start out small, then grow. He then wanted to know what would he do since he doesn't not have a high school in his district. Mrs. Gage-Watts said that he could appoint children from another high school.

Mrs. Blake requested that a media packet be sent out with regards to the Youth Commission. She said that this is a positive measure and would like a positive light shown on it. Mrs. Gage-Watts said that they would rely heavily on the Communications Department for this.

Mrs. Bryant said that there are several details that have to be worked out when working with minors, such as background checks, hours worked, etc.

It was **moved by Mr. Thomas**, seconded by Mrs. Gage-Watts, *to recommend to the full body the establishment of Youth Commission.*

**Amendment by Mr. Cothran** *that the Commission start with a smaller number of members on the Commission. Motion died to the lack of a second.*

Mrs. Gage-Watts mentioned that each Commissioner does not have to appoint four members, they are just allocated four members. She also said that the students should be in 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grades.

At this time, Mr. Thomas' original motion carried unanimously.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.



Michelle Nations  
Assistant to the Commission Clerk