

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
CADDO PARISH COMMISSION'S  
LONG RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE  
HELD ON THE 17TH DAY OF OCTOBER, 2024

The Caddo Parish Long Range Planning Committee met in legal session on the above date at 2:30 p.m. in the conference room of Government Plaza Chambers, with Mr. Chris Kracman, presiding, and the following member in attendance constituting a quorum: Commissioners Kracman, Lazarus, Thomas, G. Young, and J. Young (5). ABSENT: None (0).

Mr. Thomas gave the invocation, and Mr. J. Young led the Committee in the Pledge of Allegiances.

There were no Public Comments nor Agenda Additions, so the Committee moved onto New Business.

**NEW BUSINESS**

- *Discuss and make recommendations related to Resolution No. 65 of 2024 and other matters related to Fairgrounds Field.*

Mr. Bill Robertson, Friends of Fairgrounds Field, presented a packet of information with a rendering of what Fairgrounds Field could look like. Currently, the structure needs attention. All parties involved agree that something needs to be done about the structure.

Mr. Robertson said that they are proposing new ownership for the structure that is currently owned by the City. They suggested a four-part ownership structure involving the City, Parish, School Board, and private partnerships. He also indicated the potential of state funding with examples of recent legislative capital outlay projects, i.e. the Ninth Ward Stadium. He said that the State allocated funds for stadium renovations and field improvements in New Orleans. Mr. Robertson also explained that there would need to be private partnerships as well. He said that Mr. Linc Coleman and his firm are experts at these types of arrangements.

Mr. Robertson also talked about the ongoing lawsuit between Friends and the City of Shreveport. He explained that there are health concerns regarding bats and their droppings. He said that bat deposits at the Fairground Field pose a health risk. There was a histoplasmosis outbreak in Indianapolis which caused fatalities. The dry and dusty conditions at the Fairgrounds could disperse histoplasmosis if it is not properly managed. Mr. Robertson said that they are seeking a Stay of Execution for the facility.

He said that efforts to meet with the mayor and convince him of a better outlook for the ballpark have been unsuccessful so far.

Mr. Chris Coe came before the Committee and talked about the loss of buildings in the city over the past 30-40 years. He believes that this particular issue is a betrayal of the public trust. He emphasized the importance of treating public money in a sacred way.

Mr. Coe said that the reason this building is being threatened with demolition is due to neglect. The building was funded by public money and should have been maintained by a government department. Mr. Coe believes the discussion about demolition is absurd and wants the building to be preserved. He said that there is a way to save it. Mr. Coe said that it was originally designed as a multi-purpose venue and is a public asset.

Mr. Coe then discussed the stability of the facility. The lawsuit revealed that a structural analysis of the building confirmed its stability. The building needs vision, thought, and care for its revival, he said. Mr. Coe asked for help to get the Stay of Execution to develop a comprehensive plan for its management and finances.

There was further discussion regarding the lawsuit and stadium demolition. Lawsuit requires the city to comply with disease control centers and Louisiana health department for the removal of disease carrying home on the stadium. New owners will pause the demolition to allow recreation plans and commit to a safe reconstruction process.

Mr. Linc Coleman said that he was a part of citizens who came together in summer 2022 to discuss the city's contemplation of demolishing the stadium. He recalled past experiences playing at the old stadium and engaging in friendly matches with the Captains.

Mr. Coleman then talked about the shrinking city population. He said that Shreveport's population density has declined significantly since the 1800s. The city has lost 30,000 people in the last 30 years and 12,000 in the last 10 years. Urgent action is needed to address this population decline and save the city, he said.

Revitalizing Fairgrounds Field and its 172 acres presents an opportunity for academic repurposing and conservation, he said. The aim is to transform the entire campus, fostering positive impact on the inner city. A thorough investigation into renovation and operating costs is underway, with a request for a 6-month demolition delay from the city. Mr. Coleman also said that requests for the stadium's

information was denied. This information is needed for a comprehensive analysis. Mr. Coleman also said that they met with various stakeholders to discuss possibly saving Fairgrounds Field.

The city proposed to give the school board the fairgrounds for renovation with an estimated budget of \$2 million. The primary purpose was to create a field for Byrd High School and possibly other schools in the city. Efforts were made in 2022 to repurpose the fairgrounds field, but the city turned down the proposal.

Mr. Coleman talked about the partnership that they are proposing. A joint venture could reduce the city's financial obligation from 100% to 25%. The Commission would be part of that venture, and so would the School Board, along with the private sector.

Mr. Coleman also said that they reached out to the Tourism Bureau and asked for the annual operating budget. Annual operating budget analysis revealed a deficit of \$80,000. They believe that it would be a minimal expense compared to potential losses from a decline in the tax base. Queensboro residents emphasize the importance of keeping inner-city kids engaged. Youth and sports serve as common denominators that can unify the city. The initiative goes beyond building a baseball stadium; it aims to save the inner city.

Mr. G. Young asked for a copy of the proposed MOU. Mr. Coleman said that efforts have been made to meet with the mayor to discuss the MOU further.

Mr. G. Young wanted to know if the LA State Health Department has received a copy of the report with regards to asbestos and other potential health risks to demolition crew members. Mr. Coleman said that he is not aware of those reports. They have requested information from the City and are still seeking evidence of the City fulfilling their obligations.

Mr. G. Young then wanted to know if there have been any discussions with the current administration. Mr. Coleman said that he has not personally contacted the Governor's Office nor the State Health Department, but they did write the Governor, but did not receive a response thus far.

Mr. G. Young asked if the Administration and President J. Young has met with the Mayor regarding this matter. Mr. Kracman said that the Mayor's Office and the City Councilmembers were made aware of this meeting and were invited to attend.

There were discussions regarding histoplasmosis. A nationally recognized expert was brought in to study the cases. It is an airborne disease that is dangerous and can cause severe illness. It can stay active for three years, leading to potential lawsuits. The disease affects animals, food, and medical districts.

Mr. Burrell said that his initial concern was this area dying. This area experienced significant population decline, leading to the need for district expansion. There have also been school closures in this district. Mr. Burrell said that this area has potential for economic growth with various facilities like a stadium, fairground, and shopping area. He has been working for over 25 years to create economic development opportunities in the area. Mr. Burrell said that Queensborough is the second largest Shreveport and has the potential for growth. The area has great infrastructure but lacks investment. Fairgrounds Field offers opportunities for crime reduction, neighborhood revitalization, and economic development.

Mr. Burrell is concerned with the health issues and potential lawsuits that would stem from it. He made a call to former Governor John Bel Edwards, who then imposed a moratorium and instructed the health department to investigate the issue. The LA Department of Health said that they need to construct a biohazard team to assess this situation. He asked Dr. Whyte to provide research and assistance in resolving the issue. Mr. Burrell said that he has not received anything regarding the biohazard situation.

Mrs. Gage-Watts wanted to know if the Sports Commission has been informed of this situation and if there was a potential collaboration. Mr. Coleman said that they were interested and shared ideas and suggestions for utilizing the collaboration. Beyond that, they have not had any other discussions.

Mr. Coleman said that they did reach out to Major League Baseball, who has a program for revitalization for inner cities. They could be a potential investing partner.

Mr. Thomas applauded the efforts of the citizens who are trying to save the stadium. He hopes that the field can be saved. He expressed support for this cause.

It was **moved by Mr. Kracman**, seconded by Mr. J. Young, *to schedule a Long Range Planning Committee on November 7, 2024 and invite the School Board Superintendent, School Board Member, a representative from the Sports Commission, and the Mayor of Shreveport to discuss Fairgrounds Field further.*

Mr. J. Young said that he reached out to the YMCA who expressed interest in hosting 40 championship little league games annually at Fairgrounds Field. He also said that more information is needed, including annual operating revenue estimates, before making a decision.

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

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 that reads "Michelle Nations". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michelle Nations  
Assistant to the Commission Clerk