

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CADDO PARISH COMMISSION'S
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
HELD ON THE 30TH DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2024

The Caddo Parish Economic Development Committee met in legal session on the above date at 2:00 p.m. in the Government Plaza Chambers Conference Room, with the following members were present constituting a quorum: Commissioners Atkins, Burrell, Cothran, Gage-Watts, Thomas, G. Young, and J. Young (7). ABSENT: Commissioner Jones (1).

Mr. Atkins gave the invocation, and Mrs. Bryant led the Committee in the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA ADDITIONS

It was **moved by Mr. G. Young**, seconded by Mr. Thomas, *to expand the agenda and add Discussion of creating a Small Business Development Board under New Business.*

At this time, there was a public hearing. No one came to speak in favor or opposition of this agenda addition. The public hearing was then closed.

Mr. G. Young's motion carried unanimously.

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

NEW BUSINESS

- *Recommendation to full body regarding creation of Caddo Film & Television Commission*

It was **moved by Mr. Thomas**, seconded by Mr. Burrell, *to recommend to the full body the creation of Film & Entertainment Advisory Board.*

Mr. Thomas thank Mr. G. Young for bringing this initiative forward and feels that this will be beneficial to the Parish.

Mr. Burrell wanted to know if the Parish had any guidelines or policies regarding film. Mrs. Barnette said that the Parish did not.

Attorney Frazier mentioned that there was a sales tax exemption for the entities who participated in film and entertainment.

Mr. G. Young wanted to know what key ingredients were needed to establish this board. Attorney Frazier said that a charge is needed; how they are appointed; etc. A distinction is needed to determine whether the board is an advisory board, working committee, etc. Mr. G. Young said that further discussion is probably needed.

Mr. Cothran agreed and wanted to know if this is an advisory committee or an advisory board. He said that mission and goals should be established. Mr. Burrell said that there should be a model that the Committee could use to see what fits best for the Parish.

Mr. G. Young imagined a board with its primary focus on developing a film and entertainment industry with a minimum of ten positions from the industry itself on the board. Five additional, less critical positions may be included, he said. Mr. G. Young would like to avoid involving individuals who are unfamiliar with the industry.

Attorney Frazier pointed out that if a board is created, it will be subject to Public Bid Law.

A question was raised on how many people would be on the board. Mr. G. Young envisions a board of fifteen people. Mr. Burrell had concerns with trying to obtain a quorum with a larger board. Mr. G. Young understood and emphasized the importance of timely decision making and balancing expertise with avoiding analysis paralysis.

The Clerk of the Commission said that Baton Rouge has a film board with nine committee members and two staff members.

Attorney Frazier suggested looking at other municipalities that have film and entertainment boards to help create a model that would work best for the Parish. Mr. Burrell said that a budget might need to be created. Mrs. Bryant pointed out that the Tourism Bureau has re-established their Film & Entertainment Committee. She suggested that the Parish collaborate with the Tourism Bureau on this endeavor.

Mr. G. Young asked that Legal look into this matter further and meet on October 14 to discuss it.

At this time, Mr. Thomas withdrew his motion.

- *Discussion of creating a Small Business Development Board*

Mr. G. Young said that he and Mr. Thomas attended an Industrial Development Board meeting. During that meeting, the IDB had to create a subcommittee within the board to address a certain issue. Mr. G. Young thought it would be advantageous to create a Commission Small Business Development Board to avoid issues like this in the future.

Attorney Frazier pointed out that Industrial Development Boards are allowed by State law and are not creatures of the Commission nor its Charter. She also explained that State law outlines how this board operates. The Commission cannot take funds from the IDB to operate a different board without fully dissolving the IDB and taking on its obligations. She further explained that if the Commission were to create an additional board, it would need to be fully funded by the Commission.

Mr. G. Young requested additional information regarding the intent and purpose of the Industrial Development Board.

Mr. Thomas wanted to know if the IDB could move the funds to a Small Business Fund. Attorney Frazier said that she would need to consult with their attorney and provide this information to the Committee at a later date.

Mr. Atkins wanted to know how the IDB is funded. Attorney Frazier said that they are allowed to keep a percentage of "deals" that are made. Mrs. Bryant agreed and said that they do not have an annual source of revenue. Mr. Atkins understood and said that shifting the focus of the IDB to small business development presents a higher risk than bringing in established businesses. He also said that this Committee allows for the possibility to help grow small businesses. Mr. Atkins would like to see the IDB stay true to their mission.

Answering another question from Mr. Atkins regarding who appoints members to the IDB, Attorney Frazier said that the Commission appoints those members. She further explained that the IDB does not have to come to the Commission for guidance on endeavors.

Mr. Burrell wanted to know if the Commission is stopping the IDB from funding small businesses. Mr. Thomas explained that the IDB set aside \$500k to help support small businesses. It was also explained that the Commission does not have the authority to take the \$500k.

Mr. J. Young wanted to know if the Commission is allowed to give monies to small businesses. Attorney Frazier said that there has to be a return on investment prior to providing the funds. She also said that the Commission cannot give a business startup money.

Mr. G. Young asked that the Committee develop a Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) to address the process and concerns that have been mentioned. Attorney Frazier said that there is one in place to request funds. Mr. G. Young requested that this be sent to all Committee members.

- *Recommendation regarding NGO applications*

Finance distributed handouts detailing NGO application recommendations. Mrs. Barnett explained that the economic development type grants show what was given in 2024, what is being requested for 2025, the funding suggestion, as well as the average scores between all the committee members.

Mr. Atkins asked about the funding allocation formula. Mrs. Barnett said that the top-scoring entity was recommended at 100% of their funding request; entities 85-89% received 100% of their previous year's request; those scoring 80-84% received 80% of their requested funding; and scores below 60% received nothing.

Mr. Atkins wanted to know if Administration is comfortable with the total funding request. Mrs. Bryant said that they were.

Mr. G. Young suggested providing feedback to the applicants whose requests were denied. The goal, he said, is to help applicants understand the reasons for denial and improve future submissions.

Mr. J. Young said that they should stay as close to their budget as possible. Mrs. Barnett said that the maximum budget for Economic Development is \$400k.

Mr. G. Young wanted to know about the funding suggestion analysis. Mrs. Barnett said that the funding suggestion is calculated based on their score and the previous year's request and is free from political influence.

It was **moved by Mr. Atkins**, seconded by Mrs. Gage-Watts, *to go through the applications and proposed changes as needed. Motion carried unanimously.*

It was **moved by Mr. J. Young**, seconded by Mr. Thomas, *that \$2k be deducted from the Independence Bowl and add \$2k to the Highland Partnership.*

Mr. J. Young said that the Independence Bowl has many sponsors. He said that the

Highland Center is smaller festival and an additional \$2k would go a long way.

Attorney Frazier said that the \$65k is a sponsorship from the Commission.

Mr. J. Young withdrew his original motion. It was **moved by Mr. J. Young**, seconded by Mr. Atkins, *to increase the funding to the Highland Partnership by \$2k.* Motion carried unanimously.

It was **moved by Mrs. Gage-Watts**, seconded by Mr. J. Young, *to increase the funding for the Shreveport-Bossier Military Affairs Council by \$5k.*

Mr. Atkins said that he would need to abstain from this vote due to his involvement with the Council.

At this time, Mrs. Gage-Watts' motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Burrell, Cothran, Gage-Watts, Thomas, G. Young, and J. Young (6). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: Commissioner Jones (1). ABSTAIN: Commissioner Atkins (1).

It was **moved by Mrs. Gage-Watts**, seconded by Mr. G. Young, *that the funding for the Shreveport-Bossier African American Chamber of Commerce be \$15k.*

Mr. Thomas said that he would need to abstain from this vote due to his involvement with the Chamber.

At this time, Mrs. Gage-Watts's motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Burrell, Cothran, Gage-Watts, G. Young, and J. Young (6). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: Commissioner Jones (1). ABSTAIN: Commissioner Thomas (1).

It was **moved by Mr. Burrell**, seconded by Mr. Thomas, *to fully fund the Louisiana State Fairgrounds.*

Mr. Burrell said that they have had some challenges due to COVID.

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

It was **moved by Mr. Thomas**, seconded by Mrs. Gage-Watts, *to fund the Strand Theater \$15k for 2025.*

Mr. J. Young mentioned that they have almost reached their budget. Mr. Burrell pointed out that the Strand Theater received money from the State.

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

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 3:18 p.m.



Michelle Nations
Assistant to the Commission Clerk