

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CADDO PARISH COMMISSION'S
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
HELD ON THE 19TH DAY OF MAY, 2025

The Caddo Parish Economic Development Committee met in legal session on the above date at 12:00 p.m., in the Government Plaza Chambers, with the following members were present constituting a quorum: Commissioners Burrell, Cothran, Gage-Watts, Lazarus, and G. Young (5). ABSENT: Commissioners Atkins, Thomas, and J. Young (3).

Mr. Burrell gave the invocation, and Mr. Lazarus led the Committee in the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA ADDITIONS

It was **moved by Mrs. Gage-Watts**, seconded by Mr. Burrell, *to expand the agenda and add discussion regarding a Pickleball Subcommittee under New Business.*

Mr. G. Young opened the floor for a public hearing. There being no one to speak in favor or against the agenda addition, the Chair closed the public hearing.

At this time, Mrs. Gage-Watts' motion carried unanimously by those members who were present and Commissioners Atkins, Thomas, and J. Young being absent (3).

NEW BUSINESS

- *Discuss and make recommendations regarding Ordinance No. 6545 of 2025, an ordinance amending the Budget of Estimated Revenues & Expenditures for the Oil & Gas Fund and the Economic Development Fund to appropriate funds for SkyWest Airlines*

Mrs. Bryant said that SkyWest is expected to generate 150 direct jobs and 375 indirect jobs, along with infrastructure improvements. The direct jobs will have salaries of \$70k-\$100k. The Parish's investment of \$250k is anticipated to yield a substantial return.

Mrs. Gage-Watts said that Mr. Atkins, who is not in attendance, wanted it to be on record that he is in support of SkyWest.

Mr. Cothran wanted to know if the City of Shreveport will be investing any monies towards this project. Mrs. Gage-Watts said that the City will be investing approximately \$4M toward infrastructure improvement, and LED has a matching investment of \$250k.

Mr. Epperson wanted to know if NLEP has any skin in the game. Mrs. Bryant said that NLEP will be working to get SUSLA's aviation program there. He then wanted to know if the IDB will be contributing. Mrs. Gage-Watts said that they will be investing \$250k. Mr. Epperson said that he is in support of SkyWest.

Mrs. Gage-Watts said that SkyWest is the largest in the United States that will be coming to Shreveport/Caddo Parish. She also mentioned that this will attract other businesses to this area.

Mr. Burrell said that there have been several discussions expanding the airport and its flights. He also mentioned that this could be more sporting events to the area. Mr. Burrell wanted to know if SUSLA still has a strong aeronautic program. Mrs. Bryant said that she hasn't heard otherwise and hopes that it continues to be a successful program.

Mr. Lazarus wanted to know if SkyWest asked for these funds up front. Mrs. Bryant said that there were discussions about it, but advised that it would need to come before the full body. Mr. Lazarus is in support of this project.

Mr. G. Young wanted to know if the City's \$4M was for in-kind donations or cash. Mrs. Bryant said that the infrastructure improvement would be cash. Mr. G. Young said that this is an exciting component to add to this area for people to live and work in this Parish.

Mr. Cothran mentioned Barksdale Air Force Base. He said that this is a perfect scenario for rotary wing. He then wanted to know if there is any media being pushed to the public. Mrs. Bryant said that there have been press conferences and press releases. Mrs. Gage-Watts said that Barksdale Air Force Base was part of the conversation for bringing SkyWest here.

Mr. Cothran then wanted to know how soon would they be hiring. Mrs. Bryant said that they would like to start hiring immediately.

Mr. G. Young is excited about this opportunity for Mooretown. He said that this project provides a tremendous dynamic for Shreveport. He is hopeful that there will be more restaurants, economic activity, and home construction in the area.

It was **moved by Mrs. Gage-Watts**, seconded by Mr. Thomas, *that Ordinance No. 6545*

of 2025, an ordinance amending the Budget of Estimated Revenues & Expenditures for the Oil & Gas Fund and the Economic Development Fund to appropriate funds for SkyWest Airlines be recommended to the full body. Motion carried unanimously by those members present with Commissioners Atkins and J. Young being absent (2).

- *Discussion regarding a Pickleball Subcommittee*

Mr. Burrell said that the previous discussions regarding the Pickleball facility, it was determined that the original proposed location off of Clyde Fant was not a good fit because it was underwater.

Mrs. Gage-Watts said that there has been a lengthy conversation regarding Pickleball. She said that it is advantageous to create subcommittees when making these types of appropriations.

Mr. G. Young wanted to know what was the purpose of the subcommittee. Mr. Epperson said that he is looking at it from a logistical standpoint. He also mentioned that there isn't a Parks & Recreation Committee. He suggested that a sub-committee be created to further look at the logistics of this endeavor. Mr. Epperson said that soccer is also exploding. He suggested that maybe a multi-sport complex be constructed.

Mr. Thomas wanted to know when was the Master Plan completed. Mrs. Bryant said that it was completed in 2023. Mr. Thomas said that the Commission should be focusing more on what's included in the Master Plan and bringing those suggestions into fruition. He is in support of the Pickleball facility, but also a multi-sport complex.

Mrs. Blake wanted to know where is the proposed location. Mr. Everson said that it would be behind the Kroger on Ellerbe Road. He also explained that the Y already has the land. It was proposed to be funded by a revenue bond that would be paid back by the fees of people utilizing the facility, and it would be manage in an operation agreement between the Parish and the City. Mrs. Blake wanted to know if the Y would be donating the land. Mrs. Bryant said that they would be donating the land to the Parish, and they would assist with managing.

Mr. Burrell wanted to know if this would be a City and Parish collaboration. Mrs. Bryant said that this is a Parish project, and it would be part of the Caddo Parish Parks & Recreation Department. Mr. Burrell said that it appears whenever the Commission wants to do something inside the city limits, they would have to get permission from the City to do it. Mrs. Bryant explained that this is Parish property, so its just a matter of how we fund those and the restrictions that are in place on our internal funding.

Mr. G. Young is not opposed to subcommittees. He also said that he is in support of this project because economically, it makes sense. Mr. G. Young said that there are several parks, but hardly any parks that pays for itself. He explained that the YMCA is willing to manage this park at its own costs. He reiterated that the people who want to play Pickleball at this park are willing to pay to play. Mr. G. Young said that Administration has done the research and brought it to this committee. He does not see the need to create a subcommittee for this project.

Mr. Cothran said that he supports this project, as it has been brought forward.

Mr. Epperson said that the subcommittee would be to enhance the concept of this project. He is suggesting a multi-sports complex that could "pay for itself and benefit everyone, economically". He is just wanting additional discussion. Mrs. Gage-Watts agreed and said that there is an opportunity for additional sports to be added in the discussion.

Mr. Thomas said that the ad-hoc committee could enhance the goals of the Parks & Recreation Master Plan.

Mr. G. Young wanted to know the current status of this project. Mrs. Bryant said that the Committee voted to recommend the current Pickleball facility to the full body.

It was **moved by Mr. Cothran**, seconded by Mr. Lazarus, *to ratify the previous decision to recommend the Pickleball facility plan to the full body. Motion carried*, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Cothran, Gage-Watts, Lazarus, and G. Young (4). NAYS: Commissioner Burrell (1). ABSENT: Commissioners Atkins and J. Young (2). ABSTAIN: None (0).

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned
1:18 p.m.



Michelle Nations
Assistant to the Commission Clerk