

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
CADDO PARISH COMMISSION'S  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
HELD ON THE 4<sup>th</sup> DAY OF AUGUST, 2025

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

The invocation and Pledge of Allegiance were given during a previous committee meeting, so the Committee moved onto Citizens Comments.

**CITIZENS COMMENTS**

Stacy Brown came before the Committee and gave the following comment:

Good afternoon, commissioners. I appreciate you giving us the time to talk about this project because I feel it is something that's very important to the health of our community. Not only the physical health by getting more people involved in sports and getting them out of their living rooms and watching TVs, getting the young people involved and out in our community. The great thing is, this is not just a benefit for our constituents, by bringing in those outside events and tournaments we can have the outside people help pay for those great amenities for our constituents. So it's, it's a fantastic opportunity for us, and I really want to commend the staff here at the Caddo Parish Commission. I don't know if y'all are aware that Patrick Wesley has been involved in this industry for a number of years. Not only does he do it at the local level, he participates on a national level in these educational programs. I forget what your certification is, but he's gone through the national sports association's accreditation project, he works closely with us on working with rights holders. So as he's mentioned, you know, USA Pickleball, and the Major League Pickleball, all of those organizations, he's familiar with. So when he came to look at a project like this, he's talking with the right people. A lot of times we see that governments look at a project and they do a great job at it, but they don't design it with the end in mind of it becoming an economic development project, and this staff has done that. So they've looked at a way, how do we provide this great amenity to our community, but how do we also make it pay for itself through outside visitation. By bringing in those visitors to our community, we bring in not only the additional people that pay for the courts and use of the courts. They come into the community and they stop and buy gas, they go shopping in our stores, they eat in our restaurants, they stay in our hotels, which generates tax dollars that then also flow back into the commission. By also developing those successful businesses, that increases your property tax value, so you're looking at a number of different types of income from this project, not just the direct income of those courts. So that's another benefit we see. By working directly with USA Pickleball and the other private associations, they're making sure that they are meeting the standards and the needs for those organizations, so it has the right number of courts, they're in the right positioning, so that you have the sun that's not interfering with your play. You're having the shade structures, you're having the infrastructure, because when a rights holder is looking at bringing their tournament to our community, they're not just looking at the facility itself, they're looking at what's surrounding that facility.

Jon Glover came before the Committee and gave the following comment:

Good evening, members of the economic development committee, Jon Glover, 9100 Walker Road, Apartment 217, Shreveport, 71118. Haven't been here in a while, and I gotta get myself reacclimated, but at the end of the day, I think I've learned more today than I've learned in a long time about this project itself. You know, questions that commissioner Atkins, and if I'm not supposed to call his name please forgive me, but he was the one that asked some very detailed questions that I really brought some clarity to what is being proposed. And then they representative for the architectural firm, you know, with her sharing more intricacies of what is going on, but then here I have a problem, because from the onset, we're thinking pickleball court, but then I heard all the things that are going to be added to the court, and that pushed that price up, you know, and anticipated may be estimate \$10 million. Well, if what Commissioner Atkins said that he saw \$50 to \$78000 per court in that 20 court deal, then that money, that dollar amount is exorbitant, it is excessive. So I'd like for you all definitely to take consideration to the things that have now been brought to light that we did not know about. The green space and whatever else. I too also appreciated commissioner Blake, where she named the persons that were interested or partnering with us, but no dollar amounts were shared at that time. You know, a good investment is a good investment, and we definitely do need economic development in our parish, definitely in our city as well. But at the end of the day, we need to make sure that what we're investing in, regardless of how we do the investing, it is going to be in the best interest of all of us of Caddo Parish. We just, we can't blindly walk into anything anymore, especially when dollars are a part of this. So, I'm going to ask that each of you, based on what you've heard today, will take in consideration what has been presented to us all, and to make sure that we, this investment is in the best in the best interest of all of us, all of Caddo Parish, regardless of what we may feel personally. The program may be the best program to have, but I need to make sure it is the best program we need to have. Thank you.

Jack Varuso came before the Committee and gave the following comment:

All right. Thank you, I'm Jack Varuso of 3825 Gilbert Drive, Shreveport. I'm the ambassador of USA Pickleball Ambassador for Shreveport. I've been an ambassador for 6 years now. My primary jobs are growth and development. I like to talk about growth. Pre-COVID, there was probably 50, maybe 60 of

us playing pickleball. Fast forward COVID, there's 25 of us, 2500 on Facebook. You can verify that with our Facebook page. We average 10 new players a week, and that's just on the local level. Nationally, we have 19, what is it? 19 million, 19.8 million players. 2 million are teenagers. So, the future of pickleball, we could see the future of pickleball. Here, locally, we were top heavy with seniors, for a long time, but in the last year and a half we've been a lot of young 49 and under players coming in. Teenagers, pickleball's for everybody. I'll be 77 December. I've been on courts with teenagers and held my own pretty good. If you detected accent, I'm not from Brooklyn or The Bronx, I'm from New Orleans, I'm a local Louisianian, born and raised. I've been here for 20 years, came up with Katrina. So, Shreveport's my home, you know, stayed here because of the people, love the people, love the area. Back on pickleball, so pickleball is here to stay. It's, you know, I'd like to share a little experience some of us here today in Des Moines, Iowa. We were there for the National Senior Olympic Games. There were 12500 athletes in Des Moines, of which 2000 were pickleball players, 16%, which was the largest of all 25 sports represented, which is a lot to say and the board of directors personally told me that it continues, the games are every other year. Next in 2 years it'll be in Tulsa. So pickleball is stand out. Wherever we go now we're seeing it stand out. The Louisiana Senior Games, I'm told by the board of directors and the committeemen that it's growing, it's growing by leaps and bounds and every year, it's getting bigger and bigger. We hope someday to bring to Louisiana Senior Games here to Shreveport, that's our goal. We have 17 venues currently in Shreveport, of which 3 are outdoor and the remainder are indoor. So pickleball's growing, it's not going away, and you know, it's growing every day and I thank y'all for hearing me.

Mary Murphy came before the Committee and gave the following comment:

I just wanted to speak a little bit on pickleball, part of Caddo Parish Parks and Recreation, I'm the athletic coordinator. We spoke about the heat, the weather. Well, most of our programs that I program are outside. Kids love it. We have kids out there playing tee-ball, they have coach pitch in baseball, we have soccer clinics that we offer that are outside. But for the pickleball, looking at everything that it offers fitness-wise, heart rate, blood circulation, muscle coordination. It's a lot of things that it's going to offer, and as Mr. Wesley mentioned, 3 generations that'll be able to go out there and play at the same time. A walking trail being put in, so it's not, everybody won't want to play pickleball, but there'll be some other things out at that park that'll be offered to them. I don't have a whole lot to say, just saying that I think that it'll be a great success and a great thing to offer. Thank you.

LaMarcus Williams came before the Committee and gave the following comment:

Good afternoon, how we doing? LaMarcus Williams, 119 Palisade Lane, Shreveport, Louisiana, 71115, and speaking on behalf of pickleball, and Caddo Parish Parks and Recreation. I wanted to touch on a little bit of combining 3 different levels of it. You want to talk about mental health, you want to talk about the physical aspect of it, as well as the recreational aspect of it. So, it's 3 different things that we look for when we program in the summertime with our children. And throughout the years, we're trying to figure out how can we stimulate them mentally and physically. So pickleball is a growing sport. It's one of those things that, as you learn, you can be against because it's foreign to us, it's human nature, to not be for something we don't know a lot about. You always want to know the answers. So, when we don't know all the answers, we tend to be against it, but this is one of those things that I didn't know myself. I was just recently back at my alma mater Mississippi State this weekend, picking up my oldest son, and the first thing they said on campus was "Hey are they playing pickleball?" I'm lost to it because I still don't know a lot about it, but I'm interested in it. But I noticed about 6 or 7 of my teammates, their families, their wives were, I mean dressed to a T, Mississippi State down, and the whole deal was to go play pickleball. So, you know, I'm telling my wife about it, and of course, she's not athletic in any way. But she's, "Hey, how are we doing with this pickleball?" So it's an interesting fact, but I also look at the point of how do we tie in these athletics to mental health? You're talking about kids being more social, kids being more active, adults being more active. Not only tying it into the adults and the senior citizens. We talk about the seniors, as he spoke about a little bit earlier. I've had a great opportunity to tie 3 things in that I love to do when it comes to parks and recreation. I'm big on senior citizens, I was raised by my grandmother. I'm big on athletics, played sports all my life, coached the game for 13, 15 years, I played on a college level in the SEC. And I'm also extremely, extremely excited about children. I love children. I've always been around children my entire life. Always been the guy with reason when it came to children even when I was younger. So being able to tie all 3 of those things in has been exciting for me in my time here at parks and recreation. But I think about that in the longevity of pickleball, like all these sports are hitting us now for a reason. We all need that time to be able to process how can that impact us now for the next 20, 30, 40 years? I think with it not being as physically abrasive, I think that's something that we can all get behind, because we can play it at all levels and all ages.

There were no Agenda Additions, so the Committee moved onto New Business.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

- *Discuss and make recommendations regarding Ordinance No. 6548 of 2025, an ordinance amending the Budget of Estimated Revenues & Expenditures for the Debt Service Fund and the Capital Outlay Fund to provide an appropriation of \$10,000,000 for the construction of a pickleball park, and to otherwise provide with respect thereto*

Administration presented a proposal for a \$10M pickleball park with nineteen courts in South Shreveport. The project aims to generate revenue with a projected small profit at 40% utilization. The park is intended to address community demand for more pickleball facilities and tournaments.

Commissioners raised concerns about the 40% usage projection, outdoor play in extreme weather, and the lack of investors. Administration responded by highlighting the prevalence of outdoor sports, planned shade structures, and potential for sponsorships. The funding mechanism involves revenue bonds, and the YMCA will manage the facility under a lease agreement.

The possibility of renovating an existing structure, like a vacant mall, was considered, but deemed less economical than new construction. Increasing the percentage of covered courts and planting trees for shade were discussed to address weather concerns. The project includes green space and aims to accommodate regional and national tournaments.

This project is viewed as a potential economic driver and a way to improve the quality of life in the community. Various organizations and individuals have expressed support, including USA Pickleball, the YMCA, and local representatives. Efforts are underway to educate the public about the benefits of the project and address concerns about funding allocation.

Mr. Cothran wanted to know if the Parish owns the land that the facility will be on. Mrs. Bryant explained that the Parish would own the facility, but the Y would still own the land.

Mr. G. Young is concerned with the long-term maintenance with the courts. He wanted to know who would be responsible for the maintenance. Mrs. Bryant said that the Parish has a maintenance plan for all of its facilities.

Mr. Thomas said that he's received several comments from citizens asked to utilize that money to fix the roads. He pointed out that this money cannot fix roads because it is a revenue bond, which will be paid back on the revenues for the facility. He also mentioned that people are concerned with the future of the sports. Mr. Thomas mentioned the baseball facility that was recently torn down.

Mrs. Blake is in favor of this project. She mentioned that this would add value to this Parish and increase the quality of life for its citizens. Not only that, it will attract people to the Parish, especially during tournaments.

Mr. Atkins asked about the true budget buildup. Mrs. Bryant said that this is the initial estimate that they received from the architect. She also mentioned that if the \$10M is approved, they cannot go over that without approval from the Commission. Mr. Atkins understood, and then wanted to know what is all of the funding going to. Ms. Lisa Kantara, TBA Architecture, said that the cost estimate is to cover from not to completion, which includes built-in contingencies. This is built into the each one of the line items and is between 10%-20%. She also mentioned that the cost estimates also include walking tracks, shade structures, pavilions, etc.

Mr. Atkins then wanted to know the estimated usage fee per player. Mrs. Bryant said it is \$10-\$12 per hour per player. He also wanted to know about the land lease. Mrs. Bryant said that the lease is intended to be parish-friendly with a nominal fee.

He then wanted to know if the Parish would be paying the employees. Mrs. Bryant said that the Parish would be covering those employees through the fees. S

He then asked about the parking spaces. Mrs. Bryant said that it is based on large tournaments. She also said that there is 1,000 seating capacity in the facility.

Mr. Atkins encouraged Mrs. Bryant to "keep a tight lid on expenses and not let every wish be granted". Mrs. Bryant agreed. She also mentioned that the design can be adjusted. Mr. Wesley pointed out that this is not just a pickleball facility, but is also a park with walking trails, etc.

Mr. Atkins then wanted to know how would operations be paid if the revenues cannot cover it. Mrs. Bryant said that it would come from undedicated funds. He then wanted to know if there is an estimated annual operating cost. Mrs. Bryant said that they presented that information to the Commissioners. She also mentioned that the Parish will handle resurfacing and capital improvements.

There was discussion regarding the project timeline. Currently, the project is in its preliminary design stages. Bond issuance is planned for 2025, and construction is expected to begin in 2026 with the facility opening in late summer 2027.

Mr. G. Young wanted to know what happens to the facility once the lease expires. Mrs. Bryant said that the Parish will maintain ownership of the facility.

Mr. Burrell asked about the equipment. Mrs. Bryant said that they will receive a price for the equipment, but cannot tell whether or not the material would be made in the USA. Everything would be subject to the bid process, she said.

He then wanted to know if there are any pickleball facilities in the area. Mr. Wesley said that Arkansas, Ruston, West Monroe, etc. are building pickleball facilities. Mr. Burrell then wanted to know why would people choose to come to Caddo Parish, instead of the other places. Mr. Wesley said that Shreveport/Caddo Parish has entertainment, lodging, and "the market for it". Mr. Burrell would like this to be inclusive of the inner-city people. Mr. Wesley said that they are working on transportation from the inner city to the facility.

Mr. Lazarus wanted to know the term of the bonds. Mrs. Bryant said that it would need to be at least 20 years. He then asked if there was a penalty on paying the bonds off early. Mrs. Bryant said she that they would work to have their payments reduced.

Mr. Lazarus also mentioned that several of his constituents have called and asked for pickleball courts in his district.

It was **moved by Mr. J. Young**, seconded by Mr. Lazarus, *that Ordinance No. 6548 of 2025, an ordinance amending the Budget of Estimated Revenues & Expenditures for the Debt Service Fund and the Capital Outlay Fund to provide an appropriation of \$10,000,000 for the construction of a pickleball park, and to otherwise provide with respect thereto* be forwarded to the full body for recommendation.

Mrs. Bryant pointed out that there is a page with questions/answers, pictures, renderings, and other information regarding pickleball.

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

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned  
3:30 p.m.



Michelle Nations  
Assistant Commission Clerk