

MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION
OF THE CADDO PARISH COMMISSION
HELD ON THE 20th DAY OF OCTOBER, 2025

The Caddo Parish Commission met in a Work Session, on the above date, at 3:30 p.m., in the Government Chambers, with Mrs. Gage-Watts, President, presiding, and the following members in attendance constituting a quorum: Commissioners Atkins, Blake, Burrell, Cothran, Gage-Watts, Jones, Kracman, Lazarus, Thomas, G. Young, and J. Young (11). ABSENT: Commissioner Epperson (1).

The invocation and Pledge of Allegiance were given during previous committee meetings. A moment of silence was observed in memory of Aaliyah and Danielle, two children tragically killed in a recent Shreveport fire. Madame President asked all to keep their families and first responders in prayer. There were no Agenda Additions, so the Commission moved onto Citizens Comments.

CITIZENS COMMENTS

Belinda Rose came before the Commission and gave the following comment:

I want to say good afternoon. Belinda Rose, 810 East 70th Street, Suite A. I stand here today, National Night Out 2025, on October the 7th, for a time deemed to be the safest in the city of Shreveport. It was dimmed by gun violence, approximately 30 feet away from a building that was filled with care seniors, guests, and children. Moments after you, Commissioner Cothran, arrived on the parking lot to assist with the evening breakdown, shot rang out. Without any hesitation, you took control of calming the group inside the building, helping those knocking on the doors for safety, and retrieving a baby stroller left by parents. For the past seven years, you have been a part of Cedar Grove Neighborhood association care, informing, participating in any area needed. We stand here today to show our gratitude and appreciation to you and your wife, Mrs. Tammy Cothran, for being our hero. She understands your commitment and dedication. Our hearts are filled with love and joy for the both of you. Colossians 3:17, "And whatsoever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God, our father, through him." Thank you, Commissioner. And I ask that the ladies please stand if you all don't mind.

VISITORS

- *Shreveport Job Corps*
Dennis Essom, Director

Mr. Essom provide an update regarding the Job Corps Center's status following its recent closure threat by the U.S. Department of Labor. The center is fully operational again with funding reinstated for Program Year 2026, and enrollment is increasing with 12-15 new students per week. He also said that trades and academic programs have resumed, and partnerships with local employers are active. Despite reopening, no federal funding was provided for Career Technical Training (CTT) materials and supplies, which are critical to the program's vocational education. Mr. Essom requested the Commission's support in establishing partnerships that could provide materials for community service projects where Job Corps students could gain hands-on experience.

Mr. Burrell recognized the center as a community jewel and noted previous discussion with staff regarding a shortfall for materials and suggested further consideration for possible local funding.

Mr. J. Young suggested a collaboration between Job Corps students and local housing repair initiatives for skill-based community rehabilitation projects. He requested that a Long Range Planning & Special Needs Committee meet with Mr. Essom to explore project details and potential funding avenues.

Mr. Cothran praised Job Corps for developing skilled tradesmen in areas like plumbing and carpentry, calling it a win-win partnership for both students and the Parish.

Mr. Atkins asked for clarification regarding funding compliance. Administrator Bryant responded that any Parish funding would require legal review and must comply with low-to-moderate income funding criteria. Additional discussions will determine eligibility and structure.

Mr. Thomas supported further exploration of partnerships and financing options to assist students in meeting work-hour requirements and completing training.

Mrs. Blake requested a summary of available programs. Mr. Essom listed: carpentry, painting, welding, advanced welding, office administration, and CNA nursing. He also mentioned that campus includes dormitories, classrooms, cafeteria, and gym facilities, like a college campus.

Madame President Gage-Watts thanked Mr. Essom for his presentation and reaffirmed the Commission's support and interest in future collaboration to assist Job Corps students through potential parish and community partnerships. Mr. Essom expressed gratitude for the Commission's continued support and extended an open invitation for Commissioners to visit the campus to observe ongoing programs.

- *Arena Football*
Keith Carter, owner

Mr. Carter, owner of the Shreveport Rougaroux Arena Football Team, came before the Commission to discuss the team's operations, community involvement, and partnership opportunities. He was joined by player Anthony "Lava" Dixon. Mr. Carter explained that he recently became the 100% owner of the team, which will play its 2026 season at Brookshire's Grocery Arena in Bossier City.

Mr. Carter, a lifelong Caddo Parish resident and local business owner, stated his goal is to create a faith-based, family-oriented entertainment option for the region. He emphasized affordability and community access, offering discounted ticket packages for churches, schools, and nonprofit organizations, with all taxes and fees covered by the organization.

Mr. Carter explained that the team competes in the National Arena League (NAL), which consists of nine teams nationwide and has existed since 2017. The sport is played on turf within a hockey-rink-sized field (8-on-8 football), and is known for its fast pace and fan engagement. The Shreveport Rougaroux will play seven home games in March, April, and May, with a preseason game set for February 28.

He also highlighted partnerships with local entities such as D1 Shreveport and Cypress Baptist for training camps and youth football clinics. Players are expected to engage with local schools, churches, and youth groups. The team also supports the growth of girls' flag football and plans to help sponsor equipment and clinics.

Mrs. Blake praised Mr. Carter's initiative and asked about the sport's history and structure. Mr. Carter noted that arena football has existed for over 30 years and referenced prior local teams such as the Bossier Battle Wings.

Mrs. Gage-Watts thanked Mr. Carter for his community-centered approach and commitment to unity.

Mr. Burrell inquired about ticket pricing, to which Mr. Carter replied tickets are priced at \$24 and \$36, available through Ticketmaster.

Mr. Jones discussed local involvement, highlighting prior players with area ties and the growth of girls' flag football. Mr. Carter confirmed partnerships with local organizers for youth development.

Mr. Atkins asked about staffing and operations. Mr. Carter explained the team maintains a year-round front office of three full-time staff, with plans to expand to six, and a seasonal roster of 25 professional athletes and eight volunteer coaches.

When asked whether the team represents Caddo or Bossier Parish, Mr. Carter clarified the organization is based in Shreveport (Caddo Parish) but plays home games in Brookshire's Grocery Arena in Bossier City.

Madame President congratulated Mr. Carter on his ownership and thanked him for his efforts to promote local sports, family entertainment, and community engagement in Caddo Parish.

- *Clerk of Court, Mike Spence*

Mr. Mike Spence appeared before the Commission to explain significant changes to upcoming election procedures due to the introduction of closed party primaries for certain statewide and federal races. These include elections for the U.S. Senate, U.S. House, Louisiana Supreme Court, Public Service Commission, and BESE Board.

He talked about the new election structure. The new system will utilize closed party primaries beginning in 2026. Elections could now include up to three rounds: Round 1: Separate Democratic and Republican primaries; Round 2: If no candidate receives 50% + 1 vote in their party; and Round 3: Final general election between party winners. Louisiana has eliminated the "Independent" designation; all former Independents are now classified as No Party.

Mr. Spence then talked about the voting process for No Party Voters. Mail voters will receive a declaration form in early February 2026, requiring them to select a ballot type (Democrat, Republican, or No Party). Those who fail to return the declaration will not receive a ballot. In-person voters must complete this form at early voting sites or precincts before being allowed to vote.

Mr. Spence distributed informational flyers to the Commission and encouraged them to make copies for their constituents. He noted that a prior mailer from the Secretary of State was largely overlooked, prompting his office to produce a shorter, clearer version. Commissioners discussed creating additional outreach materials, including pamphlets and social media posts once election dates are finalized.

He also emphasized the ongoing need for new election commissioners, particularly younger workers. Interested individuals can apply via the Caddo Clerk of Court website or the Secretary of State's "GeauxVote" portal, where they can also complete online training videos.

Mr. Atkins inquired about possible election date changes; Mr. Spence indicated adjustments are likely due to programming timelines, not redistricting.

Mr. Burrell raised cost concerns, to which Mr. Spence replied that an additional election will incur added expense.

Mr. Thomas requested a digital version of the handout; Mr. Spence agreed to send one.

Madame President discussed local voter education and outreach opportunities, urging all commissioners to distribute materials in their districts.

Mr. G. Young expressed concern about transient residents missing mail ballots; Mr. Spence clarified ballots are sent to registered addresses and returned to the Registrar if undeliverable.

Mr. further noted that the new voting machines, which will include paper verification, are expected mid- to late-2026 following a state bid process. He encouraged everyone to verify their registration and party status through the official GeauxVote app or website. Mr. Spence reiterated that turnout remains the greatest challenge, and his office will continue community outreach to educate voters on the new system.

Madame President thanked Mr. Spence for his detailed presentation and commitment to voter education. Plans were discussed for future collaboration on precinct signage, voter awareness campaigns, and community presentations leading into the 2026 election cycle.

ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

- Department of Finance—100 CashVest Score Award

Administrator Bryant announced that the Parish a Cashvest (CAS) Best Score of 100, the highest possible rating, awarded by the National Association of Counties in partnership with 3+1. Only nine other entities nationwide have achieved this distinction. She recognized Mrs. Hayley Barnett for her dedication and financial analysis work ensuring optimal investment of parish funds.

- Juvenile Detention Center census

Administrator Bryant said that there are 22 children in the Detention Center, eight of which are OJJ, and two 17 year olds. There are 428 children on probation and thirteen juveniles are at CCC.

Mr. J. Young asked about efforts to improve overcrowding at Caddo Correctional Center. Administrator Bryant said that the population is at a level deemed unsustainable. She has been meeting with the District Attorney, Sheriff, Public Defender, and District Courts to address the overcrowding issue. They are considering expanding the use of electronic monitoring as one mitigation strategy.

- September 2025 Financials

Administrator Bryant advised that the financial statements from September 2025 were attached to the agenda and a hard copy was placed at each Commissioner's station.

COMMISSION REMARKS

- Mr. Cothran asked about the proper handling of deceased animals. Mr. Travis Clark, Animal Services Director, said that within the city limits, deceased animals should be bagged and placed curbside; outside of the city limits, those citizens should call Caddo Parish Solid Waste. He noted that city workers cannot enter private property, so the animals must be curbside. Mr. Clark also mentioned that in special cases, such as elderly residents, Animal Services will assist.

Mr. J. Young clarified that deceased animals are not Animal Control issues. Residents should either dispose with household trash or bury animals humanely.

- Mr. Burrell reported an influx of stray cats around the 3300 block of Boss Avenue. Animal Services will investigate, review reports, and follow up.

- Mr. Thomas announced that Ms. Susie Smith is celebrating her 100th birthday. He also commended Prize Fest and the creators of the film "Last Minute" who won the \$50k prize. He announced that an upcoming film industry meetup will be held at Robinson Film Center on October 25. Mr. Thomas highlighted other community events.

- Mrs. Blake praised Chef Niema who will be the Grand Marshal for the Krewe of Gemini Parade. She also mentioned the Witches Ride on October 25, Broadmoor STEM Academy Outdoor Movie Night on October 24, and Sheriff's Safety Town Trunk or Treat on October 27.

Mrs. Blake celebrated LSUS Baseball Team for national recognition in Washington, D.C.

She then raised concerns about Mr. Kracman's defamation case dismissal and reimbursement for legal fees. Sje requested clarification on commissioner protection and reimbursement policies. Administrator Bryant said that Legal would need to review the official dismissal documentation.

Mrs. Gage-Watts cautioned legal discussion in the absence of the Parish Attorney. Mr. Atkins recalled precedent for reimbursing legal expenses when officials are found not liable; and reiterated the need for formal legal guidance.

- Mr. Kracman warned Commissioners of email scams mimicking MPC communications with false invoices. He said that MPC Executive Director Alan Clarke has been notified.
- Mr. Jones reported fire damaged property at 6130 Southern Avenue. He requested immediate demolition due to safety, pests, and structural concerns. Public Works will coordinate with the City of Shreveport for follow-up.
- Mr. Cothran reported attending the Heroes BBQ Cook-Off, which featured excellent food and strong community participation. He also attended the Domestic Violence Task Force meeting, noting that the task force is working diligently to streamline necessary forms and processes to better assist victims. He emphasized the urgency of reducing domestic violence rates in Louisiana, stating that the state currently leads the nation in such deaths. Mr. Cothran committed to keeping the Commission updated as progress continues toward more efficient victim support and prevention measures.
- Mr. G. Young addressed the Commission with a message focused on unity, respect, and professionalism among commissioners. He acknowledged having engaged in spirited debates with colleagues over important issues but offered a public apology if any of those discussions caused offense or cast others in a negative light. He stressed that as community leaders, commissioners must set an example of mutual respect to positively influence the broader community.

Mr. G. Young reflected on the challenging times facing the parish, state, and nation, urging everyone to “recommit to collegiality.” Quoting Alexander Pope, he reminded the body that “to err is human, to forgive is divine,” calling for forgiveness and mutual understanding. He expressed respect for each commissioner by name and emphasized that, while agreement isn’t always possible, respect must always be maintained to foster unity and trust throughout the community.

PRESIDENT’S REPORT

Madame President reiterated condolences for the tragic deaths of Aaliyah and Danielle, two young children who perished in a recent fire. She urged the public to share any available information or footage—via Crime Stoppers, the Real-Time Crime Center, or personal security devices such as Ring doorbells—to assist in solving the case. She emphasized that the community must come together to help bring peace and justice to the affected family.

There being no Old Business, the Commission moved onto New Business.

NEW BUSINESS

It was **moved by Mr. Jones**, seconded by Mrs. Gage-Watts, *that the following items be advanced to Thursday’s agenda for introduction or consideration:*

- *Ordinance No. 6566 of 2025, an ordinance to close and abandon two portions of road right-of-way in the Forbing Factory Subdivision, in Section 8, Township 16 North, Range 13 West, in the Parish of Caddo, and to otherwise provide with respect thereto*
- *Ordinance No. 6567 of 2025, an ordinance amending the 2025 Budget to amend the Budget of Estimated Revenues & Expenditures for the Housing Choice Voucher Program Fund and to otherwise provide with respect thereto*
- *Resolution No. 42 of 2025, a resolution to authorize the Caddo Parish Administrator to direct and authorize the Louisiana State Mineral & Energy Board and the Office of Mineral Resources to accept nominations, advertise for, accept and award bids, and execute all oil, gas, and mineral leases on certain mineral interests owned by the Parish of Caddo, and otherwise providing with respect thereto*
- *Special Resolution Booker T. Washington High School’s 75th Anniversary*
- *Special Resolution Greater Zion Mission Baptist Church’s 100th Anniversary*
- *Special Resolution Chimp Haven’s 30th Anniversary*
- *Appointment of John Prock to Fire District No. 3 Board*
- *Recommendations of the Property Standards Hearing Committee from their October 20 Hearing*

Mr. Thomas acknowledged and congratulated Booker T. Washington High School on its 75th anniversary, Greater Zion Mission Baptist Church on its anniversary, and Champ Haven on its 30th anniversary. He noted that Champ Haven extended its gratitude to the Caddo Parish Commission for its early and instrumental role in helping to establish the organization. He added that representatives from Champ Haven plan to visit the Commission in the near future.

Mr. Cothran inquired about the timing of the Booker T. Washington High School anniversary celebration and additional related recognitions. He referenced a request to recognize five individuals associated with the school's history and contributions, noting that he had already forwarded the names to the Clerk for inclusion. The Clerk of the Commission, Mr. Jeff Everson, clarified that the resolution was intentionally worded broadly to encompass the overall 75th anniversary celebration and that additional recognitions could be advanced simultaneously. He recommended placing both the general resolution and the five specific individual recognitions on the Thursday agenda for separate votes. Mr. Cothran agreed and reiterated his intention to ensure all related recognitions occur within the appropriate timeframe.

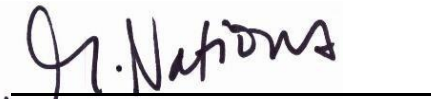
At this time, Mr. Jones' motion to englobe and advance carried unanimously with Commissioners Burrell, Epperson, and J. Young being absent.

There were no Communiques nor Citizens Comments.

CONSENT AGENDA

- *Ordinance No. 6563 of 2025, an ordinance amending the Budget of Estimated Revenues & Expenditures for the Riverboat Fund and the Oil & Gas Fund to provide an additional appropriation for the Safe Summer Program and to otherwise provide with respect thereto*
- *Ordinance No. 6565 of 2025, an ordinance amending the Budget of Estimated Revenues & Expenditures for the Economic Development Fund to provide an appropriation for Christmas in Roseland and to otherwise provide with respect thereto*

At this time, there was no further discussion to come before the Commission, so the Commission adjourned at 5:18 p.m.


Michelle Nations
Assistant Commission Clerk