

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CADDO PARISH COMMISSION'S
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
HELD ON THE 6th DAY OF OCTOBER, 2025

The Caddo Parish Economic Development Committee met in legal session on the above date at 12:00 p.m., in the 8th Floor Administrative Conference Room, with the following members present constituting a quorum: Commissioners Burrell, Cothran, Gage-Watts, Lazarus, Thomas, G. Young, and J. Young (7). ABSENT: Commissioner Atkins (1).

Mr. Thomas gave the invocation, and Mr. Burrell led the Committee in the Pledge of Allegiance. There were no Agenda Additions nor Public Comments, so the Committee moved onto New Business.

NEW BUSINESS

- *Receive and discuss update regarding the Pickleball project*

Administrator Bryant noted that today's discussion was for informational purposes only. The project is moving into its next phase, involving bond issuance and project design. She reminded the Commissioners that what they voted on was to authorize the project.

Mr. Grant Schluter, Foley & Judell, explained that the Parish will issue limited tax revenue bonds backed by the constitutional millage, which ensures a high credit rating and low interest rate. Approximately \$30M in total authorization has been approved by the State Bond Commission, with \$9.8M previously issued in 2020.

Mr. Schluter also talked about the projected timeline as it relates to bonds:

- *November 2025*—introduction of an ordinance authorizing bonds
- *December 2025*—bond sale
- *January 2026*—funds available for the project

Mr. Burrell inquired about rate fluctuations and how potential increases might affect project timing. Ms. Allen, Financial Advisor, said that the estimated interest rate is approximately 4.5% and is expected to remain stable or slightly decrease.

Mr. J. Young asked for clarification on limited tax revenue bonds versus revenue bonds. Mr. Schluter explained that limited tax bonds are backed by the Parish's general fund millage, ensuring stronger security and lower rates. Revenue bonds would only use the monies that are received from the project.

He also wanted to know who would buy the bonds. Ms. Allen said that anyone could buy the bonds. Bonds may be purchased by banks, investment groups, or individuals through brokerage firms.

Ms. Vanessa talked about the project design update. She would like to do a CMAR (Construction Manager at Risk) model, similar to Walter B. Jacobs Park. Key milestones include:

- *2-month State approval process*—letters are sent to the Senate/House Transportation Committees for approval
- *3-month contractor selection process*
- *8-month design and pricing phase*
- *February 2027*—anticipating groundbreaking

She noted that local contractors are encouraged to participate through open bid advertisements and pre-bid meetings. Mr. Burrell and Mrs. Gage-Watts emphasized the importance of local contractor engagement and community transparency.

Some of the Commissioners expressed interest in contributing design ideas. Ms. Vanessa welcomed the idea and would like to have these ideas submitted within the next six months.

Mr. Cothran would like a summary of the timeline in a one-pager.

- *Discuss Gardens of the American Rose Society's request to assist with Christmas in Roseland*

The American Rose Society requested \$50k in funding to support the continuation of Christmas in Roseland amid organizational restructuring. The Society is in the process of separating its national operations from the local gardens management to establish distinct 501(c)(3) entities. Despite the restructuring, the organization aims to ensure that Christmas in Roseland continues uninterrupted, citing significant local economic impact (approximately \$95k reinvested locally).

Mr. Cothran questioned the current status of the reorganization, legal clarity, and fiscal accountability. Administrator Bryant clarified that any allocated funds would be restricted for their intended purpose, pending verification of appropriate contracting entities.

Mr. J. Young suggested expanded the Rose Center's event featuring the roses.

Commissioners expressed unified support for preserving Christmas in Roseland due to its historic and cultural value.

It was **moved by Mr. Cothran**, seconded by Mrs. Gage-Watts, *to recommend to the full body an appropriation of \$50k to support Christmas in Roseland for the 2025 Budget. Motion carried unanimously with Commissioner Atkins being absent (1).*

- *Updates and continued discussion on other Parish economic development related initiatives*

The Committee discussed funding support for a parish wide Film & Entertainment Initiative, including the creation of a Caddo Parish Talent Search.

Mr. G. Young said that the proposal is to allocate \$270k in the 2026 budget to support the Caddo Parish Film & Entertainment Advisory Board initiatives, including:

- Parish-wide talent search modeled after "America's Got Talent"
- Production and film training component in collaboration with local schools and filmmakers
- Six-month timeline of events from February through June 2026, culminating in a final showcase event

Commissioners expressed excitement about the initiative's potential to highlight local talent, stimulate youth engagement, and expand Caddo Parish's reputation as a creative hub. Mr. Burrell and Mrs. Gage-Watts emphasized collaboration with local schools, choirs, and arts programs. Commissioners praised the leadership of Director Patrick Wesley and Administrator Bryant in developing this concept.

Mr. J. Young wanted to know the target number of participants. Mr. Wesley said that it would be narrowed down event after event, with the finale being at a large venue.

Mr. Cothran said that there is talent here in Caddo Parish and it should be showcased.

It was **moved by Mr. Thomas**, seconded by Mrs. Gage-Watts, *to recommend to the full body up to \$270k in the 2026 Economic Development Fund Budget to support Caddo Parish Film & Entertainment Advisory Board initiatives. Motion carried unanimously with Commissioner Atkins being absent (1).*

Mr. G. Young expressed his appreciation to staff, administration, and all partners for their continued collaboration and commitment to the Parish and economic development.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 1:08 p.m.



Michelle Nations
Assistant Commission Clerk