

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
CADDO PARISH COMMISSION'S  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
HELD ON THE 25<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 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 present constituting a quorum: Commissioners Atkins, Burrell, Cothran, Gage-Watts, Lazarus, Thomas, G. Young, and J. Young (8). ABSENT: None (0).

Mr. Lazarus gave the invocation, and Mr. Thomas 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**

- *Review Score packets and make recommendations for the 2026 NGO's*

It was **moved by Mr. Atkins**, seconded by Mr. J. Young, *that Art Heals receive no funding.*

**Substitute motion by Mrs. Gage-Watts**, seconded by Mr. Thomas, *to fund Art Heals in the amount of \$10k.*

Mrs. Gage-Watts explained that all Commissioners' scores had not been received, and that she believes that Art Heals' score may have been higher had all scores been received. Mr. G. Young said that there was a deadline for submission of the scores.

Mr. Cothran wanted to know why they are voting if the scores are incomplete. He said that the organizations should not be penalized because the Commissioners did not submit their scores.

Administrator Bryant explained that the legal department reviews the awardees prior to issuing the funds. She also mentioned that they have a budget to present.

Mr. Cothran said that his concern is that the Commissioners have not done their due diligence, and the organizations should not be punished because of that.

Mr. Atkins agreed with the spirit of Mr. Cothran's point. He said that if someone did not submit their scores, then they should be void, and that they should move forward based on the data and deadline that most of the Committee members met.

Mr. G. Young said that he would like everyone to vote on the motions that have been made.

At this time, Mrs. Gage-Watts' motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Burrell, Cothran, Gage-Watts, Thomas, and G. Young (5). NAYS: Commissioners Atkins, Lazarus, and J. Young (3). ABSENT: None (0). ABSTAIN: None (0).

It was **moved by Mr. J. Young**, seconded by Mr. Atkins, *to fund CoHabitat Foundation in the amount of \$40k.*

Mr. J. Young explained that the applicant's score was in the top bracket which would qualify them for 100% of their funding request per administration.

Mr. Burrell wanted to know the reason for the increase from their previous award of \$25k in 2024. Administrator Bryant explained that since there were no applicants who scored in the 90-100% range, applicants who scored in the 80-89% range would be awarded 100% of their request.

At this time, Mr. J. Young's motion carried unanimously.

It was **moved by Mr. G. Young**, seconded by Mrs. Gage-Watts, *to fund Competition Planning Partners in the amount of \$20k.*

Mr. J. Young referenced the vote and concerns regarding Art Heals and all of the Commissioners' scores not being submitted. He asked if the Committee was being consistent in their reasoning regarding the missing scores.

Mr. G. Young explained that he believed these were different scenarios, as Art Heals did not meet the minimum threshold for funding. He said he does not feel they are being inconsistent. Mr. Burrell asked if they are assuming that the missing scores would increase each applicant's score. He said he does not think they should be making that assumption.

**Call for the Question by Mr. Thomas**, seconded by Mr. Atkins. Motion carried by acclamation.

At this time, Mr. G. Young's motion carried unanimously.

It was **moved by Mr. J. Young**, seconded by Mrs. Gage-Watts, *to fund Downtown Shreveport Unlimited in the amount of \$15k.*

Mr. Burrell asked if this was the applicant's first or second time applying for funding. Administrator Bryant said that they are not aware that the applicant has applied before.

Mr. Burrell said that he thought they had some criteria regarding applicants' previous applications. Administrator Bryant clarified that applicants must have been in existence for at least 2 years before applying for funding.

**Substitute motion by Mr. Thomas**, seconded by Mrs. Gage-Watts, *to fund Downtown Shreveport Unlimited in the amount of \$20k.*

Mr. Thomas said that they are putting on 3 different festivals. He said he does not agree with the complete request of \$160k, but he does believe in support festivals downtown.

Mr. Lazarus said that based on the applicant's score and since they did not apply the previous year, their reward should be capped at \$15k.

Mrs. Gage-Watts asked for clarification that the Committee's decisions were only recommendations. Administrator Bryant said that is correct.

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

It was **moved by Mr. J. Young**, seconded by Mrs. Gage-Watts, *to fund Film Prize Foundation in the amount of \$50k.*

Mr. G. Young said he does not see a rationale of doubling the award to the full request of \$100k.

At this time, Mr. J. Young's motion carried unanimously.

It was **moved by Mr. G. Young**, seconded by Mr. J. Young, *to fund Fit For Life Ministries in the amount of \$60k. Motion carried unanimously.*

It was **moved by Mrs. Gage-Watts**, seconded by Mr. G. Young, *to fund Helping Improving Life in the amount of \$20k.*

Mrs. Gage-Watts referenced the missing scores as the reasoning for her motion.

At this time, Mrs. Gage-Watts' motion carried unanimously.

It was **moved by Mr. J. Young**, seconded by Mr. Cothran, *to fund Highland Area Partnership in the amount of \$15k. Motion carried unanimously.*

It was **moved by Mr. G. Young**, seconded by Mr. Cothran, *to fund Independence Bowl Foundation in the amount of \$55k. Motion carried unanimously.*

It was **moved by Mrs. Gage-Watts**, seconded by Mr. J. Young, *to fund Ivy Crown- AKA Regional Conference in the amount of \$25k.*

Mr. Atkins asked Mrs. Gage-Watts if the regional conference had been held in Shreveport in the last year or two. Mrs. Gage-Watts says they may have had a conference, but it was not the South Central Regional Conference. She explained that Shreveport was chosen to host the regional conference in 2026. She said that it will be a great economic impact for the area.

Mr. Burrell explained that they had a district conference. He said that it almost filled up Shreveport, so one could expect more than twice as many visitors for the regional conference.

At this time, Mrs. Gage-Watts' motion carried unanimously.

It was **moved by Mr. J. Young**, seconded by Mr. Thomas, *to fund North Caddo Fireworks in the amount of \$9k.*

Mr. J. Young said that the applicant's score was just below the next range and they are in an area with little economic development activity, so he thinks the Committee ought to be generous to them.

**Friendly amendment by Mr. Atkins** *to increase the award to \$10k. Mr. J. Young accepted.*

At this time, Mr. J. Young's motion carried unanimously with Mrs. Gage-Watts absent (1).

It was **moved by Mr. Cothran**, seconded by Mr. Thomas, *to fund Red River Revel in the amount of \$10k.*

Mr. Thomas said that the Red River Revel is a staple festival for the community.

**Substitute motion by Mr. Thomas**, seconded by Mr. J. Young, *to increase the award to \$15k.*

Mr. Thomas said that he knows of a number of needs of the applicant that were not addressed in their requests. Mr. Cothran pointed out that the Red River Revel used to last two whole weeks and now lasts only 2 weekends. Mr. Burrell said that he has spoken to a minority business owner who said they have not been able to work well with the Red River Revel and asked Mr. Thomas to look into that issue.

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

It was **moved by Mr. Thomas**, seconded by Mr. Burrell, *to fund Shreveport Bossier African American Chamber of Commerce in the amount of \$20k.*

Mr. Thomas said that he serves as a board member for the applicant. There was a discussion regarding his membership and making a motion.

At this time, Mr. Thomas withdrew his motion.

It was **moved by Mrs. Gage-Watts**, seconded by Mr. Cothran, *to fund Shreveport Bossier African American Chamber of Commerce in the amount of \$20k. Motion carried unanimously.*

It was **moved by Mr. Atkins**, seconded by Mr. J. Young, *to fund Shreveport Bossier Sports Commission in the amount of \$40k.*

**Substitute motion by Mr. Burrell**, seconded by Mr. J. Young, *to fund Shreveport Bossier Sports Commission in the amount \$45k.*

Mr. Burrell said that the applicant has a good track record and that \$45k is less than what they requested. Mrs. Gage-Watts agreed with Mr. Burrell and mentioned that she serves on the Shreveport Bossier Sports Commission.

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

It was **moved by Mr. J. Young**, seconded by Mr. Cothran, *to fund Southern Hills Business Association in the amount of \$25k.*

Mr. J. Young said that this is a great local business organization and the only thing in that part of town that the Parish funds. Mr. Cothran said that the applicant does great work and is getting ready to put on their Southern Hills Expo. He said they have limited funds and use this money to bring businesses to the area.

At this time, Mr. J. Young's motion carried unanimously.

It was **moved by Mr. Burrell**, seconded by Mr. Thomas, *to fund State Fair of Louisiana in the amount of \$25k.*

Mr. Burrell said that the State Fair of Louisiana is an economic engine and needs upgrades. Mr. Thomas agreed that the State Fair of Louisiana is an economic driver and said that he recognizes its crumbling infrastructure.

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

It was **moved by Mr. Thomas**, seconded by Mr. J. Young, *to fund The Strand Theater in the amount of \$25k.*

Mr. Thomas said that he spoke with the organization's director, who said they were not aware they could request more than \$15k, which is why their request for this year is much higher than in previous years.

Mr. Burrell said that he would like to see programs to expose low-income children to the culture at the Strand Theater. Mr. J. Young said that the Strand Theater does have a number of events that are for school aged children. Mr. Thomas said that the Strand Theater has a number of programs pertaining to dance and music. Mr. Burrell said that the Strand Theater should be able to improve upon what they do with the additional \$10k.

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

It was **moved by Mr. Burrell**, seconded Mrs. Gage-Watts, *to fund Rho Omega & Friends in the amount of \$32k.*

Mr. J. Young asked for clarification on the talking point for Rho Omega & Friends, which was left blank on the scoring packet. Mrs. Thomas of the finance department explained that the talking point was left blank because the application was not in the required format.

Mr. Atkins said that he would be voting against the motion because of the applicant's low score.

**Call for the Question by Mr. Cothran**, seconded by Mrs. Gage-Watts. Motion carried by acclamation.

At this time, Mr. Burrell's motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Burrell, Cothran, Gage-Watts, Thomas, G. Young, and J. Young (6). NAYS: Commissioners Atkins and Lazarus (2). ABSTAIN: None (0).

It was **moved by Mr. J. Young**, seconded by Mr. Thomas, *to reconsider and fund Competition Planning Partners WOD GODZ in the amount of \$25k.* Motion carried unanimously.

Mrs. Gage-Watts asked the Director of Finance, Mrs. Barnett, for the total of the Committee's recommendations. Mrs. Barnett said that the total of the recommendations was \$527k.

Mr. J. Young said that WOD GODZ is a vibrant festival that supports the convention center and thanked the committee for their support. Mr. Cothran mentioned that this organization has been paying for the competition out of its own pockets for years. Mr. Thomas said that the competition attracts people regionally. He said he thinks it has a lot of potential for growth.

Mr. Burrell said, regarding the application of Rho Omega & Friends, that the organization did not properly format their application this year, but must have in the past as they were previously awarded funding. Mrs. Thomas of the finance department confirmed that was correct.

Mr. G. Young said that he believes it would be useful to have future applicants appear before the Commission to make their case for funding. He thanked the Committee, the finance department, and administration for their work in this process.

Mrs. Bryant said that, in short, a non-compensated member of an organization is allowed to participate in the Committee's recommendation process.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 1:22 p.m.

*Clayton McGee*

Clayton McGee  
Administrative Specialist