

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CADDO PARISH COMMISSION'S
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
HELD ON THE 23RD DAY OF APRIL, 2026

The Caddo Parish Public Safety Committee met in legal session on the above date at 1:00 p.m., in the Government Plaza Chambers, with the following members present constituting a quorum: Commissioners Blake, Cothran, Epperson, Kracman, and G. Young (5). ABSENT: (0).

Commissioner Chris Kracman gave the invocation, and Commissioner Ken Epperson 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

- *Discuss Animal Services*

Commissioner Ron Cothran deferred to Commissioner Grace Anne Blake regarding Animal Services. Mrs. Blake asked Assistant Director of Animal Services Kelvin Samuel to provide a report on the recent rabies clinic and any other pertinent information. Mr. Samuel welcomed the student commissioners in attendance and thanked them for learning about local government. He then reported that the rabies clinic held the previous Saturday provided 270 free rabies vaccinations and 181 microchips. He stated that citizens who attended the event likely saved approximately \$50 to \$60 per animal when combining the rabies vaccination and microchip services.

Mr. Samuel said the core value of Animal Services and Mosquito Control is safety first. He explained that rabies is a serious zoonotic disease, meaning it can transfer from animals to humans, and that it is deadly. He thanked responsible citizens in Caddo Parish who keep their dogs currently vaccinated and microchipped. He explained that Animal Services officers have scanners in their vehicles and, when they find an animal in the field, they may be able to scan the animal's microchip and return it home before it enters the shelter.

Mr. Samuel also asked the public to trust Animal Services to handle active cases properly. He said that animals bring out strong emotions in people, but that members of the public should not interfere with an active case because they could get hurt. He said that if citizens have questions, they can use the public records request process. He stated that Animal Services staff love the animals as much as the citizens do, which is why they serve in their roles.

Mr. Samuel announced that on May 2, Animal Services would hold a dog-walking event at Walter B. Jacobs Memorial Nature Park. He said the event would allow shelter animals to interact with people, get out from behind the kennels, and walk in the park, while also showcasing Walter B. Jacobs.

Mr. Samuel then addressed wildlife and animal bites. He advised citizens that if someone is walking a dog, the polite and safe thing to do is to ask the owner before touching the animal. He emphasized that people should not touch stray animals or wildlife, regardless of whether the animal appears friendly. He said this applies to dogs, cats, horses, goats, and other animals. He instructed citizens to call Animal Services at 318-226-6624.

Mr. Samuel provided an update on the department's feral hog work. He said feral hog control is generally a state function, but Animal Services has been assisting residents who are having problems with feral hogs on their property. He said the department first responds to residents who are having public safety issues, then addresses feral hogs damaging property, forests, and crops. He said farmers have been experiencing problems with feral hogs, and he thanked the Commission for trusting the Animal Services team with the work. Mr. Samuel said the department has removed more than 50 feral hogs so far. He described one location where approximately nine hogs were captured, with the largest weighing approximately 300 pounds, and said the hogs had been coming into traffic near a main highway. He thanked

the Commission for allocating \$40,000 for the effort and said the department used only approximately \$10,000 to purchase a "Game Changer Pro" trap. He explained that the trap is large and can be controlled by phone. He said the department recently removed nine feral hogs from a resident's property in Mooringsport, where the hogs were coming near the resident's front and back doors.

Mr. Samuel then reported that mosquito season is beginning. He said West Nile and Zika are serious mosquito-borne diseases, and that the main mosquito of concern locally is the Culex mosquito, commonly called the house mosquito. He asked citizens to help the Parish "fight the bite" by dumping standing water from areas such as rain gutters, bird baths, dog bowls, old tires, and other locations where mosquitoes can lay larvae. Mr. Samuel said tires are a major issue and that he stays in contact with Property Standards regarding tire problems. He explained that repeated mosquito complaints in the same areas often indicate a breeding ground, such as an old drainage ditch or discarded tires. He thanked the Commission for allowing the department to use a drone, which helps reach areas that mosquito trucks cannot access, including old oil fields and ditches. He said the drone can operate at approximately 200 feet and spread BTI granules across a 70-foot swath, killing larvae before they become adult mosquitoes. Mr. Samuel said Caddo Parish operates eight mosquito trucks across more than 900 square miles. He said the department is currently spraying permethrin at the beginning of the mosquito season. He also stated that the department maintains a list of beekeepers and does not spray beekeepers' properties. He explained that permethrin is not residual and is intended to affect mosquitoes in the air at the time of spraying. Mrs. Blake asked how many trucks are used for mosquito control. Mr. Samuel said there are eight trucks. He stated that citizens may call in mosquito spraying requests or use Caddo Ready or Everbridge to request spraying and see areas scheduled for spraying.

Mr. Cothran asked whether BTI granules are still available to the public. Mr. Samuel said BTI granules are available free of charge at 1500 Monty Street. He said the granules are provided in small bags, and only about a teaspoon is needed where larvae are present. He explained that the granules are effective for one to two weeks, are safe for birds and aquatic life, and contain a natural bacterium that stops mosquito larvae before they become adult mosquitoes.

Mr. Cothran asked whether Animal Services and Mosquito Control could work with the Communications Department to create a short video showing the different stages of mosquitoes so citizens know what to look for. Mr. Samuel said they could do so.

Mr. Cothran then asked Mr. Samuel to repeat the phone number for Animal Services, particularly in light of snakes, wolves, loose animals, and other wildlife concerns. Mr. Samuel again provided the number, 318-226-6624. He explained that because Northwest Louisiana has significant wildlife and ongoing construction, land clearing can push wildlife into public areas. He advised the public not to contact wildlife directly. He said the region has a skunk rabies variant, and that in 2018 there were approximately 17 or 18 skunks that tested positive for rabies. He said raccoons, bats, and other nocturnal animals should be reported to Animal Services. He noted that raccoons may also have distemper, which can show symptoms similar to rabies, so citizens should call Animal Services and allow the department to handle testing when necessary. Mr. Cothran thanked Mr. Samuel for his report.

- *Discuss Disaster Response*

Mr. Cothran recognized Mr. Epperson to lead the discussion regarding disaster response. Mr. Epperson welcomed the student commissioners and explained that a committee meeting is a smaller meeting of members of the full body, where issues are discussed and recommendations may be made to the full Commission for formal action. He then distributed copies of the Parish's disaster response information booklet and asked committee members to review it and suggest any additions. Staff advised that the version distributed was the revised version. Mr. Epperson asked staff to describe the changes made to the booklet.

Assistant Commission Clerk Michelle Nations explained that the booklet had been revised to remove the Citizens Disaster Committee language from the front page and to retitle it as the Parish's Disaster Preparedness Informational Booklet. She said the resolution and other Citizens Disaster

Committee materials had also been removed. She stated that the lists of justices of the peace, fire districts, and constables had been updated for 2026. Staff also reviewed the booklet for other changes and updates.

Mr. Epperson said that at the previous committee meeting there had been discussion about adding information for the Caddo Parish Clerk of Court's Office, including where citizens can obtain birth certificates, vital records, and important documents in the event of a flood, fire, or other disaster. Staff said that information could be added before publication.

Commissioner Kracman suggested that the booklet be printed in a more cost-effective format. He observed that the version distributed appeared to have images or gray backgrounds on every page and said that a more black-and-white format could reduce printing costs and allow more copies to be distributed. Staff and committee members noted that the Parish has been using a QR code to distribute the booklet digitally, which reduces the need for hard copies.

Mr. Epperson said he has placed copies of the QR code in libraries in his district and at community centers. Mr. Cothran said that while QR codes are helpful, some senior citizens may benefit from having a physical booklet in hand. Staff also noted that student commissioners had received a QR code card in their folders. Mr. Epperson said he had also placed QR code cards at the Caddo Community Action Agency.

Mrs. Blake said the booklet should be updated to reflect that the Ward 8 Constable is now Mark Yawn. Staff acknowledged that there had been some recent changes not yet incorporated into the booklet and said the information would be updated.

Mr. Cothran thanked Mr. Epperson for preparing the booklet and said that because changes will continue to occur, QR codes are the quickest way to keep the information current. He also asked about places where the booklets or QR code cards are being distributed, such as recreation centers and other community locations.

Commissioner Gregory Young asked whether the booklet should also include information for the other municipalities in Caddo Parish. He noted that Greenwood and Shreveport appeared to have their own pages, while other municipalities may not. The Committee discussed that Greenwood and Shreveport may have been included because they have separate departments or information relevant to disaster response, but that the omission of other municipalities may also have been an oversight. Mr. Kracman said he would need to speak with the mayors in his district to see whether they would want to add information.

Mr. Epperson then raised a public safety concern related to a recent incident involving children. He said some people had contacted him and stated that the perpetrator was a veteran. Without commenting on the individual's circumstances, he said he had contacted Overton Brooks VA Medical Center and obtained information regarding mental health services, intimate partner violence services, marriage counseling, sexual intimate partner violence, threats of violence, suicide prevention, domestic violence, child abuse, and sexual abuse resources available to military veterans and spouses. Mr. Epperson said some callers mentioned post-traumatic stress disorder, and he wanted the public to know that Overton Brooks VA Medical Center and its clinics offer services for veterans and families. He said the military and veteran community is a microcosm of society and experiences many of the same issues as the broader community. He stated that the information would be shared by QR code and placed on the Parish website. He also said contact information would be included for Ms. Kimberly Dupree, who heads the relevant services at Overton Brooks VA Medical Center.

Mr. Epperson said that as officials and law enforcement continue to meet regarding such incidents, representatives from Barksdale Air Force Base and Overton Brooks VA Medical Center should be invited to participate. He explained that there may be military- and veteran-related issues of which local law enforcement may not be aware.

Mr. Epperson also asked that the booklet include information for workers and volunteers involved in disaster cleanup. He noted that when tornadoes and other disasters damage homes, workers may encounter splinters, stumps, downed trees, rusty nails, cuts, and scratches. He suggested adding information reminding people to check with medical personnel about tetanus shots when working in disaster cleanup areas.

- *Discuss Ward Officers- Constables & Justices of the Peace*

Mr. Cothran recognized Mr. Kracman for discussion regarding ward officers, constables, and justices of the peace. Mr. Kracman asked for an update on training constables and justices of the peace to adjudicate litter and blight matters. He said he had been seeking this update for about 600 days and asked whether there had been any progress with the Lieutenant Governor's Office. Mr. Kracman said the Parish had contacted Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser's Office and that the Keep Louisiana Beautiful program should be able to assist with the process, either by sending someone to Caddo Parish or by providing a Zoom training course. He said the training would help justices of the peace and constables understand how to adjudicate litter and blight cases. He gave an example of finding a trash bag on the side of the road, identifying an address inside the bag, and using a tiered system of enforcement that could include fines, public service, or even license suspension. Mr. Kracman said litter remains a significant issue, particularly near Highway 1 and the new dump site, where people fail to secure trash and do not return to pick it up. He said this training could be a major part of addressing the problem if ward officers understand the process. He stated that many ward officers have said they do not know how to proceed with those types of cases.

Mr. Kracman said he had another item to bring before the Committee, not as an Agenda Addition, but as a discussion item. He said he had met with Blanchard Police Chief Gerald Allen the previous day and distributed copies of a request from the Blanchard Police Department for funding for police vehicles. Mr. Kracman said the Town of Blanchard Police Department is requesting \$152,000-plus for two police interceptors and an ATV. He said the request is relatively conservative, especially compared with other funding requests the Commission has received. He explained that an ATV has been needed in Blanchard for some time, especially because of annexations involving wooded areas, where pursuits may occur. He said the department is requesting two vehicles and an ATV, and he would like the item formally placed on either the full body agenda or a future committee agenda, depending on the chair's preference. Mr. Kracman said he had only received the request the previous day and that the request had also prompted a conversation with the Mayor of Mooringsport, who may bring forward a similar request. He said small towns and villages often have small tax bases and may not have a shortage of officers, but do have a shortage of equipment, radios, and vehicles.

Mr. Cothran said the Committee could address the request at a future Public Safety Committee meeting. He said that before making any commitment, the Committee should work with legal counsel and Administration to determine what the Parish can and cannot do. He said the matter would be tabled until the next formal Public Safety Committee meeting.

Mr. Cothran also said he had spoken with some justices of the peace and constables who raised concerns about the amount of funding they receive for training. He said he was told that when they attend one training, the available training funds may be exhausted for the year, even though there are additional trainings they could or should attend. He asked Mr. Kracman to speak with some of them about their concerns. Mr. Kracman said that the Lieutenant Governor's Office, through Keep Louisiana Beautiful, would provide the litter and blight training opportunity he had discussed.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 3:09 p.m.



Clayton McGee
Administrative Specialist

