

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
CADDO PARISH COMMISSION'S  
JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMITTEE  
HELD ON THE 6<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF APRIL, 2026

The Caddo Parish Juvenile Justice Committee met in legal session on the above date at 2:30 p.m., in the Government Plaza Chambers, with the following members present constituting a quorum: Commissioners Cothran, Gage-Watts, Jones, G. Young, and J. Young (5). ABSENT: None (0). Commissioner Thomas and Blake were also in attendance.

The invocation and Pledge of Allegiance were given during the previous committee meeting. There were no Agenda Additions nor Public Comments, so the Committee moved onto New Business.

**NEW BUSINESS**

- *Update from Director of Caddo Juvenile Services, Andrew Randall*

Director Randall had not yet arrived, so the committee moved on to the next item under New Business.

- *Discuss Caddo Promise*

Commissioner John-Paul Young introduced the discussion of Caddo Promise and asked Assistant Administrator Clay Walker to present the item. Mr. Walker explained that Caddo Promise is a broad concept and that there is currently no identified funding source for it. He said the idea originated in 2021, during what he described as the second-worst period of juvenile crime in recent Caddo Parish history, with 1992 and 1993 being the worst period. Mr. Walker said staff reviewed juvenile crime data and began developing a plan that became known as Caddo Promise. He explained that for children who grow up in a truly dysfunctional home, without a functional mother, father, grandmother, or other stable family support, one thing that can change a child's trajectory is the presence of a pro-social adult. He said studies indicate that children need at least two such adults. Mr. Walker said that in 2021, only 304 children came to juvenile detention during the year, despite the level of juvenile crime the community was experiencing. He said that out of approximately 65,000 children in the parish, only 66 were repeat offenders during that period. Staff reviewed the files for those 66 children and found that Juvenile Services had known many of them since they were about 10 years old. He said staff could not identify one pro-social adult in the lives of those 66 children. He explained that when a judge is considering whether to release a child, there are some children for whom no adult appears in court. Mr. Walker said the concept behind Caddo Promise is based on the idea that government cannot raise children, but it can help install a village around a child. He said the promise would be that no child would have no adult on their side.

Mr. Walker explained that the original concept involved approximately 20 facilities, primarily SPAR facilities. He said those facilities are in the neighborhoods where they are needed, are in good physical condition, and are already open and staffed for much of the day. He said the program would focus on children living in poverty and would help pay the entry fees for after-school and extracurricular programs, similar to the activities available to many other children, such as sports, theater, swimming, dance, piano, coding, choir, and other programs. Mr. Walker said transportation would be an important part of the program. He explained that the school system could potentially assist by transporting children to program sites as part of existing bus routes. He said the concept was not for the parish to employ all of the coaches, teachers, or instructors. Instead, the program would help pay entry fees or program costs so existing providers could include children who otherwise could not afford to participate. He said the program would be both a poverty-fighting initiative and a crime-prevention initiative. Mr. Walker said the program would need to be an intergovernmental effort involving the Caddo Parish Commission, the school system, the City of Shreveport, SPAR, Juvenile Services, and other partners. Mr. Walker also discussed the possible role of churches. He said that when juvenile crime was at its height, many churches and adults reached out asking what they could do to help. He explained that if churches selected a facility or location, there could

be multiple functional church partners at each site. Those partners could help with after-school snacks, reading, homework, mentoring, and other support, after appropriate background checks.

Mr. J. Young asked what the budget would be to implement a program like Caddo Promise. Mr. Walker said that, in very preliminary terms, the cost had been estimated at approximately \$3 million per year if the program served around 10,000 children. He said the number could be reduced by limiting the program based on scale or eligibility. Mr. Walker explained the difference between primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention. He said primary prevention would involve serving all children, which would be too expensive. Secondary prevention would involve identifying red flags, such as truancy, out-of-school suspensions, poverty, or similar indicators that something is going wrong in a child's life. He said narrowing the program to children who meet both poverty criteria and certain risk indicators could reduce the number from 10,000 children to a more manageable number, possibly 1,000 to 2,000 children. Mr. J. Young observed that a \$3 million program serving 10,000 children would average approximately \$300 per child. Mr. Walker said he would want to review the numbers more closely, because some costs would not scale down evenly. He said entry fees would likely represent a major cost, but staffing and administrative costs would also have to be considered. The Committee discussed the types of costs that may be associated with extracurricular activities, including entry fees, competition fees, coach fees, uniforms, and costumes for activities such as dance. Mr. Walker said those kinds of costs would need to be considered when developing a realistic budget. The Committee also discussed the possibility that churches and community partners could assist with some of those needs.

Commissioner Gregory Young said the Commission should consider a more novel approach to large investments of this kind. He said that instead of referring to agencies and community groups only as stakeholders, the Commission should begin thinking of them as investors. He said partners such as the school system, the City of Shreveport, the Sheriff's Office, and other taxing authorities should be asked to bring resources to the effort. Mr. G. Young said that a \$3 million initiative may seem large, but it could be more achievable if it were a collaborative effort with other investors. He said that if the community were asked to support a tax initiative related to juvenile services, the outcome would be stronger if the major partners were working together. He said the purpose of intergovernmental meetings should be to work collaboratively toward objectives that the taxpayers and the broader community want to see accomplished. Mr. Walker said that when the issue is viewed as an investment, there is research showing a strong return. He referenced the Heckman equation and said that investments in children can produce significant savings by reducing future spending on welfare, incarceration, and other costs. Mr. G. Young said that the Commission needs buy-in from others, and that the effort would be more effective if more taxing authorities were engaged. He said all of the public entities should be invested in children because children are the future of the community.

Commissioner Steffon Jones said collaboration has not always been part of the culture of the parish, but that communities that are thriving are often on the same page. He said the McKinney-Vento program works with many at-risk and homeless children and could be a good partner for identifying a pilot group of children who may lack a pro-social adult. He said a pilot program would allow the Commission to review what worked after a year and make improvements.

Mr. Jones said the school system should be asked to do more than provide transportation, because transportation may already be part of its existing operations. He also discussed the importance of food, noting that some children receive their best meals at school and may need a snack or meal before participating in after-school programs. He said some children are in survival mode and may be getting into trouble because they are hungry, not because they want to be involved in crime. Mr. Jones said the program should focus on children early, particularly at the elementary level, while still recognizing that some middle and high school students may also need help. He gave the example of a young child participating in soccer through CABOSA and building a relationship with a coach who could remain a pro-social adult in the child's life for years. He said the effort could transform lives and revitalize the community, but that the Commission should not accept excuses from other potential investors.

Mr. Jones asked what could be done to start the effort, given that there is no current funding source. Mr. Walker said the Commission would likely have to take the initial step. The Committee discussed

the possibility of in-kind donations and support from other agencies, businesses, churches, and community partners. Mr. G. Young said his concern was that even if the current Commission is willing to invest \$1 million, \$2 million, \$3 million, or more, a program of this type would require recurring funding year after year. He said a future Commission may not place the same priority on the program. He said the Committee should be creative in finding ways to reduce the burden on any one entity and build shared funding over time. Mr. J. Young summarized that the Committee appeared to agree that the effort would need financial investment and in-kind investment, and that those investments should grow over time. He said people frequently come to the Commission saying that other entities are waiting on Caddo Parish to make the first move. He said the Commission has a responsibility because it is the governmental body responsible for Juvenile Services and for detaining juveniles when necessary.

Commissioner Stormy Gage-Watts said the discussion was important because it focused not only on current needs, but on the future. She asked about potential resources, including foundations or other organizations that might provide assistance. Mr. Walker said there may be organizations that can provide technical assistance, research, or help setting up a program, but that they generally would not provide ongoing funding.

Mrs. Gage-Watts said transportation and capacity would have to be considered, and that the Committee should bring potential partners to the table to discuss what Caddo Promise would look like. She said there may be other funding possibilities, but that any proposal should have a clear structure, a defined target population, and an actual cost estimate. She said the Commission needs to do something different, but that the program must be sustainable and should not be started without a plan for continuing it. Mr. Walker said the concept had not yet been taken outside the Caddo Parish Commission and that staff had not yet spoken with the school system or the City of Shreveport about implementation. He said a small working group involving McKinney-Vento, Volunteers for Youth Justice, Director Randall, and school personnel could help identify a population and a manageable number of children. Mr. J. Young said the idea of a small group was helpful. He suggested that Mr. Walker, Director Randall, and Mrs. Kelli Todd meet informally to determine a manageable number of children, the criteria for identifying those children, and a list of potential partners. He said 10,000 children would be too large for a starting point, while 66 may be too narrow, and that the working group should identify a number the Committee can plan around.

Commissioner Ron Cothran said the program should look at all spectrums of youth, not only children who are homeless or already involved in the juvenile justice system. He said there are young people who may be doing just enough to avoid attention but who still need support. He said the program should include elementary students, but should also consider middle school and some high school students before they reach a worse point.

Mr. Cothran said the Committee should identify numbers, make the need known to the community, and be clear that the Commission is not going to do the work alone. He said someone invested in each of the Commissioners at some point, and the community must now invest in young people. He said the parish has to try something new because the current collective approach is not working. He emphasized that youth need skills and support so they can become successful citizens going forward.

Mr. Jones suggested that a representative connected with My Community Cares could also be included in the planning discussion. He said such a partner could help identify families facing the types of issues being discussed. He also said men who volunteer with fatherhood or family-focused programs could be strong advocates and mentors, especially where a father, uncle, or other male relative wants to be more active in a child's life. He said a whole-family approach could help reduce the pressure of searching for pro-social adults outside the family when there are family members who want to be involved.

Mr. Jones said he supported a pilot program approach because it would allow the Commission to test the program without diving fully into something it may not be able to sustain. He said after a year, the Committee could review what worked, what did not work, what was not impactful, and what should be improved or replaced. He said the goal should be a program that can last for generations.

Commissioner J. Young said that for the next discussion, which could be as soon as two weeks later, he would like Mr. Walker, Director Randall, and Mrs. Todd to put their heads together for about an hour and determine a manageable number of children, how to identify those children, and a list of people or organizations to contact about partnering with the program.

Commissioner Blake said the discussion was important and that the community must be involved. She suggested that each Commissioner identify the top three large churches in their district and ask those churches if they would like to be part of the effort. She also suggested that Commissioners identify businesses in their districts that may want to give back to the community and help sponsor the program. She said securing faith community and business sponsorship at the beginning would be important.

Commissioner J. Young said that once the informal team prepares a rough plan for the next meeting, each Commissioner would have something to share with three churches and three businesses in their district to see if they would be willing to get involved.

- *Discuss and make recommendation regarding Resolution 24 of 2026 regarding opposition to House Bill 140 of the 2026 Regular Legislative session of the Louisiana Legislature relating to time limitations for juvenile delinquency proceedings*

Commissioner J. Young introduced Resolution No. 24 of 2026 and asked Mr. Walker or Mr. Randall to give a brief description of the bill. Mr. Randall explained that House Bill 140 would increase the available time for the prosecution or adjudication of juveniles in several ways. He said the first change would affect continued custody hearings. He explained that when a child is placed in the facility, the child typically must be brought before a judge within 48 hours. He said House Bill 140 would change that period from 48 hours to five days, extending the amount of time a child or resident could remain in the facility before appearing before a judge. Mr. Randall said the bill would also change the time for prosecution from 90 days to 180 days. He said another change would extend the time to respond to motions from 60 days to 120 days. He said the three changes would generally double the time available in those areas. Mr. Randall explained that the bill could lengthen court proceedings and could affect the amount of time a child remains in detention. He said anything that extends the available time to prosecute a child or delays the time for a child to appear before a judge could result in increased costs to Caddo Parish for housing juveniles. Mr. J. Young summarized that the proposed bill would allow prosecutors additional time to bring charges and respond to court proceedings involving juveniles, while current law requires those steps to be handled more quickly.

It was **moved by Mr. G. Young**, seconded by Mr. Cothran, *to recommend to the full body approval of Resolution No. 24 of 2026, opposing House Bill 140 of the 2026 Regular Legislative Session of the Louisiana Legislature.*

Mr. J. Young said that everyone has a right to a speedy trial, especially children.

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

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 3:15 p.m.



Clayton McGee  
Administrative Specialist