

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
CADDO PARISH COMMISSION'S  
PANDEMIC TASKFORCE COMMITTEE  
HELD ON THE 23RD DAY OF JULY, 2021

The Caddo Parish Commission met in a Pandemic Taskforce Committee, on the above date, at 11:00 a.m., via teleconference, with Mr. Jackson, Chairperson, presiding, and the following members in attendance constituting a quorum: Commissioners Epperson, Gage-Watts, Jackson, and Taliaferro (4). ABSENT: Commissioner Johnson (1).

Mrs. Gage-Watts gave the invocation, and Mr. Epperson led the Commission in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**CERTIFICATE OF TELECONFERENCE**

WHEREAS, the Governor of the State of Louisiana has declared a statewide Public Health emergency, inclusive of Caddo Parish, in Proclamation Number 25 JBE 2020;

WHEREAS, the Governor, has further extended that declaration via Proclamations Number 158 JBE 2020 and Number 159 JBE 2020; and

WHEREAS, R.S. 42:17.1 allows members of political subdivisions to participate in its meetings electronically under certain limited circumstances.

THEREFORE, in accordance with the provisions of R.S. 42:17.1, the presiding officer of the Caddo Parish Commission hereby certifies that this meeting is to address matters that are:

- (a) directly related to the public Commission's response to the Coronavirus Pandemic and are critical to the health, safety, or welfare of the public.
  - (b) that if they are delayed will cause curtailment of vital public services or severe economic dislocation and hardship.
  - (c) critical to continuation of the business of the Commission and that are not able to be postponed to a meeting held in accordance with the other provisions of Open Meetings Law due to a legal requirement or other deadline that cannot be postponed or delayed by the public body.
  - (d) critical or time-sensitive and have been determined by the undersigned should not be delayed;\*
- \* Consideration of matters under Paragraph (d) will initially require a two-thirds vote of those members present. (This does not affect the vote necessary for adoption or any motion).

**Date: July 22, 2021**

/s/Steven Jackson  
Pandemic Taskforce Chair

**NEW BUSINESS**

The Committee moved onto the first item under New Business: *Discuss COVID Vaccination Updates & Vaccination Plan.*

Mr. Jackson introduced Dr. Chris Kevil, Dr. John Van Cherry, and Dr. Martha Whyte to the Committee.

Dr. Kevil conducted a presentation of vaccination rates by census tract. He that they have the capability to drill down and look by census tract where the vaccination rates are. The maximum vaccination rate in Caddo Parish for a particular area is 53.62%.

Dr. Whyte said that they are actively seeking sites to vaccinate. She said that if there are places that needs to have a vaccine clinic or to conduct a presentation regarding the vaccines, they are happy to go to those places. We just want to be a good community partner and be able to get the word to the people who need to hear it, she said. Dr. Whyte also mentioned that there are two main factors for people who are not getting vaccinated. One being fears and concerns over stories they've hear about the vaccine affecting fertility or it being embedded in your DNA. The other being that people feel that the vaccine is government overreach.

Mr. Jackson asked about vaccine teams. Dr. Van Cherry said that they've been doing 30-40 events per month outside of LSU. They are going to churches, schools, community centers, housing

project, and other areas of Northwest Louisiana to administer vaccines. He further explained that they are doing about two to three times as many vaccines now as they were doing a month ago, so there has been a significant uptick in interest and receipt of the vaccine.

Mr. Jackson wanted to know if mobile units would be available to set up in different neighborhoods. Dr. Van Cherry said that they do not have a mobile unit available to them any longer because it was costing quite a bit of money. He also said that they are able to set up in community parks with tents to provide vaccines in a small community. It's a matter of identifying a site, then working with Public Health and the National Guard team, then setting a date that they will be in that neighborhood.

Dr. Whyte agreed and said that they've been to churches, events, and businesses. She said that they could also do door-to-door, but some people do not like this because they do not like that intrusion. They do have door hangers with information that talks about the vaccine and a date/time that a vaccination clinic will be held in that area.

Mr. Jackson suggested a food distribution plus vaccine. Dr. Van Cherry thought this was a great idea because it is drawing people into what they're looking for and providing an opportunity to get vaccinated or providing information regarding the vaccine.

Mr. Epperson does not agree. He said that it is like "baiting somebody and tricking them". He suggested that placing fliers or door hangers in the food boxes and leave it up to the individual to decide whether or not they want to get their shot.

Mr. Epperson also applauded all of the medical personnel that has been involved in this vaccination process.

Mrs. Gage-Watts also thanked all of the doctors who joined in on this Pandemic Taskforce. She agrees with the vaccination efforts by any means necessary. She also suggested informing the public about the vaccination efforts if they decide to include it in a food distribution.

Mr. Jackson wanted to know if the local GOP would host a vaccine event. Mr. Taliaferro thinks they would. He also said that he is all about getting vaccinated, if you so choose. Mr. Taliaferro also said that it is the Commission's responsibility, regardless of which side they are on, is to make programs available.

Mr. Taliaferro wanted to know if the low number of vaccinations is in the African-American and Hispanic population. He said that it seems that the people who are affected the most are not getting the vaccine.

Mr. Taliaferro would also like to see more education on the nutrition. He said that this is an opportunity to give people information to boost their immune system through diet. Dr. Whyte said that several of the issues Louisiana is facing are due to poor nutrition and poor nutrition choices. She also said that in Louisiana, Region 7, there is almost a 50-50 split between African-Americans and whites who have received the vaccination.

Dr. Van Cherry said that they have seen an uptick in vaccinations in the past week. He also said that there are more African-Americans who are interested in receiving the vaccinations.

We all have a responsibility to control the course of this pandemic, and without everybody participating by vaccinating, best choice; masking, second best choice; or both; this pandemic is going to take a lot more lives, Dr. Van Cherry said.

Dr. Kevil said that this is a simple matter of math. He explained that the vaccine could alter the course of this pandemic.

Dr. Van Cherry said that when he goes to the grocery store, the vast majority of white people are not wearing a mask, but the vast majority of African-Americans are wearing a mask.

It was **moved by Mr. Jackson**, seconded Mrs. Gage-Watts, *to recommend to the full body an appropriation of \$200,000 from either the American Rescue Plan Fund or the Emergency Funding Pool for vaccination coordination efforts.*

Mr. Jackson explained that this is not a vaccine marketing campaign, but a coordination effort whether it be pop-up events, food distribution boxes, community events, gift cards, etc.

Dr. Wilson wanted to know how this would be worked out. Mr. Jackson explained that he sees it working similarly to the Safe Summer Program where the Commission would contact Administration for a project that they would like done using these funds.

At this time, Mr. Jackson's motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Epperson, Gage-Watts, Jackson, and Taliaferro (4). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: Commissioner Johnson (1). ABSTAIN: None (0).

The Committee then moved onto the next item under New Business: *Government Plaza COVID-19 Protocol*.

Mrs. Cheryl McGee, HR Director, said that they are following CDC guidelines. Prior to anyone coming into the Chambers, a Sheriff's Deputy check temperatures. There is also an enhanced cleaning routine in place for the Chambers and the entire workplace. She also said that they are encouraging social distancing, washing hands, and wearing masks. Mrs. McGee said that masks are required in the Chambers.

Dr. Wilson also mentioned that people who refused to wear a mask will be escorted out of the Chambers. He also said that he will be meeting with Chief Whitehorn regarding personnel contracting COVID.

Dr. Wilson said that there has been an uptick with the reported cases, and it is spreading rapidly. We cannot become complacent with it, he said. Dr. Wilson also mentioned that there will be additional measures to protect the employees.

It was **moved by Mr. Epperson**, seconded by Mr. Jackson, *to recommend to the full body an addition to the agenda that states the Government Chambers' protocols before the Pledge of Allegiance*.

**Friendly amendment by Mr. Jackson** to also post the protocols around the building. Mr. Epperson accepted.

Mr. Epperson said that it is the Commissioner's responsibility and authority to direct what goes on in the Chambers. He also mentioned that because of HIPAA, they cannot ask people if they have or have not gotten the vaccine, or if they've contracted COVID.

Mr. Taliaferro wanted to know where the signs would be placed. Dr. Wilson said that the signs will be placed at the front doors and in the lobby of the Chambers

At this time, Mr. Epperson's motion carried as amended, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Epperson, Gage-Watts, Jackson, and Taliaferro (4). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: Commissioner Johnson (1). ABSTAIN: None (0).

It was **moved by Mr. Epperson**, seconded by Mr. Jackson, *to recommend to the full body to resume committee meetings via Zoom or teleconference*.

Mr. Epperson said that it is the Commissioners' responsibilities to mitigate and alleviate the circumstances of contracting and spreading this virus.

At this time, Mr. Epperson's motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Epperson, Gage-Watts, Jackson, and Taliaferro (4). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: Commissioner Johnson (1). ABSTAIN: None (0).

The Committee then moved onto the next item under New Business: *Rental Assistance Update*.

It was **moved by Mr. Jackson**, seconded by Mr. Taliaferro, *to postpone this discussion to the next committee meeting*.

Mrs. Gage-Watts wanted to know the total number of households that were served and the actual allocated amount. Mrs. Barnett said that the number of families served was 2,531; the total number of months of rent paid was 13,671; and the total amount of funding dispersed was \$10,428,133.28. She will forward this information to the Commissioners.

There being no further business, the Committee adjourned at 12:02 p.m.

  
Assistant Commission Clerk