

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
CADDO PARISH COMMISSION'S  
NGO APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE  
HELD ON THE 30<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF MARCH, 2022

The Caddo Parish NGO Appropriations Committee met in legal session on the above date, at 11:30 a.m., in the Government Plaza Chambers, with Mr. Johnson, Chairman, presiding, and the following members in attendance: Commissioners Atkins, Burrell, Chavez, Johnson, and Lazarus (5). ABSENT: Commissioners Epperson, Gage-Watts, and Hopkins (3).

Mr. Atkins gave the invocation, and Mr. Chavez led the Committee in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**NEW BUSINESS**

- *Discuss and make recommendations regarding Ordinance No. 6214 of 2022, an ordinance amending the Budget of Estimated Revenues & Expenditures for the Riverboat Fund in the amount of \$7,500 to provide an appropriation for Basic Necessities and to otherwise provide with respect thereto*

Mr. Atkins reminded the Commission that the majority of these items were discussed during the Commission's Work Session and were moved for introduction, but also remanded to Committee for further discussion prior to adoption.

Mr. Chavez asked that Ms. Debbie Hollis come before the Committee and give a presentation on her organizations.

Ms. Hollis, Co-Director of Basic Necessities, said that they are the only nationally recognized diaper bank and period supply bank in North Louisiana and the Ark-La-Tex. They opened during COVID in June of 2020 and delivered their first 30,000 diapers out of her dining room and Honda. Since then, they've secured an office space on Centenary Boulevard. Since its inception, Basic Necessities, has distributed 155,916 diapers, 75,120 period supplies, and 32,094 incontinent supplies to people in need in the Ark-La-Tex. Ms. Hollis also explained that SNAP and WIC does not cover the expense of these basic sanitary supplies. She said that approximately 75% of their clients reside in Caddo Parish.

Mr. Chavez wanted to know how do citizens reach out to this organization. Ms. Hollis explained that they can go to the website and click on the button that says APPLY, which will walk them through a simple client request form. She also mentioned that they work with different organizations, like 211, Unite Us, etc.

Answering a question from Mr. Chavez regarding a limit in which clients can receive help, Ms. Hollis said that they can provide help to an individual up to four times per year, but by next year, they will be able to help people up to six times per year.

Mr. Jackson wanted to know if this will be a recurring funding request from the Parish. So we're going to be here forever until diaper need and period poverty are gone, so this will likely be a recurring request, Ms. Hollis said.

Mr. Jackson then wanted to know if people could privately donate to the organization. Ms. Hollis said that there is a DONATE button on the website as well where someone could donate money, diapers, needs, etc.

Mr. Jackson also pointed out that the original request was for \$15,000, but now the request is half that. Ms. Hollis said that they did receive a rejection letter for the original funding request. Mr. Johnson explained that when they looked at all of the agencies, there was no funding for Basic Necessities at that time. Mr. Young did, however, bring it back up to try and fund it.

Mr. Lazarus asked for the web address. Ms. Hollis said that it is [basicnecessitiesla.com](http://basicnecessitiesla.com).

It was **moved by Mr. Atkins**, seconded by Mr. Lazarus, *to recommend to the full body an appropriation of \$7,500 for Basic Necessities. Motion carried*, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Burrell, Chavez, Johnson, and Lazarus (5). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: Commissioners Epperson, Gage-Watts, and Hopkins (3). ABSTAIN: None (0).

- *Discuss and make recommendation regarding Ordinance No. 6216 of 2022, an ordinance amending the Budget of Estimated Revenues & Expenditures for the Riverboat Fund in the amount of \$6,500 to provide an appropriation for Wildlife Education & Rehabilitation of Louisiana (WERLA), and to otherwise provide with respect thereto*

Mr. Johnson wanted to know the reason for this being in the Appropriations Committee, not Animal Services. Mrs. Hayley Barnett explained that the Health Tax Fund does not have enough funds to cover these types of expenses. She further stated that it needs to come out of Riverboat, which is how it ended up in the Committee to be discussed.

Mrs. Erica Bryant said that this is an NGO type request. She also said that it could become

overwhelming if they start funding organizations out of the operating funds. Mrs. Bryant also mentioned that the Animal Services Committee recommended that this be forwarded to the Appropriations Committee.

Mr. Johnson then wanted to know if this was a service or contractor that Animal Services uses. Mrs. Bryant said that she is not aware of that. Mrs. Barnett explained that Animal Services calls them if they have an injured wild animal, but they do not have a contract with them. They come on an as-needed basis, she said.

Mr. Johnson wanted to know if WERLA sends Animal Services an invoice once they help an injured animal. Mrs. Barnett said that they do not. Mr. Johnson then wanted to know the need for funds now. Mrs. Bryant said that they did not request this funding.

Mr. Atkins explained that WERLA operates on a "lean budget" of about \$50,000 per year. He also said that they provide a service to the Parish with respect to injured or wild animals who need rehabilitation or rescue. WERLA works in conjunction with Animal Services and has a great partnership with them. Mr. Atkins pointed out that WERLA is an NGO.

Mr. Chavez wanted to know if the funds will go to Animal Services or to the agency. Dr. Wilson said that it will go to WERLA. He then asked if the funding is for cases. Mr. Lazarus explained that 13% of their cases are from Caddo Animal Services. Mr. Chavez understood and suggested adding a line item for this organization in next year's budget. Dr. Wilson said that they prefer not to do that because they work with several organizations that Caddo Parish does not fund.

Mr. Chavez wanted to know if LA Wildlife & Fisheries is responsible for injured wild animals. Dr. Wilson explained that there are multiple organizations who help with wild animals.

Mr. Johnson asked if WERLA submitted an NGO application. Mrs. Barnett said that they did, but it has not been reviewed just yet.

Mr. Jackson wanted to know if the members of the organization were present. The Clerk of the Commission said that they were not, but they planned to attend the April 7, 2022 Regular Session.

Mr. Jackson wanted to know if this will be a recurring expense. Mrs. Bryant said that it could be. He then said that he is seeing a constant request for recurring items. He also said that when the budget was adopted, organizations were cut back because the Parish did not have the money to fund them at their requested amount. Mr. Jackson said that the Commission continues to "load this budget with new organizations".

Answering a question from Mr. Jackson regarding the balance in the Riverboat Fund, Mrs. Barnett said that there is about \$400,000. He cautioned the Committee on spending those funds because it keeps dwindling down.

Mr. Burrell said that this organization has a small operating budget. He is not sure how many animals can be served with that small of a budget. Mr. Burrell also said that he is not comfortable with this because he has not seen the application nor is he familiar with this organization.

Mr. Chavez suggested a report from the organizations be submitted to "see where the money is going and why the requests are increasing". Mrs. Barnett said that Finance has those reports.

Mr. Johnson explained that the NGO Committee meets each year to determine how much the different organizations will be funded based on the forecast of the riverboat revenue. He also mentioned that they normally have over \$2M in NGO requests each year. The NGO Committee then reviews the funding requests and makes recommendations to the full body.

Mr. Atkins reminded the Committee that these funds renew annually based on riverboat usage. He also said that it is appropriate to "cull organizations who have been on the NGO budget for a number of years". Mr. Atkins also said that he is more likely to fund organizations who have modest requests.

Mr. Jackson pointed out that the revenue source has been steadily declining, but the requests are increasing. He also suggested that organizations should have a sustainability plan.

Mr. Burrell said that the Commission does not have the resources to save every animal on this planet. He also stated that he is not an anti-animal person.

It was **moved by Mr. Atkins**, seconded by Mr. Chavez, *to recommend to the full body an appropriation of \$6,500 to WERLA.*

Mr. Atkins understands that not everyone is for this organization. He also said that the director did come to the Animal Services Committee and gave a presentation.

Mr. Chavez wanted to know if Animal Services could deal with injured wildlife. Dr. Wilson explained that Animal Services is for domesticated animals, not wildlife. Mr. Chavez suggested that a button be placed on the website directing citizens to Wildlife & Fisheries.

Mr. Johnson clarified that this is the responsibility of Wildlife & Fisheries. Dr. Wilson said that CPAS deals with domesticated animals, such as dogs, cats, and horses. Mr. Johnson wanted to know if ACOs can train to deal with squirrels and raccoons. Dr. Wilson said no. Mr. Johnson then asked about rats. Dr. Wilson said that rats transport viruses and diseases, so there is a program with CPAS to provide poison to eradicate the rat population. Mrs. Bryant said that CPAS provides the poison, but does not go out and place the poison out.

At this time, Mr. Atkins' motion failed, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins and Chavez (2). NAYS: Commissioners Burrell, Johnson, and Lazarus (3). ABSENT: Commissioners Epperson, Gage-Watts, and Hopkins (3). ABSTAIN: None (0).

- *Discuss and make recommendation regarding Ordinance No. 6217 of 2022, an ordinance amending the Budget of Estimated Revenues & Expenditures for the Riverboat Fund in the amount of \$10,000 to provide an appropriation for Shreveport Green, and to otherwise provide with respect thereto*

It was **moved by Mr. Chavez**, seconded by Mr. Atkins, *to recommend to the full body an appropriation of \$10,000 for Shreveport Green.*

Mr. Chavez said that this organization did not apply last year due to COVID. He also explained that this organization helps different neighborhood associations to clean up Shreveport and Caddo Parish.

Dr. Wilson stands in support of this request because Shreveport Green is a wonderful program that keeps this community clean.

Mr. Johnson said that District 2 normally wins the Great American Cleanup by producing the most trash in pounds. He mentioned that this is both good and bad; good because District 2 is winning, but bad because it has so much trash and litter. Mr. Johnson said that something needs to be done to hold people accountable for the trash and litter they are throwing out.

Dr. Wilson mentioned that Caddo Parish Solid Waste does collect tires. He also said that if there is a cleanup event in his district, they will provide as many containers as needed to haul it all off.

Mr. Jackson said that it was his understanding that there was an annual appropriation for Shreveport Green through Parks & Recreation. Dr. Wilson said that there is through the Summer Work Program. Mrs. Barnett said that appropriation is \$42,000.

Mr. Jackson then wanted to know the specifics for this request. Dr. Wilson said that this request is for cleaning up the Parish, community-wide.

Mr. Jackson then wanted to know how long this organization has been asking for funding from the Parish. Mrs. Barnett said that the Parish has funded Shreveport Green for awhile now. Mr. Jackson understands that this is a necessity, but should look at a plan for sustainability. He also said that Shreveport Green does an excellent job. Dr. Wilson said that this funding is an investment for Caddo Parish because it provides manpower and resources to address the needs in the community.

At this time, Mr. Chavez's motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Burrell, Chavez, Johnson, and Lazarus (5). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: Commissioners Epperson, Gage-Watts, and Hopkins (3). ABSTAIN: None (0).

- *Discuss and make recommendations regarding NGO application from Charles Johnson Ministries, Inc.*

Mr. Johnson wanted to know if salaries and wages were allowed. Mrs. Barnett said that it is not.

It was **moved by Mr. Johnson**, seconded by Mr. Atkins, *to recommend to the full body an appropriation of \$5,000 for the Charles Johnson Ministries, Inc.*

Mr. Johnson said that based upon the application, the programs are supposed to be held in Districts 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, and 12. This program will be providing educational and financial assistance to women who desire to open their own business in the Parish.

Mr. Jackson explained that this organization is housed in District 3, and when they originally reached out to him, it was only for District 3. Mr. Jackson advised the organization that there are currently programs that offer these same services, and he will not support it. He further explained that, now, the application is in several districts, not just District 3. Mr. Jackson also said that this organization is requesting funding for business investments, the African American Chamber is already promoting and helping small businesses. I see something here talking about providing food, we give \$100,000 to the Food Bank, Mr. Jackson said. He also pointed out the application also mentions helping expecting mothers, which is what Basic Necessities already does. Mr. Jackson said that this is just a duplication of services.

Mr. Jackson also said that he advised Mr. Charles Johnson to apply next year when the budget cycle rolls back around. He explained that his initial conversation he had was that the funds provided

by the City of Shreveport were running out, so they needed the Parish to help fill in those gaps. That means there's no sustainability, Mr. Jackson said. There are several organizations that provides the services that this organization offers. He also stated that, as the Commissioner for this area, he will not be supporting this application.

Mr. Chavez wanted to know who sponsored this item. Mr. Johnson said that he did. Mr. Chavez also wanted to know if there was anything on the application that this organization provides to the citizens that Parish does not already fund. Dr. Wilson pointed out that it is not uncommon that the Parish provides for duplicated services, i.e. after school programs.

Mr. Atkins agreed with Mr. Jackson. He suggested that these organizations be looked at holistically on an annual basis, avoid redundancy, and avoid multi-year commitments. He also suggested that the Commission put sunsets on funding organizations.

Mr. Burrell said that nonprofits used to be funded mainly by the private sector, but they have cut back considerably. He also said that the smaller nonprofits normally are not funded. As a whole, part of Shreveport's problem because of its economic conditions; because of its level of education; and a number of these factors, you couldn't do enough for nonprofits, Mr. Burrell said. He also mentioned that nonprofits provide a ROI of 7:1. Nonprofits are definitely needed, he said.

**Call for the Question by Mr. Lazarus**, seconded by Mr. Chavez. Motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Burrell, Chavez, Johnson, and Lazarus (5). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: Commissioners Epperson, Gage-Watts, and Hopkins (3). ABSTAIN: None (0).

At this time, Mr. Johnson's motion failed, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Burrell and Johnson (2). NAYS: Commissioner Atkins, Chavez, and Lazarus (3). ABSENT: Commissioners Epperson, Gage-Watts, and Hopkins (3). ABSTAIN: None (0).

- *Discuss and make recommendations regarding NGO application from Greater Shreveport Chamber Foundation*

It was **moved by Mr. Chavez**, seconded by Mr. Johnson, *to recommend to the full body an appropriation of \$7,000 for Greater Shreveport Chamber Foundation.*

Mr. Jackson said that this project is a one-time request. He said that there are several requests coming out, and his position is, "if it's not one-time, then we might need to wait until the 2023 Budget Cycle and that we consider it from a holistic perspective".

**Substitute motion by Mr. Johnson**, seconded by Mr. Lazarus, *to recommend to the full body an appropriation of \$6,000 for Greater Shreveport Chamber Foundation.*

Mr. Johnson said that he reviewed the budget form, there are some items, like insurance, storage, and permits, that the Parish should not be involved in.

Mr. Burrell wanted to know the total cost of the project. The total cost, based on the application, is \$60,500, but they are asking the Parish for \$15,000.

Attorney Frazier said that she will be following up on this and some other applications because this might be more appropriate for Economic Development. She said that there needs to be some connection between the mural and leadership class and how it impacted the job market or economic development.

Mr. Johnson said that if it is economic development, then it would need to go to another committee and have an economic impact analysis.

Mr. Jackson pointed out that insurance can be dramatically waived from the City of Shreveport. He also suggested that this group collaborate with Poetic X for his mural project.

Mr. Chavez said that he will be abstaining from this vote due to working with the Chamber and possible conflict of interest.

At this time, Mr. Johnson's substitute motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Burrell, Johnson, and Lazarus (4). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: Commissioners Epperson, Gage-Watts, and Hopkins (3). ABSTAIN: Commissioner Chavez (1).

At this time, there was no further discussion to come before the Committee, so the meeting adjourned at 12:18 p.m.

  
Assistant Commission Clerk