

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CADDO PARISH COMMISSION'S
JUVENILE JUSTICE CITIZEN'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE
HELD ON THE 22nd DAY OF MARCH 2022

The Caddo Parish Juvenile Justice Citizen's Advisory Committee met in legal session on the above date, at 11:30 a.m., in the 1st Floor Conference Room, with Mrs. Gage-Watts, presiding, and the following members in attendance: Mr. Baird, Mrs. Beard, Mrs. Bryant, Mrs. Courtney, Lt. Gen. (ret) Kowalski, Mr. Krefft, Mrs. Parsons, Mr. Williams, Mrs. Wimberly and Mrs. Yeates (1). ABSENT: Mr. Doc Montgomery (1).

Mrs. Wimberly gave the invocation, and Mrs. Baird led the Advisory Committee in the Pledge of Allegiance.

NEW BUSINESS

- Mrs. Stormy Gage-Watts moved onto the first New Business item, *Update on Committee Meeting Guidelines in Light of Recent Changes*

Commissioner Gage-Watts requested each member take out a coin and requested that each member voluntarily share two things about themselves and how the year on their coin is important to them. Mrs. Wimberly shared that her coin year is 2022 and believes that this is her year to be active in change for children. She also shared that she lost her oldest son to a DWI and is devoted to serving on behalf of children. Mr. Krefft shared that in 2006 Parish voters turned down the 1/10th percent sales and use tax for juvenile justice. In 2018, he requested for the birth of this committee in a Commission meeting.

Mrs. Beard shared that in 1981 she married into a family that lead over 100 years of service in non-profit industry that allowed her to meet the most amazing people. She said that it was the most rewarding work that she has ever done.

Mrs. Proby-Bryant shared that the year 2020 should resonate with everyone and represent the resiliency of their community and nation. She stated that she serves as President of the Arc of Caddo-Bossier and retired from Bossier as a Director Specialist and wants the Committee members work will draw them closer and unite and be a force to be reckoned with.

Mrs. Parsons shared that in 2021 she grieves someone but also adopted her great-niece. She said that God has a reason for everything and she appreciates Him for that.

Mr. Williams shared in 2019 he became a father to his 5th and final child. He stated that being in the military when his older children were born caused him to miss their young stages, but is proud to be present in his youngest child's life.

Mr. Kowalski shared in 2017 he made a life change and moved to Shreveport for the third time. He also shared that after he retired from the military and launched a consultant business in DC. He was tired of the paperwork and decided to retire in Louisiana.

Mrs. Yeates shared that she was born in 1995 but her coin was dated 1985. She stated that she enjoys the committee and enjoy all aspects of working with children. Mrs. Yeates shared that Geauxbags has distributed \$1.3 million worth of bags in Louisiana.

Mrs. Baird shared that the Geauxbags project started in 2013 and in 2015 the Geaux4Kids non-profit was born. She stated that there are different programs under the Geaux4Kids non-profit, but Geauxbags is their signature program. Inside the Geauxbags are pillow, blanket, backpack, note of encouragement, snack, water, pajamas, toiletries, underwear, and covered items. Mrs. Baird shared that these bags go to rescued children from trafficking, domestic violence or foster care. She said that she could help the children "get everything they need to set up for their lives". Mrs. Baird further shared that they are partnering with the Beard Foundation to get the Center of Resiliency study before the Alderman.

Mrs. Courtney shared that in 2008 she graduated from law school and determined that she was going to stay in Louisiana. She realized she wanted a career in public service and stayed involved in juvenile service.

- The Chair moved onto the first New Business item, *Overview and Discussion of the Advisory Committee Goals*

Mrs. Gage-Watts explained that each member was selected by a Commissioner to serve on this committee.

The Clerk pointed out that Commissioner Jones was appointed during the process of assembling the Citizen's Advisory Committee and may add someone. Mrs. Gage-Watts explained that it may not be a good idea to bring someone in late.

The Clerk explained that the Citizen's Advisory Committee had a combination of virtual and in-person meetings, which was possible due to the Louisiana Legislature passing a law in 2020 that allows teleconference meetings under certain requirements. He further explained that those requirements are "subject to the interpretation of the body calling the meeting". The Clerk stated that the disaster declaration within the State of Louisiana has expired, which was a base qualification. He said that they will be required to meet in person and should contact his office for more information to structure their meetings.

Mrs. Gage-Watts agreed that all of this Citizen's Advisory Committee's meeting should be held in person. She explained that they should meet at least once per month. Each member should not be involved with small projects and they should engage with their staff and their Commissioner as needed. Mrs. Gage-Watts further explained that the chair will be responsible for reporting minutes to the Juvenile Justice Committee and the full body as necessary. Each member will need to attend at least 80% of the meeting, review the agenda items and offer to take on special assignments. She stated that their major goal is to review the racial and gender disparity of 9 to 18 year old children, review the policies and procedures for juvenile services, make recommendations about investing in community center or services or additional programs for their youth, recommend or deny additional pods. Mrs. Gage-Watts stated that the Parish Clerk and its staff are encouraged not to attend their meetings, unless addressing questions or concerns. She explained that they do not want the Citizen's Advisory Committee to be influenced and that their decisions must be independent. Mrs. Gage-Watts stated that the Citizen's Advisory Committee should be informed of Juvenile Services and follow the conflict of interest in confidential policy. She said that they should never use the board for personal gain. Their main tasks are prevention, intervention and providing solutions to issues related to Juvenile reform. Mrs. Gage-Watts highly encouraged the Citizen's Advisory Committee to round with staff and with the juveniles per policy. She opened the floor for members to share information they learned.

The Clerk informed the Committee that he can provide reference materials from what Mrs. Gage-Watts just said.

Mrs. Gage-Watts confirmed that everyone had received a packet from Mr. Clay Walker's initial presentation and advised that it includes advantageous information to help them. Mr. Ryan acknowledged that they reviewed the recidivism rate, had an introduction of judges, and all major information on Juvenile Services operations. The Clerk suggested that he write a summary of the information presented to them with links to the reference material that they can print.

Mrs. Courtney requested for a copy of the signed ordinance that created the Juvenile Justice Citizen's Advisory Committee.

Mrs. Beard stated they were not advised on what to do with the information they have received and how they are going to be able to make recommendations. She further stated how they were unsure of the goal. Mrs. Gage-Watts stated that she spoke on their goals for the members to determine what part of the project they are going to work on. She further stated that everyone will have a project then regroup to present their findings and make a decision.

Mrs. Parsons reiterated that they would get the information first, then they can review it and come together. Mrs. Beard said that she is fine with getting information, and stated that they needed to come together to determine as a group what they needed and how to proceed.

Mrs. Yeates pointed out that on Resolution 57 of 2021 there are lettered points in the resolution. She asked Mrs. Gage-Watts if those were valid points they need to get. Mrs. Gage-Watts confirmed that they are very valid because that was what the full body adopted.

- The Chair moved onto the first New Business item, *Discuss Issues Relative to Juvenile Justice in Caddo Parish*

Mr. Krefft commented that he spoke to two probation officers at Juvenile Services and they suggested the need for more manpower. He said that he informed Commissioner John-Paul Young of this. Mr. Krefft also pointed out that Parish probation officers manage 35-40 juveniles compared to the standard average of 20-25 juveniles per officer. He wondered what can their committee do with this information. Mrs. Gage-Watts responded that they are encouraged to share that information amongst themselves on the Citizen's Advisory Committee.

Mr. Krefft mentioned that Clay Walker informed them that salaries for more officers are in the 2022 Operating Budget, but it is not an attractive for qualified, prospective applicants. Mrs. Gage-Watts stated that there is more to it than the salary and working with troubled children is a calling. She said that it

is a hard task to fulfill at Juvenile Services and that the Citizen's Advisory Committee may have new ideas to retain existing employees and recruit new employees. She recommended that this be a project for them.

Mrs. Parson mentioned the a coffee program that trains inmates and people with misdemeanors how to work with youth and advocates them for juvenile justice. She stated that it would be a great idea to recruit those participants. Mr. Everson pointed out that there was recent controversy surrounding the program. Mrs. Parson stated that she was aware and that it was just a thought.

Mrs. Beard agreed with dividing work.

Mrs. Bryant commented that she is tracking the legislative session on bills regarding juvenile justice. She also requested that they establish set dates for their meetings. Mrs. Gage-Watts recommended they use Survey Monkey to locate a consensus of the group's meeting times. Mrs. Yeates stated that they have an scheduled meeting on Wednesday and they can discuss meeting dates then.

- The Chair moved onto the first New Business item, *Next Steps*

Mrs. Parsons stated that should would like to know who their new chairperson will be for personal reasons. She believes that the chairperson will direct and organize the group. Mrs. Parsons mentioned that she needs to move forward and that they should address who their officers are.

Mrs. Yeates commented that they voted to select a new chairperson.

The Clerk pointed out that he could send a new scheduling poll.

Mr. Krefft also said that they voted to switch chairs on their March 2nd meeting with five members and two proxies present.

Mrs. Gage-Watts wanted to know if they want to have the Survey Monkey reissued to everyone. The Citizen's Advisory Committee agreed unanimously.

Mr. Krefft reiterated that they should establish who is the chair and co-chair of the Citizen's Advisory Committee today. He said that Mrs. Wimberly was the chair based on their March 2nd meeting with five members present. Mrs. Bryant stated that it was indicated that Zoom was unavailable.

Mrs. Parsons mentioned there was a lack of communication to inform all members of the vote and a reason for a vote. She said that there should have been parliamentary procedures established to make everyone's vote available and a community to all members regarding a vote. Mrs. Yeates stated that they have made things up as they went up from day one until that meeting and they didn't have any rules to follow.

Mr. Krefft recalled that he inquired about their procedure if Ryan was unavailable for emergency with Jessica, but there was no response to his inquiry. He expressed that it bothered him to vote to replace Ryan after finding out he had an emergency with his son.

Mrs. Beard stated that serving on a board has emotional things and family involvement which she took a while to consider before joining the Citizen's Advisory Committee. She stated that she had best intentions and assumed everyone had the best intentions. Mrs. Beard also said that the vote was not a conspiracy and that member's absences were not communicated.

Mrs. Bryant pointed out that she attended every meeting via Zoom. She had informed Jessica of her absence, but was not aware that they could send a proxy. Mrs. Bryant stated that they establish their in-person meeting times. She further stated that they are there for one purpose and they need to move forward under Commissioner Gage-Watts' leadership.

Mrs. Gage-Watts stated that they have lost their focus regarding who is the chairperson. She said that everyone on the Citizen's Advisory Committee has the ability to be a chairperson and that the chairperson is to facilitate the meeting. She further stated after confirming with Attorney Bernstein that they cannot have a proxy sit in their meetings on their behalf and their meeting without a quorum is void. Mrs. Gage-Watts expressed sadness that there was discord in the Juvenile Justice Citizen's Advisory Committee, but was grateful the youth did not hear about it. She reminded the Committee that as a spiritual person this is God's plan and the enemy is always busy in God's plan. She stated that they may agree to disagree, but they must find their way to their goal. Mrs. Gage-Watts pointed out that the members could not tell her any good things they have learned about Juvenile Services, because they wasted too much time on things that did not matter. She reiterated that they have what they need to refocus, rest and move forward.

Mrs. Wimberly stated that they should still settle who their chairperson is. She explained that respect has not been given to everyone in the Citizen's Advisory Committee and everyone is adults.

Mrs. Wimberly stated that they must come to a resolution today. Mrs. Gage-Watts opened the floor to vote on what they need to do to move on. "If you're not comfortable moving forward as things are and have been established, then you can vote against it. But if you feel like that there are issues that you would like to lay on the table then vote to say that I need to lay these issues on the table before I move forward", she said.

Mrs. Baird clarified that they should have a clean state. She stated that the initial selection of the committee's officers did not play out simply. Mrs. Baird stated that she prefers to do projects and programs and is not one to be a chairman of a committee.

It was **moved by Mrs. Baird, to have elect officers for the Juvenile Justice Citizen's Advisory Committee.** Motion failed, due to a lack of a second.

Mrs. Gage-Watts commended Mrs. Baird on making her motion and informed her to make her motion first then speak on the subject. Mr. Krefft commented that they make a motion, then have a second before they can have discussion and vote.

Mrs. Gage-Watts encouraged that they should start off with a new election to take the direction they want the Committee to go. She reminded the Committee that they learned about their counterparts today.

Mrs. Yeates wanted to know if they have to vote out their current officers. Mrs. Gage-Watts responded that the current officers may want to continue to serve and other members may nominate someone from the floor.

Mr. Williams stated that he was asked to be in leadership and accepted the offer. His intentions were to do the work to the best of his ability. Mr. Williams stated that if him being in leadership is an issue and a problem he will move aside.

Mrs. Bryant explained that they voted for the officers of the Citizen's Committee by recommendation of the Clerk. She stated that she attended meetings via Zoom. Mrs., Bryant stated that she was unaware of the discord until there were emails. Mrs. Gage-Watts stated that she still has not received those emails. Mrs. Bryant further explained that she can work with everybody. She said that although everyone has the ability to be a leader, they also need to get behind and follow. Mrs. Bryant stated the purpose of the chair is to facilitate and the co-chair steps in when the chair is absent. She suggested they get back to work.

Mrs. Yeates commented that it was inappropriate for Mr. Williams to send an email at midnight to all member stating "Jessica and the Republicans".

Mr. Williams stated that information was given to him because he was not present in the meeting. He said that he was his name was being tarnished because he was not in the meeting.

Mrs. Beard commented that she followed the Clerk's suggestion to select their officers. She was not aware of his attendance to meeting and that she told how he was not always responsive. Mrs. Beard requested that he does not send emails anymore. She lost confidence in his ability to lead and agrees to having an election.

Mrs. Parsons stated that there is a personal elephant in the room and she does not want to know about it. She disagreed with the email, and that it caused reactions. Mrs. Beard said they can wipe the slate clean, but does not believe any one on the current Citizen's Committee should be their leader.

Mr. Williams apologized for the email. He stated that he was told things that were untrue. Mr. Williams said that there was miscommunication because someone had to tell him. While he was taking care of his family emergency, he was unable to get to the bottom of the confusion that occurred in the meeting and what he did wrong.

Mrs. Beard said that she wished he would have asked them that.

Mrs. Gage-Watts stated that she has heard two different sides and strongly suggested that they need to start over and establish their facilitator at their April meeting. Mr. Krefft agreed and commended Mrs. Gage-Watts' and the late Mrs. Joyce Bowman as having good merits. He quoted Thomas Jefferson: "The measure of a person sincerity is how well his, your case her, brain is married to his heart", he said.

Mrs. Gage-Watts reminded the Clerk to send out the survey to determine the best time to meet in April. She stated that at the meeting members should be ready for their assignments and know what they are doing.

Mr. Krefft reminded the Committee to vote on Saturday.

Mrs. Bryant hopes for their meeting to be one hour. Mrs. Gage-Watts stated that if their meeting is over an hour they are not conducting business and should adjourn. She stated that their next meeting has guest speakers established and they should go forward with that.

Mrs. Beard asked if the Clerk will send out meeting announcements. The Clerk stated that he will send out the next meeting announcement and that they will need to figure out their minutes.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned
12:40 p.m.



Linda J. Montgomery
Administrative Clerk III