

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
CADDO PARISH COMMISSION'S  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
HELD ON THE 18TH DAY OF FEBRUARY, 2020

The Caddo Parish Long Range Committee met in legal session on the above date, at 2:00 p.m., in the Government Chambers Conference Room, with Mr. John E. Atkins, Chairman, presiding, and the following members in attendance: Commissioners Atkins, Chavez, Gage-Watts, Epperson and Young (5). ABSENT: None (0).

Also, in attendance were Scott Martinez, NLEP, SUSLA Vice Chairman Darrin Dixon, Mr. Rand Falbaum, Commissioner Cawthorne, Parish Administrator Dr. Woody Wilson, Parish Attorney Donna Frazier, Finance Director Hayley Barnett, and Assistant Director of Finance Stephanie Rico, Assistant Parish Administrator Erica Bryant, and Commissioners Cawthorne and Hopkins.

Mr. Chavez gave the invocation, and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mr. Young.

At this time, there were no agenda additions and no public comments, so Mr. Atkins welcomed everyone to today's meeting. The items to be discussed are as follows:

- Discuss funding to Strategic Action Council, Taylor Jamison
- Discuss funding to Southern University of Shreveport, Darrin Dixon
- Discuss Tomakk Glass Partners, LLC ITEP application

At this time, Mr. Atkins moved to the first New Business item, *discuss funding to Strategic Action Council*.

Mr. Darrin Dixon stood on behalf of Taylor Jamison to represent the Strategic Action Council (SAC). He explained they are requesting \$40,000 in NGO funding from the Commission and wanted to provide an overview of what they have done and are planning to do going forward. The Strategic Action Council was founded in 2004 with several organizations, including Greater Shreveport Chamber of Commerce, Greater Bossier Economic Development Foundation, LSU-Shreveport Foundation, United Way of NW Louisiana, Minden/South Webster Chamber of Commerce, Committee of One Hundred, and the Northwest Louisiana Partnership for Economic Development. The emphasis was to do some good in the community. Their first project was a development fund raising \$15M that developed low to moderate income communities. For example, Riverscape Apartments on Clyde Fant. Their mission was to benefit low income residents, as well as their investors, contractors, minorities and vendors. They were successful in completing the projects that investors have sold the properties to private owners who manage the daily operations.

Mr. Dixon further explained that they have developed the Minority Supplier Institute (MSI), which the Parish has supported for numerous years. They want to go a step further with a minority certification agency or program. They want to be the central location of registering and certifying minority companies for the Shreveport-Bossier City area. They have spoken with the City, the Parish, and the School Board, the Port, and some private entities like the casinos, to have one central place that is recognized by all these entities as the certifying company and giving a seal of approval saying that these companies have been vetted and are capable of doing business. They have met with a consultant out of Dallas, who has done work in the Dallas area, and they are working in moving the program forward with buy in from several entities. They are attempting to expand what they do for the businesses and vendors of the MSI. They are still doing programs and conferences to bring vendors in to meet with minorities, majority companies, private companies, sector companies, and even government agencies. They are partnering with Caddo Parish and the School Board to make companies aware of the opportunities that they have for procurement among those agencies.

Mr. Chavez asked for additional clarification regarding the certification process. Mr. Dixon responded that when they talk about minority business certification, it was similar to what the government procurement office does by presenting documents and insurance to say a business is legit and has the capacity to do certain things. They want to do that, in turn, for the private sector, because there isn't a certification agency here. Their purpose is to have seal of approval is saying they have vetted those businesses and have the bonding capacities and insurance requirements in order to do work for government or private sector.

Mr. Chavez stated that there is an SBDC (Shreveport Business Development Center) above the chamber that possibly does that. Mr. Dixon clarified that they do not offer that. The SBDC provides technical assistance like training, counseling, building plans, and funding assistance. Mr. Dixon also said that it is not their intent to duplicate what is already being done on the market because that is not a good use of resources. We vetted the government procurement center who does something similar, but they are geared for federal contracting, i.e. AA certification and work for DOTD. This program will fill the gap for local government. They would like to streamline the processes where all the agency recognize one certification so businesses do not go from place to place doing the same thing. As those agencies

come on to recognize the program, businesses won't have to go to the city to get certification, then go to the courthouse to do a certification, and then go to the school board for certification. They are trying to accomplish a one-stop shop for all of those agencies.

Mr. Chavez wanted to know the breakdown of the \$40,000 funding request. Mr. Dixon explained that there is cost seeking help with consultant and other administrative costs. They normally received funding from the Parish in the past, so some of the things the funding was helping them to do has been budgeting to cover other costs.

Mr. Young wanted to know an estimate of how many businesses would be certified on a yearly basis. Mr. Dixon stated that they have a starting number of 68 members. Usually, in some certification agencies there is a cost per year, which they are seeking to help reduce the out of pocket costs for certifying their businesses. Mr. Young also asked if they will seek additional businesses after certifying the current members. Mr. Dixon stated that they would. He also pointed out that they are not only asking the Parish for funding resources, but other entities as well.

Mr. Atkins wanted to know the number of employees the Strategic Action Council has. Mr. Dixon stated that they have one employee.

Answering a question from Mr. Atkins regarding the use of funding, Mr. Dixon explained that the funds are used for consulting contracts as well as the salary of the staff person and other expenses necessary to run this additional program including the MSI. He apologized for not having their budget available.

Mr. Atkins then asked whether there were more employees in the SAC. Mr. Dixon explained that there are no other employees and that MSI is a program of SAC.

Answering another question from Mr. Atkins regarding funding sources and their topline revenue number, Mr. Dixon stated that they receive funding from grants from the City of Shreveport, the Parish Commission, and other sources.

Mr. Atkins clarified that they have submitted an application through the annual process, but somehow that fell through. Mr. Dixon replied that he was made aware of that, but was not clear of what happened. Mr. Atkins then asked Finance about their application. Mrs. Bryant explained that they had received the application on time and there was a question that did not get answered. So, on the date of adoption, an adjustment was supposed to be made, but it did not happen.

Mr. Atkins stated that they have a request for \$40,000 in economic development funding for the SAC to continue their program, most specifically MSI, and propose a new program for minority certification programs. This organization has been in place since 2004 with numerous well regarded groups with sponsors and vendors.

It was **moved by Mr. Epperson**, seconded by Mr. Young, *to recommend to the full body an appropriation of \$40,000 to Strategic Action Council.*

**Friendly amendment by Mr. Chavez** requesting a copy of the Strategic Action Council's budget prior to the full body voting on it. Mr. Epperson accepted the amendment.

Mr. Epperson pointed out that there should be a copy of the budget in the initial application. He requested that a copy be forward of

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

At this time, Mr. Atkins moved onto the second New Business item, *discuss funding to Southern University of Shreveport.*

Ms. Janice Sneed introduced herself to the Committee. She explained that they are returning after adjusting their funding request amount. They are requesting a total amount of \$250,000 (\$150,000 for the Nursing Program, \$75,000 for their Aerospace Program, and \$25,000 for MS-KICK).

She then talked about the nursing program and explained that they are establishing a new nursing building downtown and hoping to open in March-April 2020. The new facility will expand their program and approximately double the number of students served. They are proud of the number of nursing student who graduate from their campus. They offer curriculum for nursing students from CNA to an LPN to an RN with a one-year fast track program for LPN students. These resources will help them to continue to grow in a variety of ways from staffing, equipment items needed, new programs online and adjusting and developing new curriculum as they strengthen their pathways in the area of allied health and nursing.

She then talked about the aviation program. She continues to state the Parish

Commission has supported them in years past in the amount of \$200,000 to \$300,000. They are decreasing that support. Today they are pleased to be Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) certified and helping to bring in businesses to the area from their funding and funding received from the Louisiana Economic Development (LED). Ms. Sneed also pointed out that this is an aero-ready city, which will also help attract businesses to the area. She is excited where they are with the aviation program despite its challenges of staffing and faculty members. They are retro-fitting a facility that is larger and will allow for more students to enroll in the program. She provided a comprehensive report to Dr. Wilson that speaks to the Aerospace Technology Program holistically and the outcomes obtained over the past few years and offers to send it to the attending committee.

Mr. Dixon and Ms. Tuareza Hose then talked about the MS-KICK program. Mr. Dixon began that there is much excitement within the community since groundbreaking in 2017. They are pleased to state that they have received the Health Inspector's seal of approval. In the interim, they have a great staff lead by Tuareza Hose.

Ms. Hose spoke about her background as a 20-year Air Force veteran and over 20 years of culinary experience. She is a minority small business owner in Shreveport and that has allowed her to see the hardships of a small business and how she can help others grow their business in a legal way. MS-KICK is the first incubator in Louisiana. They are working very closely with Baton Rouge office and they are being very stringent on what they are doing because they are a benchmark for the State. There are four stations located inside the incubator for small businesses to rent. They also offer free consulting and helps with a business plan from a culinary mindset. They have had obstacles to open, but they are on waiting on the Fire Marshall to return and give them a seal of approval in order to start their operations and get tenants in those spaces. They currently have 45-50 people on the waiting list. She sees the need outgrowing the facility. There are more personal investments going into more incubators in this area once they see the success of it. Because they are unable to operate in that format and allowing tenants to work in there due to permit issues, they did community support ideas. They visited the Providence House and did a healthy cooking demo. They also provide free recipes and offering nutritional wellness, a really big part in their program, in the community. They work with local churches, who receive grants for fitness initiatives, and help them develop plans or it. They worked with Sci-Port, during their Snow-Port theme, and hosted a pop up restaurant for a weekend which brought out a completely different demographic customer base than they haven't seen before. Their direct market is the downtown area.

Mr. Atkins reminded the Committee that the budget is limited, and this request is for a quarter of the budget. He also said that there are other organizations that are or will be requesting funding, and although there are a lot of good ideas here, resources are limited.

It was **moved by Ms. Gage-Watts**, seconded by Mr. Young, *to recommend to the full body an appropriation of \$250,000 to Southern University.*

Ms. Gage-Watts said that this is needed for our area due to a dire need for more jobs. There are pop-up restaurants and health and wellness initiatives are happening all over the world, but Shreveport is lagging behind. She stated that she is in support of the incubator kitchen pilot program, the aviation program, and the nursing program.

**Substitute motion by Mr. Chavez**, seconded by Mr. Atkins, *to vote on each SUSLA program independently.*

Mr. Chavez spoke further that some programs may be doing better more than others and shouldn't be grouped together. He explained that in economic development, it should become self-sustaining. He is unsure about the nursing program and does not know how long they have been doing it, but feels it should be self-sustaining by now. They have appropriated over \$800,000 into the aviation program. With the shortage of pilots in America, it should be easy to have a fully functional aviation program. Mr. Chavez said that he is interested in voting on the MS-KICK program because the food industry is "literally boot-strapping". He said that this program could help people learn how to start businesses in the food service industry.

Ms. Gage-Watts stated the nursing program it is an expansion. She also said several aspiring nurses do not already have the means to go through the program. For the aviation program, they have decreased the asking amount tremendously. There are other businesses coming into the area seeing the Shreveport Regional Airport is a great place for investment. She concludes that she is in full support of the asking amount and has taken into consideration that there are other organizations that will have great plans. She said that if they want to continue to bring people to Caddo, they need something to bring them to.

Mr. Young agreed with the nursing program, partly due to its multiple funding sources. It also brings population downtown, while creating a food supply and production place with MS-KICK for that population. This prospects vibrancy and economic activity to the downtown area, even on a small scale. He believes that there is a need for more human being downtown. He requests for clarification on whether the funding was for furnishing to finish the building or staffing. Ms. Sneed said that there are gaps in the funding for furnishings and staffing, but she spoke broadly to the funding use because the funding would only be used to help fill the gaps in the shortfalls in which they are allowed to be spent. Mr. Atkins pointed out that the funding cannot be used on capital projects.

Ms. Sneed also pointed out that there are 80-100 participating students in their nursing program now, which they foresee doubling in the next two years. Mr. Young asked if this was a one-time request. Ms. Sneed said that it was due to the new facility and does not see a need to ask for more support for the nursing program. She said that it funds itself. Ms. Sneed expects MS-KICK to be self-sufficient within three years or less.

Mr. Chavez pointed out that there is another nursing program in the area. He cautioned the committee that there are two competing organizations and they should not get into the habit of helping one and not the other. Ms. Gage-Watts added on that one is self-sustainable and one is disadvantaged and having a bigger need in one area.

Mr. Young asked what the future of the nursing school would be should the funding not be approved. Ms. Sneed stated they would have a delay until they can secure funding from somewhere else.

At this time, Mr. Chavez's motion failed as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins and Chavez (2). NAYS: Commissioners Young and Gage-Watts (2). ABSENT: Commissioner Epperson (1). ABSTAIN: None (0).

At this time, Mrs. Gage-Watts' motion failed, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Young and Gage-Watts (2). NAYS: Commissioners Atkins and Chavez (2). ABSENT: Commissioner Epperson (1). ABSTAIN: None (0).

Mr. Atkins stated to Ms. Sneed that unfortunately their request did not pass, but they are welcome to revisit the committee again in the future. The next meeting is on March 2 should they wish to prepare again.

At this time, Mr. Atkins moved to the next New Business item, *discuss Tomakk Glass Partners, LLC ITEP application*.

Mr. Pelham Hargett introduced Tomakk Glass Partners, LLC, a glass fabrication and tempering facility, as a project started two and a half years ago. They move into their facility on November 1<sup>st</sup>. Mr. Hargett went to Centenary College 20 years ago, was laid off his job in Houston four years ago. His partner Mr. Benjamin Hoffman is a resident of Shreveport and went to Byrd High School. He has a background in construction. His other partner Mr. Rand Falbaum, chairman and CEO of other businesses with a strong background in manufacturing. His partner, Mr. Rand Falbaum, owns the building that has been vacant for two years. They have created 13 jobs to date- thirty jobs at the end of year one and up to fifty once the business is healthy. The reason they brought this business to Southern Hills district of Shreveport is because all of the tempered glass today is being trucked in to this market from Dallas, TX, Houston, TX and eastern Mississippi. So, the barrier to entry is start-up expense, which is why it has never been done before. This is the first tempering facility in the history of Northwest Louisiana. Mr. Hargett discussed their competition within the Southeast region of the United States, their revenue breakdown with most of their revenue coming from tempered glass, and the technology and equipment behind their business. He defined tempered glass as a form of safety glass. They change the molecular structure of the glass using heat and creating surface tension, so the glass breaks in pebbles rather than shards. Their market research outside of the market aided them to develop the plan for their facility.

Mr. Atkins requested for an update on the ITEP program from Dr. Wilson. Dr. Wilson responded that they received the application on December 18<sup>th</sup> and let them know they wouldn't be able to meet again until January 6<sup>th</sup> or the 20<sup>th</sup>. At the time, the committees had not been assigned, so they had to wait. As of December 18<sup>th</sup>, the clock had already started. They had 30 days to make a decision on 80% abatement and 20% tax collection. If there wasn't a response in 30 days, it automatically goes into effect. He wanted to make the committee to be apprised of this matter that they are going to recommend it anyway because of the number of jobs it is going to bring into the community.

Mr. Atkins questioned whether they were seeking a vote or if this will automatically go to the commission. Dr. Wilson advised this was just an update on their ITEP application.

Mr. Atkins commented that Tomakk Glass Partners, LLC is making a \$2.5 million investment starting out with 15 employees, hoping to move into 55 employees by 2023. Payroll starts at about \$750,000 and will grow to about \$2.25 million in 2023 if all goes well. Their Payroll FTE is roughly \$45,000 per head. If they were to receive 20% annual exemption, their exemption will be \$48,500. If it were approved for the first five years, it will be \$242,000, and another \$242,000 for the next five years, accumulative.

Dr. Wilson confirmed that the first five years has already been voted on, but the second 5-years Tomakk Glass Partners, LLC will need to return to receive vote from the commission for the next 5-years of tax exemption.

Scott Martinez, NLEP, commented that they have been working on this company for several months. It has been vetted by the City of Shreveport and the School Board, among others, that

thought this was a good plan. Even though this committee is not taking action at this time, the other tax entities related to this project have been affirmative.

Mr. Chavez thanked the Tomakk Glass Partners, LLC team for the tour and to see the personnel from China training their staff.

Dr. Wilson informed the committee that the Commerce & Industry Board will be voting on Frymaster and Calumet's ITEP applications on Friday. Once that decision is made, they will receive notification for the 30-day window for the Commission to act on that decision.

Scott Martinez invited the Commissioners to tour the Frymaster facility tomorrow.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned.

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Michelle Nations  
Deputy Commission Clerk