

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
CADDO PARISH COMMISSION'S  
FINANCE COMMITTEE  
HELD ON THE 19TH DAY OF FEBRUARY, 2020

The Caddo Parish Long Range Committee met in legal session on the above date, at 12:00 noon, in the Government Chambers Conference Room, with Mr. John E. Atkins, Chairman, presiding, and the following members in attendance: Commissioners Atkins, Burrell, Chavez, and Young (4). ABSENT: Commissioners Johnson (1).

Also, in attendance were Assistant Parish Administrator Erica Bryant, Parish Attorney Donna Frazier, Director of Finance Hayley Barnett, Assistant Director of Finance Stephanie Rico, and Director of Facilities and Maintenance Kevin Lawrence.

Invocation was led by Mr. Chavez and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mr. Young.

Mr. Atkins opened up the floor for Agenda Additions and there were no additions to the agenda. He opened up the floor for Public Comments. At this time, there were no public comments

Mr. Atkins moved to the New Business item, *discuss upcoming Millage Renewals (Health, Juvenile Services, and Courthouse Maintenance)*.

Ms. Erica Bryant stated they have three millages expiring soon, with one this year and two in 2021. The Courthouse maintenance millage, the largest one, covers the courthouse and all parish buildings. They are required to offer office space for the district attorney, the assessor, the Sherriff and clerk of court. The millage allows them to provide space for the entities with all the building they have. If they did not have the millage the Commission is still be required to provide office space for these entities.

Mr. Atkins wanted to know if there was another courthouse millage. Mrs. Bryant replied that there is no other courthouse millage. She also mentioned that the only other funding mechanism they would have would be the General Fund- which is already funding. She explained that the Commission does not fund operations for the Tax Assessor and the Clerk of Court, but they do for the District Attorney, Coroner, and the Sheriff. Most of those costs are funded through the General Fund. There are other outside agency that they have been mandated to fund. She concluded that the General Fund is pretty tight, but those undedicated funds could be looked at as an alternative and there is not enough available to cover these costs.

Mr. Young requested whether they are planning to spend more money on capital improvements to the courthouse soon. Ms. Bryant replied every year they have capital improvements to the courthouse. They have issued bonds and planning on using some bond proceed to help cover capital improvements. The last few years they have been using some of the fund balance for capital improvements. She also said that the courthouse and the other building costs outside roads are significant costs in relation to the buildings.

Mr. Young asked how much was spent on courthouses operations per year. Mrs. Barnett confirmed the amount was \$4.2 million for the courthouse operations.

Mr. Young also asked how much capital improvement costs are. Mr. Lawrence clarified that those costs vary year to year, but this year the large ticket item is the replacement of the roof which will cost approximately \$600,000.

Mr. Atkins asked what the main drivers of the \$4.2 million in operating costs are. Ms. Bryant responded that utilities is the largest one, security, and salaries. Salaries include cleaning crew, carpenters, electricians, and maintenance.

Mr. Atkins wanted to know if outsourcing some of those positions would be cheaper. Mr. Lawrence explained that they could save a little money, but in the long run they would end up spending more. They tried outsourcing some of their smaller buildings and it just didn't work. The bigger buildings they do the environmental services with their staff and it just works out better. They work five in the evening to one in the morning, when the courthouse is not occupied, and they do a fantastic job

Mr. Atkins stated in the private sector, like Regions Tower, they outsource their cleaning services. Mr. Atkins wanted to know why this did not work with the Parish or the City. Mr. Lawrence stated that they are doing what works best for them. Mrs. Bryant commented that they are also providing services for entities that are not their own, such as the District Attorney, Sherriff, Judges, etc. Some of it is the timing of it. When they contract out they are on their time. It has been more advantageous to have their own staff and it is not to say they wouldn't consider outsourcing especially as things change and money gets tighter. They have done the analysis with privately contracting, and there is not a lot of cost savings.

Mr. Atkins suggested that they look at opportunities for cost-savings, such as outsourcing some positions, as we move forward.

Mr. Young questioned if there clearance and security issues that are easier to manage with their own staff versus contractors, such as the courthouse. Mr. Lawrence replied yes it is easier with

their own staff in most of the buildings that are cleaned. Mr. Atkins mentioned that he understands the security concern since in their offices they have someone new every month or so it seems.

Mr. Burrell apologized for his tardiness and asked Mr. Atkins for a quick update on what he could have missed. Mr. Atkins stated they are discussing the three Millage Renewals coming up and their dates and the maintenance needs at the courthouse and affiliated buildings. They were discussing about their unique operations.

Mr. Chavez requested for Ms. Bryant to bring Mr. Burrell up to speed since he is a new on the commission. Mrs. Bryant agreed and clarified that in their budget they actually call it the Building Maintenance Fund because that is a better description on how the taxes are actually used. The details in the tax says it can be used for each Parish buildings. It was primarily courthouse so in the tax records it is called Courthouse Maintenance. It covers all the costs in building maintenance needs from staff to utilities. Ms. Barnett commented there are 32 parish buildings.

Mr. Chavez asked if there would be a fence in the security upgrades. Mr. Lawrence stated the decision is up to the committee. Ms. Bryant also stated that they would not put that on the security.

Mr. Burrell wanted to know if their security system is homogenous and that they wouldn't need one system that is more sophisticated than another. Mr. Lawrence confirmed that they try to keep everything on the same level. Cameras get old and better technology comes along where they could get better picture and store it on a hard drive. Hard drives are probably the most expensive because of storage space.

Ms. Bryant stated that they have budgeted particular buildings and are unable to cover all of the buildings.

Mr. Atkins confirmed that \$4.9 million total revenue of that \$4.2 million is used to assist courthouses, and \$700,000 is used to support other maintenance around the Parish.

Ms. Bryant states that Juvenile Millage is one that they definitely need to maintain due to the cost of Juvenile Services. Mr. Young requested to know what the millage rate or amount of taxes the citizen pays. Ms. Bryant said that home residential pays 10% of their value and businesses pays 50% of their value. So, for an average citizen \$200,000 home they pay 10% of the value of their home, then multiply that amount by 1.97 then divide it by 1000, which comes out to be approximately \$39.40 per year. Mr. Young states that the amount is a very small amount of money.

Mr. Atkins states that a column went out for the millage, the Finance team developed a discussion document that lays out all the information and how much per year it costs to maintain the millage per home.

Mr. Young wanted to know if those statistics are given every time there is a mileage election. Ms. Bryant stated they have brochures, videos and social media opportunities.

He wanted to know if Commissioners can privately form political action committees to let people know, such as, him personally buying a billboard to advertise to the public to support taxes. Attorney Frazier stated that it would be an ethical issue and that they could not as a paid by the Parish to use parish resources to advertise for or against a proposition or candidate. And that they would be somewhat limited in their message. She said that the Commissioners could give factual information, but cannot say that they are for or against an issue.

Ms. Bryant commented that their brochure is factual and won't advocate at all, but there is normally a committee of private citizens that gets the message out, and the Parish cannot assist them. They are able to provide them information like they provide to any citizen who requests information from us, but cannot do the work for them.

Ms. Bryant states their goal today is to get the millage on the ballot and, although they are ahead of schedule, there is a lot of work to do. She said that they are looking at the November ballot.

Mr. Young inquired that since the Juvenile Mill hasn't been raised in so long, he wanted to know how many mills it would take to raise money to balance the budget. Ms. Bryant replies that it would take 3-4 mills, 4 to make it comfortable.

Mr. Young then asked when the millage goes on the ballot, if they could ask for the four mills. Ms. Bryant stated that they would have to pass a new tax. Since the current election is a renewal they would have to start something new. They have tried five times and it has failed five times. They have not been able to get the citizens behind it. They would rather show up by renewal first and make sure they have money already allotted and, from their experience, if they put a new tax with a renewal, if the new tax is bound to fail, the renewal will fail also.

Mr. Atkins commented that they have sufficient funds to run the parish, from his perspective. Granted the Juvenile Fund is low, but they have the flexibility in their other funds to support it. From what he heard in Juvenile services, they have very good level of services with high quality staff and a broad range of services. He continued that the Parish have always been generous in their funding Juvenile Services which is why it is very old. Mrs. Bryant agreed that they have managed the deficit from

other sources and that has been through rededication. They have gone to the citizens to request funding from other sources and they have agreed. However, the issue on expansion is that they would need additional money and would the citizens or the Commission support it in their favor. The citizens have not supported expansion in the past and have communicated they feel the millages have enough funding.

Mr. Burrell asked whether the Commission has been against rolling forward. Ms. Bryant stated the Commission has only rolled forward once. She also said that the citizens see a roll forward as an increase in taxes without them being able to vote on it, which is a matter of opinion.

Mr. Chavez wanted to know if a motion is needed to add this on the November agenda. Ms. Bryant stated they would not mind the support of the Finance Committee, but they will announce it on the March 5<sup>th</sup> agenda and did not want the Commission unaware of what they are proposing.

Mr. Young wanted to know the certain monies they can move around are revenues or not. Ms. Bryant stated that it is a renewable stream of money and, as long as it is renewed, they wouldn't run out of money.

Mr. Burrell asked if the state would have anything to do with the millage fund. Ms. Bryant confirmed that they do have to go to the State Bond Commission.

Ms. Bryant proceeded to discuss they have two Public Health Millages with one expiring this year. This is a millage that does not have mandated costs and is a service to the citizens- animal services, mosquito control, the health units.

Mr. Atkins restated to Mr. Burrell that they are mandated by the State to provide facilities and maintenance for the D.A., the Assessor, Clerk of Court, the Sherriff buildings and the Coroner.

Mr. Atkins asked where is their health unit and how many there are. Ms. Bryant replied that there is one on Crestwell and one in Vivian. They used to support the regional office in Highland area. They provide vaccinations and shot, WIC and Medicaid type of services.

Mr. Young wanted to know why the lawyers listed on the bottom of the Tentative Schedule of Events, which are based in New Orleans, were used instead of attorneys in Caddo Parish. Ms. Bryant explained that the attorney they are using are Bond attorneys and usually they help with filing and meeting the right deadlines. They will get everything to the Bond Commission.

Mr. Young also wanted to know if there were bond attorneys in Shreveport. Attorney Frazier stated that there are some firms in Shreveport whose bond attorneys are in other areas. Foley & Judell, LLP is in the top 10 of bond attorneys in the state and are highly regarded.

Mr. Atkins stated that although he is partial to using local services, he is preferred the bond attorney's service because it outweighs the cost.

Mr. Chavez stated that the motion is to set the date for the November election. Ms. Bryant stated that it will be in April when they call it.

Mr. Chavez stated he wanted to set a timeline to notify the public about the election. Ms. Bryant stated that even if Commissioners do not offer town hall meetings they hope the Commissioners will invite them to come out to their meetings in their respective districts.

Mr. Chavez suggested that Ms. Krystle Grindley create a video breaking down the cost of the millage for each household based on the cost of their house.

Mr. Burrell noticed that one of the problems he's noted, whether it be state side and city side, is the lack of education in the public and are told that they cannot put things out there due so some conflict or another.

It was **moved by Mr. Chavez**, seconded by Mr. Young, *to go forward with the Finance Department's recommendation for the timeline. Motion carried* as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Burrell, Chavez, and Young (5). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: Commissioner Johnson (1). ABSTAIN: None (0).

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

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Michelle Nations  
Deputy Commission Clerk