

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
CADDO PARISH COMMISSION  
HELD ON THE 20th DAY OF FEBRUARY, 2020

The Caddo Parish Commission met in legal and regular session, on the above date, at 3:30 p.m., in the Government Chambers, with President Chavez, presiding, and the following members in attendance, constituting a quorum: Commissioners Atkins, Burrell, Cawthorne, Chavez, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Hopkins, Jackson, Johnson, Lazarus, Taliaferro, and Young (12). ABSENT: None (0).

The invocation was given by Mr. Lazarus, and Mr. Atkins led the Commission in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**CITIZENS COMMENTS**

Mr. Chavez explained that he has several citizens' comments cards regarding gun control.

It was **moved by Mr. Chavez**, seconded by Mr. Lazarus, *to grant one minute per person to speak regarding Resolution No. 13 of 2020, gun control. Motion carried*, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Burrell, Cawthorne, Chavez, Epperson, Johnson, Lazarus, Taliaferro, and Young (9). NAYS: Commissioner Hopkins (1). ABSENT: Commissioners Jackson and Gage-Watts (2). ABSTAIN: None (0).

Ms. Kristen McCain came before the Commission regarding gun control. He does not believe this is not a good idea to bring up. He quoted the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment, "Shall not be infringed". He said that as a veteran, he took his oath to the Constitution.

Mr. Tim Nibbly also came before the Commission. He said that in regards to gun control laws, there are always two questions: 1. Will the law be effective? 2. Is the law constitutional? He believes that this fails on both parts. He said that gun control laws will not effective for criminals. Mr. Nibbly said that the Constitution states that the right to bear arms shall not be infringed.

Mr. Dan Neubert agreed with the speakers before him. He suggested making the punishment for criminals stricter.

Mr. Henry Bishop also agreed with the speakers before him. He suggested that the Commission send a resolution to the Legislature to end gun-free zones. He asked that the Commissioners vote no on Resolution No. 13 of 2020.

Mr. Madre, Mr. Jerry Baxter, Ms. Jane Edmunds, and Mr. Joel Baxter were not in attendance.

Mr. Chris McCarty stated that he is a veteran. He believes that any type of infringement on the Constitution will hurt the people. He is not in support of Resolution No. 13 of 2020.

Mr. Randall Anderson provided the Commissioners with a handout. He said that gun control does not work. He also explained that limiting magazine capacity has no effect on the rate of fire.

Ms. Jane Tappe said that Resolution No. 13 is a "bad no". She is not in support of gun control.

Mr. Cody Duous pointed out that there is a 30 round drum for a semi-automatic shotgun. He also said that the police and the government work for the people. He is not in support of gun control.

Mr. Jamar Montgomery stated that there should be more of a focus on the individual, not the firearms.

Mr. Robert Bilderback came before the Commission regarding gun control. He wanted to know if the Commission is willing to make felons out of people who do not abide by this resolution. He is not in support of gun control.

Mr. Donald Dalt said that he is a veteran of the US Army. He said that his son was murdered last year. He believes that there should be requirements for owning or carrying firearms.

Ms. Patricia Smith is not in support of Resolution No. 13 of 2020. She said that guns are tools and cannot be a deadly on its own.

Mr. John Harrell agreed with the people before him who were not in support of Resolution No. 13 of 2020. He said that guns cannot be shot without someone pulling the trigger.

Mr. Casey Hall is not in support of gun control. He said that the guns are not the problem. He also pointed out that he is president of the North Caddo Shooting Club, and over the weekend, they shot over 10,000 rounds of ammunition with no incidents. The Shooting Club educates children on the proper use and dangers of firearms.

Mr. Brian White is not in support of gun control. He suggested that the person should be held accountable, not the weapon.

Mr. Jake Brown also came before the Commission regarding gun control. He said that he is not in support of stricter gun control.

Sheriff Prator came before the Commission regarding Resolution No. 13 of 2020. He said that he noticed on the agenda that violent crimes were being discussed, but he was not contacted about it. He said that a study was conducted, and it showed that there is no evidence that banning assault weapons would reduce mass shootings. In 2017, there were 117 people who lost their lives to mass shootings. Also in 2017, there were 17,000 people who lost their lives to violent crimes. He suggested that something be done about violence and the illegal carrying of firearms. He also encouraged the Commissioners to reach out to him regarding violent crimes.

Constable Hatfield also came before the Commission regarding gun control. He believes that time would be better spent educating individuals about firearm safety.

Ms. Jean Glover came before the Commission regarding re-opening the hiring process of the Commission Clerk position. She believes that the process should not be opened due to the Commission already appointing a Clerk.

Mr. John Settle came before the Commission regarding the law school study. He commended Mr. Jackson and former- Mayor Glover for working on getting the law school to Shreveport. Mr. Settle is concerned with not having the information regarding the request from the Commission to the Board of Regents. He asked that this vote be delayed for two weeks due to the lack of information.

Mr. Ken Krefft welcomed the new Commissioners. He talked about the census. He said that Shreveport will be hiring 2,500 people in regards to the census. He also wanted to know about the millage renewal election. He also talked about the Charter Review Committee. Mr. Krefft asked that there be a serious discussion regarding funding Juvenile Services.

Ms. Jill Brown came before the Commission regarding the Unified Development Code. She said that she is not in favor of it.

Ms. Bonnie Pharr came before the Commission regarding the U.S. Constitution. She recited the Declaration of Independence. She said that the Constitution affords the citizens the right to bear arms.

Mr. Randy Rasmussen came before the Commission regarding the Unified Development Code. He is not in favor of the UDC. He suggested that the MPC stay inside the city limits and allow the rural citizens to have their own code.

Ms. Jane Tappe came before the Commission regarding the Unified Development Code. She said that she has questions for the MPC that she would like the Commission to answer. She wanted to know if the rural citizens are still receiving citations. She also mentioned that Mr. Bailey explained that UDC does not apply to Blanchard. Ms. Tappe does not believe this to be true because she said that people in the area of Blanchard are still receiving citations.

Mr. Jake Brown came before the Commission regarding the 2030 Master Plan. He does not believe that the goals of the Master Plan are to reduce crime, increase economic development, and improve education. Mr. Brown believes that the Master Plan is "a money grab" and believes that private property rights are being taken away.

### **ADOPT REGULAR SESSION MINUTES**

It was **moved by Mr. Jackson**, seconded by Mr. Cawthorne, *that the Regular Session Minutes from February 6, 2020 be adopted.* Motion carried.

### **COMMUNIQES/COMMITTEE REPORTS**

- Mrs. Bryant advised that the Legislative Luncheon was cancelled due to limited participation. A draft letter regarding the legislative priorities will be sent to the Commissioners.

Mrs. Bryant also said that the Commissioner should have received an invitation from the Port regarding its Port Night Appreciation dinner on March 5.

- Mr. Jackson responded to a citizen in regards to the response of the law school study. He explained that he cannot forward anything on behalf of the Commission. He further explained that the Commission body has to adopt it prior to forwarding it to the BOR. He also pointed out that Southern University will determine where the site is going to be, not the Caddo Parish Commission. The Deputy Clerk advised that the feedback was attached to the Work Session's agenda, and she will update the Regular Session agenda to have it attached to it as well.

- Mr. Hopkins announced that there will be a UDC Informational Meeting on Tuesday, March 3 at 6:00 p.m. The meeting will be held at Indian Hills Baptist Church. He invited all to attend.
- Mr. Burrell asked for a point of clarification regarding Mr. Jackson's comments regarding the law school. Mr. Burrell wanted to know if there was any action requested in the feedback. Mr. Jackson stated that the feedback does not request any action.

#### **PUBLIC HEARING ON ORDINANCES**

Mr. Chavez asked if there was anyone to speak in support of or in opposition of the following ordinance:

- *Ordinance No. 5943 of 2020, an ordinance amending the Budget of Estimated Revenues & Expenditures for the Economic Development Fund in the amount of \$20,000 to provide an appropriation to Legal Services of North Louisiana, Inc. and to otherwise provide with respect thereto*

Mr. Marvin Muhammad came to speak in favor of Ordinance No. 5943. He commended Mr. Jackson for bringing this ordinance forward and to allow people who have made mistakes to have a second opportunity.

There being no one else to speak in favor of or in opposition to the ordinance, the President closed the public hearing.

#### **ORDINANCES (for final passage)**

It was **moved by Mr. Jackson**, seconded by Mr. Johnson, *that Ordinance No. 5943 of 2020, an ordinance amending the Budget of Estimated Revenues & Expenditures for the Economic Development Fund in the amount of \$20,000 to provide an appropriation to Legal Services of North Louisiana, Inc. and to otherwise provide with respect thereto* be adopted. Motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Burrell, Cawthorne, Chavez, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Hopkins, Jackson, Johnson, Lazarus, Taliaferro, and Young (12). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: None (0). ABSTAIN: None (0).

#### **ORDINANCE NO. 5943 OF 2020**

BY THE CADDO PARISH COMMISSION:

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE BUDGET OF ESTIMATED REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES FOR THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FUND IN THE AMOUNT OF \$20,000 TO PROVIDE AN APPROPRIATION TO LEGAL SERVICES OF NORTH LOUISIANA, INC. AND TO OTHERWISE PROVIDE WITH RESPECT THERETO

WHEREAS, expungement helps relieve citizens of their arrest record in order to help them obtain employment, financial aid and other benefits; and

WHEREAS, Legal Services of North Louisiana provides legal services to indigent individuals who meet expungement criteria; and

WHEREAS, the option of a pauper expungement is available, but it only defers the upfront payment of the fees and is at the discretion of the Judge; and

WHEREAS, the Caddo Parish Commission would like to provide an appropriation to Legal Services of North Louisiana, Inc. to offset the expenses to Parish entities (Clerk of Court \$200, District Attorney \$50, and Sheriff \$50) to grant indigent clients fee waiver for expungement; and

WHEREAS, each individual seeking grant waiver must be a Caddo Parish resident with at least two forms of residency verification; and

WHEREAS, each individual is limited to one expungement per calendar year; and

WHEREAS, the individual must participate in 15 hours of community service from an approved community-based agency; and

WHEREAS, the individual must meet low income requirement set by Legal Services of North Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, the Caddo Parish Commission hosts an annual Pathways to Prosperity Expungement Summit for Caddo residents; and

WHEREAS, the Caddo Parish Commission's Economic Development committee recommended an appropriation of \$20,000 to Legal Services of North Louisiana, Inc. to aid in expungements for indigent citizens; and

WHEREAS it is necessary to amend the 2020 Economic Development Fund Budget to appropriate \$20,000 to Legal Services of North Louisiana, Inc.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED, by the Caddo Parish Commission in due, legal and regular session convened, that Budget of Estimated Revenues and Expenditures for the Economic Development Fund for the year 2020 is hereby amended as follows:

<b><u>Economic Development Fund</u></b>	<u>Budget Increase (Decrease)</u>
Non-Governmental Appropriations	
Legal Services of North LA, Inc.	\$20,000
Fund Balance	(\$20,000)

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED, that if any provision or item of this ordinance or the application thereof is held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect other provisions, items or applications which can be given effect without the invalid provisions, items or applications, and to this end the provisions of this ordinance are hereby declared severable.

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED, that this ordinance shall take effect upon adoption.

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED, that all ordinances or parts thereof in conflict herewith are hereby repealed.

It was **moved by Mr. Jackson**, seconded by Mrs. Gage-Watts, *that the Work Session Minutes from February 18, 2020 be postponed.* Motion carried.

#### **RESOLUTIONS**

It was **moved by Mrs. Gage-Watts**, seconded by Mr. Cawthorne, *that Resolution No. 12 of 2020, a resolution to reduce the number of people with mental illnesses in jails, and to otherwise provide with respect thereto be adopted.*

Mrs. Gage-Watts stated that this is a nationwide initiative to reduce the number of people with mental illnesses in jails.

Mr. Hopkins wanted to know if this was going to cost the Parish any money. Mrs. Gage-Watts stated that it was not.

Mr. Burrell wanted to know if this was directed to the state. Mrs. Gage-Watts said that this is a local initiative joining with other parishes and counties, as well as other organizations who has already joined this initiative.

At this time, Mrs. Gage-Watts' motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Burrell, Cawthorne, Chavez, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Hopkins, Jackson, Johnson, Lazarus, Taliaferro, and Young (12). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: None (0). ABSTAIN: None (0).

#### **RESOLUTION NO. 12 OF 2020**

BY THE CADDO PARISH COMMISSION:

A RESOLUTION RELATIVE TO MENTAL HEALTH AMONG INCARCERATED PERSONS, TO ENDORSE AND SUPPORT THE STEPPING UP MOVEMENT AND OTHERWISE PROVIDING WITH RESPECT THERETO.

WHEREAS, local governments routinely provide treatment services to the estimated 2 million people with serious mental illnesses booked into jail each year; and

WHEREAS, prevalence rates of serious mental illnesses in jails are three to six times higher than for the general public; and

WHEREAS, almost three-quarters of adults with serious mental illnesses in jails have co-occurring substance use disorders; and

WHEREAS, adults with mental illnesses tend to stay longer in jail and, upon release, are at a higher risk of recidivism than people without these disorders; and

WHEREAS, local government jails spend two to three times more on adults with mental illnesses that require interventions compared to those without these treatment needs; and

WHEREAS, without the appropriate treatment and services, people with mental illnesses continue to cycle through the criminal justice system, often resulting in tragic outcomes for these individuals and their families; and

WHEREAS, Caddo Parish and all parishes and counties take pride in their responsibility to protect and enhance the health, welfare, and safety of its residents in efficient and cost-effective ways; and

WHEREAS, Governments Justice Center, and the American Psychiatric Association Foundation are encouraging public, private, and nonprofit partners to reduce the number of people with mental illnesses in jails.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Caddo Parish Commission in due, regular and legal session convened, that the Caddo Parish Commission does hereby do hereby sign on to the Call to Action to reduce the number of people with mental illnesses in our local government jail, commit to sharing lessons learned with other parishes and counties in my state and across the country to support a national initiative and encourage all local government officials, employees, and residents to participate in Stepping Up.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED if any provision or item of this resolution or the application thereof is held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect other provisions, items or applications which can be given effect without the invalid provisions, items or applications, and to this end, the provisions of this resolution are hereby declared severable.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution shall take effect immediately.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that all resolutions or parts thereof in conflict herewith are hereby repealed.

It was **moved by Mr. Lyndon B. Johnson**, seconded by Mr. Jackson, *that Resolution No. 13 of 2020, a resolution of the Parish of Caddo urging the Louisiana State Legislature to strengthen the Louisiana Gun Law by incorporating mandatory requirements for owning and carrying a firearm, and to otherwise provide with respect thereto* be adopted.

Johnson: Today, I've heard a lot of comments from the citizens of Caddo Parish. This was a small sample of our citizens who showed up today, and our Parish holds about 200,000 citizens—

Cawthorne: 245,000.

Johnson: the amendment too, that you kept talking about today was dealing with the right to bear arms, but the Constitution was ratified on June 21, 1778. The Declaration of Independence was July 4, 1776, which one lady did allude to today. And one part of that clearly states this, that all men are created equal. Yet, there were many years of slavery. If we are going to hold words, we are going to hold words. Alright. There was also an amendment that came later on: voting rights for all races, 1870. So, sticking to amendment two. That's fine, but let's stick to everything. The Declaration of Independence, and all of the amendments that follow after that. This particular resolution is urging our state legislators; we cannot change the law. We have no rights to change the law, but this is urging our state legislators to review the gun laws, because they need to be reviewed. The resolution basically is to have the state legislators to review the gun laws as they currently stand. The recommendations from this resolution, basically as traceability on purchasing of new firearms and ownership of those same firearms. It also talks about the assault weapons, which comes into play about the mass shootings. Well, the number 20 on the magazine was a number that was thrown out for discussion. If 20 is too low, that's fine, but we don't need people walking around with magazines of 100, 80, 75, or anything like that on public streets. Many states have already opposed gun laws. That's what I'm talking about. They already oppose. So the U.S. Constitution was upheld and those gun laws were changed. Louisiana is a part of the United States. So therefore, is not unconstitutional, to talk about this or to ask our legislators to review the gun laws. Everybody came down here today asking us to not even talk about this. That was your right as a citizen. My right as a citizen is to ask the legislators to do the same thing. I'm giving my colleagues an opportunity to join me in doing so. So, if it's wrong for me to do that, it's wrong for you to come down here and ask us not to pass this. It's just that simple.

- Atkins: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll be voting no on this resolution. As you all know, I don't believe in advising state legislators on how they should or should not vote on various issues. I think our state legislators are well informed on these matters and certainly capable of placing their own vote. I also believe that this body should focus on the issues that are within our charter—issues that we can address and issues that we can improve. I don't like to see us be distracted by issues that are state legislative issues. I agree with the position of most those that came to the speaker's podium today. And again, I'll be voting no on this resolution. Thank you.
- Gage-Watts: I'm glad that the word that was voting on a particular issue that affects, I guess, a different part of the Parish, I would say. I want to start out by saying there was 297 mass shootings in 365 of the days in 2019. Violence in Caddo Parish, where Shreveport ranks 18 on America's 25 murder capitals; Shreveport happens to be in Caddo Parish. We do not live in two separate places. Everyone is entitled to their opinions as it has been said, and then there are facts. There are facts that a baby in Caddo parish in Shreveport, was killed sleeping in her cradle. It is the fact that a child in his mother's car was killed in cold blood. There are countless children, youth, men, and women all over the world that are asking anyone to do anything to help improve the current gun laws. I am supporting this resolution for every person who has lost their life to senseless gun violence. Thank you.
- Lazarus: I myself will be voting no on this as well. You're asking us to approve this resolution that supports legislation strengthening Louisiana's gun laws and making it illegal to possess and use assault weapons. You mentioned fully automatic in there, but Louisiana laws already prohibits the sale, transport, purchase, and possession of these weapons, with very few exceptions. The states with strict gun laws have fewer mass shootings. You didn't cite your study that you had but that's all right. Sheriff Prator has a study that refutes that. I have my study that I did—I call it ten minutes on Google. I spent 10 minutes on Google and found out that California has the strictest gun laws in America. They also have a complete ban on semi-automatic rifles and have had that for 20 years, but, California, also has the most mass shootings in the United States. So it kind of shoots a little hole in the study. Thirty-eight days ago, on January 13, I and everybody here at this horseshoe took an oath to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States. Second Amendment the Constitution states there, in part, the right people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed. I believe this resolution, clearly violates this amendment. And I can't support it, and I asked my colleagues join me in voting no. Thank you, Mr. President.
- Burrell: I'm not going to chime into this hot button issue. I spent 12 years at the state, dealing with this issue. I understand the passion on both sides of the issue. The way I view laws is just that they are laws—they are laws that govern a civil society. They are not an exact science. The laws were put there that we do massage them in order to fit where we are. I'm only saying that to say that every law that we have in the book is not concrete. I made them for 12 years—eight years on the Council, and now I'm on the Commission. And I know that, based on circumstances, these things change so we have the right as representatives to make those recommendations. And that leads me into what Commissioner Atkins said today in which I've heard him say this before that it is that he doesn't feel that, that this commission should not encourage or urge the legislature to do anything. Being a legislator, I welcomed information from the council and from the Commission because we are a representative government. We represent the people in those constituencies. We have those constituencies that we represent, and there is nothing wrong with encouraging support or opposition to any issue because the bottom line is government is local. We are a local body. If that would be the case, the legislative priorities that has been developed by this Commission to be sent to the state legislature—they should be ripped up because we are encouraging them to pass these laws. So, with all due respect, Commission Atkins, I just wanted to make that clear.
- Hopkins: Let me just be real brief. I am a representative of the people, and the people of District 1 have spoken to me. I will be voting no. That's just where I stand personally. I disagree with the resolution, the people of District 1 are against it, so that is how I will be voting.
- Cawthorne: I just want to give context to this argument discussing the resolution today. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment is naturally divided into two parts. You have a clause that states that a well-regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state. The operative clause is there is the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed upon. So the reason why is I want to bring context to this is that you have to look at what is considered the millionth. In 1791, there were there were fewer governing bodies that had assistance to secure their property. So someone could come from anywhere and rob you or do harm your family. To have a well-formed militia, you have the right to bear arms. In 2020—and let me also say, I don't want to take a gun from anyone who goes hunting and fishing or whatever you do with your gun. That is not my position. What I'm saying is that in 2020, as we look at situations in urban communities, we see an exacerbated occurrences of people being killed with various type of weapons. When we give context to this, that's not to disagree with anyone who came down here today—what I firmly believe is you solve 2020 problems with 2020 solutions—and not to take the Constitution the infringement of

any rights as the rest of the Constitution. Secondly, with the state legislature and its configuration, this is dead on arrival anyway. I will be voting as a contextual measure, but I know that this is dead on arrival anyway.

Epperson: My district is comprised of 118 square miles. I think I'm the third largest district in Caddo Parish. 77,000 acres and about 60% rural and 40% urban. I have two state senators within this district. I have three state representatives within this district. I disagree with anyone's position that we should not offer suggestions to the legislature, just because of this same map. And another thing, when we look at the political affiliations of some of these districts. Some of these legislators don't even hold meetings in these districts. We are the ones that they see every day. We have a right to make suggestion because we're in contact with the people more than they are. I believe you can pull out probably 10 people out of my district and ask them who their state representative is, they wouldn't know. Or when was the last time they've seen them. Or when was the last public meeting. Just as everyone came down and gave their opinions relative to the UDC and MPC, which was articulated some years back, and voted on in 2017—numerous public meetings were held, but the old NIMBY effect came in. You know what that NIMBY is? Not in my backyard. When it came in that backyard and tapped them, here we come. But all the while, the meetings were going on—nothing was done in the dark. Let's go back and give a definition of a resolution. This isn't an ordinance, an ordinance carries weight or law. A resolution is a formal request from this body to someone else relative to something you would ask them to do. They can take it serious; they can take it and throw it in the trash or whatever. A resolution carries no weight of law; it's a request. If we feel that we should not make suggestions to our state legislators and our senators—and yes, all the way up to Washington D.C., it's the same way—because of their political affiliate, they are not going to hold no meetings in certain places. The reason that lot of you are here today about the UDC is because your elected officials that you had in place, the last 12 years, never held public meetings when all of this was being discussed in your areas. That's a fact. Go back and check that. Now. Let me go back with a little history. This is my fourth big rodeo, and I love to see you here. I wish you all could come for a lot of other occasions. lot of you are here today about the UDC is because your elected officials that you had in place, the last 12 years, never held public meetings were not being discussed. Once again, I'd like to emphasize, nothing that we vote on or do on this body is done in the dark. There is public records, Facebook, internet streaming, Comcast cable. Guess what? You're here today because of hot button issues. The booming hypocrisy—I didn't see anything this resolution saying that we are going to advocate a repeal of the Second Amendment. Do you know the process of appealing a federal Constitutional amendment? Congress, Senate—has to be a three-fourths vote of the states, then has to be a vote of the people. Nothing is leading to repealing the Second Amendment right. I got 18 emails relative to this issue, not in favor, and I answered every one of them. And if any of you are in the audience, you can testify to that. I answered you respectfully and articulately. In God we trust, but I want to see black and white. When you call me, 'Mr. Epperson I want to do this and that', I say, 'wait a minute, email me. Give me your contact information'. Because I want to have something in writing that I responded to you and that I was civil and respectful. Some of these emails I got was not. That's why I had the parish attorney to pull the ordinance relative to the way people do—elected officials, appointed officials because I want you new Commissioners to know that you do not have to be intimidated or threatened. I got a BB gun; I got a .380 Beretta; and I got a six shot .22. It's all legal. My sons own weapons—all of them. I don't know what they have, but they tell me, 'daddy, you better be ready'. I don't know what that means, but what I'm saying is this is not an issue for publicity. I spent 28 years in the community, working against before I was elected—gang violence, drug activity on the corner of St. Vincent and W. 87<sup>th</sup>. The riots in A.B. Palmer Park, only two blocks from my home. Brokered a truce between the Bloods and the Crips. Instituted the Drop Your Guns program. We had the same kind of stuff back in 1995 with that program. I had threats. I had to get my phone bugged. It's bad. Guess what? I earned the right to vote in favor of this resolution which I will be doing, which I have voted for resolutions relative to this issue in the past, and I to do so. Number one what this did was bring us an opportunity for dialogue. If this hadn't been here, we wouldn't see all these people here today. I'm glad you could come down here and witness and see what's happening. I earned the right when I was born in Winn Parish, Louisiana as a child—full American. Graduated High School. I raised my hand to protect and behold constitution the United States and United States Army when I didn't have full rights back home. When I left and when I got out. Don't tell me about taking rights away from you. We are still fighting today. Let's be real; let's stop being hypocrites. This is nothing but a document to make a request to institute dialogue. They can take it; they can look at it; or they can throw it in the trash or whatever. If we're going to say that we don't have a right to make suggestions as an elected body, which we are in contact with the people more than they are—and more than they want to be or can be. They're full time; they have staff and everything. I bet they don't get this many emails coming to them, and if they do, they are going to give it to staff and blow you off with a form letter. I will be voting in favor of this. Let's put aside all this mess. All of you that really know me the one that don't know me you know me. And we're talking about passing that tax. Do you know how we got out of that old rotten, cold, no good health unit and dilapidated animal shelter on Kings Highway? Ken Epperson and others went out to the streets, got this tax pass, and that's why we have the new facilities

that we have today. So was I being senseless? Or wasn't using common sense when I went to Washington D.C. and advocate on behalf of the Veterans Cemetery? Was I being stupid because I volunteered to go into the military during the heat of the Vietnam War and wasn't treated as good when I left and when I came back? A booming hot pile of hypocrisy. I will be voting in favor of this resolution. Thank you.

Taliaferro: Thank you, Mr. President. Just for the record, I'd like to make a quick statement. Obviously, this is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment rights—being former law enforcement and military is very near and dear to my heart. This is one of the most important rights that we are afforded under our Constitution, and I welcome both the opinion and the position of my colleagues here around the horseshoe, and there are some facts that we need to discuss. Violent crime is down and been declining for decades. In other words, America is safe and the trend is since 1990, and it's becoming safer. Higher rates of gun ownership are not associated with higher rates of violent crime, just the opposite. Most gun related crimes are carried out with illegally owned firearms. There is no clear relationship between strict gun control legislation to homicide or violent crime rates. In fact, more people had been stabbed to death, than murdered with rifles. These are few statistics and there's plenty more. But the bottom line is you see there's a term in law enforcement and the military to describe and identify evil. It's called the wolf. And when the wolf comes knocking at your door and it could. You want me and responsible gun owners like me in that church, in that synagogue, in that grocery store, on that school ground, in a public venue such as this, and countless other target opportunities the wolf will explore to prey on the innocent and unsuspecting. But when he does and the smoke clears and the sheep are safe. There will be the sheepdog, the responsible law abiding concealed or open carry citizen who took decisive action, often at the risk of their own peril. My guess is that none of the citizen saved will be questioning what type of weapon was used, the length of magazine, or how many or type of rounds were extended to extinguish the threat. I've encouraged my wife and my daughter to use as much force as necessary—to expend as many rounds as necessary—until they, not me, have determined the wolf is no longer a threat. I could point out how the Second Amendment literally says the government is not allowed to institute gun control. And I would also point out that Thomas Jefferson said that preventing individuals of having weapons to defend themselves is akin to banning water because someone might drowned, or fire because someone may be burned. You know too many of our citizens in Caddo parish understand that point. And for the commission just consider legislation that would encourage anything otherwise would be against the will of our constituents. Thank you, Mr. President.

Chavez: I share all the sentiments of the people in the audience I thank you for coming out. Commissioner Epperson said it best, when it comes to the resolution—the weight of it, and the magnitude of what actually will take place, if this passes or fails. It's merely a resolution. Thank you for that great explanation. Personally I'm a veteran, know weapons are soft place in all of our hearts. Commissioner Epperson and Commissioner Taliaferro are both veterans. They both fought for the right for us to be up here and to speak our freedoms, so thank you for that. However, this isn't a personal issue for myself. I had 48 messages from my constituents in Southern Hills, District 10, that I represent, and I'll be voting against this in favor of what the people asked me to do. They asked me to vote no for it. So I'll be voting in that manner.

Burrell: On a final note, as I've said, I've dealt with this issue for over 12 years in the legislature, and probably one of the only commissioners that have had that experience. But again, I don't think any of us—I know I'm not—are against the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment. I grew up in a household in the country where we had guns in every corner. I don't think that that's what this is all about. I'm just going to give you an example of the hypocrisy that goes along with this particular issue. There was a bill that was sponsored by the chairman of the criminal justice committee. He was my Chairman, when I was there. As you remember, when the issue of putting guns on college campuses—that was right after the Virginia incident. We had a chamber that could not hold all the people who were putting that issue forward to allow our college students to have guns on campus. There was a harebrained idea by a very new legislator that said that if I can get this thing amended. It is good for the kids on campus. It should be good for the legislators in the legislature. I got the bill amended to include the legislature. Don't you know that that bill was voted down? Out of all the people that came in crowded that Chamber that put a lot of pressure on the people who were there to vote on it. It wasn't until it was a personal issue to them that the issue was voted down—it didn't change the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment; it was still the same, but just to give you an example of how this issue is so volatile. It's based upon is in the eyes of the beholder. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Call for the Question by Mr. Jackson**, seconded by Mr. Cawthorne. Motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Burrell, Cawthorne, Chavez, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Hopkins, Jackson, Johnson, Lazarus, and Young (11). NAYS: Commissioner Taliaferro (1). ABSENT: None (0). ABSTAIN: None (0).

At this time, Mr. Johnson's original motion failed, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Burrell, Cawthorne, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Jackson, and Johnson (6). NAYS:

Commissioners Atkins, Chavez, Hopkins, Lazarus, Taliaferro, and Young (6). ABSENT: None (0). ABSTAIN: None (0).

It was **moved by Mr. Jackson**, seconded by Mr. Hopkins, *that Resolution No. 14 of 2020, a resolution approving an agreement with the Northwest Louisiana Council of Government (NLCOG), the Coordination & Development Corporation (CDC), and the LSUS Red River Watershed Management Institute, for the purpose of applying for grant funding and acting in support of watershed region management activities and in conjunction with the State of Louisiana Watershed Initiative, and to otherwise provide with respect thereto* be adopted. Motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Burrell, Cawthorne, Chavez, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Hopkins, Jackson, Johnson, Lazarus, Taliaferro, and Young (12). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: None (0). ABSTAIN: None (0).

#### RESOLUTION NO. 14 OF 2020

BY THE CADDO PARISH COMMISSION

A RESOLUTION APPROVING AN AGREEMENT WITH THE NORTHWEST LOUISIANA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS (NLCOG), THE COORDINATION AND DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (CDC), AND THE LSUS RED RIVER WATERSHED MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE, FOR THE PURPOSE OF APPLYING FOR GRANT FUNDING AND ACTING IN SUPPORT OF WATERSHED REGION MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES AND IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE STATE OF LOUISIANA WATERSHED INITIATIVE, AND TO OTHERWISE PROVIDE WITH RESPECT THERETO

WHEREAS, the Louisiana Watershed Initiative was formed in order to coordinate statewide floodplain management efforts through a watershed management approach in response to the 2016 Great Floods and in preparation for future storm and flood events. This coordination includes outreach with local communities to build support for watershed region management approaches that can more effectively address mounting water risks statewide; and

WHEREAS, coordination among The Parish of Caddo and its regional partners is critical to reducing flood risk and preserving the health, safety, and welfare of the residents of Caddo Parish; and

WHEREAS, the Louisiana Watershed Initiative has requested applications for participation in a Regional Capacity Building Grant Program, which may enable the provision of technical assistance to [subject parish or organization] and its regional partners if awarded, thereby furthering immediate watershed management and flood risk reduction goals.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the agreement between the Parish of Caddo and The Northwest Louisiana Council of Governments (NLCOG), the Coordination and Development Corporation (CDC), and the LSUS Red River Watershed Management Institute, for the purpose of applying for grant funding and acting in support of watershed region management activities and in conjunction with the State of Louisiana Watershed Initiative is hereby approved.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that if any provision or item of this resolution or the application thereof is held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect other provisions, items or applications which can be given effect without the invalid provisions, items or applications, and to this end, the provisions of this resolution are hereby declared severable.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution shall take effect immediately.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that all resolutions or parts thereof in conflict herewith are hereby repealed.

#### NEW BUSINESS

It was **moved by Mr. Johnson**, seconded by Mr. Epperson, *to confirm re-opening the hiring process for the Commission Clerk, starting internally.*

**Substitute motion by Mr. Chavez**, seconded by Mr. Lazarus, *to allow until March 19, 2020 for a favorable opinion from the Ethics Board; if a favorable Ethics opinion is not rendered, the Deputy Clerk would be appointed as Commission Clerk.*

Chavez: Commissioners we have a current appointee that we appointed, we're just waiting on the ethics opinion. He started this entire process in 11/25 of 2019. We have appointed him.

He voluntarily put his ethics opinion on the line, it came back that there was an issue. He has since rectified the issue. However, he has to wait until March for the official filing and for us to get that recommendation, if what he and his wife did will rectify that ethics opinion. By March 19, we will know whether or not they accept that. . If they don't, then we have the perfect position, available for what we all agreed upon, is the perfect person. She's been in the position serving for the last two months, she's doing an amazing job. I see no reason and having to train somebody else when we can slide Michelle Nations right into the Clerk's position, and she will continue serving use proudly. If I can get your guys support on that I think would be the most expedient way for the commission to achieve the resolution of getting a clerk, and getting a well-served clerk.

Taliaferro: Thank you, Mr. President. You stated that very eloquently.

Burrell: Are we changing the process? We weren't here when we started this process, I thought it was a process. Given the fact that we sent this to the Ethics Commission because that was the issue at hand. Did that change the process where we open it back up again? Or are you saying that we as the Commission have the authority that you are proposing this?

Chavez: We do, Commissioner. We do have the authority to appoint somebody, and it's up to us for the qualifications. We have not yet open it back up for the process. Again, if my substitute motion does not take place today and Commissioner Epperson's passes, then the hiring process for the Commission Clerk will start over again. It will start the entire process of the two month duration of what we did last year.

Burrell: Again, if yours pass, we are not going back to the process. We're just saying, 'we're going to choose someone else'.

Chavez: Right. If the ethics opinions comes back unfavorable for Mr. Everson who we hired, then we will all be in unison to appoint Mrs. Nations, who on Monday everyone agreed was a great option.

Attorney

Frazier: I just wanted to point out to you, as far as the process, what you all did you adopted a process last time. So if you reopen the hiring process you would adopt whatever process you want to take this time, which can include an appointment of the deputy clerk. You can do all of that, but you adopt the process for your position, unless the process is mandated by the State legislature.

Epperson: I will be voting against substitute motion.

Burrell: Point of clarification, Ms. Frazier, the statement that you just made—is that in line with what the President is saying?

Attorney

Frazier: Yes, that is correct.

At this time, Mr. Chavez's substitute motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Burrell, Chavez, Hopkins, Jackson, Lazarus, Taliaferro, and Young (8). NAYS: Commissioners Cawthorne, Epperson, Gage-Watts, and Johnson (4). ABSENT: None (0). ABSTAIN: None (0).

It was **moved by Mr. Jackson**, seconded by Mr. Chavez, *to confirm submitting a formal request on behalf of the Parish to the Board of Regents Shreveport Law School Study.*

Mr. Jackson said that they had a great meeting yesterday, and there will be more information to come. He also said that the law school proposal is not antithetical to the dental school or the nursing school. These are not in competition.

At this time, Mr. Jackson's motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Burrell, Cawthorne, Chavez, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Hopkins, Jackson, Johnson, Lazarus, Taliaferro, and Young (12). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: None (0). ABSTAIN: None (0).

#### **COMMUNIQUES AND COMMITTEE REPORTS**

- Mr. Jackson said that Southern University will have a reception tonight at 6:00 p.m. There will also be an event tomorrow morning at MS-KICK recognizing this body for their support for the law school.

He also announced that the Black History Film Series is scheduled for tonight beginning at 6:00 p.m. *Say Amen* is the movie that will be playing. The tickets are only \$5 with a panel discussion following the film.

Allendale Ledbetter Neighborhood Association will also be meeting tonight from 6:30 p.m. until 7:30 p.m. to discuss the census.

He asked that Administration provide dates for Reinvest Caddo.

- Mr. Epperson said that the PJAL Convention was recently held in Shreveport. He also said that he was not successful in his executive position at-large. He announced that Mr. Taliaferro is the secretary for the PJAL Veterans & Military Services Committee.

- Mrs. Gage-Watts invited everyone out to the C. Wright Pink Ribbon Project is having a breast cancer awareness fundraiser on Saturday, February 22 from 8:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. at McDonald's on Greenwood and Jewella.

- Mr. Burrell said that Red River Valley Association conference was held on the last two days. He said that all of the ports along the Red River convened and discussed the possibility of flooding due to the amount of rain.

He also announced that Bilberry Park will be hosting a Black History program tomorrow at 6:00 p.m. He invited all to attend.

- Mr. Atkins stated that he has no issues with citizens reaching out to their state legislators. He agrees that it is an appropriate right that should be executed often. He has issues with the Commission body voting on controversial issues to make a statement to the legislature or the congress. He believes that the Commission should stick to issues in the Home Rule Charter and improving the Parish as it relates to those issues.

- Mr. Johnson explained that the controversial issues bring light and dialogue to the table so that all citizens of the Parish are informed of what is going on throughout the Parish. He further stated that sometimes, the citizens in one area are not aware of issues or growing concerns in other areas of the Parish.

- Mr. Epperson pointed out that there are twelve different districts within Caddo Parish. He also said that no matter how the Commissioners vote on an issue, he loves every single Commissioner at the end of the day.

- Mr. Burrell wanted to know if the votes are put on the resolutions sent to the State. The Deputy Clerk stated that the motion, second, and votes are listed on the resolutions as well as the cover letter prior to being sent to the State.

***CITIZENS COMMENTS (late arrivals)***

Mr. Marvin Muhammad came before the Commission in regards to Resolution No. 13 of 2020. He said that Mr. Johnson put a community garden in the MLK area. During that time, Mr. Young offered fruit trees for this garden. Mr. Muhammad further explained growing in the MLK community, this was not always possible. He said that the intersection where the garden is used to be the line between two rival gangs; one gang could not go to that garden without being gunned down. He said that public policy is sometimes deeper than what it seems. He thanked the Commissioners for the dialogue today.

Mr. Patrick Bell came before the Commission to speak on Resolution No. 13 of 2020. He understands that it failed, so he said that he will be brief. He also explained that the amendments were put forth with the understanding that times were going to change. He also said that the right to bear arms shall not be infringed.

There being no further business to come before the body, the meeting was adjourned at 5:40 p.m.

  
Mario Chavez  
President

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Michelle Nations  
Deputy Commission Clerk