

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF  
THE CADDO PARISH COMMISSION'S  
COVID-19 AD HOC COMMITTEE  
HELD ON THE 9th DAY OF MARCH, 2021

The Caddo Parish Commission met in a COVID-19 Memorial Ad-Hoc Committee Meeting, on the above date, at 3:30 p.m., via Zoom teleconference, with Mrs. Gage-Watts, Chairperson, presiding, and the following members in attendance constituting a quorum: Commissioners Cawthorne, Chavez, Gage-Watts, Johnson, and Taliaferro (5). ABSENT: None (0).

The invocation was given by Mr. Cawthorne, and Mr. Taliaferro led the Committee in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**AGENDA ADDITIONS**

It was **moved by Mr. Johnson**, seconded by Mrs. Gage-Watts, *to expand the agenda and approve consideration of items under La.R.S. 42:17.1. Motion carried by acclamation.*

**CERTIFICATE FOR TELECONFERENCE**

WHEREAS, the Governor of the State of Louisiana has declared a statewide Public Health emergency, inclusive of Caddo Parish, in Proclamation Number 25 JBE 2020; and,

WHEREAS, the Governor, has further extended that declaration via Proclamations Number 158 JBE 2020 and Number 159 JBE 2020; and

WHEREAS, R.S. 42:17.1 allows members of political subdivisions to participate in its meetings electronically under certain limited circumstances.

THEREFORE, in accordance with the Provisions of R.S. 42:17.1, the presiding officer of the Caddo Parish Commission hereby certifies that this meeting is to address matters that are:

- (a) directly related to the public Commission's response to the Coronavirus Pandemic and are critical to the health, safety, or welfare of the public.
- (b) that if they are delayed will cause curtailment of vital public services or severe economic dislocation and hardship.
- (c) critical to continuation of the business of the Commission and that are not able to be postponed to a meeting held in accordance with the other provisions of Open Meetings Law due to a legal requirement or other deadline that cannot be postponed or delayed by the public body.
- (d) critical or time-sensitive and have been determined by the undersigned should not be delayed;\*  
*consideration of matters under Paragraph (d) will initially require a two-thirds vote of those members present).*

**DATE: March 8, 2021**

  
Stormy Gage-Watts, Chair

Mrs. Gage-Watts opened up the floor for Citizens Comments. At this time, there were no public comments.

**NEW BUSINESS**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the Committee and said the following items will be discussed:

- *Discuss COVID-19 Memorial*

Mrs. Gage-Watts opened the discussion with the following statement: "this day marks the anniversary of the first confirmed coronavirus case in Louisiana. This morning at Ochsner LSU, we held lights in the hallways in honor of those lives that were lost to COVID-19. As we paused and reflected, I couldn't help but think of how many thought that this would be a month of quarantine and life would back to normal—those thoughts were far from the truth. We all know it became a year of unprecedented events, a plethora of us know the importance of remembering those whose lives were taken, homes were broken, and communities ripped apart. May we never forget how many of us suffer even now and didn't even get to properly say goodbye. This pandemic has killed many children from schools or playgrounds, and even their grandparents homes, church doors have been closed, and many businesses dissolved.

There is no price we can place on this deadly disease. As we've made progress, this fight is far from over. There will be lasting effects for years to come. Today, I would like to discuss how this monument can help heal and bring unity to our community. Let's discuss how we can recognize our loved ones who lost the battle to COVID-19, honor our essential workers and scientists. Let's discuss a memorial for future generations that we'll never forget."

Mr. Chavez said that he received comments from citizens requesting that the monument not be placed downtown. One of the places that was suggested was possibly one of the medical facilities. Mr. Cawthorne wanted to know the name of the group who made the suggestion. Mr. Chavez mentioned that it was a Commissioner who requested that it not be downtown. He also said that several other citizens thought a medical facility would be the proper place for it.

Mr. Johnson said that he is against placing it at a hospital because Caddo Parish has multiple medical facilities. He suggested that it be placed on the riverfront where other memorials are. He also mentioned that it would be easier to access it on the riverfront, so people would be able to visit it, especially those citizens who lost loved ones to COVID-19.

At this time, Mrs. Gage-Watts asked that the Clerk share his screen to show some examples of memorials that could be used. She said that it could be an economic driver and a tourist attraction, not to mention a legacy to the pandemic related realities.

It was **moved by Mr. Johnson**, seconded by Mrs. Gage-Watts, *to recommend to the full body an appropriation of up to \$75,000 for the construction of a COVID-19 memorial.*

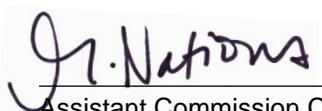
Mr. Taliaferro understands that this memorial would be erected for the victims of COVID-19, as well as a monument to memorialize the victims and first responders. Mr. Taliaferro said that he be interested in seeing what the public would like to see. He also agreed with Mr. Johnson that the memorial should be placed on the riverfront.

Mrs. Gage-Watts said that she has received several calls from survivors and other members of the community who are in support of the memorial. Mr. Chavez suggested that the Parish's Communication Manager reach out to some of the victims' families and first responders to see what they would like on the memorial.

Mr. Cawthorne would like to know what the engagement of the public would look like, feel like, and be organized around. It gets a little messy when you try to include too many ideas all over the map, he said. It is also his understanding that Mr. Johnson would like this to be completed as we moved out of the COVID-19 pandemic. Mrs. Gage-Watts agreed.

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

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 4:01 p.m.



Assistant Commission Clerk