

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
THE CADDO PARISH COMMISSION'S
PANDEMIC & NATURAL DISASTER AD HOC COMMITTEE
HELD ON THE 1ST DAY OF APRIL, 2021

The Caddo Parish Commission met in a Pandemic & Natural Disaster Ad Hoc Committee Meeting, on the above date, at 3:30 p.m., via Zoom teleconference, with Mr. Steven Jackson, Chairperson, presiding, and the following members in attendance constituting a quorum: Commissioners Jackson, Epperson, Young, and Johnson (4). ABSENT: Commissioners Gage-Watts (1).

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

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;

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

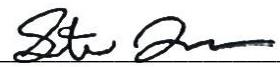
WHEREAS, R.S. 42:17.1 allows members of political subdivisions to participate in its meetings electronically under certain limited circumstances.

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. (This does not affect the vote necessary for adoption or any motion)*

Date: March 26, 2021



Steven Jackson, Chair

CITIZENS COMMENTS

Mr. Jackson opened up the floor for Citizens Comments. At this time, there were no public comments.

NEW BUSINESS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and moved to the first New Business item, *Winter Storm Event FEMA Updates*. Mr. Jackson requested a status update on the FEMA application. Dr. Wilson acknowledged that they are tracking the application, and he will contact Dr. Waters for a status today.

Mr. Jackson announced there is a disaster SNAP program that reimburses citizens for food shortages or loss from the winter storm.

Mr. Jackson then moved on to the next New Business item, *Discussion Regarding Agency Impacts Related To The Covid-19 Pandemic- Revenue Shortfalls, Unexpected Expenses, and Recovery Ideas that are related to the Covid-19 Pandemic with representatives from Caddo Parish Administration, District Attorney's Office, Public Defenders Office, Juvenile Court- Ted Cox, Judge Ree Casey-Jones, Judge David Matlock & Judge Natalie Howell, Juvenile Services- Clay Walker, and Registrar of Voters Office.*

- *Caddo Parish Administration*

Mr. Jackson said that the discussion is a conversation and not a call of action at this time. He announced that the American Rescue Plan Bill has a 60 to 90 day wait before payout.

Dr. Wilson confirmed that they were to expect half payment of \$46 million by end of May, which is \$23 million.

Mr. Jackson said that this discussion is the groundwork to prepare to move forward with initiatives when funding becomes available.

Mr. Epperson shared that the Louisiana State Fair lost 82% of their revenue due to COVID19 and plan to host a fair in Spring 2021 and wanted to know if there is anything they could do to support them. He added that the Caddo Community Action Agency has been hit economically with unemployment, food insecurity and pipe bursts within the community and expressed his interest in assisting them with increasing their emergency aid fund.

Mr. Jackson acknowledged that they will prioritize spending on lost revenues and Parish needs and recovery, but warned that funds could be sequestered if they don't use all the funding. He informed the Committee that they should be efficient and be diligent in helping the Parish in recovery. He then introduced the first speaker Parish Administration.

Finance Director Mrs. Barnett explained the Parish revenue lost about \$2.7 million based on data from 2019 and 2020 from including, but not limited to, sales taxes, riverboat funds, adoption revenue, parks revenue and some criminal funds. They were unable to receive reimbursement for \$800,000 of their COVID related expenses by CARES Act and still incurred expenses post application period. They anticipate it would take many years for the riverboat fund to return to the usual revenue amount.

Mr. Jackson asked if the amount of funds that were not reimbursed by the CARES Act were included in the \$2.7 million. Mrs. Barnett acknowledged that the \$800,000 is not included in the total amount.

Mr. Young wanted to know if there was a reduction in court and criminal court costs or is the \$2.7 million a net loss. Mrs. Barnett acknowledged that there were less court activity including salaries, which the \$2.7 million includes revenue loss. For the Parish to replace the revenue lost due to Covid19 would be \$2.7 million through the American Rescue Plan Act.

Dr. Wilson alerted the Committee that they are considering using the American Rescue Plan Act dollars to reimburse for additional projects and water investments including \$900,000 appropriated to Blanchard and \$700,000 appropriated to Greenwood.

Mr. Jackson informed that the State is set to receive \$2 billion and a \$10 billion for State's to apply to infrastructure, water and broadband project and recommends to secure funding for Caddo Parish. He included that they have more processes to go through before they can move forward with municipal broadband.

- *District Attorney's Office*

The Administrator for the District Attorney's Office, Mr. Gary Gaskins, thanked the Committee for inviting them and informed the committee that they experienced \$300,000 reduction in revenue from 2019 from bond forfeiture to court costs, \$483,000 of applicable CARES Act reimbursement that was not awarded, with an estimated \$250,000 revenue loss year to date. He explained that they negotiated a 1% budget increase in funding from the Parish, which was usually around 4% increase, so they have an estimated \$1.5 million in revenue loss.

Mr. Young asked Mr. Gaskins to clarify the annual 4% budget increase from the Parish. Mr. Gaskins apologized for the generalization and that every year they have discussion with the Finance Director regarding budgetary needs before a percentage is finalized.

Mr. Jackson requested a preview of the District Attorney's Office's funding shortages to the Parish Administrator.

- *Public Defender's Office*

Mrs. Michelle Andrapana, District Public Defender, thanked the Committee for inviting them to the meeting and explains that their funding is from local conviction and user fees averaging \$109,000 per month in fiscal year 2019. Since Covid19 pandemic, they have experienced court closings they are averaging \$76,127.98 per month. The difference over a 12-month period totaled \$390,746.40. Mrs. Andrapana made some salary by 50% and was ineligible for CARES Act relief and continued to pay full salary averaging \$33,000 per month.

Mr. Jackson inquired if there was any reimbursement from the state they could have applied for. Mrs. Andrapana received a one-time increase in District Assistance funds from the State Public Defender Board for 2020, which provides \$4 million for the Louisiana State Public Defense System. And that they received less than \$500,000 but their reserves are suffering due to revenue shortages every month. She added that letters was sent to the Caddo Parish Commission in 2020 regarding assistance requests listing that they hand 75-85% of Caddo Parish's criminal cases on a budget about one-third of the District Attorney's budget of which Public Defense Office does not receive any funding from the Parish.

Mr. Young wanted to know how much is in their reserves. Mrs. Andrapana estimated they have about \$500,000 in their reserves and has been maintaining this amount since 2020 by making 50% salary cuts when courts were closed.

Mr. Young asked the District Attorney if they have a reserve. Mr. Gaskins confirmed that they have a reserve of about \$2.2 million.

Mr. Young subsequently wanted to know what change has occurred to the District Attorney's reserves for the last 12-18 months. Mr. Gaskins acknowledged that they have dropped near \$200,000 in reserves.

Mr. Jackson thanked Mrs. Andrapana for attending and providing information and informed that the Pandemic and Natural Disaster Ad Hoc Committee is not the place to make requests for funding. But he is looking forward to discussing that with her office.

- *Juvenile Court: Ted Cox, Judge Ree Casey-Jones, Judge David Matlock, and Judge Natalie Howell and Juvenile Services Director Clay Walker*

Mr. Walker thanked for the invitation to the Committee and explained that in addition to court cost revenue losses, their needs include pandemic related mental health training, human trafficking training due to change in patterns during pandemic, and academic recovery for disenfranchised children who missed a full school year, and also personal car use for working-from-home.

Mr. Johnson asked Mr. Clay that truancy was initially a problem handled by the school system. Mr. Clay Walker acknowledged that it is a shared expense where the school system handles high school truancy and the Juvenile Services Department handles elementary and middle which judges have jurisdiction with Parents. The funding is shared between their department and the school system where the school system develops education recovery, personnel and contracted staff and the Juvenile Services department handles the mental health and social service needs.

Judge Ree Casey Jones clarified that majority of the \$2.7 million loses majority is not juvenile court costs. Mrs. Barnett confirmed that the the figure is an inclusive figure but can provide a more approximate number if needed.

Judge Jones concluded that truancy numbers have tripled in 2021 and they are working with community partners as well.

Mr. Walker agreed that they had minimal court costs and child support losses.

Mr. Jackson inquired about the ankle monitors. Mr. Walker explained that they did not have an issue funding the ankle monitors using their budget.

Dr. Wilson advised that they incurred costs from the Caddo Correctional Center (CCC) and would have to review to separate data to realize any health costs incurred from backfilling individuals into CCC who could have been on an ankle monitor during the pandemic which can be reimbursed.

Mr. Jackson informed that they could bill up to 30 days of medical expenses as well and requested that the Juvenile Services department to provide their information in a report. Mr. Walker acknowledged.

Mr. Jackson reviewed what was discussed about the American Cares Act funding, and using the American Rescue Plan dollars to replenish the riverboat fund and what their pandemic response in the Parish can do to help, as well as, increase COVID19 testing. He explained that he is working with LSU Health Sciences center to write a grant to help with more testing and minority health education.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 4:25 p.m.


Linda Montgomery
Administrative Assistant III