

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
THE CADDO PARISH COMMISSION'S
PANDEMIC & NATURAL DISASTER AD HOC COMMITTEE
HELD ON THE 27TH DAY OF APRIL, 2021

The Caddo Parish Commission met in a Pandemic & Natural Disaster Ad Hoc Committee Meeting, on the above date, at 11:00 a.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. Epperson with a one-minute moment of silence for those who have suffered from the pandemic and the lost loved ones due to COVID19, and Mr. Jackson led the Committee in the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA ADDITIONS

It was **moved by Mr. Epperson**, to expand the agenda and approve consideration of items under La.R.S. 42:17.1. Motion carried by unanimous consent.

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;*

Date: April 27, 2021



Steven Jackson, Chair

The chair explained that the meeting is held by teleconference to accommodate for visitors who are caretakers of high-risk individuals and other pandemic related restrictions that keep them from attending the meeting in person.

CITIZENS COMMENTS

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

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Jackson welcomed everyone to today's meeting and said that following items will be discussed:

- *FEMA Update—Myrna Chase, Public Information Officer*
- *SBA Update—Susheel Kamar, Public Information Officer*
- *Winter Storm Update—Robert Jump, Caddo GOSEP, Homeland Security & Emergency Preparedness Division Commander*
- *COVID-19 Testing & Vaccination Update—Dr. Martha Whyte*
- *US Treasure Emergency Rental Assistance Update*
Lottery System
Support for Fairfield Fire Victims
- *American Rescue Plan Local Government Funds Update*

The Chair moved onto the first New Business item, *FEMA Update: Myrna Chase, FEMA Public Information Officer.*

Mrs. Chase mentioned that she emailed the Caddo Parish Commission her contact information and introductory information and advised that she is unable to testify in any public hearings without an invitation from the state governor. She also advised the Committee to arrange a meeting for more information about FEMA programs.

Mr. Jackson requested Mrs. Bryant to include invitations to Robert Jump, Mr. Weaver and Mr. Ward to the Pandemic & Natural Disaster Ad Hoc Committee meetings and arrange a meeting to brief them of what was discussed in this meeting so they can assist in emergency response within the community in time for May 10th. Mrs. Bryant acknowledged.

Mr. Jackson inquired about meeting with non-elected officials. Mrs. Chase acknowledged that a meeting would need to include elected officials and that there is a preliminary deadline on May 8th.

Mr. Jackson requested that Mrs. Bryant include the Chair of the Long-Range Planning Committee Mr. Chavez, Commission President Mr. Johnson and his self to be in the briefing meeting.

The Chair then moved to the next New Business item, *SBA Update: Susheel Kamar, SBA Public Information Officer.*

Mr. Kumar introduced that when an emergency occurs SBA, FEMA, and other agencies to assess damages then the state makes a declaration based on the total cost threshold. He explained that

regarding the winter storm, the emergency declaration is determined they must first register with FEMA to receive a 9-digit identifying number then receive a referral to the SBA. SBA provides low interest disaster loans at 1.25% for renters and homeowners, 2% most private organizations and 3% for businesses. He advised that renters and homeowners must complete the package even if the application is declined, because it qualifies the declined applicant to other needs assistance from FEMA. He further explained that their various loan programs allow recipients to pay their bills, recover revenue losses, have their loans refinanced, and a summit of insurance proceeds. Mr. Kumar advised that in lieu of natural disasters businesses have a 90% chance of not reopening and after the winter storm most did not open.

Mr. Jackson mentioned that physical damages from the storm are still affecting businesses in his area and requested that an informational card be sent out into the community in high populated areas so people can be informed of relief efforts available.

Mr. Kumar acknowledged that he is willing to work with the Parish and City to provide more information and teleconferences. He also advised that the SBA is a resource for small businesses.

At this time, Mr. Jackson moved onto the next New Business item, *Update from Caddo GOSEP Regarding Winter Storm: Robert Jump, Homeland Security & Emergency Preparedness Division Commander.*

The Clerk advised that Mr. Jump nor a representative are on the call and that they were invited.

Mr. Jackson expressed disappointment that a representative from the division was not on the call and that a report could have sufficed in their absence to the meeting.

Mr. Jackson moved onto the next New Business item, *COVID-19 Test & Vaccination Update.*

Mrs. Bryant provided an update on the Emergency Rental Assistance Program successfully receiving almost 3,400 applicants and are making the first payments on Thursday that week. She added that the program is running smoothly so far and are accepting feedback for improvements.

Mr. Epperson commended the program's advertisement throughout Caddo Parish and that it is very popular among citizens. Mr. Jackson acknowledged and agreed.

Mr. Young inquired if all applicants will receive funding. Mrs. Bryant responded that applicants who meet the eligibility requirements will get funded from the American Rescue Act.

Mr. Young also wanted to understand how the lottery system operates. Mrs. Barnett acknowledged that they chose the lottery system to help as many citizens as possible and that applicants are in the draw system until their name is drawn. She added that they have funding for all eligible applicants to receive funding.

Mr. Young also inquired if the chances of having their name drawn is 1 in a million, for example. Mrs. Barnett declined that the names being drawn are 1 to 1 and informed that an eligible applicant may not be first drawn but they will get funded. And that a disadvantaged applicant is not further disadvantaged compared to an applicant that has efficient resources to apply and have their landlord registered. She explained that the lottery system selects 300 applicants every Wednesday and then verify eligibility of those selected applicants.

Mr. Jackson inquired if the lottery was post inspection. Mrs. Barnett acknowledged that the lottery is pre-inspection, and once a name is drawn and they have proven their eligibility the applicant will receive assistance immediately and continue to receive assistance every week thereafter. She informed the committee that it is possible that people whose names were drawn in the first selections, but have not responded or submitted all their documentation, the applicants whose names were drawn in the second

lottery selections that complete their processing may receive their first payment before the ones in the first selection. She strongly stated that applicant completing the process

Mr. Jackson reported citizen's point of view regarding the lottery system as a barrier to funding and that the Parish should just release the funds since they have it. Mrs. Bryant acknowledged the concern of the citizens. She explained that they have reviewed their options to reduce obstacles and maximize timeliness from application to assistance payments and found that the lottery system was the best fit.

Mr. Jackson wanted to know what happens to an applicant that applies in April but doesn't get assistance until June. Mrs. Bryant acknowledged the concern about delays however they are working 300-400 applications per week and that citizens are welcome to contact the Parish for a status update on their application.

Mr. Jackson discussed his concern about the chosen system that is used to manage the program and recommended to follow the State's method. Mrs. Bryant acknowledged that they are continually gathering data and are open to feedback from the state, their team tasked with making the lottery draws, their partners and applicants to make adjustments and improvements.

The Chair moved to the next New Business item, *Support for Fairfield Fire Victims*.

Mrs. Standke from the HOA discussed a fire that was still under investigation of building 1 on Fairfield Avenue in Shreveport that occurred Wednesday, April 21st and that there were no deaths or bodily injuries. She explained that the HOA is going above and beyond to assist the displaced residents as well as receiving assistance from local churches and Red Cross. They are working to get clearance for residents to retrieve their personal items. She included that they have increased 24-hour security around the building and have it cordoned off.

Mr. Young inquired about housing needs of the displaced residents. Mrs. Standke listed that residents have a place to stay at local churches, many residents were able to live with family members, but mentioned that residents are more concerned with salvaging their belongings.

Mr. Kumar provided his contact information for Mrs. Standke.

Mrs. Standke stated that residents need counseling as there were some residents who lost everything and added that they can provide contact information for their Commissioner Mr. Young to reach out to them.

Mr. Jackson encouraged the displaced residents to apply for rental assistance and to seek assistance from non-profits due to their ability to provide immediate assistance. He added that Mr. Young is working on an ordinance to appropriate emergency assistance and any information they provide would help the citizens however the assistance through the Parish may not take more time for it pass.

The Clerk advised that Dr. Whyte the health system offers crisis counseling that may assist the citizens and that they will gather and send contact information from the teleconference chat to Mrs. Standke. Mrs. Standke acknowledged and provided her email address.

Mr. Jackson moved onto the next New Business Item, *Covid-19 Test & Vaccination Update*.

Dr. Whyte discussed that the Parish is below the 5% positivity rate threshold and that the hospitalization census has decreased tremendously compared to the start of pandemic, but are concerned that many citizens aren't testing. She stated concerns about seeing younger people suffering worse conditions of COVID, and are working with LSU Emerging Viral Threat Lab's certification to sequence variant strains of the virus for the state. They are also testing breakthrough cases (when a person get re-infected with the COVID virus) and cases of those who were infected after vaccination. She added that

international news is devastating and mentioned India's 1.5 million cases in a week, and hundreds of thousands of cases per day, deaths due to lack of oxygen and burning bodies due to lack of burial plots. And included that Canada has experienced a spike in infections from a Brazilian strain. She encouraged that people should continue to wear masks even in crowds and get tested and vaccinated if they can. She advised that they may not see an increase in cases, but they are also not having an increase in testing. She mentioned that they have resources for testing sites at the fairgrounds, David Raines, churches and non-profits, but have noticed that there is some resistance to having National Guard present in their communities.

Mr. Epperson asked for clarification on the stigma against the National Guard who provides essential relief and services during disasters. Dr. Whyte acknowledged that it was noted in Sabine Parish and DeSoto Parish due to belief in conspiracy theories that COVID testing and the vaccine is a form of government control.

Mr. Epperson announced that Mount Olive Baptist Church at the intersection of Buncombe Road and Highway 169 in Greenwood, Louisiana is hosting Moderna vaccinations on Friday May 7th for the rural south and west Shreveport area towards the Texas state line.

Mr. Jackson asked how many were tested per day at the large testing sites and would they expect lower quantity of completed tests if the sites were done in smaller neighborhood settings. Dr. Whyte acknowledged that they reached about 1,500 tests per day and has preference to smaller testing sites to reach more people. She commended that localized sites would encourage others to get their tests and vaccinations done, because a person has seen or know someone who successfully got it done can spread the word.

Mr. Jackson mentioned that New Orleans hosted shots for shots but had concerns about mixing alcohol with vaccines. Dr. Whyte acknowledged that alcohol doesn't harm the vaccination and that they are looking into incentives.

Mr. Jackson moved onto the next New Business item, *Update on American Rescue Plan Local Government Funds*.

Mrs. Bryant explained that they have limited information at this time but should receive more guidelines regarding the American Rescue Plan closer to May 6, 2021 and that they may receive the deposit on May 11th.

Mr. Jackson inquired about the Commission's ability to work on the fund from any committee. Mr. Bernstein advised that committee action items have to be referred to the full body for full consideration and that the Commission President can decide on that.

Mr. Jackson voiced concerns that no one person should be able to delegate which fund a committee can use. Mr. Bernstein acknowledged that neither an individual Commissioner or Committee can decide, but is a Parliamentary question for the full body.

Mr. Epperson added that any committee can make recommendations, vote to send to the full body. Mr. Jackson acknowledged.

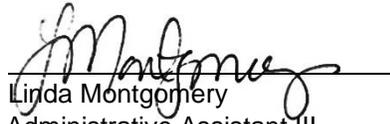
Mr. Jackson inquired about the use of American Rescue Plan dollars. Mrs. Bryant acknowledged that it can be used for infrastructure, economic development, hazard pay or other investments into the community.

Mr. Jackson wanted to know if employees still worked during the pandemic. Mrs. Bryant commended the Parish employees efforts during the pandemic including, but not limited to, payroll, pick up animals, address road situations, operating solid waste sites, water and food distribution, and clearing ice during the snow storm.

It was **moved by Mr. Jackson**, seconded by Mr. Epperson, *to provide a one-time supplement pay of \$1,000 for frontline to Parish employees.*

An amendment by Mr. Jackson, seconded by Mr. Epperson, *to increase the one-time supplement pay to \$1,500.* Motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Epperson, Jackson and Young (3). ABSENT: Commissioner Gage-Watts and Johnson (2).

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


Linda Montgomery
Administrative Assistant III