

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CADDO PARISH COMMISSION'S
NGO APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
HELD ON THE 6TH DAY OF JUNE, 2022

The Caddo Parish NGO Appropriations Committee met in legal session on the above date, at 2:30 p.m., in the 1ST Floor Conference Room, with Mr. Johnson, Chairman, presiding, and the following members in attendance: Commissioners Atkins, Burrell, Chavez, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Hopkins, Johnson, and Lazarus (8). ABSENT: None (0).

The invocation and pledge of allegiance were bypassed.

NEW BUSINESS

- *Discuss And Make Recommendation Regarding CJ Ministries*

It was **moved by Mrs. Gage-Watts**, seconded by Mr. Johnson, *to recommend to the full body an appropriation of \$5,000 for Ceejay Ministries.*

Mrs. Gage-Watts commented that Ceejay Ministries is very active in the community and believes he is making a difference in the Parish. Mr. Atkins wanted to know more about the specific differences Ceejay Ministries makes. Mrs. Gage-Watts responded Ceejay Ministries recently hosted a high school field day. She said that he promotes positivity through prayer. He also works with other organizations for women, as well as tries to reacclimate incarcerated individuals into society.

Mr. Jackson recalled that the Commission set aside some funds in the budget for mentoring. He said that Ceejay Ministries application is for mentoring. Mr. Jackson suggested Ceejay Ministries apply for the NGO grant when it becomes available this year, but they did not. Mr. Jackson expressed that it bothered him because the Commission budgeted \$100,000 to \$150,000 for mentoring, which is what the applicant applied for.

Mr. Burrell commented that in his last twenty years working with non-profits, the Parish does not have enough organizations for young people to get involved in. The normal return on investment for most non-profits is 7 to 1 due to invaluable volunteerism and expertise. "We got to have a social net for a community as poor as ours," Mr. Burrell said. He suggested the Committee review the crime and poverty statistics for Shreveport. Mr. Burrell said the Parish must have something to "undergird" those statistics or the jails will fill up. Mr. Burrell further said it is a small amount of money for what Ceejay Ministries is doing.

Mr. Hopkins wanted to know how many groups in the NGO system do the same type of work as Ceejay Ministries. Mr. Johnson responded that some organizations do similar work. Dr. Wilson responded that there is redundancy in the Parish's grant process. Mr. Hopkins also wanted to know if money will be moved from the Parish's Oil & Gas Fund to provide an appropriation to Ceejay Ministries. Mrs. Bryant explained that a transfer from Oil & Gas Fund occurs when the NGO fund is low.

Mr. Atkins agreed with the support for Ceejay Ministries, but had concerns about following the process. He wanted to know why Ceejay Ministries did not wait to apply in the annual process. Mr. Johnson responded that Ceejay Ministries had expenses in the current year and if he waited for the annual process, the next award would be in January 2023. Mr. Burrell stated that they should review all NGO applicants that did not go through the process to be fair.

Mr. Johnson asked Mrs. Erica Bryant if the NGOs that have approved appropriations are used every year. Mrs. Bryant responded no, because some NGOs have to return funds or did not receive funds due to an incomplete process. She said that there is usually some monies unused. Mr. Johnson said the use in the community outweighs the \$5,000 appropriation for Ceejay Ministries.

Attorney Frazier pointed out the budget is not listed in detail and that the grant does not pay for wages or salaries. Mr. Johnson responded that is why he reduced the appropriation amount to \$5,000.

Mr. Jackson commented that the Parish has not funded an NGO outside of the budget process this year, unless it was related to the American Rescue Plan. Mr. Johnson mentioned WERLA. Mr. Jackson explained that the funding for that program is new revenue by an oil and gas lease that became available. Mr. Johnson also mentioned Shreveport Green. Mr. Jackson said that Seedlinks was appropriated with more funds than what Ceejay Ministries is requesting. Mr. Jackson expressed concerns about organizations receiving funding that offer the same type of community efforts. He said that revenue is diminishing and granting new organizations for the same type of work is not going to accomplish what the organizations are trying to do. Mr. Jackson asked the Committee how are they going to keep their grant program going.

Mr. Chavez wanted to know if there were unused funds that could be appropriated to Ceejay Ministries. Mrs. Bryant acknowledged that there were organizations with leftover funds last year. Mr. Chavez also wanted to know the difference between Seedlinks and Ceejay Ministries. Mr. Johnson responded that Seedlinks helps with mental health issues, whereas Ceejay Ministries helps mentor kids and helping women.

Call for the Question, by Mrs. Gage-Watts, seconded by Mr. Johnson. Motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Burrell, Gage-Watts, Hopkins, Johnson, and Lazarus (5). NAYS: Commissioners Chavez and Atkins (2). ABSENT: Commissioner Epperson (1). ABSTAIN: None (0).

Mr. Chavez wanted to know if the \$5,000 appropriation to Ceejay Ministries would be taken from the Oil & Gas Fund or the Riverboat Fund. Mrs. Bryant responded that a commissioner could make an amendment to fund the appropriation from the Riverboat Fund without using the Oil and Gas Fund.

At this times Mrs. Gage-Watts' motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Burrell, Chavez, Epperson, Gage-Watts, and Johnson (4). NAYS: Commissioners Atkins, Hopkins, and Lazarus (3). ABSENT: None (0). ABSTAIN: None (0).

- *Discuss NGO Process and Suggested Updates*
 - NGO Eligibility Requirements

Mr. Johnson explained that the Finance and Administration Departments revised the Caddo Parish Grant Management Policies and Procedures that includes eligibility requirements, conflict of interests, etc. He said that conflicts of interests under Parish of Caddo employees should include immediate family members.

It was **moved by Mr. Johnson**, seconded by Mr. Chavez, *to include "immediate family" to Conflicts of Interest under NGO Eligibility Requirements for the Caddo Parish Grant Management Policy & Procedures.*

Mrs. Gage-Watts asked for clarity on Mr. Johnson's recommendation. Mr. Johnson responded that his suggestion is for the employees and their immediate family to be listed under Conflict of Interest. He said that the State's definition of immediate family includes spouses, children, etc. Mrs. Gage-Watts asked if immediate family is a part of the Code of Ethics. Mr. Johnson confirmed that it is.

Mr. Jackson asked for clarification on Caddo Parish employees, such as Mr. Jeff Everson employed by the Parish and his spouse who works at Robinson's Rescue. "Conflicts of interest means that person and their immediate family," said Mr. Johnson. He reiterated the Louisiana definition of immediate family with no exceptions.

Attorney Frazier pointed out that the State Ethics Court has already moved to allow Robinson's Rescue to continue to receive funds. Mr. Jackson asked if the policy would prohibit Robinson's Rescue. Attorney Frazier said that it would be stricter than the State said their relationship did not violate. Mr. Taliaferro asked if it can be stricter. Attorney Frazier said that it can be.

Mr. Johnson said that he was hoping to correspond with the Louisiana Code of Ethics. Mr. Hopkins suggested removing immediate family and correspond with what the Louisiana Ethics are.

Dr. Wilson expressed that his interest is in Robinson's Rescue spay/neutering impact on the Parish to reduce pet population. Mr. Johnson asked if Mrs. Everson is the owner of the company. Dr. Wilson said that she is an employee. Mr. Johnson pointed out that whether they fund the company or not, Mrs. Everson would still receive the same salary.

Mr. Jackson stated that based on the inclusion of immediate family, there will be conflict of interest with Mr. Everson. Mr. Johnson commented that they are still in violation of Code of Ethics.

Mrs. Erica Bryant commented that there could be a situation where an immediate family member may work at an organization, but that family member is not in a principle in that organization. She suggested that it be in accordance with Louisiana Code of Ethics law and seek recommendation from the Ethics Board.

Mr. Burrell commented that the immediate family could not have a direct benefit from an appropriation. Mr. Johnson explained that the Everson family wrote the Ethics Board with a lawyer to appeal the first ruling that their relationship was unethical. He further explained the Everson family wrote the Ethics Board a second time with another attorney who wrote differently and received approval. "If you're an employee of the Parish or immediate family, you can't receive grant funding," said Mr. Johnson.

Dr. Wilson pointed out that over the last ten to twelve years, the Parish has reduced animal intake from 12,000 to 3,000. He commented that the Parish needs to continue working in this direction.

Mrs. Bryant stated that some Parish employees have family members that work for other organizations. Mr. Johnson suggested that the language say "immediate family to receive grant funding directly" so that an employee's immediate family receive direct income from the grant funding would not be allowed. Mr. Johnson requested that Legal handle the language.

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

- NGO Eligibility Requirements, Point 6.a.

Mr. Johnson wanted to know how “currently active and consistent program” is defined for eligibility. Dr. Wilson responded that it is explained in the application.

- How to Apply, Point 1

Mr. Johnson suggested that Point 1 include “an exception for emergency situations”. Mr. Hopkins wanted to know how to define emergency. Mr. Johnson responded that emergency situations include natural disasters, emergency declarations, etc. He asked that Legal put in a definition for an emergency situation.

Mr. Lazarus suggested that there be a hard deadline. He stated that Mrs. Barnett that there is always an organization submitting an application after the deadline date.

Mr. Burrell wanted to know if Legal would be pulling the definition of an emergency situation from the State. Attorney Frazier suggested the Parish handle applicants on a case by case basis when there is an emergency or something that affects everyone. Mrs. Bryant pointed out that many granting organizations extended deadlines during the pandemic. She further stated that emergency situations should be ones that have an impact on multiple situations. Dr. Wilson explained that the Committee could define an emergency and put it in their policy. Dr. Wilson further explained that one organization’s emergency circumstances should not “run our train off track”. Attorney Frazier stated that emergencies to date have been either federally declared emergencies or local government declared emergencies. Mr. Johnson recalled a time when the Meals on Wheels experienced a shortfall in their program due to increased gas prices. He explained that it was not a Parish wide emergency, but the organization requested additional funding from the Parish. Dr. Wilson mentioned that the Food Bank and Meals on Wheels would be excluded from the grant process.

It was **moved by Mr. Johnson**, seconded by Mr. Chavez, *to include exception for federal, state or locally declared emergency situations.* Motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Burrell, Chavez, Epperson, Gage-Watts, Hopkins, Johnson, and Lazarus (8). NAYS: None (0). ABSENT: None (0). ABSTAIN: None (0).

- How to Apply, Point 4.i.

Mr. Johnson wanted to know if a staff list was necessary. Attorney Frazier responded that the staff list is used to figure out if there are Parish employees listed on the staff list.

- Additional Information about the Application Process

Mr. Johnson stated that if an application is late, it will not be considered in that fiscal year it is received. Mr. Burrell wanted to know if a received application is time stamped. Mrs. Bryant explained that an electronic application process because it allows them to track when an applicant open, completes and submits an application. Mr. Burrell explained there were emailed or hand carried applications that did not get stamped. Mrs. Bryant responded that their process has moved away from that. “Applicants have to go through the system, through DocuSign, and submit it. That way we can track it,” she said. Mr. Burrell voiced concerns for small non-profits that may have challenges. Mrs. Bryant explained that every organization they work with can do the electronic process and the Parish will work with them, if needed. Mrs. Gage-Watts wanted to know if there is a tracking matrix for applicants to receive an automated response once their application is submitted. Dr. Wilson acknowledged that DocuSign includes tracking.

Mr. Jackson pointed out that the Mrs. Barnett and Mrs. Jalisa Thomas laid out these recommendations in the Finance Committee. He said that the Committee got to hear what Finance does in the NGO process. Mr. Johnson stated that they should postpone working on the policy document until the application matches the requirements. Mr. Jackson stated that the policy changes are applicable to all non-governmental organizations. Mr. Johnson agreed that all Commission Committees should review the policy.

- Scoring Applications

Mr. Johnson suggested reducing scoring applications from four criteria to three criteria. He recommended combining Program Design and Outcomes as one criteria with the total being 100. He suggested under Organization Capacity to keep points B, D, and E; under Program Design and Outcomes keep points D, E, F, G, H and include “include measurable indicators” at the end of E; and, under Influence and Impact to keep points B and C. He said that is a total of 10 parts worth 10 points each.

Mr. Burrell wanted to know what was wrong with the previous scoring system. Mr. Johnson said that some of the outcome requirements were redundant.

Mr. Hopkins commented that it is important to know what their in-kind contributions are available for an organization, because they request too much of their entire budget from the Parish. Mr. Johnson stated that some organizations have their value but it is not what they need. Mr. Hopkins asked for clarity on “in kind”. Mrs. Bryant explained that in kind is for organizations to state what they’re providing to the program that the grant does not cover. She said that it helps the Committee to decide on what they are funding. Mr. Hopkins stated that it’s important to “get a true feeling” and full picture on grant applicants.

Mr. Jackson pointed out a 200 point system and seemingly redundant questions could help small organizations by giving them “two shots” at the apple. He said that it helps them make up areas where they may be deficient. Mr. Jackson explained their goal is to know what an organization’s long term impact is on the community. Mr. Johnson responded that that is listed under Outcomes Point B. Mr. Jackson reiterated that a 200 point measure is friendlier to small and non-profit organizations.

Mr. Johnson stated that the point system does not dictate what score guarantees funding. Mr. Lazarus mentioned that the higher the number, the higher the probability of being funded. Mr. Johnson mentioned that the Committee cannot appropriate more than what an application requests. Mr. Hopkins stated that some organizations are afraid to ask for what they really need.

It was **moved by Mr. Epperson**, seconded by Mr. Gage-Watts, *to recess Appropriations Committee to a later date.* Motion carried by acclamation.

At this time, there was no further discussion to come before the Committee, so the meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.


Administrative Specialist I