

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CADDO PARISH COMMISSION'S
VETERAN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
ON THE 22ND OF SEPTEMBER, 2022

The Veteran Affairs Committee met in legal session on the above date at 2:30 p.m., in the Government Chambers Conference Room, with Commissioner Ken Epperson, Sr., presiding, and the following members in attendance, constituting a quorum: Commissioners Atkins, Burrell, Epperson, and Taliaferro (4). ABSENT: Commissioners Chavez and Jones (2).

Dr. Wilson gave the invocation, and Commissioner Taliaferro led the Committee into the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA ADDITIONS

- *Make Recommendations For Caddo Parish Recognition Of POWs And MIA.*

It was moved by Mr. Atkins, seconded by Mr. Taliaferro, *to expand the agenda and add Make Recommendations For Caddo Parish Recognition Of POWS And MIA under New Business.*

The Chair opened the floor for anyone to speak in favor or against the agenda addition. There being no one to speak, the Chair closed the public hearing.

Mr. Epperson requested for Administration to fly a POW/MIA Flag under each United States Flag that flies over any Parish facilities. Mr. Epperson requested to include an addendum under the Pledge of Allegiance agenda item to remember U.S. POW/MIA. Mr. Atkins wanted to know if Dr. Wilson is in agreement with the requests. Dr. Wilson agreed.

At this time, Mr. Atkins' motion carried, as shown by the following roll call votes: AYES: Commissioners Atkins, Burrell, Epperson, and Taliaferro (4). NAYS: None. ABSENT: Commissioners Chavez and Jones (2). ABSTAIN: None.

NEW BUSINESS

- *Make Discuss Grand Re-Opening of Caddo Parish Veterans Services Center*

Mr. Epperson hoped that the Parish is fully through the pandemic, because a lot things have been forgone in the last three years. He hoped to return into full swing of all Veterans committees and their respective functions. Mr. Epperson announced that repairs of the Veterans Service Office is near completion and there is a grand reopening schedule on October 14th at 10 a.m. He invited all veterans service, veterans on the Commission, and the Parish leadership to attend. Mr. Epperson said he would like to place Parish leadership and the Commission's veterans on the program. Mr. Epperson announced the guest will be Carl Joey Strickland, Secretary of the Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs, will attend to help with the ribbon cutting. Mr. Epperson said that the VFWs, all American Legion posts, all the DAV posts and all veterans organizations that worked with the Parish are going to be invited to the reopening of the facility.

Mr. Atkins wanted to know what happened to the center. Mr. Kevin Lawrence, Directory of Facilities and Maintenance, responded that Hurricane Laura destroyed the center almost two years ago.

Mr. Epperson stated that the address for the center is at 1031 Creswell Ave, adjacent to the Caddo Parish Health Unit. Mr. Epperson said the Committee will have a program and invite individuals to be on the program. He asked that everyone adjust their schedules accordingly. Mr. Atkins wanted to know the services provided at the facility. Mr. Epperson responded there are so many services including eligibility for benefits and DD 214s. He said that per the State Constitution, each Parish in Louisiana is responsible to provide a facility for veteran services. Mr. Epperson said that the Parish and the City of Shreveport fund the center. Dr. Wilson commented that the facility houses a veteran assistance center and a Caddo Parish drug counseling program through the District Court. Dr. Wilson explained that the District Court receives a grant from the Supreme Court to fund positions to provide adult counseling for drug abuse. Mr. Epperson urged the Committee to arrive early to the scheduled grand opening for a walk through of the Veterans Services Office.

- *Discuss Operation Green Light*

Mr. Epperson said that Operation Green Light is an initiative from the National Association of County Officials (NACO) for all of its associates and members to light up their municipal buildings, such as courthouses and main administration buildings, with green lights from November 7th through November 13th. Mr. Epperson requested that during the initiative all residents in Caddo Parish place green lighting on their front porches from October 1st through November 13th to recognize the sacrifices of the U.S. military and veterans on behalf of the nation. Mr. Epperson said that Amazon has sent green lights to every municipal member associated with NACO and that Home Depot, Lowes, and Walmart are supporting the green light initiative. Mr. Epperson announced that his neighborhood has already started placing green

lights on the main boulevard and there are several members with green lights in place. Mr. Epperson said he attended a Region 4 meeting that adopted a resolution sent to the Police Jury Association of Louisiana to make the initiative a statewide and a nationwide event. Mr. Epperson asked Mrs. Pam Atchinson to speak on lighting up the Bakowski Bridge with green lights.

Mrs. Pam Atchinson said that she is not in charge of the Bakowski Bridge of Lights. She explained that she is the facilitator at the command of the City of Bossier and the City of Shreveport and both entities are very excited to light the bridge for November 11th. Mrs. Atchinson said that she can control the Dalmatian and will light the dog to show the Shreveport Regional Art Council's participation. Mrs. Atchinson announced that the Caddo Common Park's pavilion is completed and that a veterans celebration is the reopening celebration for the park. She explained that the event is scheduled for November 11th starting at 5 p.m. She explained that there will be a Happy Hour on Texas Avenue and Great Raft Beer is sponsoring a free first beverage for all veterans. Mrs. Pam Atchinson said that during the celebration, the Parish Commission will be honored for its investment to get the tables, chairs and umbrellas in the park. Mrs. Atchinson said that the formal indoctrination of Veterans Day at the park will start at 6 pm. Mrs. Atchinson invited all Commissioners to the event at 6 pm to be honored. She said at 6:30 p.m. there will be an opening act about the value of Shreveport Common and Caddo Common Park by the Renzi Center students, at 6:45 p.m. there will be an opening act by the band Bond Plus, and from 7:30-9:30 p.m. there will be an opening headliner act by AJ Haynes and the Seratones. Mrs. Atchinson said that there will be a food truck court, an arts market and a collaboration of events happening on Texas Street. She expressed excitement to be a part of the Veterans Day weekend.

Mr. Epperson requested that the Committee collaborates on a joint press release with Mrs. Pam Atchinson to come out with a same message on the upcoming events.

- *Discuss Veterans Celebration Committee's Annual Parade & Honor Ceremony*

Mr. Epperson said that the Veterans Celebration Committee is in its 11th year sponsoring the annual Veterans Parade. He commended the volunteers and its well-maintained budget. Mr. Epperson said that the new administration at the Bossier Convention Center could not accommodate the Honor Ceremony this year. He explained that the Honor Ceremony has always been held the day before the parade and the parade is always held on the last day of the Louisiana State Fair. Mr. Epperson further explained that the previous Veterans Day Parade was one of the largest attendances the State Fair had during its history. Mr. Epperson said that liability and costs are minimized hosting the Veterans Day Parade with the Louisiana State Fair. Mr. Epperson said that participants come from Mississippi, Southern Arkansas, and East Texas. Mr. Epperson said that the Northwest Louisiana Veterans home are included in the parade. He also said that there are special trams to accommodate handicap or other debilitating features to enjoy the parade. Mr. Epperson stated that all veterans and military receive free parking and free entry on Sunday without identification. He encouraged veterans and military to wear apparel showing which branch they served in.

Mr. Epperson said that the Honor Ceremony begins at 5:00 p.m. at the Shreveport Municipal Auditorium. He mentioned that the venue was built in honor of World War II veterans. Mr. Atkins commented that the Shreveport Municipal Auditorium is a warmer, cozier environment than the Bossier Civic Center. Mr. Epperson said that security is provided inside and outside in the parking lot.

Mr. Epperson said that the Colonel DePyssler Award is awarded to any individual or business (for profit or non-profit) that does things on behalf of the U.S. military and veterans and go beyond the call of duty. He explained that the deadline for nominations is October 8th and that there are 11 nominees. Mr. Epperson said that the Colonel DePyssler family allows the use of Colonel's name for his great history of military service. Mr. Epperson mentioned that Colonel DePyssler held every enlisted rank, served in three major wars and was the only person to have a facility on a military base in the United States while they were alive. Mr. Atkins wanted to know the year that Colonel DePyssler retired from the Air Force. Mr. Epperson responded that it may have been in the 1980's.

Mr. Epperson stated that sponsors and advertisements is how costs are deflated, so that veterans or participants have no costs for the event. Mr. Epperson requested for ads from different businesses and entities and that ads are apolitical and should honor veterans. Mr. Epperson encouraged that the recommended Greenwood business from Mr. Taliaferro be provided an ad request. Mr. Epperson said that they print about seven to eight-hundred program books. Mr. Epperson suggested Dr. Wilson consider any Parish employees to be nominated for the Colonel DePyssler award. Mr. Epperson announced that the guest speaker at the Veterans Honor Ceremony will be Don Pearson, a United States Army veteran and the Secretary of the Louisiana Department of Economic Development. Mr. Epperson announced that the Grand Marshal for the Veteran's Parade will be Lieutenant Colonel Ebony C. Carter, a Northwest Louisiana graduate and in active duty with the Louisiana National Guard.

- *Make Recommendations For Caddo Parish Recognition Of POWs And MIA.*

Mr. Epperson said that the POW MIA was commissioned by the President of the United States to do something to remember POWs and MIAs and that it is the only flag that has been authorized to fly under the U.S. flag. He explained that there are still unidentified remains of persons that was on the

battlefield without identification and the U.S. has never given up on them. Mr. Epperson recalled during his tenure at a cemetery, there was a marine that was killed in 1943 and they had found out that the deceased marine was a native of Vivian. Mr. Epperson said that there are still POWs behind enemy lines today. Mr. Atkins wanted to know what language would be used on the agenda. Mr. Epperson suggested it say remember our POWs and MIAs. Mr. Epperson said that he suggested the same during the Police Jury Regional meeting as well and suggested the Parish use what the Police Jury adopts. Mr. Epperson said that the first additional steering committee that was implemented 85 years after the Police Jury was called the Military and Veteran Steering Committee of Caddo Parish.

Dr. Wilson wanted to know if a date for the joint press conference has been selected. Mr. Epperson said no and that they will get together on that.

It was moved by Mr. Atkins, seconded by Mr. Taliaferro, *to recommend to the full body an additional recognition of POW-MIAs.* Motion passed by acclamation.

There being no further discussion the meeting was adjourned at 3:05 p.m.



Linda J. Montgomery
Administrative Specialist I