

## **LAFAYETTE PARISH COUNCIL**

### **CITY-PARISH ALIGNMENT (CPA) COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES**

**Wednesday, November 10, 2021; 9:00 a.m.**

**Lafayette City-Parish Hall, 705 West University Avenue, Council Auditorium, Lafayette, Louisiana**

**Commission Members present:** Joseph “Bobby” Richard (Chair – Parish District 3), Purvis Morrison (Vice Chair – Area Mayors appointee), Bryan Tabor (Parish Council), Nanette Cook (City Council), Kevin Naquin (Parish District 2), Paul Eason (Parish District 4), William Thiele (Parish District 5), and Timothy Breaux (Mayor-President appointee)

**Commission Members absent:** Charles “Buddy” Schilling, II (Parish District 1)

**Council staff members in attendance:** Veronica L. Williams (Clerk of the Council) and Joseph Gordon-Wiltz (Assistant Clerk)

#### 1. Call to order

CPA Commission Chair Bobby Richard called the meeting of the City-Parish Alignment (CPA) Commission to order at 9:03 a.m.

#### 2. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Richard recognized Pastor Josh Kines of Parish Church to offer the invocation and Commissioner Paul Eason to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

#### 3. Chair Announcements

Chair Richard provided opening statements, welcoming everyone to the CPA Commission meeting. He summarized a letter that he drafted to the Commissioners, thanking them for their selection of him as Commission Chair and sharing his vision for the Commission, particularly his hope that any individual, preconceived biases will evolve into a singular bias and collective findings of the Commission.

Commissioner William Thiele offered dialogue on his proposal for an independent Commission website for ease of access to Commission documents and meeting information. Chair Richard explained that the website would be permitted, but Commissioner Thiele would maintain it purely with the public records of the Commission. Commissioner Bryan Tabor expressed his support of the website, provided that it simply contains unbiased information and public records relative to the Commission, which Chair Richard echoed.

#### 4. Protect the City (PTC) Committee Final Report

Chair Richard recognized PTC Committee Chair Jan Swift for opening statements on the PTC Final Report. She began her comments by giving an overview of her history as a citizen of Lafayette leading up to her appointment to the PTC Committee. Chair Swift gave a quick summary of the PTC Final Report in that the Committee felt that deconsolidation would best serve the

interests of the City of Lafayette; the City of Lafayette needs its own mayor; there should be the establishment of separate operating accounts for the City, for the Parish, and for allocated expenses; the City and the Parish should enter intergovernmental agreements to clarify work performed; and, with recent controversies, the police chief for the City of Lafayette should be elected. She highlighted that the City of Lafayette lacks its own autonomy, notably by the fact that residents of other municipalities have input in the election of Lafayette's mayor. Chair Swift reviewed the Committee's observations that the City of Lafayette often bears the burden of City-Parish cost allocations from administration to administration. She stated that the PTC Committee, in its report, recommended that the City Council and the Parish Council convene a Charter Commission to study deconsolidation and present a plan to return self-governance to the City of Lafayette. Chair Swift also emphasized that the Parish, too, deserves certain protections and that it requires its own sufficient resources. She stated that a solution could be found through functional consolidation of services. Chair Swift shared a variety of ideas on how the executive branch could be overseen in a functional consolidation scenario.

Commissioner Tabor questioned whether the PTC Committee determined the cost of deconsolidation to the City (he signaled the potential for tax increases), to which Chair Swift responded that this was difficult to ascertain because the PTC Committee was unable to obtain a lot of information it sought, so she indicated that it is unknown as to whether tax increases will result. Chair Swift acknowledged Committee members (both in attendance and not in attendance) Tag Catalon (Vice Chair), Stuart Breaux, Mark Pope, Bill Leyendecker, Roddy Bergeron, and Tina Shelvin Bingham.

Commissioner Kevin Naquin opined that consolidation may not be as bad as many think it is and encouraged the review of how the City of Lafayette has benefitted from consolidation. He agreed that the City of Lafayette needs autonomy in the sense of its own elected mayor and elected police chief. Commissioner Naquin cautioned that deconsolidation may result in increased property taxes. Chair Richard questioned whether the PTC Committee considered the benefits of consolidation to the City, to which Chair Swift responded that the Committee simply answered the questions posed by resolution. PTC Committee Member Stuart Breaux stated that the conclusions of the PTC Committee indicate that the City of Lafayette did not benefit from consolidation. Commissioner Nanette Cook expressed her support for functional consolidation with emphasis on tracking expenditures and intergovernmental agreements. She added that she feels that the City of Lafayette did benefit from consolidation in certain areas, such as through Public Works.

Commissioner Thiele noted previous discussion points that deconsolidation may result in raising taxes in the City of Lafayette and questioned whether the City Council would simply be able to pass a resolution to denounce the use of non-dedicated tax revenue allocation formula in order to fix the allocation formula issue in the current form of government, to which Chair Swift responded in the affirmative and added that it would balance budget negotiations between the City and the Parish. Commissioner Thiele questioned whether the legal ramifications for consolidation on the basis of the election of the Mayor-President had been studied by the PTC Committee, particularly in a situation where more of the electorate for the mayor of Lafayette resides outside of its city limits, to which Chair Swift responded in the negative.

CPA Commission Vice Chair Purvis Morrison noted that it is difficult to factor the citizens of the smaller municipalities into Parish considerations and that the goal should be to pinpoint the needs and the struggles of those citizens purely within the unincorporated areas of the Parish. He clarified that when it is stated that the Parish has outgrown the City, it considers the growth of the combination of the smaller municipalities and the unincorporated areas. Vice Chair Morrison stated that these factors must be considered for protecting the interests of the unincorporated areas.

Commissioner Naquin added that the potential for increased taxes extends beyond issues such as roads and drainage to include courthouse and jail needs at the Parish level. Commissioner Timothy Breaux questioned whether the constitutionality of consolidation has ever been challenged; he stated that the need for a mayor for the City of Lafayette is being met with the Mayor-President's position; and that the citizens will ultimately make the decisions on the future of Lafayette's government, with the PTC Committee and the CPA Commission having been tasked only with making recommendations.

#### 5. Dissenting Opinion on the PTC Final Report

Chair Richard recognized PTC Committee Member Mark Pope for opening statements on his dissenting opinion on the PTC Final Report. Mr. Pope provided his professional background, highlighting his work in public service. He shared his observations on the LCG budget and its funding sources between the City and the Parish. Mr. Pope opined that the findings of the PTC Committee may have been predetermined, citing a fellow Committee member's comments at the first meeting that indicated support for recommending deconsolidation. He also cited other statements of Committee members and/or guests that were refuted, such as the allegation that there was a moratorium on annexations at the start of consolidation, with which Mr. Pope disagreed and stated that a current administration official corrected on record. He pointed out other flaws that he perceived in the wording of certain questions posed to the Committee and that no examples could be found of City dollars being spent in the Parish. Mr. Pope noted efficiencies in consolidation, such as eliminating the duplication of services. He stated that there was no internal discussion among the Committee members on the final report; rather, he stated that it was crafted by only three (3) Committee members on the Drafting Subcommittee. He recalled instances whereby the Parish was asked to fund certain City functions, such as for aspects of the Heymann Performing Arts & Convention Center and golf courses operations. Mr. Pope rejected former City-Parish President Joey Durel's assertion that the Parish was not paying its fair share of LCG operations. He stated that Kevin Blanchard and Carlee Alm-LaBar employed various strategies, including the Delphi method, then the development of Plan Lafayette, Project Front Yard, sustainability models, etc., all of which culminated in the implementation of Fix the Charter.

Commissioner Cook explained that there had been City park millage funding going into the Parish, but efforts were made in recent years to correct that issue. She added that the current administration streamlined the absorption of the Community Development Department (which Mr. Pope previously stated was solely a City function prior to consolidation) into the new Parks, Arts, Recreation & Culture Department and the new Community Development & Planning Department. She stated that these were also measures taken toward corrective action for more appropriate tracking of City and Parish spending.

Commissioner Thiele asked Mr. Pope whether he is in favor of the City of Lafayette electing its own mayor, to which Mr. Pope responded that he is interested in that idea being explored because of the potential for there being more people residing outside of the City of Lafayette electing its mayor. Commissioner Morrison clarified Mr. Pope's statements about LUS extending service into the City of Scott and explained that the measure was voted down. Commissioner Cook supported the merits of the PTC Committee resolution question that addressed protection of the City-owned utility system by explaining situations whereby LUS extends service to the unincorporated areas or other municipalities and the need to ensure the viability of the LUS asset in the interest of the City of Lafayette, whose residents own LUS. Mr. Pope concluded by emphasizing that not many, if any, of the 14 questions posed to the PTC Committee were discussed at length among the Committee. Commissioner Naquin asked his colleagues to think about whether these deliberations would be occurring had a different Mayor-President been elected. Commissioner Cook responded by stating that she believes there would still be conversations geared toward improving the way City Council members and Parish Council members could best represent their constituents and how taxpayer dollars are spent. Commissioner Thiele recalled campaigning for Fix the Charter and being asked the reason why the Mayor-President's position was not being split as was being proposed for the then-City-Parish Council.

#### 6. Comments from the Public

Chair Richard recognized the single speaker who requested to address the CPA Commission, Mr. Bill Leyendecker. Mr. Leyendecker stated that, as a City resident, he would gladly pay more taxes to have more autonomy. He added that it does not matter who is leading the administration, but he just wants to have the same privileges as the residents of other municipalities in the Parish do. Mr. Leyendecker stated that the City of Lafayette deserves to have a Council that is free from influence from outside of the City and the City of Lafayette needs its own separate and distinct legal department, as well as being able to elect its own police chief. He asked the CPA Commissioners to deliver these things by offering their support in any final recommendations.

#### 7. Discussion on Next Meeting Agenda and Forecasted Agenda

Chair Richard announced that the next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 8, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. The Commissioners discussed seeking the history involving the Fix the Charter campaign, so it was recommended that an invitation be extended to Kevin Blanchard and Carlee Alm-LaBar. Commissioners also indicated the benefit of hearing from previous Charter Commission members and seeking information on how the current government is operating from the LCG administration and Legal Department, along with CFO Lorrie Toups and auditors to provide information on the finances, cost allocations, etc. It was decided that the next meeting will feature discussions with Kevin Blanchard & Carlee Alm-LaBar on Fix the Charter and Glenn Weber on the original consolidation.

#### 8. Adjourn

Chair Richard declared the meeting adjourned at 11:09 a.m.