

**LAFAYETTE PARISH COUNCIL**

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

**Wednesday, January 12, 2022; 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 9:01 a.m.

2. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Richard offered the invocation and called on Commissioner Will Thiele to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Chair Announcements

Chair Richard provided opening statements, welcoming everyone to the CPA Commission meeting. He noted that Commissioner Buddy Schilling would not be in attendance for today’s meeting.

Commissioner William Thiele gave a brief update on the independent CPA Commission website, stating that the website has garnered 520 visitors. He stated that he continues to regularly update the website and that it remains politically neutral.

4. “How Does Government Charter Work?”

Chair Richard recognized LCG Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) Cydra Wingerter for opening statements on the how the LCG Home Rule Charter work. CAO Wingerter began her comments by giving her experience in the past three (3) administrations to include City-Parish President Joey Durel, Mayor-President Joel Robideaux, and, currently, Mayor-President Josh Guillory, along with her personal background and sentiments of her love for Lafayette. She gave history on consolidation, initially discussing the formation of this form of government and opining that the City of Lafayette has benefitted from consolidation more than the Parish of Lafayette has. She emphasized that the people of the City and the Parish overwhelmingly supported this measure and compared it to a marriage. CAO Wingerter offered a number of analogies to demonstrate that the

Parish of Lafayette has not been sustained at the expense of the City of Lafayette. She acknowledged that the journey that the City and the Parish has taken together over the past 30 years has had its challenges, but warned of the potential detriments that the City would face should deconsolidation materialize. She stressed that political disagreements are not reasons to advance deconsolidation efforts. CAO Wingerter reminded the Commission that the 1992 vote for consolidation took place during a high turnout Presidential election and pointed out that deconsolidation attempts since that time have been unsuccessful. She described the concerns of former Mayor-President Robideaux in that there could have been better ways to approach the “Fix the Charter” amendments, which prompted his formation of a Charter transition committee. This committee concluded that better communication between the City and the Parish officials would yield the best outcomes. Additionally, the committee recognized that the power lies within the two (2) Councils to make decisions to bring forth measures to the people when deciding changes and to arrive at consensus. CAO Wingerter emphasized that understanding that everyone will not always get their way is critical when working within the current form of government and that the City and the Parish are better together. Regarding the City of Lafayette having its own mayor, she stated that this is politically driven and has nothing to do with reality or historical fact. She added that if deconsolidation was passed by the voters, proponents for deconsolidation would still remain unsatisfied because it is likely that Mayor-President Josh Guillory would be successful at being elected Mayor of the City of Lafayette. She reminded the Commissioners about Robert Benoit’s statements during the last Commission meeting that a single Mayor-President would be most effective at securing funding and other benefits from the state and federal governments, noting that Commissioner Tim Breaux contributed to this perspective, which is supported by his many years of relevant consolidated government experience. CAO Wingerter highlighted various growth and improvement metrics of the City of Lafayette and the various declination in Parish of Lafayette metrics over the course of consolidation, so the Parish has not flourished at the expense of the City. She offered many more examples of the negative potential aspects of deconsolidation, notably that having shared expenses between the City and the Parish is mutually beneficial to each entity. She stated that the City Council, the Parish Council, and the administration agree on over 95% of the issues faced by Lafayette Consolidated Government.

Commissioner Bryan Tabor pointed out that a great percentage of the Parish millage for roads go to the City of Lafayette. He thanked CAO Wingerter for her presentation. Vice Chair Purvis Morrison questioned the time and effort put toward benefiting the Parish, particularly the unincorporated areas. CAO Wingerter stated that the relationship between the Mayor-President and the Parish mayors is a lot healthier and more robust than it had been in previous years and a better job has been done toward that type of cooperation, all of which has contributed to the growth of effort toward planning for the unincorporated areas. Vice Chair Morrison pointed out that if the population of the unincorporated areas are factored in to the acquisition of grant dollars, then that population should be reaping the benefits of those dollars, to which CAO Wingerter responded that there are efforts underway to identify various needs of the unincorporated areas, such as temporary rental assistance grant funding and other benefits. Vice Chair Morrison also identified the difference in retirement systems between what would become Parish employees and what would become City employees, in that new-hires on the Parish side would go into the Parochial Employees Retirement System (PERS) and new-hires on the City side would go into the Municipal Employees Retirement System (MERS). It was also acknowledged that with deconsolidation, the

City of Lafayette would not have influence over the expenditure of Parish millage funds in the areas of roads and drainage.

Commissioner Thiele questioned whether the City gets 80% of the benefits of consolidation in correlation to its contribution, to which CAO Wingerter explained that she and the various departments of LCG would not be able to demonstrate that, but time and effort is spent in the areas where the money is being spent. Commissioner Thiele questioned whether work efforts throughout LCG have changed between administrations in her experience, to which she responded that each Mayor-President have had philosophical differences in how they determined allocations, all which have been acceptable practices.

Chair Richard questioned whether her experience in the current form of government requires any changes in the Charter, to which CAO Wingerter responded that changes are not required and that communication needs to be enhanced and it must be understood that everyone will not always get what they want. Chair Richard sought clarification on adjusting allocations during the budget process and instances when it appears to be prohibited being more of an issue with timelines for adoption of the budget, which CAO Wingerter confirmed. Commissioner Nanette Cook opined that the issue of deconsolidation is not so much of a concern of hers, as much as representation and citizens of the City of Lafayette being able to vote for its own mayor. She noted that in recent reports, the City of Lafayette has grown in a lesser percentage than the other Parish municipalities, which concerns her. CAO Wingerter stated that she is unaware of a scenario where having two (2) executives would work because of the possibility of divergent directions between a mayor and a Parish president, which Commissioner Cook acknowledged, but noted that a conflict still exists within one person making decisions on what happens in the City and/or what happens in the Parish. Commissioner Cook expressed concern about spending City dollars outside of the City of Lafayette, using the former methods of Parks and Recreation spending, and noted that this example created mistrust in the public's perception that this is occurring and she expressed confidence that this is not happening currently. Commissioner Timothy Breaux gave an example that if not for consolidation, a population of people in his experience who needed fresh drinking water in the Indian Bayou area would not have been able to be as effectively served because of the lack of dollars and influence that would have existed under a deconsolidation scenario. He stated that this is one of many examples of the effectiveness of consolidation.

Commissioner Thiele opined that the Parish has more control over its operations since the Charter amendments, to which Commissioner Kevin Naquin responded that it gave Parish voters proper representation. Chair Richard noted that the creation of a separate Parish Council allowed for the forfeiture of the City of Lafayette's control over Parish issues, to which CAO Wingerter agreed. Commissioner Thiele stated that the Charter amendments improved the relationship between the City and the Parish, to which CAO Wingerter responded that it simply provided a fresh perspective on operating the separate entities, but there was no impact on the relationship and that, despite the issues realized during the first budget process, communication is the most critical concern. Commissioner Thiele questioned whether a repeal of the recent Charter amendments would benefit the Parish, to which CAO Wingerter responded that she does not know because she does not foresee this happening. Vice Chair Morrison stated that a Parish executive could direct those employees in consolidated departments based on those employees that are paid with funding from

Parish millages and funding sources. Commissioner Cook stated that with further conversations, that type of structure could possibly work. She added that the Charter amendments has forced the City and Parish Councils to be more respectful of each other's respective funds and the uses thereof and that joint functions should be closely examined. Commissioner Naquin acknowledged the overwhelming agreement that deconsolidation should not move forward, but the pros and cons should be identified of what the future of LCG would look like and proper education of the public is important. He expressed concern that there may not be enough public involvement in these processes so that everyone understands the functions of each branch of government and how everything impacts the public. Commissioner Paul Eason expressed his disagreement with having a mayor for the City of Lafayette and questioned how representation is lacking with the position of the Mayor-President, to which CAO Wingerter responded that the administration has not received public feedback expressing a lack in representation from either City or Parish constituents. Commissioner Eason stated that it is the Mayor-President's responsibility to work with all constituencies within the Parish, so he has to know how to pivot in serving all, which he feels as though the current Mayor-President is adequately accomplishing.

Commissioner Cook stated her concern that, looking to the future, there may be the possibility of a resident of another municipality being elected as Mayor-President, but notably as mayor of the City of Lafayette. CAO Wingerter stated that its difficult to imagine a scenario where a resident of another municipality would be elected as Mayor-President because City of Lafayette residents would more than likely turn out to vote in opposition to that. Commissioner Thiele opined that since the Mayor-President's position is funded 80% by the City of Lafayette, then his time and effort should be 80% dedicated to the City of Lafayette, to which CAO Wingerter responded that the Mayor-President works well in excess of 40 hours per week and he ensures that City and Parish residents get an equal amount of his attention to their concerns and issues. Commissioner Thiele questioned whether the administration would be able to convince the public that the products of governmental functions are in alignment with allocations, to which CAO Wingerter responded that this may not be accomplished because of some citizens' preconceived notions to the contrary. Mr. Benoit reminded the Commission that less than 5% of the government has an allocation formula, yet 90% of arguments are regarding the City-Parish allocation.

Chair Richard thanked CAO Wingerter for her participation and presentation. CAO Wingerter thanked the Commission for their involvement in the CPA Commission process.

## 5. Comments from the Public

Chair Richard recognized the speakers who requested to address the CPA Commission.

- **Bill Leyendecker** addressed the Commission stated that if we acknowledge that the system is very complex, then it should be simplified. He added that he has attempted for eight (8) months through his Council representative(s) to get a meeting with the Mayor-President, but he has not been able to do so. Mr. Leyendecker stated that functional consolidation should be examined. He questioned whether there will be town hall meetings of the CPA Commissioners, to which Council Clerk Veronica Williams responded in the affirmative. Mr. Leyendecker encouraged subcommittees of the CPA Commission in order to get in-depth knowledge of LCG.

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

Chair Richard announced that the next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday February 9, 2022 at 9:00 a.m. He acknowledged that there are only three (3) additional meetings allotted for the Commission and he would like to hear from CFO Toups (February meeting), then from the Legal Department, with which Commissioners agreed. Chair Richard asked the Commissioners to think about the tangible matters, such as what constitutes a City issue, a Parish issue, or a joint issue, as well as what determines the allocation process and how these processes could be communicated transparently and simply for citizens. Regarding subcommittees, the Commission agreed that once all information being sought is collected, it could be determined later as to whether subcommittees will be necessary. It was agreed that the Commissioners would begin answering questions posed by the Parish Council's resolution individually and report their responses to Chair Richard.

## 7. Adjourn

Chair Richard declared the meeting adjourned at 11:22 a.m.