

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

**Wednesday, December 8, 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), 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:** Purvis Morrison (Vice Chair – Area Mayors appointee) and 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 9:02 a.m.

2. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Richard offered the invocation and Commissioner Nanette Cook to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Chair Announcements

Chair Richard provided opening statements, welcoming everyone to the CPA Commission meeting. He noted that Commission Vice Chair Purvis Morrison and 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 is being utilized with nearly 400 visitors, many of which are accessing the website from the link on the Parish Council’s webpage.

Chair Richard acknowledged the significance of the work that is underway by the Commission and that important questions must be asked throughout this analysis. He asked his fellow Commissioners to think about the various potential impacts of complete deconsolidation, as well as to consider the current structure of government, all of which are complex issues.

4. Fix the Charter

Chair Richard recognized Kevin Blanchard for opening statements on the Fix the Charter. Mr. Blanchard shared his professional background leading up to the Fix the Charter campaign. He offered a presentation on Fix the Charter and gave commentary on the campaign and its implementation.

Commissioner Kevin Naquin noted that the Future Needs/Funding Sources Committee that he formed during his first term on the City-Parish Council presented its findings and recommendations on addressing Parish needs, but their guidance fell on deaf ears. He expressed his support for functional consolidation and that intergovernmental agreements are the way to help accomplish that. Commissioner Naquin stated that he is not in favor of the government being blown apart. Commissioner Bryan Tabor indicated his desire to iron out the issue of allocated costs. He asked Mr. Blanchard whether “functional consolidation” is an official term for describing the type of government that is often described. Mr. Blanchard responded that there are so many examples of local government consolidated functions.

Commissioner Thiele recalled when City employees of the Parks & Recreation Department were laid off and the City Council, depending on the Parish Council in joint session, could not take measures to appropriate funding to address that issue due to the lack of seconding a motion on the Parish Council. He stated that such conflicts between the Councils are adjudicated by the City-Parish Attorney, when the City Council should be entitled to their own legal representation and interpretation. Mr. Blanchard responded that these types of conflicts have historically be brought before each City-Parish Attorney, even when there was a consolidated council. Commissioner Thiele asked whether deconsolidation would benefit the citizens, to which Mr. Blanchard responded in the negative. Chair Richard questioned the merits of the City Council having its own legal counsel, to which Mr. Blanchard responded that any separate legal counsel for the City Council would have to be for a specific purpose, pursuant to the Home Rule Charter, and could not be for general matters. Commissioner Naquin apologized on behalf of the Parish Council for the instance of it not moving to appropriate funding for the Parks & Recreation employees and he stated that the Parish Council has realized that this should not happen. He stated that either Council should not get in each other’s way should they wish to spend money on matters that they deem as priorities and echoed that intergovernmental agreements would aid in addressing the concerns with allocated costs.

Commissioner Cook expressed her support for functional ways to operate City and Parish governments under the same umbrella; however, she stated that certain protections need to be put in place for both entities so that there is a clear understanding of who is responsible for what. She added that there are several issues that would have to be addressed, but everything could be improved incrementally. She asked her fellow Commissioners to consider that. Commissioner Paul Eason and Commissioner Timothy Breaux thanked Mr. Blanchard for his presentation. Commissioner Breaux indicated his support for intergovernmental agreements and legal counsel for the City Council.

#### 5. The 1992 Lafayette City-Parish Consolidated Government Home Rule Charter

Chair Richard recognized Mayor-President Josh Guillory’s Chief of Staff Robert Benoit for opening statements on the 1992 Lafayette City-Parish Consolidated Government Home Rule Charter. Mr. Benoit provided his professional background leading up to his position within the Guillory administration, followed by his presentation to the Commission on the subject matter requested of him.

Chair Richard questioned whether consolidation is working, to which Mr. Benoit responded in the affirmative. Commissioner Cook asked for the reason why the other municipalities in Lafayette Parish did not opt into consolidation, to which Mr. Benoit responded that the municipalities wished to maintain their own autonomy. Commissioner Cook requested annexation data for the other municipalities in Lafayette Parish, which Mr. Benoit agreed to provide. Chair Richard asked Mr. Benoit for his thoughts on a single administration versus separate administrations in terms of leverage in getting funding and resources from the state and federal governments, to which Mr. Benoit responded that a single Mayor-President who could articulate the needs for the City and the Parish is better effective. Commissioner Cook noted that the representation of the Mayor-President is conceivably split between the Parish and the City with one individual, when other municipalities get double the representation with their own Mayors. Commissioner Thiele questioned whether the effectiveness of consolidated representation in a Mayor-President wouldn't result in the other municipalities jumping on the consolidation bandwagon. Commissioner Breaux pointed out that benefits of consolidation not only come in from the state level, but also from the federal government. Commissioner Thiele observed that consolidation tends to work well when the city within that particular parish/county is overwhelmingly accounts for the population of that parish/county. Mr. Benoit stated that consolidation may not have saved as much money as originally conceptualized; however, it resulted in a lot of efficiencies. Commissioner Tabor disagreed with the argument on the Mayor-President's representation. He reasoned that it may be more difficult to get the volume of grants with deconsolidation, with which Mr. Benoit agreed.

Commissioner Naquin questioned how consolidation remains intact and splitting the Mayor-President's position, to which Chair Richard responded that this would look like another form of deconsolidation. Commissioner Breaux noted that, although consolidation did not result in as much savings as anticipated, there were other factors that resulted in a positive net effect following consolidation. Commissioner Cook expressed her dissatisfaction with citizens outside of the City of Lafayette voting on its mayor. Commissioner Thiele stated that the most important issue at hand in this matter is democracy and that the City of Lafayette residents being able to vote for its own mayor is very critical. Commissioner Naquin agreed, but emphasized that other issues with the Charter must also be addressed as part of the equation. Commissioner Eason questioned whether there were missed opportunities with fairness as it relates to the current structure of government, particularly with the Mayor-President position. He opined that he is content with the way things are. Commissioner Breaux stated that if the people are not satisfied with a particular Mayor-President, then they could always vote that person out of office. He felt as though there are hidden agendas with respect to singling out the current Mayor-President for the job he's doing. Commissioner Cook clarified that her motivation is simply to ensure better representation for voters of residents in the City of Lafayette being represented by someone who lives within the same environment, along with tweaking the current form of government without deconsolidation. Commissioner Thiele stated that wanting a mayor for the City of Lafayette is not an attack on the current Mayor-President or the administration. He also noted that during KATC's Mayor-President candidate forum, all candidates agreed that the Mayor-President role should be split between a Mayor for the City of Lafayette and a Parish President. Commissioner Breaux responded that the voters would have to make that decision. Chair Richard reminded everyone that Mayor-President Josh Guillory wrote in his response to the Protect the City Committee that his position on splitting

the Mayor-President's position has changed. Commissioner Eason agreed and added that with the current Mayor-President and the mayors from the municipalities in the Parish, things are going well. A discussion ensued about what the role of a Parish executive would entail, along with the concern of that position's role being diminished.

#### 6. Comments from the Public

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

- **Ted Richard** addressed the Commission about representation of the unincorporated areas not being as strengthened as those who live in municipalities, the costs of operating the Parish jail, and that the City and Parish would not have the influx of funding currently being experienced had it not been for COVID-19.
- **Geoff Daily** addressed the Commission to give perspective on his opinion that the Mayor-President's position should be split between a mayor and a parish executive.
- **James Colvin** addressed the Commission to express his support for splitting the Mayor-President's position between a mayor and a parish executive.

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

Chair Richard announced that the next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 12, 2022 at 9:00 a.m. Commissioner Naquin stated that a discussion on Charter interpretation would be beneficial, particularly as it relates to intergovernmental agreements and the City of Lafayette having its own attorney. The Commission agreed that CFO Lorrie Toups would be a good resource for the discussion on the intergovernmental agreements and the Legal Department would be a good resource for the discussion of a City attorney. Comments were made for the possible invitation of CAO Cydra Wingerter for discussion on the LCG operations. Commissioner Breaux suggested inviting Steve Dupuis or Mike Hebert, since they were the attorneys involved with the original consolidation.

#### 8. Adjourn

Chair Richard declared the meeting adjourned at 12:09 p.m.