

AMERICAN RESCUE TASK FORCE MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, October 28, 2021

Task Force Meeting 2 Minutes- Thursday October 28, 2021 at the Joseph Yenni Building—Room 405—9:00 a.m.

Committee Members in Attendance

Mike Quigley
Angela Callais
Francisco Christian
Bob Evans Jr.
Brian Grenrod
John Litchfield
Jim Martin
Oscar Pipkin
Jim Young

Committee Members Absent

Steve LaChute
Victor LaRocca
Brett Lawson
Ruth Lawson
Pamela Watson

Seeing that there was a quorum of task force members, Chairman Mike Quigley called the meeting to order:

1. Approval of Minutes:

The Chairman advised the task force that their needed to be a technical addition to the minutes whereby the attendance at the meeting needed to be included. It was moved by Brian Grenrod and seconded by Bob Evans that the Minutes for the October 7, 2021 meeting be approved. The minutes were unanimously approved by the committee.

2. Change the Order of Business:

Chairman Mike Quigley proposed to change the order of business to allow Parish President Cynthia Lee Sheng to make her presentation. The Task force approved this change. All of the administrations speakers were supported by a PowerPoint Presentation attached to these minutes.

- Parish Finance Director Tim Palmatier initiated the Administrations presentation by thanking and congratulating his team for drafting and proposing the Jefferson Parish Budget for FY 2022.
- Parish Accounting Director Madison Martin provided an informative overview of the Parish Budget. He advised that the Parish has consistently won awards for its budget and conforms to Governmental Accounting Standard Practices and is prepared to conform to all federal regulations in regard to these funds. Subsequently, Mr. Martin has submitted the Jefferson Parish Performance report on the State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (or Local Fiscal Recovery Funds). The report is also located on the Parish website, as required by the Treasury Department on the Finance webpage ([Finance \(jeffparish.net\)](http://jeffparish.net)). The report is very bare bones as it was a required report despite the fact that no funds have been budgeted. Additionally, the lost revenue calculation was updated after this report was issued, and is no longer accurate. The lost revenue estimate was required to be in the report even though no funds have been allocated for this purpose. He has also submitted the latest guidance from the Treasury Department which can be found on line at [Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds | U.S. Department of the Treasury](https://www.treasury.gov/press-releases/Pages/20210811) . He has also provided two high level summary type documents which are the Fact Sheet and the FAQ, he advises that the Fact Sheet lacks a lot of important details and he Interim Rule is a bit cumbersome and the SLFRF Compliance and Reporting Guidance isn't necessarily applicable to the taskforce discussions, but it does have some useful information on allowable expenditure categories in Appendix 1. All of Mr. Martin's subsequent information is attached to these minutes.
- Philip Rebowe of the Professional Accounting Corporation, Postlethwaite and Netterville addressed the committee. This firm has been engaged by the Parish to offer guidance on the American Rescue Plan Act. He outlined the total allocations for the Parish entities, the strategies for what needs to be done, allowable and unallowable uses and conforming to all compliance requirements. *As part of compliance, reports of plans and expenditures are required; and as a result the first initial report was submitted in August of 2021 which is attached hereto. Furthermore he advised that there is a U.S. Senate bill that may give additional guidance and expand the use of the funds, especially emergency relief for natural disasters (Ida). More information will follow once passed. Mr. Rebowe's presentation elicited some conversation in regard to premium pay. There are ethical and constitutional issues in regard to retroactive payments to public employees. Oscar Pippen was interested in the allowable use of the funds being providing services to disproportionately impacted communities. The Chairman advised that considering this was in the task force purview and can be submitted to the council as a recommendation.
- Parish President Cynthia Lee Sheng addressed the task force. Her opening remarks emphasized that this is a great one time opportunity for the Parish to have a substantial amount of money to invest in our communities. She

emphasized that we should invest in projects that ultimately pay for themselves. She presented 5 main categories of priorities and recommendations as follows:

- ❖ **Connectivity to Lafitte and Grand Isle** — It is the opinion that the future Grand Isle will be changed or different due to Ida. Because of more stringent building codes, properties will be enhanced to the point it may become a tourist destination. This could become a game changer and enhancing the mode of travel to and from the island is being proposed. Lafitte and Grand Isle have never been thought of together and having an opportunity to travel by boat from both of these locales will give them a much needed boost. The Parish President concluded this part of the presentation by saying such tourist destinations like 30-A started with a plan and feels that connecting Lafitte and Grand Isle with a boat feature is a first step in a plan to make them tourist destinations. In addition, ARP monies would be used to fund feasibility studies and/or plans in making Grand Isle and Lafitte more pedestrian friendly areas, including paths for golf carts and bicycle traffic.

- ❖ **Natorium as a Component of a Sports Complex**—Parish President Sheng touted the new sports complex being built in Avondale and the new soccer complex at Lafreniere Park as examples of sports destinations that Jefferson Parish has been needing for years. She alluded to going to out of town venues and seeing many Jefferson Parish participants/ teams and wondering why we didn't have such venues. This will be an opportunity to enhance these new facilities and bring our ability to attract sporting tournaments and events to the next level. Francisco Christian interjected that he was aware of lack of competition sized pools in our area and we have missed out on some good events, such as a USA Water Polo Tournament.

- ❖ **Creation of Jefferson Parish Health Department**—The Parish President advised that Covid19 and Hurricane Ida have made it obvious the Parish needs to have its own Health Department. She complained that oftentimes she received important Covid19 information at the same time as the public. During the recent Hurricane Ida she advised that having Sarah Babcock a member of her executive staff with a strong public health background actually saved lives. They were able to rapidly deploy assistance to the elderly and those with special needs. The Parish will be able to take advantage of many grants by establishing its own Health Dept., including purchasing a mobile health bus. Currently the Parish is unable to apply for these grants. This presentation created a conversation in regard to the presently convening Charter Review is considering recommending the creation of a Health Dept. Valerie

Brolin, Deputy Chief Operating Officer, acknowledged that such a Health Department would require a constant source of funds, as opposed to this one-time opportunity through the ARP funding. The hope is to use the ARP funds as startup funds or possible match for state funding in future.

- ❖ Establishment of Broadband Connectivity—President Lee Sheng stated Jefferson Parish has an affordability issue that contributes to the “Digital Divide.” It creates hurdles for many individuals. In this day and age connectivity or high speed internet is an important component for earning a living, education, banking and telehealth. She urged investment into this very important aspect of our community’s needs. Furthermore she advised the committee that the State of Louisiana appointed a broadband czar and has recommended that we have matching funds available for soon to come broadband projects. Additionally the Jefferson Parish School system has significant American Rescue Plan Act funds and Dr. Gray may be a willing partner in a broadband initiative.

- ❖ Water and Sewer Infrastructure Projects – The committee was advised that the Parish’s water and sewer system is getting old and was negatively impacted by Hurricane Ida. It is in significant need of pipe replacement and equipment upgrades. The Public Works Dept. has a length list of needed projects to consider. While the Council recently passed increased sewer and water user rates by which will be bonded soon, it was stressed that using ARP funds would elevate our system to a more modern day program. Jim Young questioned a water line project for the City of Kenner. The Chairman advised that we will be inviting the municipalities to present to the committee any projects that would be mutually beneficial.

The chairman thanked Parish President for presenting important and viable recommendations and priorities for the task force to consider.

3. **New Business**

- Task Force Meeting #3 will be held on Thursday, November 4, 2021, at 9:00 a.m. at the JEDCO Conference Center, 701 A Churchill Parkway, Westwego, LA 70094.

- The business groups have been invited. To date Todd Murphy with the Chamber and Jerry Bologna with JEDCO have agreed to present. Violet Peters with JCVB is pending. Bob Evans Jr. requested that the Elmwood Business Association and the WBIA are invited to present and invitations are being extended this week.

- The Municipalities in Jefferson Parish have been invited to present to the task force any projects that would mutually benefit the entire Parish.
- The Jefferson Parish Council members have been invited to appear if they are inclined.
- Task Force Meeting #4 will be held on Thursday November 18, 2021 at the Joseph Yenni Building in Room 405. Please note that these meetings will continue to be in person and no virtual option will be offered unless a presenter requests this in advance.

4. Reports/Presentations by Members:

Due to the length of time spent on the presentation and in an effort to keep the meeting to one hour, the Presentation and report on public meeting and remote attendance by Assistant Parish Attorney, Victoria Woods, was deferred to the next meeting.

5. Meeting Adjourned:

Motion was made by John Litchfield and seconded by Jim Young to adjourn the meeting.