

LOUISIANA COMMISSION ON CIVIC EDUCATION

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Louisiana Commission on Civic Education

APPROVED MINUTES

November 2, 2018

I. CALL TO ORDER

A meeting of the Louisiana Commission on Civic Education was held on Friday, November 2, 2018 in the John J. Hainkel, Jr. Room at the State Capitol in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The chairperson, Beth Courtney called the meeting to order at 2:06 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

The secretary called the roll and the following was noted:

MEMBERS PRESENT

Beth Courtney, Chairperson
Sen. Yvonne Colomb, Vice Chairperson
Fredell Butler
Will Chapman
Shan Davis
Rep. Reid Falconer
Barry Erwin
Ryan Gremillion
Mitzi Hochheiser
Brenda Hodge
Judge C. Wendell Manning
Josh McNemar
Sen. Blade Morrish
Lawrence Narcisse
Kelly Pepper
Criketa Matlock

MEMBERS PRESENT, Continued

Anita Sexton
Monica Taylor
Sen. Francis C. Thompson
Donald Songy

MEMBERS ABSENT

John Alexander
Peggy Cotogno
Doris Hicks
Rep. Patrick Jefferson
Polly Johnson
Terry Landry
Lauren Russell

STAFF PRESENT

Tammy Crain-Waldrop, Legislative Researcher
Candace Shields, Senior Secretary

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Wendell Manning made a motion to approve the minutes of May 18, 2018. There being no objection, the minutes were approved.

IV. APPROVAL OF ANNUAL REPORT

Senator Morrish made a motion to approve the 2017-2018 Annual Report. There being no objection, the Annual Report was approved.

V. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Mr. Erwin moved to nominate Mr. Wendell Manning for position of chairman of the commission. There being no objection, the motion passed.

Judge Manning accepted the chairmanship.

Mr. Songy moved to nominate Shan Davis for position of vice chairman. There being no objection, the motion passed.

Ms. Davis accepted the vice chairmanship.

Judge Manning stated Ms. Courtney has lead the commission for many years. He said through her leadership devotion she has helped bring a spotlight to the work of the Legislative Youth Advisory Council and other initiatives, and he wanted to thank her for her devotion to civic education – not just through the commission but through public broadcasting – and other activities around the state.

Ms. Courtney stated she will remain on the commission and her staff will continue to facilitate and assist on some day-to-day activities. She said as we head into this election, we are all united in our desire to have involvement of young people, middle-aged people and old people in the election process. She stated she looks forward to continuing working with the commission.

VI. PRESENTATION

Youth Challenge Program: Shawn Parker

Testifying and providing information to the commission was Shawn Parker, representing the Louisiana National Guard Youth Challenge Program.

Ms. Parker stated she is the Lead Recruiter with the program. She said program's motto is "Changing America One Youth at a Time". She stated their mission is to reclaim the lives of 16 and 18 year old, male and female, at-risk youth. She said at-risk youth means any boy or girl who is struggling at some point in their life whether in their home, community, school or anything that could take them off the good pathway. She stated they want to get them into their program to get them back on the right track to become a productive citizen. She said their program is free. She stated it is funded federally and by the state, and administered by the Louisiana National Guard. She said they are not a boot camp even though they are associated with the military. She stated they operate military style – they wake up early, make their beds, and do physical training. She said they are a residential approved alternative education program for students. She stated they have operated for over twenty-five years. She said Louisiana was awarded the opportunity to open the first of ten programs in the United States which was started at Camp Beauregard, and were awarded two others – Gillis Long and Camp Minden. She stated Louisiana was the first state in the United States to receive three programs and operated that way for twenty-four years until recently when California started their third program. She said they are a five-month residential program – the students eat and sleep there. She stated while the students are with them, they work on their HiSET which was the old GED. She said last year they introduced a new course "Choice Credit Recovery". She stated the students could come to them, not exit school, work on their current high school course work, and return back to high school to stay on the diploma track. She stated after they finish the five-month residential program, they enter into the twelve-month post-residential program. She said they are assigned a case manager and their mentor helps them come up with a plan for after they graduate. She stated they want

them to do something productive whether its getting a job or continuing their education. She said to be eligible for their program, they must be a Louisiana resident, sixteen years old on day one of the program and be eighteen on day one, and be willing to be drug-free. She stated the program is voluntary and cannot be court ordered to come to the program. She said the students cannot be convicted of an adult-felony crime. She said their eight core components are life coping skills; academic excellence; job training skills; responsible citizenship; leadership/fellowship; health, sex and hygiene; physical fitness; and community involvement projects. She stated the students live on the base in military barracks and are monitored 24/7. She said they get one phone call a week and they do letter writing to family and friends. She stated there are no distractions – no social media, no cell phones and very limited technology. She said a typical day is wake up at 5:30AM for Health and Hygiene and to get breakfast then school is at eight o'clock to three with a lunch break Monday through Friday. She stated after that, they have basketball, swimming, archery and band. She said there is also field trips and outings in the community and lights are out at nine o'clock. She stated they get one family day which is a big tailgate – people bring tents and boil crawfish or barbecue – to spend the day with their student to see where they are sleeping and what they are doing. She said they get one home pass to go home usually around a holiday. She stated they are required to get forty hours of community involvement. She said their last week before graduation, there is an awards day, talent show and prom night before graduation. She stated there are sometimes over three thousand people there. She said the program is operated by Colonel Michael Burrell who is the Super Director over all three programs and each program has their own director and deputy director. She stated under them are the cadres who supervise the cadets 24/7 and they are active and retired military. She said the students are required to see a counselor once a month or more if needed and they have a grief counseling group. She stated the academic department are certified teachers with class rooms of one to twenty students. She said they also do peer tutoring. She stated if one student is failing in a subject they are paired off with a student to help teach the leadership/fellowship skill. She said their medical department is there to administer any medicine as prescribed. She stated the dining facility feeds them three meals a day. She said she encourages everyone to take a tour – one is at Gillis Long in February. She stated Supply and Logistics supplies the students with uniforms that they wear while they are in the program. She said during the post-residential phase they are assigned a case manager. She stated they meet with the case manager to develop a plan for the year after they graduate and they also work with their mentor to help make sure they succeed after they graduate. She said every student has to have a mentor. She stated the mentor is usually someone from their hometown– someone they know like aunts, uncles, cousins – who will be there to give them a ride to a job interview or school after they have graduated from the program. She stated they have cadets that do not have connections with anyone in their family or community so the program has people who volunteer their time to be mentors for the cadets. She said they offer students a chance to earn up to fifteen hours of college credit through a program with the Bossier Parish Community College which helps students join the military when paired with HiSET or helps them get into a four-year

college. She stated they do workforce development, but only ten percent of the class is eligible. She said they also instituted a JAG program "Jobs for American Graduates" in 2017 at the request of the governor. She stated they offer tutoring to help raise grade levels. She said they have about an eighty-three percent pass rate for HiSETs which is extremely good because the HiSET is harder than the GED. She stated the reason for the number is because parents pull their children out. She said they see more requests from parents to come home than children getting terminated on their own. She stated a year ago, a mother pulled her son out of Camp Minden four weeks before graduation and he was shot and killed a week before graduation. She said if they complete the program, they are more likely to succeed afterwards. She stated over a three-year period, they have an eighty percent placement rate for their students. She said they started "Course Choice Credit Recovery" last year in October. She stated it allows students who are not struggling in school but may have failed a few classes to come to the program and get the discipline and structure that they need to enter back into high school. She said students must attend an interview to be eligible for the program. She stated the Youth Challenge Program graduates about fourteen hundred kids a year. She said they are on all forms of social media, and encourages everyone to follow their Facebook page.

Mr. Songy stated that if the members could, he strongly encourages them to attend a graduation. He said he was able to do that and it is a celebration unlike anything he has ever seen at any graduation. He stated he was fortunate enough to be a mentor to a young man who went through the program and it is a life changing experience.

Ms. Taylor stated a close family friend in her hometown had an older sibling that battled cancer for a number of years and passed away. She said he started acting out. She stated he went through the program and it saved his life. She said it was so important to the family because they could not lose another child.

Judge Manning stated while a judge could not order someone into the program, the judges do use it as a resource when working with parents, custodial adults and district attorneys. He said they are able to strongly encourage them to enter it and have had great success.

WITNESSES PRESENT:

Information Only:

Shawn Parker, Louisiana National Guard, Pineville, LA

VII. UPDATES

A. Legislative Youth Advisory Council (LYAC): Madeline Malbrough, President

Testifying and providing information to the commission was Madeline Malbrough, representing the Legislative Youth Advisory Council.

Miss Malbrough stated she is the current president of LYAC. She said she does a lot of community involvement and is involved in several clubs. She stated this one is her favorite because it is the one she is most passionate about.

Testifying and providing information to the commission was Amy Lemaire, representing the Legislative Youth Advisory Council.

Miss Lemaire stated she is a senior and student body president at Iota High School in Iota, Louisiana.

Testifying and providing information to the commission was Selia Jindal, representing the Legislative Youth Advisory Council.

Miss Jindal stated she attends Baton Rouge Magnet High School. She said she is the club president of a few clubs and recently was named Student of the Year. She stated, the Legislative Youth Advisory Council has been a tremendous part, if not one of the greatest, of her time and experience in high school.

Testifying and providing information to the commission was Andrew Gary, representing the Legislative Youth Advisory Council.

Mr. Gary stated he attends St. Martin's Episcopal School in New Orleans, Louisiana. He said he does a lot of things and out of all of them he likes LYAC the most because he has met people like Mr. Songy and better understands the system that Louisiana runs off of. He stated he knows people who only talk about national issues, but it is the local stuff that matters the most.

Miss Malbrough stated they all met at the two-day July summit where they had elections and talked to several people to get an idea of what they have gotten themselves into.

Miss Jindal stated the two-day seminar was the first time they got together as a council to meet and get to know each other. She said it was amazing the connections they made with one another. She stated it was phenomenal to be in a room with bright students from around the state that were passionate about improving the state, and about state and local issues. She said it was a great experience to talk with one another about possible solutions, about their futures, and what they want to do to make the state as best as it can be. She stated earlier this year, she was tasked with promoting a civic engagement voter registration drive. She said at first it was really daunting because she had never done anything like that before. She stated being able to reach out

to students from around the state that have done similar things in the past was very helpful and informative. She said during the two-day seminar, it was great to meet state and local representatives and officials. She stated it was an inspiring and amazing experience to hear what is going on in the state, what it takes to be a representative, and how those roles are filled and actively taken in the community. She said that role extended throughout the year through programs they participated in through LYAC such as Louisiana Public Broadcasting (LPB). She stated their members have spoken on the public station multiple times about preventing suicide, the power of reading, and revisiting prison reform. She said representing the youth and voicing their opinions on such a big scale in the community has been a tremendous experience. She stated it has helped them grow as individuals and understand what they wanted to do with their futures and lives.

Miss Malbrough stated every year, LYAC is involved in World Peace Day. She said this year she spoke at World Peace Day and watched over the whole event. She stated there are different cultures and perspectives on world peace. She said LYAC helps bring artwork to the Capitol to display for the entirety of October. She stated some students came to speak about their artwork – what it meant to them, why they drew it and what were they thinking when they did the pieces. She said she spoke about trying to get peace within yourself before you try to make peace around yourself. She stated one member did a bilingual duet with her father – "A Whole New World" from Aladdin.

Miss Lemaire stated during the first semester of the 2018-2019 school year, a total of three LYAC members have held Back to School visits with Louisiana legislators with one visit being planned in the upcoming weeks. She said the LYAC president Madeline Malbrough invited Representative Amedee to speak to sixty students at Houma Christian School. She stated he talked about legislation he passed and what young people can do to become more involved in the government. She said Andrew Gary, a member from St. Martin Episcopal School, asked Senator Appel to speak to fourteen students about the workings of the legislature. She stated he also touched on Louisiana public education system, the Secretary of the State election, and seven Louisiana constitutional amendments that will be on the ballot November 6th. She said LYAC member Bobby Alexander also had Representative Horton speak to students at Airline High School in Bossier City. She stated the next Back to School visit is being organized by Kaitlyn Poirier. She said Representative Pope agreed to speak to about thirty students at Walker High School.

Mr. Gray stated at LYAC's last meeting, Representative Ivey spoke to them about a number of topics, but the most important one that he took away from it was how to deal with failure. He said the representative has advocated on many controversial issues and often did not succeed in getting his bills passed. He stated the representative taught them about whether they wanted to be on the winning team or on the right team. He said the representative said that he would rather

fight the fight instead of winning all the time, and if that meant to charge up the hill and die every time it did not matter as long as he was fighting for what he believed in. He stated he thought that was a really important message for them as being young people they would have to eventually choose between being on the right team or the winning team.

Ms. Courtney stated LPB has a Public Square coming up to discuss what should be the entry requirements to get into higher education in Louisiana. She said they thought they should have young people give their opinions and she is looking forward to having some of them on the next taping.

WITNESSES PRESENT:

Information Only:

Madeline Malbrough, Houma, LA
Amy Lemaire, Iota, LA
Selia Jindal, Baton Rouge, LA
Andrew Gary, New Orleans, LA

B. Legislator's Back to School Program: Morgan Robertson/Lauren Russell

There was no presentation by Morgan Robertson or Lauren Russell.

C. Adult Civics Education (ACE): Mr. Wendell Manning

Judge Manning stated last year he reported to the commission the plans of creating the program Adult Civic Education with the acronym of ACE. He said for the young people who just spoke, civic engagement, rule of law, and basic constitutional principles are very fresh on their minds, but older citizens need a refresher course from time to time. He stated the Louisiana Center for Law and Civic Education, Louisiana State Bar Association, Louisiana District Judges Association and other groups created a series of lesson plans and interactive presentations to take into civic organizations like Rotary Clubs, Lions Clubs, churches, synagogues, councils on aging and other areas throughout communities. He said the initial training was in January this past year at the Renaissance Hotel in Baton Rouge and another will be in January in Baton Rouge. He stated seventy-five programs were presented around the state to date. He said it has been well received and he encourages everyone to take part if they have an opportunity. He said he would provide to the members of the commission the specific dates and times for the training in January.

VIII. CONSIDERATION OF ANY OTHER MATTERS THAT MAY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

There were no other matters that came before the commission.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the commission, Ms. Davis moved to adjourn. Without objection, the meeting was adjourned at 3:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Judge C. Wendell Manning
Chairman

May 17, 2019
Approval Date