

# T E R R E B O N N E COUNCIL ON AGING

promoting independence and dignity

May 26, 2020

+Board of Directors

Kirby Verret  
At-Large  
Chairman

This letter is to inform the elderly and concerned members of Terrebonne Parish about the future of the Terrebonne Council on Aging (COA).

L.J. Folse  
District 1  
Vice-Chairman

Since the beginning of the year, the Terrebonne Parish Council (Parish) has withheld ad valorem taxes. They have, in the past, always sent it as it was collected by the Sheriff's office. Because of the failure to forward the money to the COA, the COA is forced to use money from other allocated/dedicated funds to continue the services we currently provide to the most vulnerable citizens of Terrebonne Parish.

Raymonda Guidroz  
District 9  
Secretary

We, the COA Board of Directors, believe that these actions by the Parish are in retaliation for the lawsuit filed by the COA seeking clarification of the Proposition language and for what we feel is inappropriate use of COA millage funds by the Parish. Specifically, \$500,000 was taken from the millage to begin renovations to the American Legion building on Legion Avenue and \$250,000+ was taken for the Mechanicville Center, which was opened without any knowledge or approval from the COA.

Michael Boquet  
District 2

Virginia Callahan  
District 6

Carla Chaisson  
At-Large

Janet Hickman  
District 8

Melissa Lyons  
District 4

Louis "Chockey" Pitre  
District 7

District 3

The millage statement that was voted upon by parish voters states that the taxes collected are to be used for the elderly and disabled "through the Terrebonne Council on Aging." The Parish Government feels otherwise. If we do not proceed with a law suit, it could possibly allow the Parish President and council members to take money to provide for projects in each of their districts with no regard for the amounts. This would be devastating for the Council on Aging and the services we provide to needy seniors.

Diana N. Edmonson  
Executive Director

The COA purchased property on St. George highway in Schriever to build low cost housing for the elderly as we have a waiting list of over 30 people for occupancy at Shady Acres Apartment complex. As we try to save money for this project, it appears to some, that this is extra money to be used by the Parish. We are audited by the State annually and have never squandered or misused any of the millage proceeds that we are entrusted to administer. The Parish has approved every budget submitted by the COA until now.

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Monies that were allocated to a disaster fund for use in the event of hurricanes or other situations that require immediate action are now being used to deliver covid-19 emergency support services and assistance to seniors. We have money assigned for the retirement insurance, illness, accidents, etc. for our employees, which are all prudent businesses decisions. If anything, we have been overly cautious with the millage and are very protective of its use.

In the 40 years that the COA has been receiving the proceeds of the millage, the current Parish Administration, is the very first one to have taken COA millage funds without prior approval from the COA's Board of Directors.

Our wish is that the Parish Government returns the funds, and stop taking it for specific projects without the approval and knowledge of the Council on Aging. We have no alternative as we need to let the court decide who has the right to administer the millage collected and the voters have approved. Our hope is to continue providing dialysis trips, meals, doctor visits, housing, transportation, and other forms of assistance, as we have been doing. We hope that this can be resolved without interruption of the services we provide to our elderly citizens.


Sincerely,

The Terrebonne Council on Aging Executive Committee

  
KIRBY VERRET, CHAIRMAN

  
L J FOLSE, VICE-CHAIRMAN

  
BERT A. LEBOUF, TREASURER

  
RAYMONDA GUIDROZ, SECRETARY

  
LOUIS "CHOCKEY" PITRE, MEMBER