

Minutes of Called Special Board Meeting of the Bayou Vermilion District

Held by ZOOM at Vermilionville, 300 Fisher Road Lafayette Louisiana
4:30 pm, August 11, 2021

Call to Order was given by President Michot. The meeting was called at 4:32 pm. The BVD meeting is on ZOOM because of COVID-19. Adhering to Governor's Proclamation, following mandate and guidance.

Roll Call: Given by the Secretary: Commissioners Thomas Michot, Jason Sullivan, Holden Hoggatt, Calvin Leger, David Eaton, Phyllis Mouton, Mark Wiltz, and Claire Darby were on ZOOM. There was a quorum.

Commissioner Don McConnell joined the meeting by ZOOM.

Introduction of Guest(s): Guest Ryan Goudelocke. Other guests and staff number over 115, too many to include. Persons requesting to speak are Philip Gould, Harold Schoeffler, Clint Bruce, and David Cheramie.

I. Consideration of personnel action: termination of the Chief Executive Officer.

President Michot will be keeping everyone muted for procedure. Asking commissioners to not interrupt or talk over each other. Raise your hand to speak and wait to be acknowledged. If there are interruptions or talking over one another, they will be gavelled.

There will be a motion and a second. Discuss by board members, comments by the public who have requested to speak, and emails sent in by the public will be read.

President Michot asked for any motions.

MOTION: (C. Leger/D. Eaton) Terminate Dr. Cheramie.

Discussion followed. Commissioners agreed at last month's meeting to have the Executive Committee meet to explore the risk for termination to BVD and report back to the board. That meeting went into executive session. Commissioners wanted to know what the outcome was from the meeting. Commissioner Eaton called a special meeting with one agenda item, other commissioners could have added items but did not. President Michot summarized the risk to the board that was presented to the Executive Committee: the board has to be compliant with ADA, FMLA, non-discrimination and harassment rules, among other laws. Special Counsel Bowers suggested that a commonly used formula for determining severance pay for a terminated employee was 2 weeks' pay for every year of service. It was interjected by Board Counsel Goudelocke that the Louisiana Attorney General had made a previous ruling that tax money cannot be used on severance pay, though there may be a way to do that in this instance. Another option that was presented to the Executive Committee during the executive session was to give the CEO the opportunity to resign, in lieu of termination. President Michot went on to summarize the investigative report that had been prepared and presented by Special Counsel Bowers. There were 24 allegations of wrongdoing in Ms. Vicky Bowers' report, of which only eight were claims made against the CEO; the others were against other employees or commissioners. The report included 12 recommendations for action by the board, of which one recommendation pertained to Dr. Cheramie. That one recommendation had three alternative actions: (1) reprimand or suspend, (2) Performance Improvement Plan, or (3) terminate.

Commissioners wanted to know what the plan would be for BVD if CEO was terminated. Commissioner Leger suggested that, in that case, there should be an interim CEO, with a team effort by all employees and staff to support the interim CEO until new CEO would be hired. Commissioner Leger summarized why he thought Dr. Cheramie should be terminated.

Dr. Michot announced that, if there was no further discussion by commissioners, then he would allow citizens from the public who had followed the guidelines to speak

Philp Gould attempted to speak several times, but he had technical difficulties and could not be heard.

Harold Schoeffler offered his full support and admiration for CEO Cheramie.

Clint Bruce did not speak.

CEO Cheramie thanked everyone for their support and concern and addressed the allegations of wrongdoing that had been included in the report.

Ryan Goudelocke then read 48 written comments, 46 for support of CEO Cheramie and 2 against. See attachment below.

President Michot asked if there was any additional discussion by the board. Commissioner Mouton commented on the need for the board to be more responsible and to,- employees, to make sure allegations require the board to act, do not wait until you leave BVD to make your issues known. Commissioner Hoggatt stated that a PIP is an executive function and should be taken care of by the CEO;-HR hired in the past had a list of failings by CEO.

There being no more discussion, the president called for a roll call vote.

Call for the vote. The vote was 5 against (Michot, McConnell, Sullivan, Darby, Mouton), 3 abstained (Eaton, Wiltz, Hoggatt) and 1 for (Leger) termination. The motion failed.

Commissioner Leger thanked the people for attending the meeting and giving their opinions and hopes they are never David Cheramie's employees.

Adjournment: MOTION: (P. Mouton/D. McConnell) Motion to adjourn. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Thomas Michot, President

Calvin Leger, Secretary

REQUEST TO SPEAK AT MEETING:

1. Philip Gould
2. Harold Schoeffler
3. Clint Bruce
4. David Cheramie

EMAILED COMMENTS:

- Against termination – 46 Total
- For termination – 2 Total
- No vote – 3 Total

***AGAINST TERMINATION – 46**

From: Diane Harris <diane@festivalinternational.org>
Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 4:10 PM
To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermilliondistrict.org>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Termination of David Cheramie

I do not wish to speak, but I'm AGAINST the termination of David Cheramie.

Thanks,

Diane

***AGAINST TERMINATION – 45**

From: Jourdan Thibodeaux <jthibodeauxmusic@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 4:11 PM
To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermilliondistrict.org>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] II. Consideration of personnel action

I, Jourdan Thibodeaux, firmly oppose and am against the termination of the current CEO, David Cheramie.

Merci,
Jourdan Thibodeaux
337-258-1596

***AGAINST TERMINATION – 44**

From: Jessica Cormier Rabalais <yeuxdesoco@gmail.com>

Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 4:07 PM

To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermiliondistrict.org>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Opposition to the termination of David Cheramie

I firmly oppose the termination of David Cheramie as Chief Executive Officer of Bayou Vermilion District and Vermilionville. I follow the BVD and Vermilionville on social media and in the news and have not found any of their posts to be offensive. In fact, I find them encouraging and enlightening. As a native and a resident of Acadiana I appreciate the direction the programs have taken in respect to environmental awareness and stewardship and in the broadened scope that the historical programs have adopted that puts our history in context and reflects my personal values as a Christian, a Cajun, and a French speaker. I do not appreciate the narrow mindedness and unchristian-like views and attitudes that the outsiders and the Americanized residents have brought to the BVD board in the past year. The BVD and Vermilionville are not for profit businesses. They provide a service to our community and should run by people with the necessary skills and knowledge. These are not the skill sets of typical lawyers, accountants, and business owners.

Jessica Cormier Rabalais

***AGAINST TERMINATION – 43**

From: Gunnar Viator <wviato1@gmail.com>

Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 4:06 PM

To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermiliondistrict.org>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Termination of David Cheramie

I do not wish to speak, but I'm AGAINST the termination of David Cheramie.

***AGAINST TERMINATION – 42**

From: Terri Viator <tviator01@gmail.com>

Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 4:03 PM

To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermiliondistrict.org>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Termination of David Cheramie

I do not wish to speak, but I'm AGAINST the termination of David Cheramie

***AGAINST TERMINATION – 41**

-----Original Message-----

From: Chris Stafford <cfstafford87@gmail.com>

Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 4:03 PM

To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermiliondistrict.org>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Consideration of personnel action: termination of the Chief Executive Officer

AGAINST - I oppose this. I am NOT in support of the termination of David Cheramie. I do not wish to speak.

Sent from my iPhone

***AGAINST TERMINATION – 40**

From: MP Justus <mpjustus1@gmail.com>

Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 4:02 PM

To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermiliondistrict.org>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Tonight's meeting: Agenda item II

Dear BVD Board of Directors,

I am writing about Agenda item II concerning the termination of Dr. Cheramie as CEO.

I was born in Lafayette and my husband and I recently bought our first home here, and **I would like to urge the board *not* to terminate Dr. Cheramie.**

The support he has shown for local French and Creole culture is enormous. Not just in programming, but in creating jobs for French speakers. I spent a summer working as a tour guide and camp counselor there when I was still in school. Many of my peers have also worked there. Francophone tourists expect our museums and cultural institutions to have French speakers. It is often part of how Louisiana is marketed to them and drives a lot of international tourism. It is reassuring to know that Dr. Cheramie understands this, and for years now I have known that I can send friends and visitors to Vermilionville to see Louisiana authentically represented by its own people.

Plenty of people give lip service to local culture, saying that they're "proud to be Cajun" or that they "support" the language or "love our culture" without actually doing anything about it. **David Cheramie is a genuine, active supporter of south Louisiana's culture.**

Merci,

Marguerite Justus

***AGAINST TERMINATION – 39**

From: kathryn pumford <kcpumford@icloud.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 4:02 PM
To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermiliondistrict.org>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Cheramie

To dismiss Cheramie, who has spent his Adult career passionately promoting our Acadiana culture, would be huge loss to the community.

Kathryn Pumford

Sent from my iPhone

***AGAINST TERMINATION – 38**

-----Original Message-----

From: JAMES W BOUDREAUX <jimbx@bellsouth.net>
Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 4:00 PM
To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermiliondistrict.org>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Tonight's meeting

While I do not wish to speak at tonight's meeting, I need to express my disappointment in the Board's decision to even consider firing its director, David Cheramie.

As a lifelong educator and a strong advocate for Louisiana's French culture and language, I've had the privilege to be working with David Cheramie in various projects and settings throughout the past thirty years.

I always appreciated his leadership, his commitment to our culture, and his understanding of what this culture meant for our region. I've seen the passion he put in his work not only in Vermilionville, but even more in the protection of the Vermilion River.

Especially considering the economic, social, and cultural impact the current Covid epidemic has had on our region, I think it would be a grave mistake to lose David Cheramie's leadership at the helm of the Bayou Vermilion District, and I hope that the Board will make the right decision to keep him in his position.

Sincerely,

Nicole S Boudreaux Ed. D.

Sent from my iPad

***AGAINST TERMINATION – 37**

From: Rachel Doherty <racheldohfinn@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 3:58 PM
To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermiliondistrict.org>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] David Cheramie's continued employment

My name is Rachel Doherty and I am writing in favor of David Cheramie's continued employment at the Bayou Vermilion District and Vermilionville. I am willing to read my own statement in the meeting, or someone may read on my behalf.

Dr. Cheramie has overseen and encouraged improvements to Vermilionville throughout his service there. Thanks to his leadership at the Bayou Vermilion District, Vermilionville now better represents the complexity and diversity of cultures in French Louisiana along the Vermilion. His vision of inclusivity and historical accuracy is evident in his scholarship and in his chronicles of culture in South Louisiana.

Dr. Cheramie also directly supports young French speakers in our region. Many of my young friends and colleagues who pursue careers in French have been employed at Vermilionville. He also supports current efforts to continue literary production in Louisiana French. His leadership, writing and his generous support to our francophone youth are irreplaceable in our community, and no one else could continue to improve the Bayou Vermilion District and Vermilionville in this era.

Merci pour votre attention, Thank you.
Rachel Doherty,
French teacher

***AGAINST TERMINATION – 36**

From: Kelley Courville <kelleycourville@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 3:56 PM
To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermiliondistrict.org>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Termination of David Cheramie

To whom it may concern,

I do not wish to speak, but I'm AGAINST the termination of David Cheramie.

- Kelley Courville , AIA + NCARB

***AGAINST TERMINATION – 35**

From: Mike Bass <mikebass@me.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 3:52 PM
To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermilliondistrict.org>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Vote to keep David Cheramie

I encourage you to keep David Cheramie as the BVD executive director. He's a pillar of the community and has done a great job. Thank you.

- Mike Bass
(337) 706-2524

***AGAINST TERMINATION – 34**

From: Carly Viator <carly@electricmagnoliastudio.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 3:51 PM
To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermilliondistrict.org>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Termination of David Cheramie

I do not wish to speak, but I'm **AGAINST** the termination of David Cheramie.

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Carly Viator, Owner
ELECTRIC MAGNOLIA STUDIO
CREATIVE PHOTO + VIDEO + DESIGN
337.466.8002

***AGAINST TERMINATION – 33**

From: Lucinda Noelle <cnroyer71@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 3:47 PM
To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermilliondistrict.org>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] David Cheramie

Do not fire David Cheramie.

Cherie Royer

***AGAINST TERMINATION – 32**

From: Lucius A. Fontenot <lucius.fontenot@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 3:40 PM
To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermiliondistrict.org>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Agenda: David Cheramie

Bonjour,

I DO NOT support the termination of David Cheramie.

Lucius Fontenot

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Sent from Gmail Mobile

***AGAINST TERMINATION – 31**

From: Nathan J Rabalais <nathan.rabalais@louisiana.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 3:36 PM
To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermiliondistrict.org>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Meeting 8/11/21

Good afternoon,

With regard to this afternoon's BVD board meeting, I would like to state my position of:

OPPOSITION to item

II. Consideration of personnel action: termination of the Chief Executive Officer.

Comments: Dr. Cheramie has ostensibly been a highly effective CEO of Vermilionville, and the site has offered an increasingly diverse and dynamic programming despite major setbacks such as the 2016 floods and the COVID pandemic, which has affected all sectors of tourism. This motion seems politically motivated given the tension that arose last year and a stated intent among certain actors that Vermilionville is not economically viable. Why would such a drastic decision as to terminate Dr. Cheramie's employment be necessary? Vermilionville is a valuable part of the community's cultural landscape and more transparency is needed here.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for sharing these comments.

Kind regards,
Nathan Rabalais

Nathan Rabalais, Ph.D.
Joseph P. Montiel Endowed Assistant Professor of Francophone Studies
Center for Louisiana Studies Fellow (2020-25)
University of Louisiana at Lafayette
T: (337) 482-6816
Office: Griffin Hall 461
(he, him, his, il, lui)

***AGAINST TERMINATION – 30**

-----Original Message-----

From: Margaret Wilby <kasbah@lusfiber.net>
Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 3:34 PM
To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermiliondistrict.org>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] The firing of David Cheramie as the CEO of BVD

My name is Margaret L. Wilby and I am opposed to the firing of David Cheramie as CEO of BVD.

***AGAINST TERMINATION - 29**

From: Heather Warner-Finley <redmangrove354@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 3:32 PM
To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermiliondistrict.org>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] David Cheramie

I've worked with David as part of the Bayou Vermilion Preservation Association. I think he's been fair in his dealings as far as I have seen. He's presided over improvements in the Vermilionville campus and has worked to promote the environmental portion of the BVD as well as the Vermilionville museum.

Heather Warner-Finley

***AGAINST TERMINATION - 28**

From: Lisa Stafford <lisa@festivalinternational.org>
Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 3:27 PM
To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermiliondistrict.org>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Consideration of personnel action: termination of the Chief Executive Officer

AGAINST - I oppose this. I am NOT in support of the termination of David Cheramie. I do not wish to speak.

Lisa Stafford, Programming Director

P: (337) 232.8086

C. (337) 288-8087

Festival International de Louisiane

April 27 - May 1, 2022

www.festivalinternational.org

***AGAINST TERMINATION - 27**

From: Brianne Hendricks <brianne.hendricks87@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 3:27 PM
To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermiliondistrict.org>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Meeting comments

I am writing today as a citizen of Lafayette in opposition of terminating David Cheremie from his position with BVD.

***AGAINST TERMINATION - 26**

-----Original Message-----

From: Robin Miller <robinmilleris@me.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 3:06 PM
To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermiliondistrict.org>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Agenda item II. Consideration of personnel action: termination of the Chief Executive Officer

My name is Robin Miller.

I am AGAINST the termination of David Cheramie as the Chief Executive Officer.

Merci,
Robin

***AGAINST TERMINATION - 25**

From: Brenda Mounier <brendamounier@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 3:05 PM
To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermilliondistrict.org>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] termination of CEO, David Cheramie

To the BVD board members,
I STRONGLY oppose terminating David Cheramie as Vermilionville's CEO. His resumé speaks for itself. As the "face" of Vermilionville, he is well-known and well respected locally, nationally AND internationally.

I have known him for many years. He is a very capable, intelligent man who is proud to be at the helm of an historical museum that cherishes his French language and culture, a cause whose merit he will always defend as well as other worthy ones.

So, to quote another heavyweight in this arena, *"Please do the right thing"... and seriously reconsider your stance on this issue before voting to terminate a leader "in the pantheon of the French Renaissance in Louisiana."* Because you never know when you, too, may find yourself in such a position one day.

Your support will be **noticed** and appreciated.

Best regards,

Brenda Mounier

***AGAINST TERMINATION - 24**

From: Rebecca <rhudsmith@aol.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 3:05 PM
To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermilliondistrict.org>
Cc: pat@patmire.com; festival@cinemaonthebayou.com
Subject: [EXTERNAL] David Cheramie

To Whom It May Concern:

We are writing regarding David Cheramie after reading in today's newspaper about the upcoming board meeting and the opportunity for input from the public.

For several years now, Cinema on the Bayou Film Festival has had a presence at Vermilionville through film screenings and events at our annual 8-day film festival each January and at various film screenings during the year. The Festival, now in its 17th year, is presented by Cinema on the Bayou Film Society, a Louisiana non-profit, 501(c)(3) corporation.

We have found David and his staff to be extremely professional. In particular, David, who is fluent in French, has regularly welcomed our large number of international film industry guests, many of whom are from French-speaking Canada, France and other French-speaking countries around the world. He has also participated in discussions with filmmakers and our audiences during our two-day presentation of French-language films at Vermilionville.

Our international guests have expressed to us how welcome they feel at Vermilionville. David, along with his staff, create and nurture this welcoming environment. David is simply a great host and representative of our community.

In the course of our Festival presence at Vermilionville, we have participated in live interviews with Festival participants from Canada, France and Japan, as well as from across the United States, thereby bringing positive attention to Lafayette and Vermilionville. David has assisted us in our communications with the Francophone world, including welcoming dignitaries from Quebec and from the Office of the French Consul General.

We thank you for the opportunity to speak as members of the public and share our positive experiences with David Cheramie at Vermilionville. It is truly a special place, which we believe is in large part due to David's leadership there.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Hudsmith
Director, Cinema on the Bayou Film Festival

Pat Mire
Founder and Artistic Director, Cinema on the Bayou Film Festival

P.S. We have attached a photo of one of our film events at Vermilionville

337-235-7845

***AGAINST TERMINATION - 23**

From: Katie Perrin <katieperr@gmail.com>

Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 2:45 PM

To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermilliondistrict.org>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Termination of CEO

I am extremely opposed to a firing of David Cheramie for several reasons you already know. He has always done excellent work for this community. We all know this! Leave the good people where they are instead of installing puppets.

Sincerely,
Kathleen Perrin

***AGAINST TERMINATION - 22**

From: ray@latrail.org <ray@latrail.org>
Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 2:41 PM
To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermilliondistrict.org>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] David Cheramie's termination: WE ARE AGAINST!

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN: AND THIS CONCERNS EVERYONE IS ACADIANA!!!!

We are so against his termination!!!

Oh my goodness how is this even a thought?!

I could wax poetic about David Cheramie and everything this amazing man has done for Acadiana, our heritage and culture, Lafayette and Louisiana Tourism, humanity in general, AND FOR ME.

When I started working in the tourism industry he quickly became a mentor to whom I could reach out with the most random of questions.
He always gave me his time with grace and patience.
He was always frank and never evasive.

Working with Cycle Zydeco he and his team were always more than helpful meeting our needs and we have used Vermilionville as our Welcome venue because of this.

He is truly an asset to whomever he represents and, on both a personal & business standpoint, I hope he will continue to represent you.

In what world are we living where David Cheramie of all people is seen as a villain.

There is something fishing going on. Must be politics.

Please reconsider! S'il vous plait!

All the best,

Ms. Ray-T. Cloutier

Director of Events

T.R.A.I.L. & CYCLE ZYDECO

337-446-4389 Office

337-739-0543 DIRECT/TEXT

413 Coolidge St. Lafayette, LA 70501

2021 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

AVAILABLE AT WWW.LATRAIL.ORG

***NEW*(FIRST) RESPONDER'S RACE - SAT, 9-11, 2021**

SUGARMAN TRIATHLON & DUATHLON SUN, OCT 03, 2021

TOUR DES ATAKAPAS- RUN & DUATHLON- OCT, 10, 2021

BIKES BREWS & OMELETTES TWO NOV, 06 & 07, 2021

CAJUN COUNTRY RUN (1/2 MARATHON, 10K & 5K) SAT, DEC 11, 2021

LUNDI GRAS BAR-A-THON / MON, FEB 28, 2022

BAYOU VERMILION PADDLE BATTLE / SAT, APR 2, 2022

SHARK BAYOU BLAST, A PADDLING RACE / SUN, APR 3, 2022

RIDE FOR ROX / SAT, APR 9, 2022

CYCLE ZYDECO / APR 20-24, 2022 WWW.CYCLEZYDECO.ORG

THE B.A.L.L., BIKE ACROSS LA LOUISIANE / TUES, APR 26 - FRI, APRIL 29, 2022

***AGAINST TERMINATION - 21**

From: Scott Feehan <scott@festivalinternational.org>

Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 2:38 PM

To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermiliondistrict.org>

Cc: David Cheramie <ceo@bayouvermiliondistrict.org>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support for David Cheramie, do not wish to speak

I send this email as a message of support for David Cheramie and current his position of CEO of Bayou Vermilion District.

I have been serving as Executive Director of Festival International for 6 years and can say that David has always been great to work with on anything we have ever worked together on. From French translations to events at Vermilionville and everything in between, David and his staff have been nothing short of professional and courteous. I also believe David has a wealth of knowledge about our community, culture, and heritage.

From an outsider's perspective, Vermilionville is a wonderful place that provides tremendous value to our community. I believe David, as the leader, has contributed immensely to its success.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this message.

Respectfully,

--

Scott Feehan

Executive Director I Festival International de Louisiane

P: [\(337\) 232.8086](tel:(337)232.8086)

***AGAINST TERMINATION - 20**

-----Original Message-----

From: Kathy Pumford <kgpumford@cox.net>

Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 2:24 PM

To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermilliondistrict.org>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] David Cheramie

> I am sending ardent support to David Cheramie. Mr Cheramie has done an outstanding and he's one of the most principled people I know.

>

> Before he got there, Vermillionville was all but dead. It was Mr Cheramie's passion, drive and deep commitment to conveying the history of the Acadians that brought life back to the Bayou Vermillion District.

>

> The notion that he may have discriminated against employees is ludicrous and wholly unbelievable. It appears that the Board has been talked over by those who have their own agenda and for some reason wish to cancel Mr. Cheramie and all he stands for. The board should be ashamed.

>

> Signed with umbrage,

> Kathy Pumford

>

Sent from my iPhone

***AGAINST TERMINATION - 19**

From: Michelle Ritter <michelleleighritter@gmail.com>

Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 2:22 PM

To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermilliondistrict.org>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] II. Consideration of personnel action: termination of the Chief Executive Officer.

I, Michelle Ritter, am AGAINST terminating David Cheramie's employment.

David Cheramie does so much good for this community, Vermilionville, and the Bayou Vermilion District.

Sincerely,

Michelle Ritter

***AGAINST TERMINATION - 18**

From: Charles Larroque <calarroque@gmail.com>

Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 2:19 PM

To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermiliondistrict.org>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] BVD meeting_David Cheramie

RE: Public comment, statement of support for David Cheramie

Dear BVD board members:

I am totally AGAINST any effort to remove David Cheramie from his position as Director of Vermilionville.

Since its establishment in 1990, I have been a keen observer of the evolution (and devolution at times) of the Vermilionville Living History Museum. Never has Vermilionville been more successful than during the time Mr. Cheramie has been at the helm.

David Cheramie is a rare pearl who has and continues to *authentically* showcase the Acadian, Creole and Native American cultures of the Attakapas region while preserving these endangered heritage groups (particularly their respective languages) with dignity and respect. In addition, his dedication to enhancing the environment is widely known locally and his many successes with the Bayou Vermilion District should speak for themselves.

In these uncertain times, our local Cultural Industry will need the most experienced and devoted professionals to not only stay afloat, but to actually thrive. David Cheramie has proven to be an invaluable human resource to face those challenges. Few local professionals understand the full value of Lafayette's brand and how that *authentic* local culture truly drives our local economy.

Sincerely,

Charles Larroque

Ret. educator and former executive director, Council for the Development of French in Louisiana (CODOFIL)

***AGAINST TERMINATION - 17**

-----Original Message-----

From: Kayleigh Goode <ks.goode@yahoo.com>

Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 2:14 PM

To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermiliondistrict.org>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Mr Cheramie

While I don't know Mr. Cheramie personally and cannot account for the allegations against him I am of the believe that people deserve an opportunity to change- if we don't point out the failures and give individuals an opportunity to self correct we are sending a dangerous message. Now if given the opportunity to change - and no changes are made then of course termination would be warranted. But in a world of cancel culture be the breath of fresh air- tell someone your actions and choices are unacceptable - write apology letters, hit metrics that prove that you're working towards understanding and correcting your failures and move on. The man is clearly doing a great job for this community and should be given the opportunity to self correct with guidance.

Ami de Vermillionville,

K S Goode

***AGAINST TERMINATION - 16**

From: Table Francaise <btablefrancaise@gmail.com>

Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 2:00 PM

To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermiliondistrict.org>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] David Cheramie

Dear Vermilionville,

We were shocked to hear of the possible termination of David Cheramie.

He has been nothing short of a shining example of French Heritage Preservation.

We have looked to him for advice and direction on multiple topics including yet not limited to Vermilionville & tourists; French Tables and bringing French back to Acadiana; the preservation of the Vermilion; and more. Always accommodating and a wealth of knowledge and candor

I can't imagine what a complaint against Mr. Cheramie would look like other than he is too kind, too generous, and he makes the rest of us look bad.

With much love for all that the Bayou Vermilion District does and much respect for Mr. Cheramie.

La Table Francaise Farouche

***AGAINST TERMINATION - 15**

-----Original Message-----

From: Melanie Francois <melaniefrancois@outlook.com>

Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 1:52 PM

To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermiliondistrict.org>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] David Cheramie

>>> This week I heard of the upcoming BVD board meeting to discuss the possible termination of the executive director of Vermilionville, David Cheramie. I'm hoping that your decision will NOT be politically motivated. We don't need yet another division in an already fragile system.

>>> I strongly support any organization or individual that goes above and beyond to protect and promote the Acadian culture. In that vein, I abhor the effort to terminate Dr. David Cheramie who has capably and tirelessly served as Vermilionville's executive director. You have David's qualifications on file. Do the right thing!

Melanie Francois

#337-281-8875

***AGAINST TERMINATION - 14**

From: MELANIE PERRIN <mperrin@aol.com>

Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 1:39 PM

To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermiliondistrict.org>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Termination of CEO

I am against the termination of CEO David Cheramie. I think he has done a wonderful job, especially involving the community. I have every confidence he will continue to be a positive force.

Melanie Perrin

Sent from my iPhone

***AGAINST TERMINATION - 13**

-----Original Message-----

From: Therese Pumford <tpumford@cox.net>

Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 1:37 PM

To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermilliondistrict.org>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Dr David Cheramie

I strongly urge the Board to keep Dr David Cheramie on the job! He has improved the facility and park 100 percent. All the activities and events made locals and tourist aware of the place. Our women's group had several meetings there and were treated professionally.

Therese Pumford

Sent from my iPhone

***AGAINST TERMINATION - 12**

From: Shane Bernard <shane@cajunculture.com>

Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 1:36 PM

To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermilliondistrict.org>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Letter of Support for Dr. David Cheramie

Dear BVD:

Please see the below attached PDF document in support of Dr. David Cheramie.

Sincerely,

Shane K. Bernard
New Iberia

Shane K. Bernard, Ph.D.

301 Boas Avenue
New Iberia LA 70563-2509
(337) 364-0667
Email: shane@cajunculture.com

August 11, 2021

Bayou Vermilion District
c/o Vermilionville
300 Fisher Road
Lafayette LA 70508

Dear BVD:

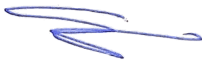
Although I am unfamiliar with the day-to-day operation of the Bayou Vermilion District, I wish to express my strong support for Dr. David Cheramie, who I have known for some thirty years.

As a south Louisiana historian dealing with Cajun and Creole history, among other local-interest topics, I have always regarded David as one of my chief go-to resources for advice and input.

Moreover, I have participated in several Vermilionville events under David's aegis, such as public symposia, and I have always found those events worthwhile. I believe I can say the same for the general public, based on its enthused participation in those events.

In short, David impresses me not only as a keen administrator, but as a veritable "walking encyclopedia" of information about our region's uncommon heritage. He always gives generously of his time and expertise, and I regard him as a community asset.

Sincerely,



Shane K. Bernard

Author, *Teche: A History of Louisiana's Most Famous Bayou* (2016)
Cajuns and Their Acadian Ancestors: A Young Reader's History (2008)
Tabasco: An Illustrated History (2007)
The Cajuns: Americanization of a People (2003)
Swamp Pop: Cajun and Creole Rhythm and Blues (1996)

***AGAINST TERMINATION - 11**

-----Original Message-----

From: Elizabeth Abadie Williams <elizabadie@gmail.com>

Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 1:33 PM

To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermiliondistrict.org>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] RE: David Cheramie

Name: Elizabeth Williams

Position: Against firing David Cheramie

He's done so much for this community.

***AGAINST TERMINATION - 10**

-----Original Message-----

From: Sarah Schoeffler <cadistyle@aol.com>

Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 12:57 PM

To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermiliondistrict.org>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comment for 8/11/21 Zoom Meeting 4:30 pm

Agenda Item II Consideration of personnel action: termination of the Chief Executive Director Office.

I am NOT in favor of terminating Dr. David Cheramie as the Executive Director Office of the Bayou Vermilion District

Sarah Schoeffler

Sent from my iPhone

***AGAINST TERMINATION - 9**

From: Margaret Lambert <marglamb2@yahoo.com>

Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 1:26 PM

To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermiliondistrict.org>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support of David Cheramie

I am writing in support of David Cheramie to continue in his position with the Vermilion River Authority Board. He has given selflessly of his time and talent to Vermilionville all of these years.

Vermilionville is a marvelous Acadian culture center for our area. I volunteer there once a week as a Master Gardener. Mr. Cheramie is always willing to speak with us about the gardens and has taken us on a tour of the grounds. I fear terminating him, would seriously affect the culture center, as well as the conservation of our river.

I respectfully urge you to not terminate him. You will never find a more knowledgeable advocate for Acadiana.

Thank you very much.
Margaret Lambert

Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone

***AGAINST TERMINATION - 8**

From: Jennifer Campisi <jcampisi1975@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 12:22 PM
To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermiliondistrict.org>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] David Cheramie-Public Comment

Good Afternoon,

Please include this email as part of the public comments for this evening's meeting.

I, Jennifer Campisi, am opposed to the termination of David Cheramie as CEO of Bayou Vermilion District and Vermilionville.

Respectfully,
Jennifer Campisi
337-523-7137

***NO VOTE - 3**

From: Charissa Helluin
Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 1:36 PM
To: Sally Donlon <sodonlon@gmail.com>; Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermiliondistrict.org>
Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] Public Board Meeting, August 11th at 4:30 p.m.

Sally,

I have included the Zoom invite to the meeting below along with the public notice. By law I cannot provide any synopses or statement concerning the subject matter of the agenda.

Public Notice: Notice is hereby given that the Bayou Vermilion District Board of Commissioners shall hold a Called Special Meeting on Wednesday, August 11, 2021 at 4:30 P.M. The meeting will be held via video/telephone conference. This meeting will be available for viewing on zoom by using link provided below; public comment is allowed following the procedures provided below.

CERTIFICATE OF TELECONFERENCE AND/OR VIDEO CONFERENCE OF THE
BAYOU VERMILION DISTRICT BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS CALLED SPECIAL MEETING TO BE HELD ON
August 11, 2021, AT 4:30PM IN ACCORDANCE WITH R.S. 42:17.1:

WHEREAS, the Governor of the State of Louisiana has declared a statewide Public Health emergency, inclusive of Lafayette Parish, in Proclamation Number 25 JBE 2020;

WHEREAS, the Governor, has further extended that declaration via proclamation No. 131 JBE 2021, and

WHEREAS, R.S. 42:17.1 allows members of political subdivisions to participate in its meetings electronically under certain limited circumstances,

THEREFORE, in accordance with the provisions of R.S. 42:17.1, the President of the Bayou Vermilion District Board of Commissioners hereby certifies that this meeting is to address:

- (a) Matters that are directly related to the public body's response to the disaster or emergency and are critical to the health, safety, or welfare of the public,
- (b) Matters that if they are delayed will cause curtailment of vital public services or severe economic dislocation and hardship,
- (c) Matters that are critical to continuation of the business of the public body and that are not able to be postponed to a meeting held in accordance with the other provisions of this Chapter due to a legal requirement or other deadline that cannot be postponed or delayed by the public body, or
- (d) Other matters that are critical or time-sensitive and that, in the determination of the presiding officer, should not be delayed; however, such matters shall not be considered at the meeting unless the members of the body present at the meeting approve the consideration of the matters by a two-thirds vote.

//s// Thomas C. Michot, Chair

Bayou Vermilion District Board of Commissioners' Executive Committee

Date: August 9, 2021

NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING & AGENDA

Date of Notice: August 9, 2021 at 8:00 a.m.

Called Special Meeting of the Bayou Vermilion District Board of Commissioners
To be held at 300 Fisher Road, Lafayette, LA 70508
4:30 p.m. August 13, 2021

Agenda

I. Call to Order

II. Consideration of personnel action: termination of the Chief Executive Officer.

III. Adjourn

David Cheramie, Ph.D.,
Chief Executive Officer
Bayou Vermilion District
300 Fisher, Lafayette LA 70508
337-233-4077x202

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need assistance, please contact Kim Fournet at 337-233-4077x204 describing the assistance that is necessary.

David Cheramie is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.
Topic: Called For Special Meeting of BVD Board
Time: Aug 11, 2021 04:30 PM Central Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83653708113?pwd=TDBvcE01ZlBvZ1V2bXA0a0Z0RytLZz09>

Meeting ID: 836 5370 8113

Passcode: 583280

One tap mobile

+13017158592,,83653708113#,,,,*583280# US (Washington DC)

+13126266799,,83653708113#,,,,*583280# US (Chicago)

Dial by your location

+1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC)

+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)

+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)

+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)

+1 669 900 9128 US (San Jose)

Meeting ID: 836 5370 8113

Passcode: 583280

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/u/kb4qe61o4>

PUBLIC COMMENT PROCEDURES

Public Comment Procedures in Person:

- If you **DO NOT WISH TO SPEAK**, but wish to state your support for or opposition to an item:
 - Sign up on the appropriate sign-up sheet upon arrival.
 - In your message, you must identify which item you are referring to, your name and your position (for or against)
- If you **DO WISH TO SPEAK**:
 - Sign up on the appropriate sign-up sheet upon arrival.
 - When it is your turn to speak, you will be called upon.
 - When speaking, please identify yourself and the agenda item you wish to speak about
 - The 5-minute rule will apply

Public Comment Procedures via Zoom:

- If you **DO NOT WISH TO SPEAK**, but wish to state your support for or opposition to an item:
 - Submit your comments via e-mail to communications@bayouvermiliondistrict.org.
 - Specify which agenda item you would like to address in the subject line.
 - In your message, state your name and your position (for or against)
 - Emails must be received prior to 4:15pm the day of the meeting
- If you **DO WISH TO SPEAK**:
 - Submit your request to speak via e-mail to communications@bayouvermiliondistrict.org
 - Specifying which agenda item you would like to address in the subject line.
 - Emails must be received prior to 4:15pm the day of the meeting
 - When it is your turn to speak, you will be unmuted by the host
 - When speaking, please identify yourself and the agenda item you wish to speak about
 - The 5-minute rule will apply

Thank you,

Charissa M. Helluin
 Director of Outreach
[Bayou Vermilion District](http://BayouVermilionDistrict.org)
[Vermilionville](http://Vermilionville.org)
Outreach@BayouVermilionDistrict.org
 337-233-4077, 207

From: Sally Donlon <sodonlon@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 12:25 PM
To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermiliondistrict.org>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Board Meeting, August 11th at 4:30 p.m.

Please send me the link to the Bayou Vermilion District Public Board Meeting scheduled for today (Wednesday, August 11th).

Please also send me the list of complaints lodged against Executive Director David Cheramie.

Thanks,

Sally O. Donlon
sodonlon@gmail.com
sallyo@louisiana.edu
337.288.4396

***AGAINST TERMINATION - 7**

From: Warren Perrin <perrin@plddo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 11:12 AM
To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermilliondistrict.org>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Wednesday meeting: Cheramie

As one who has been involved in the protection and promotion of the culture for the last 52 years, I abhor the pernicious effort to terminate Dr. David Cheramie as director of Vermilionville. I had the honor to serve as president of CODOFIL from 1993 until 2010 and during that time Cheramie ably served as our executive director for 13 years. He and I represented Louisiana and the United States at the World Francophone Summits in Romania, New Brunswick, Quebec, Vietnam and Switzerland. Since 1999, I have been on the Board of Directors of the Francophone Section of the Louisiana Bar Association and I now serve as it's chairman. During these many years, I have always had the full support and expertise of Cheramie support us in many of our programs.

Here is just a brief portion of his impressive résumé which he has dedicated his life to building: David Cheramie was born in New Orleans but grew up in the fishing and oil-services town of Golden Meadow on the banks of Bayou LaFourche. He was graduated *cum laude* from Loyola University of New Orleans in 1981 with a B.A in History, and from the University of Southwestern Louisiana, today the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, in 1992 with an M.A. in French and again in 1999 with a Ph.D. in Francophone Studies. Upon returning to Louisiana after having lived in France for seven years, he decided to become active in the renaissance of the French language and culture. He is a founding member of *Les Amis de l'Immersion* and *Action Cadienne*, two organizations dedicated to the preservation of the French language through Immersion education. From 1990 to 1996 he edited and published *Feux follets*, a French-language literary revue. In 1992, he published his translation of Gabriel Desbiens' series of articles about French Creole immigration to Louisiana after the Haitian Slave Revolt under the title *The Road to Louisiana*. In 1997, he published his first collection of poetry, *Lait à mère*. The year 1998 saw the publication of a collection of short stories, *Feux follets: Une anthologie de la nouvelle louisianaise*, written in French by Louisianians which he edited and contributed to. After having worked for over a year as Director of Programming and Communication for the Congrès Mondial Acadien-Louisiane 1999, he was named Executive Director of the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana (CODOFIL) in January 1998. In 2004, he was named Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres by the French government. In 2007, the Conseil Supérieur de la Langue Française, a branch of the Québec Provincial Government, named him to the Ordre des Francophones d'Amérique. His second book of poetry, *Julie Choufleur ou les preuves d'amour*, was published in 2008 by Les Éditions Tintamarre at Centenary College in Shreveport, LA. His third, *L'Allée du souvenir* est sort aux Éditions Perce-Neige in Moncton, New

Brunswick in their collection *Acadie Tropicale* in 2017. His fourth book, *Bayou Zen*, is scheduled to come out late 2021, early 2022. His work can also be found in several anthologies, including *Anthologie de la littérature louisianaise d'expression française de 1682 à nos jours*, published by UL Press 2017. In May 2011, after thirteen years at CODOFIL, he was named Chief Executive Officer of Bayou Vermilion District, a political subdivision of the State of Louisiana wholly within Lafayette Parish.

Do the right thing and show some respect for this Cajun scholar who has been a leader in the pantheon of the French Renaissance in Louisiana. *Merci beaucoup pour votre soutien.*

Warren A. Perrin

Co-author, *Acadie Then and Now: A People's History* (French and English editions) winner, Le Prix France-Acadie <https://www.acadianmuseum.com/boutique.html>

Co-author, *Seeking an Acadian Nation: the 1930 Diary of an Evangeline Girl* <https://www.acadianmuseum.com/boutique.html>

Chairman, the Acadian Museum of Louisiana <https://www.acadianmuseum.com>
President of CODOFIL, 1994-2010.

***AGAINST TERMINATION - 6**

From: Bruce Jordan <bjordan@stokesandspiehler.com>

Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 10:57 AM

To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermiliondistrict.org>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Keep David Cheramie

Sirs,

Your meeting and quest to remove David Cheramie from office is a waste of time and taxpayers money.

He is doing, and always has, done a good job.

He needs to stay in the job.

Thanks,

***AGAINST TERMINATION - 5**

From: babsvwerner@aol.com <babsvwerner@aol.com>

Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 10:48 AM

To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermiliondistrict.org>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] David Cheramie

I was disheartened to see the news about David Cheramie in The Advocate this morning. I have worked with David through the Bayou Vermilion Preservation Association since 2012. David is a standing member of the BVPA Board of Directors. He has always been professional in his actions. He has been

very supportive of our efforts to educate the community about the Teche-Vermilion watershed. He has participated in our yearly symposium. I am also a Master Gardener and have worked with David on this project since 2011. Again, his support has been outstanding. I have never seen or heard any remarks made by David that would be inappropriate.

I fully support David in his role as CEO of the Bayou Vermilion District and Vermilionville.

Babette Werner

Babette Werner
337-258-6411
babsvwerner@aol.com

***NO VOTE - 2**

From: Charissa Helluin
Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 10:08 AM
To: thescottherald@aol.com; Director of Communications
<communications@bayouvermiliondistrict.org>
Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] Consideration of personnel action: termination of the Chief Executive Officer.

Good morning,

Are you looking to contact Theresa, or is this Theresa?

Thank you,

Charissa M. Helluin
Director of Outreach
[Bayou Vermilion District](#)
[Vermilionville](#)
Outreach@BayouVermilionDistrict.org
337-233-4077, 207

From: thescottherald@aol.com <thescottherald@aol.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 10, 2021 10:27 AM
To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermiliondistrict.org>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Consideration of personnel action: termination of the Chief Executive Officer.

Theresa Rohloff

What else do you need?

***AGAINST TERMINATION - 4**

From: May Waggoner <mwagg1443@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 10:26 AM
To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermiliondistrict.org>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] David Cheramie

Dear members of the BVD Board:

I am writing to voice my support for David Cheramie as director of Vermilionville.

David has performed well for Vermilionville. His superb command of both oral and written French has engendered respect of international visitors and scholars and the prestige of this historical museum, putting Vermilionville on a par with Le Village d'Antan in Quebec and living history museums in France. He knows the history thoroughly and can discuss it on any level.

I do not know the nature of the complaints raised against him, nor do I wish to: complaints sometimes take on an ugly life of their own, and I am not interested in hearsay. David's manner can sometimes ruffle feathers; they did on several occasions when he was a graduate student at UL, but hurt feelings and thin skins are no measure against his excellent performance.

I was a performer at Vermilionville's first performance on its opening day, and I have worked with every director and personnel manager since 1990, as well as most of the staff. I have noticed over the years that Vermilionville seems to have trouble retaining good leadership. Please do not make the mistake of turning your back on this excellent leader.

Dr. May Waggoner
Professor Emeritus of French and Francophone Studies
University of Louisiana

***AGAINST TERMINATION - 3**

From: Chuck Pickett <chuckdrill4939@lusfiber.net>
Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 10:18 AM
To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermiliondistrict.org>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Keep David Cheramie

Sirs,
Your meeting and quest to remove David Cheramie from office is a waste of time and taxpayers money. He is doing, and always has, done a good job. He needs to stay in the job.
Thanks,

Chuck Pickett
Gail Pickett

101 DiCarlo Dr.
Lafayette, La.
70503

***AGAINST TERMINATION - 2**

From: Peggy Feehan <pfeehan@crt.la.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 9:44 AM
To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermiliondistrict.org>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] support for Dr. David Cheramie

Bonjour,

By this email, I wish to give my support to the CEO of the Bayou Vermilion District, Dr. David Cheramie.

I think that Dr. Cheramie is a great asset to the Bayou Vermilion District and Vermilionville.

Vermilionville is a wonderful living history museum that brings in tourists from all over the world. It is a great showcase of the special history and culture present in Acadiana.

I think that Dr. Cheramie brings a lot to the area if only by his knowledge and understanding of the history and losing him would be a great detriment to Vermilionville, the Bayou Vermilion District, the city of Lafayette and the state of Louisiana.

Cordialement,

Peggy Feehan

Peggy Feehan

Directrice exécutive | Executive Director

Conseil pour le développement du français en Louisiane (CODOFIL)

217, rue Principale Ouest | Lafayette, LA 70501 | (337) 262-5810

pfeehan@crt.la.gov | www.codofil.org



***NO VOTE - 1**

From: Sam Oliver <sam@acadianacenterforthearts.org>
Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 8:20 AM
To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermiliondistrict.org>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Do not wish to speak / agenda item "CEO termination"

Please see attached and share with the commissioners.

Best,

Samuel Oliver
Executive Director
Acadiana Center for the Arts

Based on the publically-available agenda, CEO Dr. David Cheramie may be terminated as of August 11, 2021.

BVD has a leadership-level crisis that the commission is responsible for addressing because there is no succession plan for the CEO. It is in the best interest of BVD to establish a succession plan.

BVD should immediately establish a Deputy Director position and fill it with a senior staff member of BVD who is knowledgeable of the full operations of the organization and who has exemplary management skills.

Effective immediately, the Deputy Director would serve as a full step separation between the CEO and the staff of the organization. The org chart would reflect all positions that previously reported to the CEO as reporting to the Deputy Director, and the Deputy Director only would report to the CEO.

This separation will allow the BVD commissioners to focus aligning expectations with the CEO and provide an additional layer of accountability and steady management during any current or future CEO transition.

This position could likely be funded at the \$ 65,000 salary level within the existing budget by leaving one or more vacant positions open at least temporarily.

In the event of the CEO's termination, the Deputy would serve as interim CEO until the position is filled by due process of the commission.

This recommendation is intended in good faith to ensure best practices in both governance and management for this critical environmental and cultural asset in Lafayette.

In the event that BVD decides it needs a deputy director or an interim CEO, it should prioritize the following candidate for the below reasons.

Succession planning is a critical step for an organization, and internal leadership and experience should be encouraged and supported as a party of that process to bolster staff morale and to ensure institutional knowledge is maintained during a leadership transition.

Recommended for consideration:

Melanie “Mel” Harrington

BVD Director of Education and Recreation

[Resume linked here](#)

Why:

- Mel serves a unique place among the BVD senior staff, as the only member who has experience in both the environmental and cultural activities of the organization in her capacity as Director of Education and Recreation. This is compared, for example to Brady, who just works within the historic museum, or Curtis, who just focuses on the physical plant. BVD needs someone who has the big picture in mind.
- Mel has considerable private and public sector experience. She has owned and run her own business and has served as the Director of Tourism for the City of Breau Bridge, BVD needs someone like this who understands the financial side and civic side of the organization's operations.
- Mel has a relevant masters degree with an MA in Cultural Anthropology. This distinction is meaningful for anyone who would lead an organization with a mission that includes public history and education like BVD.
- Mel is well respected in the community of BVD partners and she has an impeccable reputation among the BVD staff as an idea-generating leader who gets the job done. BVD should seek someone as an interim or deputy who would promote cohesion and retention in the staff—loss of key talent has been a crisis-level issue for the organization in the past 12 months.
- Mel is effective at bringing outside funding to the organization through grants and partnerships, and she has shown herself to be as an effective administrator of grants to fund BVD programs. BVD should seek an able administrator who can expand the resources of the organization beyond its existing revenues.
- Mel is and has been the most qualified professional at BVD for years, according to a number of key references who have volunteered her for the role. BVD should hope that a well qualified candidate like Mel would accept an offer of interim leadership.

(Link to resume:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/167DCfKs7qbwhSDeZXCbB3KIPhoVIC63O6Wruq6y1Pd8/edit?usp=sharing>)

***FOR TERMINATION - 2**

-----Original Message-----

From: Markie Belanger <markiebelanger@yahoo.com>

Sent: Tuesday, August 10, 2021 9:02 PM

To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermiliondistrict.org>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Agenda item 2- termination of ceo

Hello,

I would not like to speak at the meeting but I am in favor of the termination of CEO of BVD, David Cheramie.

He did nothing to foster a health work environment. One example- When employed there, I complained that a particular male staff member constantly made inappropriate sexual comments that made me uncomfortable. He told me "that's how he is". Nothing was ever done about it.

I also highly suggest an outside hire as replacement. You need someone who will clean house and run the place efficiently, not just someone who is known in Lafayette.

As interim director, I suggest Melanie Herrington who has a great reputation for being a team player and leader. She fosters an environment of encouragement, creativity, and kindness in all that she does. She is well known within the music community and education field at all levels. She is the clear choice.

Thank you for your time,

Markie Belanger

***AGAINST TERMINATION - 1**

-----Original Message-----

From: H A Mc Connell,jr <docmac39@bellsouth.net>

Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 7:35 AM

To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermiliondistrict.org>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Item 2

I am Dr. H.A.McConnell,Jr,DDS

I VOTE AGAINST TERMINATION OF Dr.Cheramie !

Sent from my iPhone

***FOR TERMINATION - 1**

-----Original Message-----

From: joe_bourg@juno.com <joe_bourg@juno.com>

Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 7:28 AM

To: Director of Communications <communications@bayouvermilliondistrict.org>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] CEO

The CEO should be treated as any other employee would be treated. Otherwise litigation is a legitimate option.

Joe Bourg
Lafayette LA

Dear BVD Commissioners,

I have known Dr. Cheramie, his work in the community, his work in francophone studies, and his work with the Bayou Vermilion District for many years. In all of those years I have known him as a stand-up, considered, fair-minded, and decent human being, and I was shocked and surprised to read in the Advocate that complaints had been lodged against his leadership practices by members of his staff, some of whom I know and have worked with as well. I was also shocked to read that the BVD Commissioners are actually considering each of the three options presented by outside counsel last month, when clearly the equitable and reasonable first step would be to take the middle stance of initiating a well researched performance improvement plan. Cooler heads will acknowledge that an investment of more than 10 years in a steadfast employee is not a simple thing to toss aside when a few employees decide to "talk out of school." Perhaps the allegations are factual; perhaps they are just gossip. Perhaps the Commissioners ought to give the benefit of the doubt to the man who has led the organization through lots of lean years and who deserves the opportunity to defend himself or to right his imbalances, which is only possible through the development and implementation of an appropriately structured performance improvement plan. The implementation of such a plan—done well—would also benefit the organizational structure in other ways by bringing other potential issues to light, as well. Thank you for the opportunity to make this statement. ~Sally O. Donlon/337-288-4396/sodonlon@gmail.com

Hello, I am Philip Gould, a long-standing friend and fan of Vermilionville since its inception in 1990. As such, I am speaking in support of Executive Director David Cheramie and against any attempt to terminate his employment by the BVD board. David has served as director for a decade. In that time, he has accomplished a great deal for Vermilionville, for the river, the district, the city, the parish and state. Specifically, Cheramie has developed Vermilionville to be the vital cultural and historic center as well as tourist attraction that we know today. Vermilionville is now one of the area's primary venues for concerts, dances, jam sessions, weddings, lectures, and cultural events honoring Acadians, Creoles and Native Americans. Vermilionville also hosts larger gatherings such as the Black Pot Festival. David has also led the charge to further clean the river and maintain its beauty and viability. He has established a system sending crews out daily to pick up garbage and unwanted items. These crews also work diligently to keep the river free of fallen trees and open to navigation. A simple ride on the now beautiful Vermilion River can attest to their success. Just as important, David has worked to increase and enhance public awareness of the Vermilion River through a variety of events such as the annual Boat Parade. According to the original BVD mission statement, "Bayou Vermilion District's purpose is to improve the water quality and the aesthetics of the Bayou Vermilion within the Parish of Lafayette in an effort to

promote the bayou as a recreational, cultural, and economic asset ...” By any measure, David has faithfully executed this mission with great success, which leads me to wonder why the board is attempting to terminate him. From a distance, the whole matter feels like a political hatchet job that for whatever reason, some members simply want David Cheramie gone. In light of his record, one must ask why. Frankly, this attempted ouster has an odorous stench about it, one that reminds me of the Vermilion River itself in decades past, when garbage as well as rotting carcasses floated downstream past homes and parks, when the river itself was sadly an embarrassment. David Cheramie and his staff have worked hard to clean and beautify the Vermilion River. It is sad that some members of the BVD board have difficulty appreciating his efforts. In considering this matter, I am reminded of what Jesuit priests would often say when presented with a bad idea. “Sure, you can go ahead and do it, but in the end, you will regret it.” This is not a time for misguided, regrettable actions. Rather, we all need to get past this moment, to work in concert, and to keep the river clean and Vermilionville vital. Many thanks.

My name is Theresa Rohloff and as I intended to say at this evening's discourse, I have always been impressed with Dr. David Cheramie's demeanor and the things he has done for the community and Vermilionville. This evening I have learned that his wealth of experience and expansion of programs has been recognized extensively by others who I also respect. In my interactions with him, his ethics have been beyond reproach and he stands strong as an ambassador for this area and a champion in his support of Vermilionville's participation and expansion of environmental and cultural programs.

I was truly worried that the problem might be something to do with finances at a time when the entire world is being impacted by COVID and its affect on economy. Any ultimatum that might have been suggested as to Vermilionville's monetary flow or financial health would have to be tempered with reason due to our current worldwide crisis. But that does not seem to be the focus, although I think it might benefit Vermilionville to have the community assemble to help in any way it can if that is needed.

What surprised me most of all was how certain commissioners on this board were so clearly biting at the bit to fire Dr. Cheramie. Of course, before sitting through this meeting, I would not have planned to bring this up and certainly was not expecting such a reactionary push to fire by a couple of commissioners. I applaud those members who had the forthright vision to see that some internal review might be necessary for the board, as sometimes those who are freshest to the field, have the best clarity on what is transpiring.

I am glad to see that the majority of the board saw fit to rethink this motion and hope that board, staff, and administration can get it together and focus on continuing the great things that Vermilionville and Bayou Vermilion District bring to Lafayette, Louisiana and all its visitors from all over the world.

Truly,
Theresa Rohloff

