

MINUTES

Monroe City School Board
2101 Roselawn Avenue
Monroe, Louisiana 71201

The Monroe City School Board met in regular session, Tuesday, August 12, 2008 at 6:00 p.m. at Wossman High School, 1600 Arizona Street, Monroe, Louisiana 71202. The meeting was called to order by the president. Prayer was offered by Rev. James B. Johnson. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited in unison.

Item 4: Roll Call

Board Members Present

Mrs. Victoria "Vickie" Dayton
Mrs. Victoria "Vickie" Krutzer
Mr. James Mickey Traweek
Mr. Jessie Handy
Bishop Rodney McFarland, Sr.
Mrs. Stephanie Smith
Mrs. Brenda Shelling

Superintendent and Administrative Staff

Dr. James Dupree
Ms. Karla Bowlin
Mrs. Betty Carroll
Mrs. Derenda Flowers
Mrs. Teresa Foreman
Mr. Andrew Hill
Mrs. Vickie Irwin
Mrs. Julie Staley
Dr. Tammye Turpin
Mr. Bobby Williams
Ms. Mamie Williams
Attorney L. Douglas Lawrence

Action Item 5: Adoption of the Consent Agenda

It was moved by Mrs. Shelling and seconded by Mr. Traweek to remove 5:H (human resources agenda) from the consent agenda and place it on the regular agenda as 7:B and to approve the following consent agenda items:

5:A – Adoption of the agenda

5:B – Adoption of the July 15, 2008 board minutes

- 5:C – Permission to advertise for bids for stage lighting - Neville High
- 5:D – Permission to advertise for bids for stage curtains - Wossman High
- 5:E – Permission to advertise for bids for stage curtains - Carroll High
- 5:F – Permission to advertise for surplus/garage sale for items stored at Georgia Tucker
- 5:G – Adoption of the 2008-2009 Pupil Progression Plan

The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Agenda Item 6 – President’s Reports and Announcements

President Dayton thanked everyone for their attendance and asked that all cell phones be turned off. She informed the public on procedure for addressing the Board on agenda and non-agenda items.

Agenda Item 6:A – Superintendent Search Update

President Dayton noted that a meeting was held last night to present the top five candidates for superintendent to the Board. She also noted that the process was not tainted, and the committee did what they felt was in the best interest of the school system. She thanked the liaison and search committee for over 700 hours of work.

Ms. Lorraine Slacks, Committee Chair, presented to the Board an overview and scope of the Superintendent Search Committee. She noted that twenty applications were received; six did not meet the advertised criteria. Since the initial interviews with the top five candidates, two have withdrawn their names for consideration. The three remaining candidates are: Dr. Julia Earl, Dr. James McCormick and Dr. Louis Gonzales.

Ms. Dana Jefferson and Ms. Kathy Patrick addressed the Board on the superintendent search process and the absence of Board members at last night’s meeting.

Mrs. Smith commented that the president should have addressed the issue regarding the absenteeism of Board members. She stated that the President knew that all Board members could not attend the meeting; therefore, the meeting should not have taken place.

President Dayton stated that the meeting date was set when the timeline was adopted by the Board. She also stated that in respect to Board members that were unable to attend, she accepted the information on their behalf.

Action Item 7:A – Approval of Principal of Carroll High School

Mrs. Shelling requested that the Board go into executive session to discuss the appointment of the principal at Carroll High School. She said, “It has been brought to my attention that the Monroe City School Board may have exposed themselves to possible litigation as the result of allowing my daughter, Dr. Cassandra Shelling, to apply for the position of principal. First, state law prohibits immediate family of school board members from serving in a capacity other than a teaching position. Second, based on the statement of Ms. Kathleen Allen, attorney for the Louisiana State Ethics Board, there is no exception that allows a

school board member's immediate family to be appointed as a principal. Third, The News Star stated that 'consideration of Cassandra Shelling, daughter of a seating board member, will result in an apparent ethical violation for the Board.' Therefore, it is my fiduciary duty as an elected official to request that we go into executive session to discuss this matter and to receive advice from our attorney."

The motion was seconded by Bishop McFarland.

Mrs. Dayton stated that this would need to be added to the agenda. She then asked Attorney Lawrence his opinion.

Attorney Lawrence replied, "The Open Meetings Law is very specific on this issue. If there is no objection by unanimous consent, the matter can be taken up as an executive session item. If there is an objection from a Board member on the issue you must put the matter to a vote to be added to the agenda."

Mrs. Shelling stated, "According to my attorney we are violating state law. We can not discuss this here because it is a personnel issue and it is pending litigation. I would warn this Board not to discuss this tonight because we have violated state law by even allowing her to apply. We need to go on record tonight indicating that we have violated state law. Since it is pending litigation, I ask that we go into executive session because by law we should."

Attorney Lawrence asked Mrs. Shelling if that was her motion.

Mrs. Shelling replied, "Yes."

President Dayton noted that it has been motioned and seconded to convene in executive session in order to hear a matter that is identified as pending litigation.

Mrs. Smith stated, "As a matter of record, the superintendent has not made a recommendation. As a Board member, I don't know what the recommendation is."

Mrs. Shelling replied, "I agree with Mrs. Smith. My concern is not the recommendation. My concern is that we have violated state law by allowing my daughter to apply for a position that she should not have applied for. I don't have a problem with discussing it in public, but because it is pending litigation we should go into executive session."

Mr. Handy asked president Dayton to identify a time period.

President Dayton noted that the time would be fifteen minutes.

The motion carried on a majority vote. Mrs. Krutzer opposed.

After the allotted time, Mr. Handy informed the audience that the Board would need an additional ten minutes.

On a unanimous vote, the board reconvened in open session at 7:05 p.m. on a motion by Mrs. Shelling that was seconded by Bishop McFarland.

Attorney Lawrence stated, "The Louisiana Code of Governmental Ethics prohibits an immediate family member from holding certain positions as long as the other family member is a member of the school board. As long as Mrs. Shelling is a member of the Board, one of the applicants can not be named to the position of principal without violating the Code of Governmental Ethics."

Mrs. Shelling stated "I want the public to know that when my daughter applied for the position of principal at Carroll High School, we were not aware that she would be violating state law. I called the ethics board and received clarification on the issue. I then called our Board attorney to insure that I was being given the same information. I also consulted with my personal attorney. Because of the information I have gleamed from each of these resources, I chose to ask the Board to go into executive session to make a decision regarding my daughter's application for the position of principal of Carroll High School."

President Dayton asked Dr. Dupree for his recommendation.

Dr. Dupree stated that he was not prepared to make a recommendation for the principal of Carroll High School at this time.

Action Item 7:B – Human Resources Agenda

It was moved by Bishop McFarland and second by Mr. Handy to approve the human resources agenda.

Mrs. Smith recused. She stated that one of the individuals on the human resources agenda is a family member.

The motion carried on a majority vote.

Agenda Item 8:A – Academic Performance

2007-2008 Summary Report of One-to-One Support to Students

Mrs. Jackie Matthews reported on the Supplemental Educational Services Program held at Carroll Jr. High. Strengthening Our Students Academically (SOSA), was offered ten Saturdays from December 2007 to March 2008 for a total of forty hours. On the spring accountability test 58.3% of students scored proficient in English/ language arts and 33% scored proficient in math. Students improved an average of two grade levels in reading and one grade level in math. As a result of the services provided, Carroll Jr. High was the only middle/junior high school in Louisiana to exit AUS.

Mrs. Patricia Johnson reported on the 21st Century Community Learning Centers after school program. The creation of community learning centers provides academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours for students. The following schools participated in the

program: Lincoln Elementary, Sallie Humble Elementary, Carroll Jr. High, Robert E. Lee Jr. High, Martin Luther King Jr., Middle, Carroll High and Wossman High. There was a combined total of 1415 students served in the 21st Century Program and GEAR-UP Program during the 2007 – 2008 school year.

Jackie Matthews report on GEAR-UP. This program is a national initiative that is a college readiness and awareness program. One goal of GEAR-UP is to increase math and English/language arts scores by 10%. The first cohorts will become sophomores this year and those students will be followed through high school graduation. Partnerships have been formed throughout the City of Monroe to provide enrichment and academic support to students.

Agenda Item 8:B – Clara Hall update

Dr. Turpin updated the Board on Clara Hall Elementary. She noted that the new principal is working with faculty and staff to prepare for the opening of school. A reading coach and an additional teacher interventionist have been hired to address students that scored below the benchmark in reading. Also, after school programs have been expanded and additional staff has been added to lower the student/teacher ratio.

Agenda Item 9 – MIS and IT Progress Report

Karla Bowlin highlighted the 2007-2008 MIS and IT Progress report. The district is one of two other sites in Louisiana that was selected for the Telepresence Project. This project will allow the district to communicate in real time with the Louisiana Department of Education. The Web Site Redesign Project should be up in approximately two weeks. Also, Video Conferencing will be available for check-out through schools.

Agenda Item 10 – Board Committee update

Mr. Traweek will schedule a facility committee meeting for next week.

Mrs. Krutzer noted that the policy committee was instructed by the board to look at a policy on censoring Board members. Currently there is no policy regarding this issue. She noted that a committee meeting will be called to review the draft policy manual.

Agenda Item 11 – Department of Justice Report

Attorney Lawrence disseminated to the Board a summary of the proposed consent decree that was sent to him by the Department of Justice. The proposed decree focuses on: the Medical Magnet program at Carroll High, high school course offerings, TOPS Scholarships, and the affiliation with an Intercultural Development Research Association. The decree is to be in effect for five years with an annual report due at the end of each school year. The next step is to either accept the proposed decree or to modify it. Once it is signed by a federal judge, the district will have forty-five days to initiate contact with the Intercultural Development Research Association.

Dr. Dupree states that his administrative staff will meet and respond to each item from the Department of Justice.

Action Item 12 – Hiring of Superintendent of Schools

Mrs. Shelling commended the search committee on their hard work during the search. She stated, “As a Board member my first and initial position was that this process be flawless and aboveboard with no tampering or interference. However, I have experienced poor leadership, manipulative behavior, backdoor meetings and leaks to the media. Initially, I voted not to renew the superintendent’s contract because I experienced negative communication with him. However, because of what I just mentioned, I would like to take another position. First, I would like to reject the applicants that were received. Additionally, I move that we hire Dr. James Dupree as superintendent of Monroe City Schools under a new contract of employment to commence on September 21, 2008 at 12:01 p.m. and that Dr. Dupree immediately enter into an agreement with Attorney Doug Lawrence and bring to the board at the next regular meeting the terms of the contract which will include: benefit options; goals and objectives to be accomplished during his second term; job performance and responsibilities; and any other inclusive options deemed necessary.” Bishop McFarland seconded the motion.

Public In-put

Ms. Annie Jopling and Ms. Kathy Patrick addressed the board on the superintendent process and Board unity.

Ms. Gloria Walker addressed the Board on student achievement and leadership of the current superintendent.

Board Comments

Mr. Handy stated that it is his desire that this Board come together and do what is best for students.

Bishop McFarland stated that when Dr. Dupree came into the district the entire Board voted for him and he would that to happen again tonight.

Mr. Traweck questioned the terms of the superintendent’s contract. He offered a friendly amendment to adhere to the same terms as advertised for the new superintendent.

Mrs. Shelling replied, “When we initially employed Dr. Dupree, we hired him and then asked that the contract be drawn up for presentation to the Board. We did not draw up a contract and then hire him. I am asking that we follow the same guidelines. Therefore, I do not accept your friendly amendment.”

Mr. Traweek stated that perimeters and guidelines were established four years ago and none are being established now.

Mrs. Shelling asked for a roll call.

President Dayton stated that as president she would vote last.

In favor: Mr. Handy, Bishop McFarland, Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Shelling

Opposed: Mrs. Krutzer, Mr. Traweek, Mrs. Dayton

President Dayton said, "I am voting no because it was my desire that the Board reach a consensus and allow the search committee to finish their work. Our decision could have been to keep Dr. Dupree and allow the community to buy-in so that we would not have a divided community. As a Board member I will support Dr. Dupree to make him successful."

The motion carried on a majority vote.

Attorney Lawrence stated that this process should be a joint effort with the Board attorney, Board members and Dr. Dupree.

President Dayton stated that the president, vice president and legal counsel will meet and discuss the contact and a recommendation should be made at the next board meeting.

Action Item 12-B: Censorship of Board members

Mrs. Shelling asked that this item be tabled.

Mr. Traweek stated that after speaking with Bishop McFarland, this item should be removed from the agenda. He further stated that there was a misunderstanding as to what Bishop McFarland wanted placed on the agenda.

Bishop McFarland said, "I asked that the Policy Committee create a policy on censoring a Board member. I was not asking that a Board member be censored. I request that this item be pulled from the agenda."

Attorney Lawrence stated that a temporary restraining order was filed today regarding agenda Item 12:B. He also stated that he received a request from Judge Jones to let Mr. King address the Board.

Mr. King stated that he was asked to speak under a verbal order from the judge. He further stated that the Board should be knowledgeable of the Open Meetings Law and that items placed on the agenda are to be comprehensible by the public.

It was moved by Mrs. Shelling and seconded by Bishop McFarland to delete agenda item 12:B.

Bishop McFarland stated that a policy regarding censorship needs to be developed.

Mrs. Krutzer stated that a policy will be developed and presented to the Board for adoption.

The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Agenda Item 13 – Superintendent Announcements and Updates

Dr. Dupree thanked Board members for voting to retain him as superintendent.

He announced that the district is ready up for back-to-school. Principals, administrators and substitute have been in training. In-service for certified staff will be conducted at Carroll High School this week.

Agenda Item 14 – Public Input on Non-Agenda Items

Mrs. Gloria Walker asked the Board to look into MFP money for students.

Ms. Rachelle May addressed the Board on unity.

Ms. Sandie Lollie asked the Board to consider giving employees a cost of living raise.

Action Item 15 – Adjournment/Recess

On a motion by Mr. Handy that was seconded by Mrs. Smith, the meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m. on a unanimous vote.

Mrs. Victoria Dayton
President

James A. Dupree, Ed.D.
Superintendent