

MINUTES

Monroe City School Board
2101 Roselawn Avenue
Monroe, Louisiana 71201

The Monroe City School Board met in regular session, Tuesday, March 10, 2009 at the Monroe City School Board Media Center, 2009 Auburn Avenue, Monroe, Louisiana 71201. The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m. by President Shelling. Prayer was offered by Reverend Van Brass. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Jamie Powell; Berg Jones Lane Elementary School.

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

Action Item 5 – Adoption of Agenda

On a motion by Bishop McFarland that was seconded by Mrs. Dayton, the Board approved the agenda as printed.

The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Action Item 6 – Adoption of Minutes

On a motion by Mrs. Smith that was seconded by Mr. Handy, the Board approved the February 24, 2009 and February 26, 2009 minutes as printed.

The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Agenda Item 7:A – Recognitions

Dr. Dupree presented certificates of appreciation to the 2009 Truancy Board. Members are: Captain Carol Andrews, Gwen Dupree, Peggy Steele, John Russell, Nydia Walker-Sims, Susie Fenceroy, Vanessa Small, Ferdess Smith, Pat Dismuke, Christie Taylor, Patrina Riley, Alisha Virgil, Gloria Elmore, Bob Rash, Phyllis Watkins Salazar, Scott Shelby, Barry Jones, Jennifer Harris, Michelle Triplett, Alice Gordon, John Ross, Patty Newman, Pamela Smith, Lue Reed, Gloria Carroll, Patricia Johnson, Phedra Brantley Sylvia Brass, Clarissa McFee, Sharon Wilborn, Sgt. Roy Brown, Addie Morehouse

Board members thanked the Truancy Board for volunteering their time.

Agenda Item 7:B – Timeline for M.L.K. Principal

The timeline for a principal at Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School was presented to the Board. Newspaper and internet advertisement will begin the week of March 16, 2009. A recommendation by the Superintendent will be presented to the Board at the May 19, 2009 board meeting.

Dr. Dupree noted that Mrs. Blue is on leave and Mr. Harrington Watson will serve as interim principal until a permanent principal is named.

Agenda Item 8:A – Feasibility Study

Mr. Charles Monroe noted that site visits have been completed at Wossman, Carroll High and Lee. A finalized plan by Architecture Plus should be complete in approximately one week. A facility assessment for all schools is currently being prepared by TB Architecture.

President Shelling stated that she is concerned that the district has committed \$75,000 to the City of Monroe for a baseball field for Carroll High and now there is discussion about placing the field behind the school.

Mrs. Krutzer stated that the agreement should be honored because the district has committed the funds. She suggested that the Superintendent speak with Mayor Mayo and Mr. Ross to clear up any miscommunication regarding the project.

Mr. Traweek noted that both Neville and Wossman play on fields owned by the City of Monroe. He stated that the city is responsible for upkeep and utilities on the property. He further stated that the district committed funds for this project and that the grant may be compromised if funds are pulled.

Bishop McFarland stated that he is concerned that the practice field for the football team will be lost if the baseball field is placed behind the school. He said that additional land may need to be purchased.

Mr. Handy stated that he does not want this project to die because of miscommunication.

Mrs. Smith asked that the Board consider Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School when looking at improvements at schools. She noted that the school uses Wossman's field and sometimes there is a scheduling conflict.

Agenda Item 8:B – Superintendent Performance Objectives

Mrs. Dayton briefly updated the Board on the Superintendent Performance Objectives. She noted that the committee will discuss the superintendent's evaluation process during the March 24th work-session. She asked Attorney Lawrence to provide each Board member with a signed copy of the contract. In April the committee will develop the evaluation instrument, adopt it in May and perform the evaluation in June.

Action Item 8:C – Equality of Programs at Neville

Attorney Lawrence disseminated to the Board an excerpt of the 2008 report issued by the Department of Justice which reflects course offering at all three high schools. The report summarizes advance placement, gifted and honors courses at all three high schools during the 2007-2008 school year.

Mrs. Krutzer inquired as to why only six elementary schools are listed on the DOJ report.

Attorney Lawrence replied that he did not know why they only listed those schools.

Mrs. Krutzer stated that the report does not provide a clear picture of the Gifted and Talented program because all schools are not listed. She further stated that there needs to be an addendum to the consent decree that lists the remaining schools.

It was moved by Mrs. Smith and seconded by Bishop McFarland to table this agenda item until an overall study of course offering is presented to the Board.

The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Mrs. Smith asked for a report on gifted classes by schools.

Action Item 9:A-1 – Contract for Communications Planning and Coordination

Attorney Lawrence presented a contract for communication services based on information provided by the Superintendent. The contractor is identified as Mrs. Amy Scott. Attorney Lawrence noted that the proposal covers a 91 day period at a cost of

\$8,400.00 to be paid in three monthly consecutive installments of \$2,800.00 with the first payment due May 1, 2009.

It was moved by Bishop McFarland and seconded by Mr. Handy to contract for communications planning and coordination.

President Shelling stated that because of the negative publicity it is important that the public be made aware of positive things in the district.

Mrs. Dayton said that she understands the need but she is opposed because of the unknown economic state.

In favor: Mr. Handy, Bishop McFarland, Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Shelling
Opposed: Mrs. Dayton, Mrs. Krutzer, Mr. Traweek

The motion carried on a majority vote.

Action Item 9:A-2 – Employment of Internal Auditor

Dr. Dupree noted that as a result of the Legislative Audit, it was recommended that an internal auditor be employed by the district.

Mrs. Flowers noted that very few school districts in Louisiana have this position. She asked the Board to consider several things as the decision is being contemplated. She said, “This person will be appointed by the Board and will answer to you. In order for this position to be viable the person must be qualified and familiar with schools. You must also consider if one person or a majority of Board members will assign tasks.”

Mrs. Dayton stated that Mrs. Flowers has brought up some excellent points. She also stated that the Board should consider contracting the services.

It was moved by Mrs. Dayton and seconded by Bishop McFarland to table this agenda item.

The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Action Item 9:B – Human Resources Agenda

On a motion by Bishop McFarland that was seconded by Mrs. Smith, the Board approved the human resources agenda as presented by the administration.

The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Action Item 9:C – Approval of the 2009-2010 School Calendar

On a motion by Bishop McFarland that was seconded by Mrs. Smith, the Board approved the 2009-2010 school calendar as presented.

The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Action Item 9:D-1 – Awarding of Bid for Special Needs School Buses

On a motion by Bishop McFarland that was seconded by Mrs. Smith, the Board awarded a bid to Ross Bus & Equipment Sales, Inc. for special needs school buses as recommended by the administration.

The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Agenda Item 9:D-2 – 2009-2010 Budget Presentation

Mrs. Flowers noted that the target date for budget adoption is June 2, 2009. She noted that prior to adoption; the MFP and Stimulus Package must be taken into consideration.

President Shelling stated that the Board needs to hear from department heads before the budget is adopted.

Agenda Item 10 – Board Committee Updates

1. Transportation Committee: Mrs. Krutzer noted that a transportation committee meeting will be called in approximately two weeks.
2. Personnel Committee: Bishop McFarland asked that the committee look at the scope of the personnel committee as outlined in the policy handbook at the next scheduled meeting. He asked that the work-session be shortened in order to have a full committee meeting. Mrs. Shelling asked Bishop McFarland to chair the discussion on staffing.
3. Facilities Committee: Mr. Traweck noted that roofing jobs, funded through QZAB, are now complete.
4. Insurance Committee: Mr. Handy stated that he will contact the superintendent and insurance coordinator to schedule a meeting.
5. Finance Committee: President Shelling noted that each time a finance committee meeting is called, a Board member will be appointed to chair the meeting.

Agenda Item 11 – President's Reports and Announcement

1. The staff was commended for meeting the payroll deadline. Employees were thanked for being patient while the situation was resolved.

2. The Board president and secretary traveled to Natchitoches to identify a location for the retreat. Because of the time-frame it was determined that it would not be feasible to hold the retreat at that location at this time. The retreat will be held locally on March 15th and 16th. Location and time will be determined.
3. The LSBA Conference was very informative. President Shelling noted that State Superintendent of Education, Mr. Paul Pastorek, spoke during the conference. She shared with the Board items he is proposing. She also noted that she will travel to Baton Rouge to attend the BESE meeting. Board members are invited to attend.

President Shelling requested that the following statement be made a part of the official minutes: She said, "I know you all have noticed in the past couple of weeks that we have been bombarded by the News-Star in regards to receipts for the Superintendent's expenses. Tonight we were served with another public records request. The New-Star is asking for 1.) Expense details of all expenditures on the Monroe City School Board VISA card for January 2008 – December 2008 and 2.) Documentation of any reimbursements made by Monroe City School Board members or district employees for expenditures on the Monroe City School Board VISA card for January 2008 – December 2008. In response to the articles regarding expenses and meals, I am not concerned about the cost of the expenses because they are minimal. I am going to read to you expenses that were not minimal. I am going to read to you Dr. George Cannon's expenses. You need to compare superintendent to former superintendent. You can not compare our superintendent to another district's superintendent because no two districts are alike. You made reference to expenditures at high cost restaurants. In the year 2003, Mr. Cannon ate seventy-seven times at the Chateau. On January 30, 2003, in South Carolina, there was a charge at a restaurant for \$374.58; the next day there was another charge at Middendorf's Restaurant in New Orleans for \$106.01. Ms. Leader, I just want to give you some examples. On April 14, 2003 there were six charges at the Chateau Restaurant in one day. Charges for February totaled \$1,099.47 and charges in April totaled \$1,153.34. On October 17, 2003 there was a charge at Ruth's Chris Restaurant in Baton Rouge for \$334.04; a high-end restaurant. I will give you this report. We had a \$3 million deficit at that time, now we have a \$10 million surplus. Dr. Dupree's charges are minor compared to this. My comments have nothing to do with defending Jim Dupree – it has to do with what is right. When you say that certain Board members ate with Jim Dupree and don't list the others, I have a problem with that. I was purposely pointed out as eating six meals with Dr. Jim Dupree. On two of the occasions other Board members ate with the Superintendent but they were not mentioned. That lets me know that you are targeting me."

Mrs. Smith said, "As a Board member I do not appreciate some of the things that are being said. I think that African American Board members and the Superintendent are being attacked in the newspaper. The attack on the district is unfair to our community, students, faculty and staff."

Bishop McFarland stated that charges for the previous Superintendent needed to be brought out. He also stated that he was offended that black board members were being described as “the gang of four”.

Mrs. Krutzer noted that the LSBA Conference was very informative. She also noted that the district’s facilities should be assessed for energy efficiency.

Mr. Handy thanked Mrs. Shelling for her report. He noted that the New-Star is in the business of selling papers.

President Shelling announced that the first community meeting will be held on March 24th at Wossman High School. She requested that the public relations coordinator publicize the meeting.

Agenda Item 12 – Superintendent’s Announcements

Dr. Dupree noted that there is an interim principal at Carroll High School and that the position will be opened up for a permanent replacement.

Agenda Item 13 – Executive Session

Mrs. Barbara Leader stated that she objects to the second item on the executive session.

Attorney Lawrence replied, “We have a right because there is a provision to the Open Meetings Law that talks about misconduct investigations. In this instance the news report was that a criminal complaint was filed; the district attorney received it; and the district attorney is now referring the criminal complaint to the Louisiana State Police for investigation. Because this is a criminal complaint against the head of the school district, we are concerned. For both litigation wise and misconduct wise, we have the right to discuss this in executive session.”

It was moved by Mr. Handy and seconded by Bishop McFarland that the Board and Superintendent convene in executive session for fifteen minutes to discuss Gannett River Publishing Corporation, et al. –vs– Monroe City School Board, et al (Court of Appeal, 2nd Cir. No. 44231-CA); and the criminal complaint of Barbara Leader against the Superintendent of Schools.

The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Agenda Item 14 – Reconvene in Open Session

The meeting reconvened in open session at 8:28 p.m.

Action Item 15 – Recess/Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 8:28 p.m. upon a motion by Mr. Handy and seconded by Bishop McFarland.

The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Mrs. Brenda Shelling
President

James A. Dupree, Ed.D.
Superintendent