

MINUTES

Monroe City School Board
2101 Roselawn Avenue
Monroe, Louisiana 71201

The Monroe City School Board met in a special called meeting, Thursday, July 16, 2009 at the Monroe City School Board Media Center, 2009 Auburn Avenue, Monroe, Louisiana 71201. The meeting was called to order at 5:10 p.m. by President Shelling. Prayer was offered by Reverend James B. Johnson, New Light Baptist Church. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Ms. Sandie Lollie.

Item 4: Roll Call

Board Members Present

Mrs. Victoria "Vickie" Dayton
Mrs. Victoria "Vickie" Krutzer
Mr. James Mickey Traweek
Mrs. Brenda Shelling

Board Members Absent

Bishop Rodney McFarland, Sr.
Mrs. Stephanie Smith
Mr. Jessie Handy

Superintendent and Administrative Staff

Dr. James Dupree
Mrs. Derenda Flowers
Mrs. Betty Carroll
Mrs. Vickie Irwin
Mr. Andrew Hill
Mrs. Julie Staley
Mrs. Teresa Foreman
Attorney L. Douglas Lawrence

Adoption of the Agenda

Mrs. Dayton stated that the Board needs to consider the addition of an executive session as the first agenda item. She asked Attorney Lawrence to speak to the justification.

Attorney Lawrence stated that the executive session will speak specifically to the specific counts of charges, misconduct, policy violations or whatever that will serve as the violation basis for items #5 and #6 on the agenda under the misconduct exception of the Open Meetings Law.

It was moved by Mrs. Dayton and seconded by Mrs. Krutzer to adopt the agenda as printed with changes as indicated.

The motion passed on a unanimous vote.

Executive Session

It was moved by Mrs. Dayton to convene in executive session to discuss matters as indicated by the Board Attorney. Mrs. Shelling passed the gavel to Vice President Traweck and seconded the motion.

Mrs. Shelling noted that the Board will convene in executive session for fifteen minutes.

The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Reconvene In Open Session

Attorney Lawrence asked to address the Board. He stated that while in executive session, several attorneys entered the meeting chambers and indicated that they are making a legal demand on the school district as a threat of litigation. There was a request to discuss the matter. Under the Open Meetings Law it is permitted to meet in executive session specifically to discuss the receipt of a threat of a legal claim or litigation. In order to have this type of discussion, the matter will have to be added to the agenda and there must be a vote to go into executive session regarding the discussion of the legal claim or threat of litigation. Attorney Lawrence made note that Mr. Scott, Mr. Britton and Mr. Pierre are present and representing the Superintendent.

Motion to add to the Agenda

It was moved by Mrs. Dayton and seconded by Mr. Traweck to add to the agenda an executive session to discuss the threat of pending litigation.

The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Executive Session

It was moved by Mrs. Krutzer and seconded by Mr. Traweck to convene in executive session to discuss the threat of pending litigation.

The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Reconvene In Open Session

The Board reconvened in open session, and the meeting continued.

Action Item 5 – Suspension from Employment of the Superintendent

Attorney Lawrence noted that an offer was made to the school district regarding a resolution to all matters that will facilitate an exit. The district made a counter offer – that offer was rejected.

It was moved by Mr. Traweek and seconded by Mrs. Krutzer to suspend Dr. James Dupree, Superintendent of Schools, from his employment with the Monroe City School District with pay, effective immediately, for a period up to ninety days unless subsequently modified for a shorter period of time with the following prohibitions unless specifically authorized by the Board:

- a) He shall immediately cease all official activities associated with his job duties as Superintendent and cease his official involvement in the affairs of the school district, and this includes a directive that he make no official appearances on behalf of the school district, and have no official communications in his official capacity as Superintendent with school district employees, vendors, contractors, representatives or other affiliates of the Monroe City School District, and that he refrain from acting for, or communicating on behalf of, the school district with any person, agency or entity;
- b) He shall not go upon the physical premises of any school, administrative office or other premises owned or controlled by the school district (including the Superintendent's office), unless authorized by the Board and accompanied by persons designated by the Board.
- c) He shall immediately relinquish to the Board all keys to all school district premises, all school district credit cards (including debit cards or any other mediums through which purchases can be made) all school district owned computers, cell phones or other property in his possession that is owned or subject to the control of the school district and that is in his possession;
- d) He shall remain cooperative and available to the Board during the period of his suspension, to respond to questions or inquiries by the Board, and to perform or resume those job duties and responsibilities that may be requested by the Board.
- e) He shall engage in no travel on behalf of the school district or at its expense.
- f) He shall incur no debt for or in the name of the school district.
- g) He shall no bind the school district to no contractual obligations.

Mrs. Krutzer asked for a clarification on the number of days.

Mr. Traweek stated that the motion should note thirty days.

Public Comments:

Ms. Rachelle May stated that it is time that the Board make a decision and stand by it. In order to move forward this matter must be resolved. She further stated that the community needs to come together for the good of the children.

Ms. Gloria Walker noted that the Board's focus is not where it should be. She stated that the Board is not accountable and has failed. She asked that Dr. Dupree be allowed to remain as Superintendent of Schools.

Ms. Diane Nabors stated that she does not understand the urgency of addressing this matter at this particular time because school will start in a few weeks.

Ms. Sandie Lollie stated that the school year is about to begin, and it should start with an instructional leader. She stated that morale in the system is low. She asked the Board to expedite this matter in order to start the school year in a new direction.

President Shelling asked for a roll call on the motion.

In favor: Mrs. Dayton, Mrs. Krutzer, Mr. Traweek, Mrs. Shelling

Opposed: None

The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Action Item 6 – Matters regarding the continued Employment of the Superintendent

It was moved by Mrs. Krutzer and seconded by Mr. Traweek to adopt the written charges for the removal of the Superintendent as presented, and to initiate the process for the removal of Dr. James Dupree from his job duties as Superintendent of the Monroe City School District by scheduling a hearing for his removal on the written charges at a meeting of the School Board to be scheduled for Monday, August 10, 2009 at 6:00 p.m. at the Monroe City School Board Media Center, 1811 Auburn Avenue; Monroe, LA.

Public Comments:

Ms. Diane Nabors asked why the Superintendent is being removed. She asked if she could receive a copy of the charges.

Board Comment:

Mrs. Dayton asked if Attorney Lawrence could read the charges.

President Shelling asked Attorney Lawrence if the motion needs to be carried before the charges are read.

Attorney Lawrence stated that the motion makes reference to charges that were presented. Previously, charges were reviewed by the Board and were promulgated in writing. If the motion fails, they are not charges. The charges will be a part of the record and will be made public if adopted by the Board. Attorney Lawrence explained to the Board that if the motion carries, the charges as written are the final charges. He then asked about an issue that was discussed during executive session.

President Shelling asked Attorney Lawrence to summarize the contractual item that was discussed.

Attorney Lawrence stated that in addition to the items in writing, there is one additional charge where it is alleged that the Superintendent executed contracts without Board authorization or following the proper technical procedures that apply to executing contracts on behalf of the school district. This item could be added to the thirteen written charges. Attorney Lawrence read the following charges:

- Charge 1: On or about July 1, 2009, and following the official action of the Monroe City School Board of June 30, 2009 to not extend the employment (or to re-employ) the then acting/interim principal of Carroll High School, you appointed the same person, who was no longer an employee of the Monroe City School District, to continue employment and perform the duties of school principal at Carroll High School, in violation of Board Policies, including policies GCK and CE of the Monroe City School District.
- Charge 2: Between the dates of June 1, 2009 and July 14, 2009, both dates inclusive, you directed and caused the Monroe City School District to close its offices and operations on at least one occasion on a Friday, without Board authorization and in violation of Board policies, including policies GCMB and CE of the Monroe City School District.
- Charge 3: Between the dates of June 30, 2009 and July 14, 2009, both dates inclusive, you failed to bring forth another recommendation for the hiring of a principal for Carroll High School, upon receipt of the Board's rejection of your lone nominee for the position, in violation of Board Policies, including policies CGB, GCF and CE of the Monroe City School District.
- Charge 4: Between the dates of January 1, 2009 and July 14, 2009, both dates inclusive, you failed to adhere to the established procedures of the Monroe City School District for identifying candidates for the principalship for Carroll High School, by using one or more alternate processes not approved by the Board that led to a lone nominee for the position, in violation of Board Policies, including policies GCF, CGB and CE of the Monroe City School District.
- Charge 5: As per the results compiled from Board submissions made on June 30, 2009, relative to the performance objectives set forth in your contract of employment, you failed, in accordance with Performance Objective #3, to furnish to the School Board a plan for career/vocational skills training before the end of the 2008-2009 school year.
- Charge 6: As per the results compiled from Board submissions made on June 30, 2009, relative to the performance objectives set forth in your contract of employment, you, in accordance with Performance Objective #6, were rated as not acceptable in the frequency, nature and quality of communications with the community, news media and other parties of interest.
- Charge 7: As per the results compiled from Board submissions made on June 30, 2009, relative to the performance objectives set forth in your contract of employment, you failed, in accordance with Performance Objective #9, to present to the Board by March 2009 a plan for increasing graduation rates.
- Charge 8: As per the results compiled from Board submissions made on June 30, 2009, relative to

the performance objectives set forth in your contract of employment, you failed, in accordance with Performance Objective #9, to implement a plan for increasing graduation rates.

- Charge 9: As per the results compiled from Board submissions made on June 30, 2009, relative to the performance objectives set forth in your contract of employment, you, in accordance with Performance Objective #10, were rated as not acceptable in your use of the media and community meetings to communicate developments or promote the Monroe City School District.
- Charge 10: As per the results compiled from Board submissions made on June 30, 2009, relative to the performance objectives set forth in your contract of employment, you failed, in accordance with Performance Objective #14, to present to the Board an Implementation plan for the payment of financial incentives on or before March 31, 2009.
- Charge 11: In connection with all of the policy violations and failures to meet performance objectives, as set forth in Charges 1-10 above and Charge 14 below, you are incompetent, within the meaning of the word as it is used in the state statute LSA-R.S. 17:54, and therefore, should be removed from the position of Superintendent of Schools.
- Charge 12: In connection with all of the policy violations and failures to meet performance objectives, as set forth in Charges 1-10 above and Charge 14 below, you are unworthy, within the meaning of the word as it is used in state statute LSA-R.S. 17:54, and therefore, should be removed from the position of Superintendent of Schools.
- Charge 13: In connection with all of the policy violations and failures to meet performance objectives, as set forth in Charges 1-10 above and Charge 14 below, you are inefficient, within the meaning of the word as it is used in state statute LSA-R.S. 17:54, and therefore, should be removed from the position of Superintendent of Schools.
- Charge 14: On or about January 1, 2006 through July 14, 2009, both dates inclusive, the Superintendent, on at least one occasion, executed one or more contracts by and on behalf of the Monroe City School District without the authority of the School Board, or executed contracts in a manner that is not in accordance with state law or school district policy, including state statute LSA-R.S. 17:83, and Policies DJAA, GCB and CE of the Monroe City School District.

Public Comment:

Ms. Gloria Walker asked the Board to put aside differences and support Dr. Dupree. She stated that he is accountable and does communicate. She then stated that this is a race issue.

Ms. Sandie Lollie stated that there is an option to termination and it is a resignation.

Statement from the Superintendent:

Superintendent Dupree stated: "I want to go on record as saying that the charges in #5 and #6 and the action being taken, I completely disagree with and I give it my total objection."

President Shelling asked for a roll call.

In favor: Mrs. Dayton, Mrs. Krutzer, Mr. Traweek, Mrs. Shelling
Opposed: None

The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Employment of Special Counsel and a Court Reporter

On a motion by Mrs. Dayton and seconded by Mr. Traweek, the Board authorized the engagement of services of a court reporter and the engagement of services of an Attorney at Law, if deemed necessary, to provide counsel to the Board during the course of the removal hearing or prosecute the charges on which the hearing is based.

In favor: Mrs. Dayton, Mrs. Krutzer, Mr. Traweek, Mrs. Shelling
Opposed: None

The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Employment of an Educational Consultant to the Board

On a motion by Mrs. Dayton and seconded by Mrs. Krutzer, the Board approved the services of a Consultant to the Board during the period that the Superintendent remains under suspension and that the position of Superintendent is not held by anyone else on a permanent, interim or acting bases, to act on behalf of the Board and under the authority of the Board to administer the affairs of the Monroe City School District.

Mr. Traweek asked if it would be inappropriate to name the individual tonight.

President Shelling asked Board members to offer suggestions as to who might best serve the district.

Mr. Traweek offered a friendly amendment to name Mr. Julian Gray, former Assistant Superintendent, as an Educational Consultant.

Mrs. Dayton and Mrs. Krutzer accepted the friendly amendment.

In favor: Mrs. Dayton, Mrs. Krutzer, Mr. Traweek, Mrs. Shelling
Opposed: None

The motion and friendly amendment carried on a unanimous vote.

Action Item 7 – Resolution of Unresolved Issues Involving the Principalship of Carroll High School

President Shelling passed the Gavel to Vice President Traweek. She stated that in light of the suspension of the Superintendent of Monroe City Schools, the absence of a principal at Carroll High School, and the necessity for a person to serve as principal, she moved that Mr. Patrick Taylor be placed as acting principal on Carroll High School's campus on an interim, non-permanent basis, until such time the Board makes a future determination regarding an interim or permanent placement in the position. Mrs. Krutzer seconded the motion.

In favor: Mrs. Dayton, Mrs. Krutzer, Mr. Traweek, Mrs. Shelling
Opposed: None

The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Action Item 8 – Recess/Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m. upon a motion by Mrs. Dayton and seconded by Mrs. Krutzer.

The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Mrs. Brenda Shelling
President

James A. Dupree, Ed.D.
Superintendent