

MINUTES

Monroe City School Board
2101 Roselawn Avenue
Monroe, Louisiana 71201

The Monroe City School Board met in regular session, Tuesday, August 23, 2011 at Monroe City School District Central Office, 2006 Tower Drive; Monroe, Louisiana 71201. The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by President Traweek. Prayer was offered by Mrs. Linda Sharp. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Riley Luttgarm, Neville High School Student.

Agenda Item 4: Roll Call

Board Members Present: Mrs. Victoria “Vickie” Dayton, Mrs. Victoria “Vickie” Krutzer, Mr. James Mickey Traweek, Mr. Clarence Sharp, Bishop Rodney McFarland, Sr., Mr. Verbon Muhammad and Mr. Glynn Ludley

Administrative Staff: Dr. Kathleen Harris, Attorney L. Douglas Lawrence, Ms. Karla Bowlin, Dr. Phedra Brantley, Mrs. Betty Carroll, Mrs. Derenda Flowers and Mrs. Vickie Irwin

Action Item 5 – Adoption of the Agenda

On a motion by Bishop McFarland and seconded by Mrs. Krutzer, the Board approved the agenda with the addition of permission to advertise for principal of Berg Jones Elementary School as Action Item 6:D. The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Action Item 6 – Consent Agenda Items

On a motion by Bishop McFarland and seconded by Mr. Sharp, the Board approved consent agenda items; 6:A - Approval of August 2, 2011 minutes; 6:B - August 23, 2011 Human Resources Agenda; 6:C - permission to advertise for a Human Resources Director; 6:D - permission to advertise for a principal of Berg Jones Elementary School. The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Action Item 7 – Consent Items for Separate Consideration

None

Agenda Item 8 – 2011-2012 Budget Discussion

Mr. Sharp asked if the budget includes extra staff for Carroll Jr. and Sr. High School. He stated that those schools need assistance.

Mrs. Dayton stated that the Board has received budget actuals through May 30th but do not have actuals through June 30th. This information is needed to properly assess the budget.

Dr. Harris replied that the budget has been placed on agendas numerous times. Currently, staff is taking the recommended budget and bringing it up to date to include all staffing and any other actuals. When budgets are adopted by June 30th, it is a proposed budget because the actual budget has not been reconciled to that date. School districts are always 30 days behind when working with a budget; that is the usual method of accounting. A deficit budget is being proposed, and the district is seeking every cost saving method necessary to expend less than that. She noted that State guidelines have been followed and the district is in compliance with budgeting requirements.

Mrs. Krutzer stated that several board members feel as though the district should have a balanced budget – that's revenue in and revenue out. She commended the superintendent on presenting a zero-based budget; however, she is concerned that there may not be enough time to tweak the budget or redirect funds. She then read the revised statute regarding budget preparation. A Finance Committee meeting is tentatively scheduled for 3:00 pm on September 7th. She requested that the budget be made available for Board member review by September 2nd.

Dr. Harris stated that she is in agreement with the meeting if it is limited to the budget without extra agenda items.

Bishop McFarland stated that the budget is being picked apart. Last year a Board member spent approximately \$7,000 for Board travel and they are now complaining about the budget. He noted that the budget can be revised as needed.

Mrs. Krutzer replied that the majority of those expenses were related to the Federal Relations Network Conference that was Board approved. She noted that the accuracy of those expenditures is questionable.

Agenda Item 9:A – Demographic Report

Mr. Michael Hefner, Chief Demographer, presented an updated report on the Demographic Study. Principals were asked to provide their ideal school capacity; this will be used to determine zones, and will have a direct impact on facilities. He noted that once zone jumpers are corrected, there may not be a need to move zone lines. The next phase of the project will include staff and the public. The software being used will help with student attendance zones and will also assist Attorney Lawrence with his report to the court

Action Item 9:B – Redistricting of Board Member Districts

Attorney Lawrence stated that he had spoken with Mr. Creed and he was under the impression that he would be available for a presentation at this meeting. He also stated that Mr. Creed has the knowledge needed to move this process forward.

Bishop McFarland cautioned Board members not to make hasty decision because redistricting should be studied carefully. He asked that the information be provided as soon as possible so that Board members can deliberate.

Mr. Hefner informed the Board that school districts have until the end of 2012 to adopt a plan.

Action Item 9:C – Adoption of Resolution: Louisiana Department of Economic Development

On a motion by Bishop McFarland and seconded by Mrs. Krutzer, the Board approved a resolution for Community Preparation, in accordance with the Louisiana Department of Economic Development's efforts to promote economic development in the region. The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Action Item 9:D – Ratification of an Agreement with St. Francis Medical Center

On a motion by Bishop McFarland and seconded by Mrs. Krutzer, the Board ratified an agreement with St. Francis Medical Center to undertake construction, upgrades and improvements to the school-based medical center currently in existence on the campus of Carroll Jr. High School, using grant funding received by SFMC to cover the full cost for enlarging and upgrading the school-based clinic, to meet prevailing standards applicable to school-based medical clinics. The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Mrs. Dayton asked that the exposure to medial malpractice be explored.

Action Item 9:E – Awarding of School Food Service Paper and Cleaning Supplies

On a motion by Bishop McFarland and seconded by Mr. Krutzer, the Board awarded the SFS paper and cleaning supplies as indicated on the spreadsheet. The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Action Item 9:F – Awarding of Online, On-Demand Professional Development RFP

On a motion by Bishop McFarland and seconded by Mrs. Krutzer, the Board awarded the Online, On-Demand Professional Development RFP to School Improvement Network. The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Action Item 9:G – Permission to Advertise for Blinds for Neville High School

On a motion by Bishop McFarland and seconded by Mr. Sharp, the Board authorized the administration to advertise for bids for window blinds for Neville High School. The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Action Item 9:H – Approval of Step Increases

It was moved by Bishop McFarland and seconded by Mr. Ludley, to approve a one-step increase for Dr. Phedra Brantley and Ms. Karla Bowlin.

Mrs. Dayton stated that she is not in support of any raises until the Salary Study is complete.

Dr. Harris indicated that because she has not been allowed to hire an elementary and secondary supervisor, staff has been performing their own duties as well as performing duties associated with vacant positions. She is asking that the persons named be compensated for those extra duties.

In favor: Bishop McFarland and Mr. Ludley. Opposed: Mrs. Krutzer, Mrs. Dayton, Mr. Sharp, Mr. Muhammad, and Mr. Traweek. The motion failed.

Action Item 9:I – Permission to Hire an Architect for Lexington and Minnie Ruffin additions

It was moved by Bishop McFarland and seconded by Mr. Muhammad, to hire an architect to explore options for additions at Lexington and Minnie Ruffin.

Mr. Sharp offered a friendly amendment to expand the service to include the choir room at Carroll Jr. and three classrooms for the Medical Magnet Program.

Bishop McFarland did not accept the friendly amendment.

President Traweek asked for clarification on the agenda item.

Dr. Harris replied that this item was placed on the agenda as a result of the Facilities Committee meeting. At that meeting parents were told that this item would be on the agenda. She noted that the Board must move forward with a plan to methodically approach facility needs on a routine basis.

Mrs. Dayton asked that needs for Carroll Jr. and Sr. High and Lee Jr. High be placed on the next Facilities Committee agenda.

Public Input: Ms. Gloria Walker questioned the need to add additional space to schools that are overcrowded when the Prismatic Study suggests that schools be closed. She noted that students must attend their zoned school. Ms. Misti Cordell stated that she is also concerned that schools will be closed. She noted that there is tremendous growth at Lexington and additions are needed. Rev. Roosevelt Wright stated that the school system operates a dual system because it is racially segregated and this is perpetuated by adding additions on north side schools to keep those students from going to south side schools.

The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Action Item 9:J – Approval of Middle School Concept

It was moved by Mr. Muhammad and seconded by Mr. Sharp, to approve the middle school concept for Lee Jr. High and Carroll Jr. High, effective school year 2012-2013.

Mrs. Krutzer noted that finances must be considered before changes can be made.

Mr. Muhammad stated that the district needs to have uniformity and equality; therefore,

all junior high schools should become middle schools. He questioned the rationale for using taxpayer's money to build schools when there are empty classrooms. Students may need to be bussed to the south side. The district needs to ensure that all schools have the required curriculum and programs.

Mrs. Dayton stated that she has no data to show the effect of the middle school concept. She stated that the principals and superintendent needs to make a recommendation.

Dr. Harris stated that if there is a concern that going to a south side school will be detrimental, then the district must move teachers as well as students and then make sure that each and every program is strengthened. She stated that she respects the traditions of the past, but she challenges the Board and community to embrace new traditions so that the city and school district can move to another level.

Mr. Traweck suggested that a study be conducted because he is unsure if the buildings can accommodate the extra students or if finances are available.

Public Input: Ms. Tina Boardmen asked that the matter of a middle school concept not be rushed. Mr. Jason Elias stated that he is concerned about all students and that race should not be an issue. He noted that the Board's first priority should be the budget; thereafter, other options can be explored. Ms. Amy Sherman questioned the success of sixth grade students at Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School and the middle school concept in general. Rev. Roosevelt Wright stated that when the district makes changes it needs to make sure that they are racially diverse. He reminded the Board that the plaintiffs in the case of *Andrew-vs-MCS* must approve the plans. Ms. Benya Marshall stated that 31 years ago she was an original plaintiff in the Jimmy Andrews case and she is still seeing the same things today that she saw then. She further stated that there is nothing wrong with south side schools. She asked Board members to put aside individual differences and work with the superintendent for the betterment of the district.

The motion carried on a majority vote: In favor: Mr. Sharp, Mr. Muhammad, Bishop McFarland, and Mr. Ludley. Opposed: Mrs. Dayton, Mrs. Krutzer and Mr. Traweck.

Action Item 9:K – Attendance Zone Modification

Dr. Harris stated that approval is needed to give the attorney the authority to negotiate and be a liaison between the district, Department of Justice, and the court in the matter of rezoning.

Attorney Lawrence noted that the Board has considered movement of Lexington's sixth grade students to Lee Jr. High and that he has been asked to look into the process. He now seeks direction from the Board as to what they want presented for consideration.

Public Input: Mr. Jason Elias stated that homeowners look at schools when they purchase property, and that should be taken into consideration when zones are changed. Rev. Roosevelt Wright asked that any changes be racially diverse.

Mr. Muhammad stated that both north side and south side schools will be affected.

Dr. Harris stated that Lexington's enrollment is 740 and the building has the capacity for 650. The principal needs help through rezoning or additional staff. There is extended wait time for the bathroom, water fountain and cafeteria – this takes away from valuable instructional time. She realizes that parents do not want their students moved, but she is asking that they work with the district to propose reasonable solutions that will work. She suggests that the attorney move forward to seek a remedy to alleviate overcrowding.

Mrs. Hodge stated that the district needs to have the courage to do things that may be different or unpopular. The Board has known for years of the yearly increase in enrollment at Lexington. She reiterated that she desperately needs assistance with this matter.

Attorney Lawrence noted that the initial discussion centered on the reassignment of sixth graders to give the Board time to explore long-term remedies. The growth of all grade levels at Lexington is rapid; a long-term solution is needed.

On a motion by Bishop McFarland and seconded by Mr. Ludley, the Board authorized the attorney to proceed with obtaining the required approvals for student attendance zone modifications. The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Mr. Traweck asked that principals and the executive board be involved in the process.

Dr. Harris noted that the demographer has a process in place that encompasses several groups.

Action Item 9:L – Scheduling of a Tenure Hearing

Attorney Lawrence asked the Board to set a distant tenure hearing date because the matter may be resolved.

On a motion by Bishop McFarland and seconded by Mrs. Krutzer, the Board scheduled a tenure hearing for Ms. Julie Ezell, certified teacher, for October 18, 2011. The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Agenda Item 10 – Report of Board Members

Mr. Muhammad reported that he received a certificate and 25.5 professional development hours for his participation in the Education Challenge Conference held in Chicago, IL. Also, a Transportation Committee meeting will be scheduled the first week of September.

Mrs. Dayton reported that the Monroe Rotary is interested in mentoring at-risk students. Dr. Harris replied that she is aware of their intent and will continue working with the group until an agreement is reached. Mrs. Dayton noted that a Policy Committee meeting will be scheduled. Dr. Harris suggested September 8th; the date of the principals' meeting.

Agenda Item 11 – Report of Superintendent

No report given.

Agenda Item 12 – Future Meetings

Bishop McFarland indicated that he is unable to attend the next meeting and he asked that the meeting be moved to September 13th. It was the consensus of the Board to move the meeting as requested. Mrs. Krutzer asked that no meetings be scheduled the day after a holiday.

Action Item 13 – Executive Session

On a motion by Mrs. Krutzer and seconded by Mr. Ludley, the Board convened in executive session at 9:25 pm. to receive additional information in connection with an employee grievance complaint. The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

The Board reconvened in open session at 10:36 p.m. and took no action.

Action Item 14 – Permission to Hire a Neutral Investigator

No action was taken on the hiring of a neutral investigator in the grievance complaint against the superintendent due to the lack of a motion.

Action Item 15 – Executive Session

On a motion by Bishop McFarland and seconded by Mrs. Krutzer, the Board convened in executive session at 10:37 p.m. to receive a report on the claim of Calandra Reese -vs- Monroe City School, et al. The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

The Board reconvened in open session at 10:55 p.m. and took no action.

Action Item 16 – Recess/Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 10:58 pm upon a motion by Bishop McFarland and seconded by Mr. Sharp. The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Mr. Mickey Traweek
Board President

Dr. Kathleen Harris
Superintendent