

Monroe City School Board of Education
2006 Tower Drive
Monroe, Louisiana 71201

MINUTES

The Monroe City School Board met in regular session, Tuesday, January 14, 2025 at Monroe City School District Central Office, 2006 Tower Drive, Monroe, Louisiana 71201. The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Board President Haneline. Prayer was offered by Reverend Cliff Thomas and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Board President Jennifer Haneline.

Agenda Item 1C – Roll Call

Present: Michael Sampognaro, Jennifer Haneline, Bill Willson, Betty Ward Cooper, and Brenda Shelling

Absent: Mr. Daryll Berry, Brandon Johnson

Action Item 1D – Adoption of the Agenda

On a motion by Mrs. Shelling and seconded by Mrs. Cooper, the Board approved the agenda as printed. The motion carried on an unanimously vote.

Board Attorney Lawrence read information pertaining to the charter school on Title 17 section 39:82 of the Louisiana revised statute mandates this process. In section A of the statute states there must be an evaluation conducted by the board. The board has 90 days to evaluate such applications. In the evaluation the board shall determine each proposed charter complies with the law and rules whether the proposal is valid, complete financially, well structured, and educationally sound whether it provides for a master plan for improving behavior and discipline in accordance with Title 17 section 2:52, whether it provides a plan for collecting data in accordance with Title 17 39:11 and whether it offers a potential for fulfilling the purposes of this chapter of this law. Attorney Lawrence emphasized “the school board shall determine” This is an obligation that the board must determine whether the application proposal is valid complete financially well-structured and educationally sound. A part of that due diligence is the additional requirement that there be a third-party evaluation that is conducted. The specific language states the local board shall engage in a transparent application review process that complies with the latest principles and standards for quality charter school authorization as promulgated by the national association of charter school authorizers provide for an independent evaluation to charter proposal by a third party with educational, organizational, legal and financial expertise. The board shall send to the charter applicant (Neville Charter association) either by electronic means hand delivery the final evaluation and recommendation if any, of the third-party evaluator. Such information shall be sent no later than (five) business days prior to the meeting at which the local board will take action on the charter proposal. This comes from one section of the law. In response to this requirement regarding evaluation there is a five-page document that was submitted by the charter evaluator.

Ms. Haneline stated the third-party evaluator overall recommendation for the Neville High School Charter application was denied.

Agenda Item 2A – Presentation of report from Third-Party evaluator on Neville Charter Association application to convert Neville High School into a Type 3 Charter School

The Charter School representative Stewart Shelby read his formal response for the Charter school.

Ms. Haneline stated that she invited Mr. Noah Guice who was present, from the Guice law firm office for extra legal expertise.

Agenda Item 3A -Action on Neville Charter Association application requesting approval to convert Neville High School into a Type 3 Charter School

Public Comments: Mr. Gary Roberts noted how he appreciates Stewart Shelby and the charter board. He stated he knows how things work, and a lot of decisions were made behind the scenes. He noted he has over a thousand names of community members who support Neville charter. He stated over 70% of the faculty approved going charter. Mr. Roberts hopes the board considers approving the charter and the ball is in their court.

Public comment – Susan Weaver, she had concerns about implications that have been made in the community and on social media that this is a racial issue. She stated it is 100% not the case. When the charter application was restarted, this was never a question. As stated in the application, if you are a Neville student now or in zone, you will be a Neville student when they charter. Neville embraces their diversity. Neville is an A school, and she believes going charter will maintain that status. Neville has been diverse for a long time, and she wants to stay that way. She hopes the board will listen and consider what they are saying.

Public Comment- Mrs. Dana Jefferson stated she does a lot of praying. She asks the board to examine their conscience and do the best thing for our children and community. You have been thoroughly informed of the true consequences of your decision. As someone who hangs tightly to history it is time to move forward the granting of your positive vote will be a landmark toward the future of our school system and our city. For the true good of all she sincerely pleaded that the board vote wisely for the proposal of the charter.

Public comment – Mr. Derrick voiced his concerns. Stewart Shelby stated this is a hard decision, Mr. Derrick noted this is a positive decision. People move in a community because of a great school system. This is not an agreement or disagreement; this is a chance to move Neville forward. Please consider voting for the charter.

Public comment: Reverend Cliff Thomas, current President of the NAACP Chapter, He stated the organizers have made his case. That is a perfect charter plan, but the summary of the explanation is that nothing is wrong with Neville. The audience that spoke said it's an A+ school and everything will stay. The only thing they desire is to run it. A+ is the best you can

get in a school. Neville is our most prestigious school, and we don't want to let Neville go, and all our kids deserve the best. You should vote for what is good for our kids. Nothing has been said by the organizers that would make you think Neville needs anything but their support. If you're going to invest all this mental help and bring all these resources to Neville about being a Charter school, why not bring it now as Neville stands. Identify the problems as you see them, Let's invest all that effort and energy that were doing to try and turn it into a charter school and continue to help Neville as we know it to be. We say vote no, don't let Neville go. Reverend Thomas asks the board to vote no on that for the kids.

Board Member Willson voiced his concerns about the Neville High School Charter.

Ms. Haneline noted this is her final meeting as Board President and wanted to read an important letter she wrote.

Future Meetings

Board of Education Meetings: March 18, 2025, and April 8, 2025

Agenda Item 5 – Recess/Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Board, on a motion by Mr. Willson and seconded by Mrs. Shelling the meeting adjourned at 6:48p.m.

/Betty Ward Cooper/
Betty Ward Cooper
Board President

/Sam Moore, III/
Sam Moore, III
Superintendent