

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

MINUTES

The Monroe City School Board met in regular session, Tuesday, February 13, 2024 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 Jennifer Haneline. Prayer was offered by Kristie Bardell, Queen Krewe De Riviere, and Director of the Children’s Coalition in Northeast Louisiana. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Cherish Kelly, Carroll Jr High School Student of the Year.

Agenda Item 1C – Roll Call

Present: Mr. Sampognaro, Mrs. Haneline, Mr. Bill Willson, Mrs. Betty Ward Cooper, Mr. Brandon Johnson, and Mrs. Brenda Shelling

Absent: Mr. Daryll Berry

Action Item 1D – Adoption of the Agenda

Board Attorney Lawrence read the addendum to the agenda.

On a motion by Mrs. Shelling and seconded by Mr. Johnson the board approved to add the addendum read by Attorney Lawrence and to remove item 5C from the agenda. The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

On a motion by Mr. Willson and seconded by Mr. Johnson the board approved to adopt the agenda with the above changes. The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Agenda Item 2A and 2B Point of Pride

The Monroe City School Board Recognized Band Director, Mrs. Desaree Player, and the Carroll High School Band for performing in the Superdome at the Union Parish High School Football Championship game.

Co-Interim Superintendents Sam Moore and Serena White introduced and recognized the students of the year for the Monroe City School District with a certificate. (pictures were taken)

Sr. High Division:

A’Shyra Montgomery – Wossman High School
Teone’ Winston – Carroll High School
Joseph Maxwell Butler – Neville High School

Jr. High Division:

Lillian Ditta – Neville High School
Cherish Kelly – Carroll Jr
Ruth-Ann Bailey – Martin Luther king Jr.

Elementary Division:

Jackson Porter – Sallie Humble
Keziah Wilson – Berg Jones
Braylen Allen – J.S. Clark
Amir Abrams – Thomas Jefferson
Kayelynn Scott – Madison James Foster
Maddix Wilhite – Minnie Ruffin
Omari Wheeler – Roy Neal Shelling
Sophia Madison – Cypress Point
Ka'Liyah Wilson – Carver
Caleb Jones – Barkdull Faulk

Ms. Haneline thanked the parents, grandparents, families, and the students support system.

Agenda Item 3 – Presentation Superintendent Search Update and next steps – Jon Guice/Doug Lawrence

Mr. Guice gave an overview on how the process should be on the Superintendent search. He explains the 17:54 law, which has been done and is now ready to precede with the interview process. To have an open and fair interview process, Mr. Guice recommends conducting the interviews at the same time in one day. The benefit from this is asking the same questions to the candidates without getting back to the others. Everyone can arrive about thirty minutes early take up their cell phones and electronic devices, put them in a room with a TV and refreshments, do a draw of numbers or names and bring them in with the luck of a draw and the Board can ask the questions they may have until the interviews are completed. Once the interviews are completed, the Board will then select their next Superintendent. Once the selection is made, the person is still not hired. The Board will then negotiate a contract with certain requirements by law, certain performances, objectives, and other things. Once a tentative agreement is reached, they will come back to the Board in terms of provision will be reviewed by the Board and vote rather or not to accept that contract of the person that the Board named as Superintendent. All this takes on more significance as Superintendent Vidrine retired as of February 9th of this year. We are now on the clock on selecting the next Superintendent. The law requires a vote of the majority of the full membership of the Board, not just the majority vote of the ones present the night you elect someone. It will take four (4) votes to hire the next Superintendent.

Attorney Guice highly recommended the board consider a voting machine and believes everyone should vote at the same time. Until the Board gets a voting machine, Mr. Guice recommends writing the names of the candidates on a sheet of paper, with a line to sign and print your name, The Board Members will write who they choose to be employed as the next Superintendent, fold it, and pass it up for him to read out.

Board President, Ms. Haneline mentioned she and Board Vice President, Mr. Johnson met with Attorney Guice and Attorney Lawrence and asked Mr. Guice to attend meetings to help them through this process to make sure they are receiving solid legal advice as they move forward as a Board.

Action Item 4 – Consent Agenda

It was moved by Mr. Johnson and seconded by Mr. Willson, to approve January 23, 2024, Board meeting minutes.

Ms. Haneline stated the RFP needs to be reworded and properly advertised again. She recommends working with Mr. Guice and Mr. Lawrence to rewrite it and bring it back to the Board.

Ms. Haneline moved 4B to separate consideration.

Mrs. Cooper inquired about agenda item 4C approval of notice of intent for opportunities industrialization center incorporated of Ouachita. She asked why a need for a letter of intent knowing it will be put out for bid. Attorney Lawrence explained that OIC requested a target letter from the Board to them stating the Board is interested in selling the property and there is a process used for selling surplus school board property which is a variety of entities purchasing has the right to step forward to apply ownership by the process authorized by law.

Public comment: Mrs. Vickie Krutzer wanted to address January 23, 2024, board minutes comments by Mr. Willson comments on misinformation. Mrs. Krutzer stated the minutes from March 27th, 2018, on a motion by Bishop McFarland and seconded by Mrs. Dayton the board authorize the president to negotiate a contract extension for the Superintendent and the motion carried by an unanimous vote. She stated it is spoken to in the investigative report on page 49. Mrs. Krutzer stated just to clarify that is where in this information came out to the public is to who was the president in negotiating.

On a motion by Mrs. Shelling and seconded by Mr. Sampognaro, the Board approved moving agenda item 4B to agenda item 5C January 23, 2024 board meeting minutes; approval of notice of intent for Opportunities Industrialization Center Incorporated of Ouachita; Berg Jones Elementary 5th and 6th grade students Permission to travel to Memphis Tennessee; and J.S. Clark Choir to travel to Hot Springs Arkansas. The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Agenda Item 5A – Committee Assignments

Ms. Haneline rewind for a moment to recognize a student of the year that was late. .

Caleb Jones – Barkdull Faulk (photo taken)

Ms. Haneline stated assignments went out a couple of weeks ago to the Board Members

Policy Chair – Brenda Shelling

Finance Chair – Brandon Johnson

Facilities Chair and Safety Ad hoc – Michael Sampognaro

Curriculum Chair – Betty Ward Cooper

Insurance – Bill Willson

Transportation – Daryll Berry

Agenda Item 5B – Superintendent Job Description

Ms. Haneline stated that they wanted a job description on file to have in case needed.

Agenda Item 5C – Action on RFP Policy Review (moved from agenda item 4B)

On a motion by Mrs. Shelling and seconded by Mr. Johnson the board approved to rewrite the proposal and to specify the scope of the policy and reject the current existing one.

Agenda Item 6A – December 2023 Financial Reports

Co-Interim Superintendent Serena White gave an overview of information from the financial committee meeting shared by CFO Davona Howard

- ESSER II is completed \$22 million dollars every dollar is almost spent.
- We are in the final months of ESSER III
- Capital projects are still going and have until September 30th to finish as much as possible.
- Next month's meeting will consist of set aside funds that will be utilized for Summer Camps

Co-Interim Superintendent Sam Moore gave a financial report overview.

- Revenues are approximately \$3.2 Million more than the prior year due to state allocations for one-time stipend and property tax that was received in December. The amount was \$704,00.00. Expenses have increased due to the one-time stipend.
- Sales tax revenue has increased \$743,000 which is 2.16 percent increase as of October 2023 collections received as of December 2023
- 1968 sales tax revenue have an approximately increase of \$124,000 more than the prior year
- 1994 sales tax has an approximately increase \$257,000.
- 2001 sales tax has approximately \$1.6 million due to a previous mentioned grant that was reimbursed to Monroe City Schools \$1.28million
- In a previous meeting it was mentioned that the object code 500 is 103.89 percent due to the annual insurance payment that was effective July 1.

Agenda Item 6B – Report of Co-Interim Superintendents

Co-Interim Superintendent Serena White explained the writing program. There are three categories strong, moderate, or weak. Two schools had 50 percent or greater in the strong category and 80 percent in moderate and strong category. She wants to make sure it happens across the district. Coaching is always going on. They have the NIET (national institute for excellence in teaching) they work with the administration team's about how to support teacher. There are currently Eureka math square coaches from Great Minds, K-8th. Literacy Coaches gets support through the center for literacy and learning, For the last two weeks she has been engaging with each leadership team to look over the progress monitoring data through the school year.

Vice President Brandon Johnson inquired about the students in our schools, he knows the district must be align with the state but being realistic about taking heed to programs and things that Principals are facing within their schools trying to help implement some of the things they are seeing. He's about the growth and success of the students.

Co-interim Superintendent Serena White stated there is a standard curriculum that must be at the top level which they supply coaching for. She stated there are campuses that are different and respond to those needs.

Board Member Brenda Shelling inquired about Eureka math. She stated it is rumored throughout the community that the students do not do well with this. She asked Mrs. White to tell her why the kids on the southside, basically the black schools, are not doing as well with the Eureka scores. Have we considered adopting another program that will meet the needs of the students. She would hate to think the students are not functioning at the highest capacity because of the past history. She asked who adopted the Eureka. Mrs. white stated at the beginning of this process Eureka math was the first tier1. Almost the full state utilized it at one point. There are more tier 1 curriculum with more options. Mrs. White stated the staff is not as solid in the Southside schools which means there is more change in the staff. Zearn math is also utilized as a tier 1 that can be depended upon. Mrs. White stated they can most definitely look into other options. Mrs. Cooper noted the curriculum Committee has a meeting scheduled before the end of the month with this being one of the amin agenda items. Look out for this date and time. They will be looking closely at the data and see what it says. Mr. Moore added one of the middle schools invited them to come to look at what they were doing with Zearn and add some additional support. Because this particular faculty met with them, they were concerned about reaching some of the students they serve. They dove into the data and saw the students not performing the way they expected them to. They met with them and heard them out. Mr. Moore stated the Teachers are the frontline of the classroom.

Co-interim Superintendent Sam Moore noted:

- ESSER III funding ends September 30, 2024
- Neville new construction project which is the Student Center and scheduled to be completed by May 20, 2024
- Permanent gas in the new facility has been turned on and once completed we will receive the certificate substantial completion of 2024.
- Carroll High School Band construction project scheduled to be completed May 2024 Carroll High School band was represented today and he believes its significant showing that we are serving our students academically and extra-curricular as well.
- The new gym at Sallie Humble is on its way. The certificate from the City of Monroe has been received to move forward.
- In the demolition project at Sallie Humble, they were removing the bus awning and discovered asbestos but did not have impact or affect the moving forward with the gymnasium.
- Traxler construction have safely fenced in the areas they will be working in to keep our facilities safe. The more they can use the dollars set aside through ESSER, the more they can protect the general funding budget to take care of the needs of students.
- The schools that were physically affected during the bad weather are back up and running and in the process of replacing all those things that were damaged.
- The electric buses charging stations are being completed and moving forward added security lights. Mr. Moore met with the transportation department and several expressed to him concerns about the parking lot after dark and the need for additional lighting.
- The charging stations are for the 20 electric buses and moving forward.
- They put in measures to help with potential accidents in backing up the long buses.
- They are in the process of securing discarding the old buses.
- Mr. Moore explained to Mrs. Cooper about the OIC intent letter.

- There were issues with the payroll conversion sub pay this past weekend. He commended Davona Howard and her staff for making sure employees received their pay with possible delay depending on your bank.
- October Board meeting there was a RFP 2401 (trash pickup services) that was already approved by the Board, Mr. Moore, reviewed the contract with Mr. Spencer and believed the language in the contract was not for the best interest of the Monroe City School System and brought it the Legal Counsel Doug Lawrence attention and now moving forward.
- On Monday February 12, 2024, there was a significant power outage on the southside of Monroe with four of our schools being impacted, Carver Elementary, Clara Hall, Jefferson Upper, and Barkdull Faulk Elementary. A tree fell on a power grid prior to the opening of school. They continued to move forward with transportation. He commended the building supervisor, Mr. Dewayne Dupree at Carver Elementary, for making the call to him at 5:44am letting him know about the power outage in the neighborhood. He Thanked Mrs. Temple, the cafeteria staff, Mr. Monroe, Principals, Building Supervisors, and Mr. Spencer.
- We are one (1) in the Monroe City School System and cannot make it work without everybody where everyone is important to make it work for our children.
- He thanked the parents for entrusting their kids with the Monroe City School System
- We will continue to do what's best for our children and community, Mr. Moore thanked the Board for their support and Faculty and Staff. Keep fighting a good fight, our children deserve it.

Mr. Willson inquired about the asbestos at Sallie Humble, if it's been fully remediated. Mr. Moore stated no, we had to stop to get everything in place and will be fully remediated.

Mrs. Shelling – no report

Mr. Willson congratulated Mr. Michael Sampognaro and his daughter Tabby; Neville High School won 3rd place overall in the National Cheerleading Competition in Co-ed. He's proud of everyone on the team and the parents.

Mrs. Cooper appreciates all the community and partners. She attended the Tabernacle Baptist Church, Pastor Brian Reed, where they honored the Monroe City Schools employees.

Mr. Sampognaro piggybacked Mr. Willson, he congratulated the cheer coaches and the cheer team on this major accomplishment. He congratulated the Bengal Belles and their Coach Jessica Smith on their 3rd place in hip hop and 5th place in dance.

Mr. Johnson stated he is the chair of the finance committee meeting and will be meeting at 5:00pm prior to the regularly scheduled board meetings and encourage everyone to come and be apart. He would like input from the community and stakeholders. Useful information will be given. The CFO will attend all the meetings. Please come with any questions or concerns at the 5:00pm meeting. When it's time for the financial reports during the 6:00pm board meetings the financial reports can be found online.

Ms. Haneline recognized Black History month that started in Chicago (her hometown) it was originally in 1926 was a week they celebrated. Woodson is an alumnus of University of Chicago. In 1926 he established Negro History Week. He chose the second week of February because it included Abraham Lincoln and Fredrick Douglass Birthdays. It became a month-long event in the 70's where we celebrate many individuals.

She enjoys seeing the decorations from the teachers and educating the students is a major accomplishment in all aspects. If there are comments or something the committee members want to put on an agenda will need to come to Ms. Haneline a week prior, the day of is too late. If you would like to speak on an item on the agenda, you need to be here prior to the start of the meeting and submit your request to speak. February 20th her intention is to have a special meeting at 5:30pm to discuss Mr. Guice procedures for Superintendent selection. Ms. Haneline has established weekly meetings to check in with the Superintendents and appreciates their patience with her and identifying things that need to be done. This is a lot of work to take on and the time that you've done it, dealing with the politic side of it and still doing what you are here to do and that is to make sure our kids get everything they need and staff. She will be working with the facilities committee and curriculum committee to establish short- and long-term plans. She's been speaking with Darren Ducote on getting voting machines for the board with a no cost option. There will be student board members (snob) each high school student Council President and Vice President will be sworn in as board members at the beginning of that school year. They will be non-voting members. She's going to look into civic engagements. Ms. Haneline has reached out to the Chamber of Commerce. She wants to partner with Ouachita Parish Schools so they can implement it. She has spoken to the mayor as well. The students she spoke with would like this to learn more and be part of more. She thanked Mrs. Robinson for the work she does for the Board as well as the Superintendent(s) and keeping up with the multitude of meetings.

Mrs. Cooper introduced Pastor Quincy Gardner that had a point of pride item that was not mentioned. Mr. Gardner had the opportunity to work with the Monroe City School District at an early age and served on numerous committees while in high school and thereafter. This has led him to mentor students since 1998. Since then, over 286 scholarships were number of students from this district. He wanted to emphasize since Carroll Band was recognized here tonight, he stated his son wanted to do something academically that he can only do at Carroll High School and that was to fly planes through the ROTC program. Carroll High School has been down for the past three or four years. He invited the band to their Worship service and received a note that two of the students were going to quit. He saluted Dr. Player and her staff for hanging in there and turning the program around. He stated what saddened him was someone outside our district look into our district and saw the best and wanted it to be highlighted on other stages. If you look at our programs, we have some of the best programs in the state. One of the students that they provided a scholarship to is now on staff at Tennessee State University. When he Pastored in Galilee Tennessee 7 years ago, they started a music program together that produced 38 musicians that financed their way through college. Please consider in the committee meetings, board Meetings, to invest more in our students especially the Arts Program.

Agenda Item 7A – Future Meetings

Board of Education Meetings – March 19, 2024 and April 16, 2024, at 6:00pm

Agenda Item 7B – Upcoming Conferences – COSSBA Annual Conference in Dallas Texas February 22-25, 2024; LSBA Annual Convention March 10-12, 2024.

Agenda Item 8 Executive Session – Expectation to convene in executive session to discuss pending litigation.

On a motion by Mr. Willson and seconded by Mrs. Cooper the Board convene in executive session at 7:27p.m. The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Reconvene in open session.

On a motion by Mr. Willson and seconded by Mr. Sampognaro the board reconvened in open session at 7:52p.m.

It was moved by Mr. Willson and seconded by Mrs. Shelling to approve the regulations the Counsel made in executive session regarding the two lawsuits.

Action Item 9 – 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 7:53 p.m.

Jennifer Haneline
Board President

Sam L. Moore, III
Co-Interim Superintendent

Serena White
Co-Interim Superintendent

Note: These minutes summarize the final decisions made by the Board at the referenced meeting. This meeting was also audio recorded and that recording is available for review by contacting the board clerk at tonyarobinson@mcschools.net