

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

MINUTES

The Monroe City School Board met in regular session, Tuesday, August 15, 2023 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 Bill Willson. Prayer was offered by Board President Bill Willson and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Board Member Brandon Johnson.

Agenda Item 1C – Roll Call

Present: Mr. Sampognaro, Ms. Jennifer Haneline, Mr. Willson, Mr. Daryll Berry, Mrs. Betty Ward Cooper, Mr. Johnson, and Mrs. Brenda Shelling

Agenda Item 1D – Adoption of the Agenda

On a motion by Mr. Berry and seconded by Mrs. Shelling the board approved the agenda as printed. The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Agenda Item 2A Sallie Humble Multipurpose Building – Architectural Associates Mr. Fred Bennett

Mr. Bennett reported the concept of this project is to create a multiuse facility that provides students with a gymnasium, choir, band, orchestra, P.E classroom, and auditorium space for students and parents. The gym will hold up to 650 people. This new facility will be detached from the existing building but connected through covered canopies. Mr. Bennett explained the layout of the building that was presented.

Public Comment: Mrs. Bryant inquired about a previous meeting where it was discussed that the auditorium can hold only half of the student body and to add on to accommodate more students. She wanted to know if that idea was ditched or will this building be large enough to have an assembly with all the students. Mr. Bennett stated this was studied demolishing the existing gymnasium and or adding on to it. The concept would not work structurally and could not handle an addition very well because of the design of the structure on that type building. It was cost effective to keep the existing building. Mr. Willson noted that was the first thing looked at and it was not feasible. Mr. Johnson inquired about the previous discussion on renovations for JS Clark gymnasium. Dr. Vidrine stated the engineers are working on this project.

Action Item 3 Consent Agenda

It was moved by Mrs. Shelling and seconded by Mr. Berry to accept the consent agenda with approved changes. Ms. Haneline recommended moving Item 3B “adoption of amended board policy BBBE-R to consent item for separate consideration. Attorney Lawrence explained this can be considered separately after the consent agenda is covered.

The Board approved July 11, 2023 board of education minutes; adoption of amended board policy BCBB; adoption of amended board policy IFAA; awarding bid #MC24-01 instructional supplies;

awarding bid #MC24-02 janitorial supplies; permission to advertise for bids on Sallie Humble Multipurpose building; permission to advertise request for proposal for trash pick up services; memorandum of understanding between Monroe City School District and Louisiana Delta Community College and University of Louisiana at Monroe; approval of amended lease/use agreement with Innovative Network of Knowledge (INK), a non-profit corporation for occupancy and use of the facilities at the former Martin Luther King, Jr Middle School at 3716 Nutland Road, Monroe, LA for operation HeadStart program and approval of filing of cross-claim on behalf of the Monroe City School Board against a current party in the Onika Armstrong vs Armstrong v Constance Jenkins et al litigation.

Public comment: Mrs. Bryant thanked the Board for coming up with a policy involving parental and public involvement in approval of materials that go into the classrooms. Mrs. Bryant gave her interpretation on the first and second reading of policies. She stated at the last meeting no one knew what the policies were, and it was a mystery. She suggested to the Board to follow the rules. Mrs. Bryant stated to the Board if they plan to adopt these policies then they need to suspend their own rules. She noted the policies were just presented yesterday and there was not enough time to review.

Action Item Consent Items for Separate Consideration - Adoption of amended Board Policy BBBE-R (added agenda item/moved from consent agenda)

It was moved by Mrs. Shelling and seconded by Mr. Berry to approve the adoption of the amended board policy BBBE-R.

Ms. Haneline noted the reason she asked for this to be considered under separate consideration is because following the policy committee's recommendation, it was pushed through in the first reading. Ms. Haneline asked that this policy go back to the policy committee for consideration of the changes that were made after it left the committee so it can adequately be discussed. The only change she is asking for is replacing the words convention and conferences with the word events.

Mr. Willson explained the three conferences. He believes the LSBA conference is the most important conference because it gives the most hours and offers one hour of required ethic training each year. He stated COSSBA has replaced NSBA in the National Conference. Mr. Willson noted in these conferences they go to learn, get accreditation and bond as a school board. Mr. Willson stated with understanding that in the past, if a person could not make the previous conference, they would be able to attend the trailblazer conference. Ms. Haneline asked Mr. Willson to use the word I instead of we because she doesn't know who we is. He responded, yes, he can use I. He noted this is why the changes were implemented and suggested by himself and another board member. He wanted the public to be aware of what and why they were doing it.

Mrs. Shelling stated she would like to withdraw her motion. She didn't realize it had changed and stated she had the original that was given at the last meeting and didn't read the updated one. Mr. Willson stated Mr. Lawrence sent it out to everyone. Mrs. Shelling stated this is not the agreement. Mr. Willson stated the motion has been removed then asked if someone would like to make a motion for approval. Mr. Johnson commented to Mr. Willson that everyone knows what the meetings are for. Mr. Johnson stated to Mr. Willson there were questions about the wording in this policy on #1 in the first sentence, but you proceeded to have Mr. Lawrence read the entire policy. He stated Mr. Willson mentioned he had Mr. Lawrence read it for the community but Mr. Johnson thought the purpose of doing things for the community was to have a policy committee meeting first to have everyone's input. Mr. Johnson commented that this seems more of a power thing rather than what most of the

board is asking. He stated to Mr. Willson he wasn't rude about it, but it was unnecessary for him to say you can continue, continuously. Mr. Johnson stated we have Board Officers as President and Vice President, but we are all one. Mr. Johnson stated to Mr. Willson it was ridiculous and he felt like the Board was brushed off when they asked a question about the wording in the policy and it's not right. Mr. Willson stated this is what was approved in the first hearing at the last meeting. Mrs. Shelling stated this was approved in the policy committee meeting and would like Mrs. Robinson to pull the minutes. Ms. Haneline stated to Mrs. Shelling that she is correct and there was an opposition voiced and Ms. Haneline had suggested that it was brought back to policy instead of going to the second reading and was told no to see where the second reading would go. Mrs. Shelling stated a second reading was not necessary. Mrs. Shelling stated a second reading is only necessary if it's a legislative act. On a motion by Mr. Johnson and seconded by Ms. Haneline to approve sending policy BBBE-R back to the policy committee for investigation. The motion carried on a majority vote. Mr. Willson opposed.

New Business

Action Item 4A Approval of lease/use agreement for Free Me Association {MCAL}, a non-profit corporation, for use of football stadium facilities.

It was moved by Ms. Haneline and seconded by Mr. Johnson to approve the agreement for the Free Me Association.

Superintendent Vidrine stated the district amount for a non-profit organization is \$750.00 for use of the facilities. It will be up to the Board to change this amount. Two years ago, they paid \$750 for every Saturday, last year the Board overridden the policy of the district of \$750 and changed it for non-profit to \$100.00, this is why the agreement was left blank. (Mrs. Hollins intervened and stated \$110) An organization that wants to use a facility that's not non-profit is \$1,500 and other things that come with it like insurance liability. Mrs. Cooper inquired about the agreement that was uploaded in board docs. She stated the document was incomplete and needed the president's name changed. Dr. Vidrine stated Attorney Lawrence took the amount out. Mr. Willson stated the problem that was experienced is when they made this exception, several nonprofits wanted to move this to a lower amount and that's why the request was made to go back to what the policy states for nonprofits which is \$750. Ms. Haneline asked Mr. Willson, who made the request to move it back to \$750 because she would like to amend her motion to approve the lease agreement at the same rate that was approved last year as a board because of the public service this organization provides to Monroe City Schools students. Mr. Johnson seconded the motion. Attorney Lawrence confirmed it will be September to November, like last year. Mrs. Hollins intervened and stated it is a ten (10) week period which is why they are asking for the special rate. The \$110 rate saves a lot of money when servicing our youth because they come back week after week. Mrs. Haneline asked Mrs. Hollins for the people that are unfamiliar with the organization, to state who she is, what she does and how many students she services from Monroe City Schools. Mrs. Jessica Hollins, program director of Monroe City Academy League. This is a youth league here in Monroe, Louisiana serving youth ages 4-12. This organization offers football, dance, cheer, basketball, soccer, baseball, and softball. The organization offers an afterschool enrichment program. She stated their goal is to help decrease obesity, increase their attitude towards learning and their school attendance. Mrs. Hollins believes providing this incentive for their league, the children will be more excited about going to school and providing something positive for children to do after school. The students receive 120 hours of enrichment activity over the quarter which is 10 weeks. Ms. Haneline asked how many students. Mrs. Hollins responded there were 1,600 athletes last year across all sports and sixty percent of those students belong to Monroe City Schools. Mr. Willson asked if there is a charge for parking. Board Member Mr. Johnson stated

this is a fundraiser for the organization because they are non-profit. This is to help continue with the collective events that they have with all the sports. Each kid must pay \$35 for football, and this is not enough for football equipment and uniforms etc. Mrs. Hollins stated it's just a certain area not the entire parking lot. Mr. Stonewall Hunter, III, Vice President of the organization gave clarification on the parking. Mr. Hunter stated part of their safety protocol is to box off the entire campus, so cars are not able to go inside due to the vending area. There is a charge for some parking, but not all. Ms. Haneline inquired about other fees of \$35 per student, parking, and \$6 admission. Mr. Willson stated the motion has been made and seconded to continue the charge of \$110 to rent. There being no further questions the board approved the lease/use agreement for free Me Association {MCAL}, a non-profit corporation, for use of football stadium facilities. The motion carried unanimously.

Mrs. Hollins stated the Monroe City Academy League would like to thank everyone for their continued support as they serve the youth. MCAL believes that it takes a village to help serve the youth and is glad to have the Monroe City School Board as a part of their Village. She stated having 60% of the athletes from Monroe City Schools is important for the students to know that they have the Board support. MCAL is inviting everyone out to their opening game with a family, friendly, enjoyable environment on Saturday, September 9th at Carroll High School at 9am.

Mr. Berry stated to MCAL that they do a fabulous job throughout the community. He hears good things about the organization all the time. Keep up the good work.

Agenda Item 5 – Reports

Agenda Item 5A – June 2023 Financial Reports (preliminary)

Public comment: Mrs. Vicki Krutzer wanted to address Monroe City School Board finances to the Superintendent. Mrs. Krutzer stated the general fund budget is roughly sixty-six million nine hundred thousand dollars. She stated we are at sixty-six million. She asked when will general funding be in deficit this year. Dr. Vidrine responded he does not know the numbers. If she can send him the information, he will give it to Davona, and she will respond. Mrs. Krutzer inquired about ESSER funds. She stated there was roughly 72 maybe 75 million dollars per year and the budget this year is 56 million dollars. She assumes the 24 million dollars was spent last year. Mrs. Krutzer stated as of 6/20 with encumbrance of 1.5 million dollars. She stated about 25 million dollars was spent and asked if roughly under 21 million was left to spend in all ESSER Funds.

Dr. Vidrine stated to Mrs. Krutzer that she public requested all this information this week and received it. If she has any questions about it send it to him and they will respond. Mrs. Krutzer stated it is a public meeting and the finances are out here, and this is when the public can come before you the Board. Hopefully the board has looked at this and is able to give the constituents answers.

Superintendent Vidrine noted that the public viewing of the budget will be August 18th.
A Finance committee meeting will be held on August 30th at 5:00pm

Agenda Item 5B- Report of the Superintendent

- Superintendent Vidrine believes it was a smooth opening for schools yesterday.

- Professional Development with the teachers went well last week.
- All buses have a GPS system. Parents can activate this system.

Agenda Item 5C – Report of Board Members

Mrs. Cooper reported she spent time yesterday visiting some of the schools on their opening day. As a board member she was at Wossman High School. Senator Katrina Jackson, Representative Pat Moore, Representative Adrian Fisher, and others arrived early at the schools to greet the students as they came off the bus to say good morning and welcome back. Representatives from the police department, fire department and army were there to greet the students as well. One of the objectives was that the students could see the representatives from various divisions as other career choices. The students seem to really appreciate it. Mrs. Cooper stated she is big on partnerships, especially partnerships in education and likes to comment on it every chance she gets. She knows how important and valuable partnerships are in education and hopes all identities and showing in our community business and industry, library, and religious community wanting to step up and help the school systems in any way. She attended an event at Olive Branch Library where there are great partnerships.

The library had partnered with a group called May She Outreach. She was impressed with what was offered to the kids like food, games, school supplies, clothing, and shoes. Mrs. Copper salutes all the identities for wanting to help us in education to develop that whole child and make sure no child is left behind. She appreciates all the partners and thanked everyone for all they do.

Mr. Sampognaro – No comment

Mr. Johnson reported the transportation department had a successful CPR training and in-service this past week as they were gearing up for back to school at Neville Jr High School. It seems that they are ready and eager to get our kids to and from. Other safety points were discussed about being on the road as kids are transported. They are still gearing up to use electric buses toward the end of this the year. The electric buses will be route buses for our students in the district. The diesel buses are still in place for traveling. Mr. Johnson was able to attend the ring ceremony for the back-to-back champions at Wossman High School, the Girl's Basketball Team with Coach Otis Robinson, and his staff along with Mrs. Robinson. She has been really supportive with this board as well as her husband at Wossman High School by doing what she can to help the program. Mr. Johnson gave continuous thank you to Mrs. Robinson and her support. Mr. Johnson noted they are looking forward to a great year with staff across the district. He believes we are off to a good start. He stated he received calls already and knows they receive calls during the year but will handle them. Mr. Johnson stated to Dr. Vidrine he appreciates him. He called him about some things prior to school, he was busy, but he jumped right on it and took care of it. He stated to Dr. Vidrine to keep his feet on the ground because its going to be a tough couple of weeks to start but it's going well, and we started good. Mr. Johnson appreciates the board for what they do as well and looks forward to another great year with them all.

Ms. Haneline thanked Dr. Vidrine and his staff for all the Professional Development that was offered to teachers. She was able to attend the PD session on chat GPT and AI. This was a new topic for her to understand and was an eye opener to understand how many more challenges the teachers have these days for making sure they are teaching the students and students aren't using AI to write their papers. Ms. Haneline thanked the multitude of organizations that had back to school events offering free supplies that included the Region Community Outreach Organization Aetna Office Public Health, One Strive for Success, Healthy Blue, The Governor's Office, and Children's Coalition and hopefully everyone is set up in Monroe City. This was a short list but there were more. If you would like to witness a great production of the musical Memphis that will be on stage at the end of

September, you will get to see yours truly on stage along with City Council Woman Kema and much more talented people than herself.

Mrs. Shelling reported she had the opportunity to visit Wossman High School. She assisted them with getting some flooring and painting done. She thanked Dr. Vidrine for making sure it happened. Mrs. Shelling attended the giveaway in Trishell and Wossman. It was hot but she stayed, and they were able to give away all the bookbags away.

Mr. Berry offered his report time to Mrs. Kay Kellogg Katz. Mrs. Katz voiced her concerns about some literature and the books that they are seeing presented to our young people. It was understood that the district is handling this in a good fashion and she's supportive of this and the board. She publicly wanted to speak for herself stating she is not for burning books, banning books, and not for telling people what books to buy. She believes when you are an adult you need to have age-appropriateness for some of these. Mrs. Katz checked the books out before she looked at them, she wanted to say publicly and frankly they are pornography. These books do not need to be with our young people. Mr. Willson intervened stating those books are not in the Monroe City School System. Mrs. Katz stated that's why she is here. She wanted to commend the Monroe City School District. These types of books have been found in schools in the Southern part of our State.

Mr. Willson reported when the union Parish Police Jury discovered that their investments in their savings account were at a very low rate and over the past year, they have seen the quickest rise in prime rate banking. He called Dr. Vidrine and asked him to double check the districts savings rate. If it's not adequate, then it needs to be increased. Mr. Willson stated 0.75 percent on one of the largest rates on one of the largest accounts. He and Dr. Vidrine quickly contacted that bank, giving them the opportunity to raise it. It's gone up from 0.75 percent to 4.86 percent which is going to make the district an additional three hundred forty-one thousand dollars (341,000) over the next year. He wants to be a good steward of public funds. Mr. Willson thanked Mrs. Melanie Hurd for contacting him about her husband and sons being a member of AMVETS in relation to replacing our old tattered American flags free of charge. The first one to be replaced will be Neville Jr High School in the last week of July. A ceremony was held this past Friday at Roy Neal Shelling, their flag was replaced. JS Clark, Cypress Point, Lexington, Neville, Minnie Ruffin, Barkdull Faulk and Carver are scheduled to have theirs replaced. Mr. Willson had a great visit today with state representative Lance Harris who is running for BESE Board for District 5. Mr. Harris told Mr. Willson about the bill he and Joe Marino, known as ACT 266, the house bill #69 that was recently approved and signed off by the Governor. This is availing testing for our kindergarten graduates. This is a dyslexia test. The cost is between one dollar (\$1) and two dollars (\$2). Mr. Willson would like Monroe City School System to pay for this test for the graduating kindergartners this year. He stated dyslexia is something that has gone for years untested, sometimes not diagnosed is a serious problem. Dr. Vidrine commented. That the Monroe City School System is already doing this test. The students were previously being tested at second grade level but were moved down after COVID because of the year missed with students. Mr. Willson is excited too about the good start to school.

Agenda Item 6 – Future Meetings

Board of Education Meetings - September 5, 2023 and October 3, 2023 at 6:00pm; Louisiana School Board Association (LSBA) Fall Trailblazer/LEADS Luncheon September 26, 2023 Baton Rouge, LA

Action Item 7 – Recess/Adjourn

There being no further business to come before the board, on a motion by Mr. Johnson and seconded by Mr. Willson the meeting adjourned to 7:04p.m. The motion carried unanimously.

/William Willson/
William “Bill” Willson
Board President

/Brent Vidrine/
Dr. Brent Vidrine
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 tonya.robinson@mcschools.net.