

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

MINUTES

The Monroe City School Board met in regular session, Tuesday, February 14, 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 Pastor Brian Mercer, Pastor of First Methodist Church, Monroe, La. Pledge of Allegiance was led by Adasyn Pleas, Elementary student of the year, J.S. Clark Elementary School.

Agenda Item 1C – Roll Call

Present: Mr. Michael Sampognaro, Mrs. Jennifer Haneline, Mr. Bill Willson, Mr. Daryll Berry, Mrs. Betty Cooper, Mr. Brandon Johnson, and Mrs. Brenda Shelling

Action Item 1D – Adoption of the Agenda

On a motion by Daryll Berry and seconded by Jennifer Haneline, the board approved the agenda as printed. The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Action Item 2A – Point of Pride 2022 School Board Member Training Resolution

Dr. Vidrine read a resolution acknowledging that Monroe City School Board members Daryll Berry – 17.5 hours, Betty Cooper – 27.75 hours, Jennifer Haneline – 14.5 hours, Brandon Johnson – 22.75, Sharon Neal – 11 hours, Rick Saulsberry – 17.75 hours and Bill Willson – 20.75 hours, have successfully received and exceeded the six hours of required training as mandated by the legislature of Louisiana and all board members have fulfilled the mandate of one hour of ethics training for the year 2022. There are three certified Board Members Betty Cooper, Brandon Johnson, and Bill Willson. Distinguished Board Members are Daryll Berry, Betty Cooper, Rick Saulsberry, Sharon Neal Greer, and Bill Willson.

Board President Willson noted Mrs. Shelling and Mr. Sampognaro attended the new school board member training. Mrs. Shelling stated she has never had a training like this and was pleased to have attended. Mrs. Shelling hope to have more board member training in the upcoming scheduled conferences.

Mr. Sampognaro noted there was interacting and some one on one with each other. They were trained on what the school board overall was about, and he looks forward to more training like this.

Agenda Item 3 Presentation - Early Childhood Education Project, State Representative, Pat Moore (packet was issued by Pat Moore)

Representative Pat Moore thanked President Willson and the Board for giving her the opportunity to speak. Mrs. Moore stated in 2019 she was given the opportunity to represent District 17. Mrs. Moore stated to go on record we look at facts, we look at the data, we look at Louisiana schools where they're ranked 47 overall, Louisiana Schools ranked 43 in the terms of the school's systems quality, ranked 48 in reading and math, in southside schools hundreds of our kids do not attend pre-school or head start. She noted when you pull up the ten (10) top dangerous cities, the city of Monroe is ranked number five (5). She stated when you look up our district you can see we are struggling financially, and the poverty is there and this is the reason she's honored to be serving the people. Mrs. Moore reviewed some of the information that was in the packet and came tonight to talk about some things that are being seen on the state level, how it can impact the kids and maybe have partnership. There

was a study done in 2019 to see what they could do to help children at the age of 6 weeks through three (3) years and certainly five (5) years old. The report came back in 2021 saying 85 million dollars is needed to help our kids and early childcare in education. She noted we must act quickly on somethings unless were going to continue to travel down this path. She noted there is data on children that are not in early childcare quality type facilities and programs. One record show about ten thousand four-year-olds and under in Ouachita Parish but only about half of the kids are in some type of facilities. Mrs. Moore stated there need to be a place, having housing a campus for children that are six weeks to three and then four- and five-year-old if they are not in our school system. Mrs. Moore stated she was told the old Martin Luther King Jr school building is on the market to be sold. She stated if this is so, to please consider removing it off the market and give her twelve months even though she would like twenty-four months to do some things. She noted she thought when she received the information from Mr. Monroe was enough to go after some federal dollars, the grant is due in March, however, it can be done next year because she has put in for another project to ask for some federal dollars from congresswoman Letlow and Senator Cassidy. She was told a feasibility needs to be done. Mrs. Shelling asked Mrs. Moore how much time she will need to expedite this project. Mrs. Shelling stated she does not want to miss out on a sale but want to give Mrs. Moore and the children of Monroe to utilize the building. Mr. Willson noted this would have to go to the facilities and finance committees. Mr. Willson stated he just found out that an organization out of Texas and for Dr. Vidrine to correct him if he's wrong, in six months will be taking over the space that Prime Time is vacating and then potentially may want additional space. Dr. Vidrine responded, right now we are on month to month with Prime Time, the lease will end June 1st. Mrs. Moore stated they have looked around and believe this will be a great opportunity. Mrs. Haneline stated she appreciates Mrs. Moore presentation and staying involved. Mrs. Haneline voiced her concerns about housing issues, poverty, and jobs as well as the care for the children. She added her thoughts to have a center of resources for the guardians to help them in getting stable housing and jobs and things of that nature. Mrs. Moore stated there are too many kids on a waiting list and they need to be in a facility. Mrs. Moore stated she hope the board will decide, consider, and hold off for twelve months. Mrs. Shelling asked will there be a cost for family members for the care of the children. Mrs. Moore responded they are trying to make sure there is either minimal or no cost. Mr. Johnson asked what other needs Monroe City Schools would have to provide for this project and will Monroe City Schools be doing funding with Ouachita Parish as he knows this project will be servicing Monroe City Schools and Ouachita Parish School System. Mrs. Moore stated this is Monroe City Schools building, this is your mission, and this is what you do. She stated she will propose to the State about Monroe City Schools. She stated monies were missed out on trying to submit an application. She spoke with an engineer about the feasibility study that's estimated twenty thousand dollars that someone must pay, and hope the district has covid money in their general budget. Mrs. Moore plan to ask her colleges to support and vote yes on the bill that she is going to file and have the Governor to sign. It will say The Monroe City School Board will have the authority to letting a property tax at the will of the people if that is their will. In order to get the bill filed she must move quickly. She talked with the Official Journal, Free Press, to put something in the paper stating this is an intent. This will cost thirty or forty dollars and needs to be done by next week to meet the deadline. She asked the board to pay for this to be put in the Official Journal, if not, she will take care of it.

Action Item 4 – Consent Agenda

On a motion by Ms. Haneline and seconded by Mr. Sampognaro, the Board approved January 10, 2023, board of Education minutes, Carroll High School Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA) travel to Baton Rouge, Neville High School Bengal Belles travel to New York City, Neville High School, Senior Class travel to London, and Wossman High School Beta Club travel to Baton Rouge.

Action Item 5 - Consent Items for Separate Consideration

On a motion by Ms. Haneline and seconded by Mr. Berry, Sallie Humble, Barkdull Faulk, J.S. Clark, Madison James Foster, Minnie Ruffin, and Cypress Point Elementary Orchestra Band travel to

Orlando Florida – Mayo Tours. The motion carried six (6) in favor and one (1) Mr. Johnson recused.

Agenda Item 6A – Financial Reports

Public comment: Vickie Krutzer asked if the procedure in requesting reimbursement funds the same as you use for federal dollars.

Dr. Vidrine stated you must have approval by the state before requesting reimbursement.

- Audit is complete and ready. Auditor(s) will be at the March 21st meeting.

Agenda item 6B – Report of the Superintendent

- Cameras in the special education classes audio and video are currently being installed.
- Boys and Girls Club that we partnership with at Powell and Saul Alder Recreation Center will tutor on Mondays and Wednesdays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays 3:30pm to 5:30pm
- Professional Development schedule for Friday, will be emailed to board members.
- Primetime is no longer the facilitator of the Headstart program.
- We are receiving twenty (20) electric school buses that will cost about twenty to twenty-five thousand per bus. The buses will be in this fall and next spring.

Mrs. Haneline asked where the directives of the school buses come from.

Dr, Vidrine stated it came out in the American Response Plan. They applied for the grant and received it.

Mrs. Hanline had concerns about the safety of the electric buses.

Dr. Vidrine stated safety studies have been done.

Mr. Johnson had concerns about the mechanical work and supervisors, this will be discussed in the transportation committee.

Mrs. Shelling asked if the mechanics can be trained.

Dr. Vidrine responded, yes, bus drivers as well and its very low maintenance.

Agenda Item 6C – Report of Board Members

Mrs. Cooper reported on Black History Month. She shared some facts on the population in the United States 2021 is fifty million. The percentage of African Americans 25 years and older with a high school diploma or higher in 2021 is 90.3 percent. The percentage of the employed black population age 16 and older working in management business, sciences and arts occupation is about 34 percent. The number of black owned employer businesses in the United States in 2020 is about 141,000. Lastly, the number of black civilian military veterans in the United States nationwide in 2021 is two million. This testifies the accomplishments and achievements and more to come.

Mr. Sampognaro reported he had the opportunity to visit some schools in the district and was very impressed with motivated principals. One Principal was Montreal Marshall at Carroll Jr High School. He is doing a great job, motivated and has special programs in place. He stated the visitation at the other schools was good. There are good teachers, staff, and leaders in place. Mr. Sampognaro concerns are the safety in the schools that need to be identified and aware it is currently being looked at.

Mr. Johnson thanked the board for their work and look forward to the continued work that is ahead. He looks forward to discussing the situation with the buses. He stated mechanics are hard to find to

for the upkeep on buses. Mr. Johnson explained to the public why a roll call was done for mayo tours. Mrs. Haneline stated she had constituents and staff members contact her about issues in the cafeteria at one school and directive that was given at another school about kids having to repack their snacks in clear bags. She thanked Dr. Vidrine and Principal McCarty for being responsive to this issue. She stated if you open a can of peaches that are molded there is no need to post it on Facebook and complain about it, sometimes things happen, tell the cafeteria staff. It cannot be fix if they don't know about it. She asked to remind families and parents that the people that are hired and work tirelessly in the schools, care about their work and students. It's not fair to people going on Facebook complaining, this makes their job harder. She understands the sensitivity about what the students eat but be a part of the solution to make things better for the students. There are some issues that need to be corrected and they will continue to work on it.

Mrs. Shelling reported she have been reviewing the policy handbook for needed changes. She has some ideas of changes to be made. Mrs. Shelling will be calling a policy meeting week after next. She asked that the policy committee Mrs. Haneline and Michael Sampognaro to be prepared. Mrs. Shelling has been invited to Black History programs at Roy Neal Shelling Elementary, Barkdull Faulk Elementary and Madison James Foster Elementary as guest speaker. She stated the Facebook post about the peaches was wrong, but it brought attention to handling things and will address it on tonight.

Mr. Berry reported he is the chairman of the facility committee, and he will get with Mr. Johnson and Mr. Sampognaro on a meeting date and time. He thanked the cafeteria workers for coming out. Mr. Berry stated someone from the cafeteria can take his time to speak. Mr. Willson stated he will allow someone to speak.

Public: Pastor Chandler Hawkins, employee of Neville High School for 18 years, spoke on behalf of the cafeteria workers. He stated the peaches had a date of October 2024 on it and explained how the state level works for high school students and their lunch plate portions. He spoke on the Facebook post that was made, he and the staff was hurt by this post. Mr. Hawkins voiced his concerns about work hours and stated the workers are unappreciated and underpaid. Its not about the money but about being appreciated. He stated the managers were told not to come out and help and its not right. Mr. Hawkins thanked God for his managers that will stop their paperwork and come help. They cannot keep workers/subs because of the hours and pay.

Mr. Willson reported he just made it back from Washington DC on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce representing both education and the government committee. He had an opportunity to lobby on local congressmen, women and Cade Brumley, Superintendent of Louisiana State of Education. He spoke highly of our system and the job Dr. Vidrine has done. They discussed what can be done differently in the Monroe City School System jumpstart that can be addressed with jobs and vocations. Early Childhood development was discussed and beneficial. He had great visits with Congresswoman Julia Letlow our fifth district congresswoman, Steve Scalise, Senator John Kennedy, Bill Cassidy, and Speaker of the house Kevin McCarthy. He learned that in 17 schools in Washington DC, not a one student tested proficient in math and spending thirty -two thousand dollars per student in that district. Mr. Willson stated realizing that our test scores are not where they should be but a whole lot better than some other areas. Test scores nationally for our students were the lowest in 30 years especially in the African American community. He stated a large reason is because of COVID and now trying to play catch up by having summer school sessions, and after school tutoring. The last year in a half Mr. Berry, Mr. Saulsberry, Mrs. Sharon Neal Greer have been working on getting better parental involvement and engagement. He would like to meet next month or so to put an ad hoc committee together to address this with different parts of the community leaders, pastors, elected officials, principals, teachers, and board members. There was a press conference on yesterday for school banners with Monroe Chamber of Commerce, Monroe City School System, ULM, and Delta Community College. Mr. Berry, Mrs. Shelling, and Dr. Vidirne was in attendance. Mr. Willson thanked Mr. Sampognaro, as a private citizen a couple years ago was gracious enough to hang the banners at Neville Junior High School and Lexington. Mr. Willson congratulated all the board members for their certifications. He asked for prayers for the 41,000 people that have died in the earthquake.

Agenda Item 7 - Future Meetings

Board Meetings March 21, 2023, and April 11, 2023, at 6:00 p.m.

Agenda Item 8 - Executive Session

None

Action Item 9 – Recess/Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the board, on a motion by Mr. Berry, seconded by Mrs. Haneline, the meeting adjourned at 7:14 p.m.

 /William Willson/
William 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.