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

MINUTES

The Monroe City School Board met in regular session, Tuesday, September 9, 2025, at Monroe City School District Central Office, 2006 Tower Drive, Monroe, Louisiana 71201. The meeting was called to order at 6:06p.m. by Board President Betty Ward Cooper. Board Member Daryll Berry offered prayer, Carroll High School ROTC presented the Colors/National Anthem and Daryll Berry led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Agenda Item 1C – Roll Call

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

Agenda Item 1D – Adoption of the Agenda

A motion was made by Ms. Haneline and seconded by Mr. Willson to add two items to the agenda:

1. Curriculum explanation regarding removal of the Accelerated Reading Program in schools.
2. Property and vendor agreement with the Boys and Girls Club of North Louisiana.

It was clarified that agenda additions require unanimous consent and must be voted on individually

Ms. Haneline amended her motion and seconded by Mr. Willson to add Accelerated Reading Program under New Business, Item 5E.

6 in favor: Michael Sampognaro, Jennifer Haneline, Bill Willson, Daryll Berry, Brandon Johnson, and Brenda Shelling

1 opposed: Betty Ward-Cooper.

Motion failed

It was moved by Mrs. Shelling and seconded by Mr. Willson to add the Cooperative Endeavor Agreement with the Boys and Girls Club of North Louisiana under Consent Agenda, Item 3D.

6 in favor Michael Sampognaro, Bill Willson, Daryll Berry, Brandon Johnson, Brenda Shelling, and Betty Ward-Cooper

1 opposed: Jennifer Haneline

Motion failed

It was moved by Mr. Sampognaro and seconded by Ms. Haneline to table agenda item 5A Adoption of the General Fund and Special Revenue Funds Budget Resolution - Revised Budgets for 2024-2025 and Beginning Budgets for 2025-2026

In favor: Michael Sampognaro, Jennifer Hneline, and Bill Willson

Opposed: Daryll Berry, Brandon Johnson, Brenda Shelling and Betty Ward Cooper

Motion failed

On a motion by Mr. Berry and seconded by Mrs. Shelling the board approved to adopt the agenda as printed.

In favor: Michael Sampognaro, Bill Willson, Daryll Berry, Brandon Johnson, Brenda Shelling and Betty Ward-Cooper

Opposed: Jennifer Haneline

Agenda Item 2A Public Announcement – Millage Renewal

Public Finance Attorney Boles Shafto explained the process for millage renewal, including public notice requirements. No formal action tonight. An upcoming discussion on October 7, 2025 and formal action to add the millage for the election in April 2026. Mr. Shafto read the following:

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE OF INTENT TO CALL ELECTION

Notice is hereby given in accordance with Section 19.1 of Title 42 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, as amended, that the Monroe City School Board of the City of Monroe, State of Louisiana, acting as the governing authority of the City of Monroe Special School District (the "District"), on October 7, 2025, at its regular meeting place, 2006 Tower Drive, Henrietta George Metting Room, at 6:00 p.m., will discuss and consider adopting a resolution ordering and calling an election on April 18, 2026 to authorize renewal of an ad valorem tax of the District subject to the approval by the qualified voters therein, and if passed, for such tax to be levied thereafter.

By: MONROE SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT, STATE OF LOUISIANA

FOR ANNOUNCEMENT AND PUBLICATION IN THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL

Note: This Announcement must be read into the minutes of a meeting that is at least 20 (but not more than 60) days prior to date the resolution can be passed. It must also be published in the Official Journal at least 20 (but not more than 60) days prior to the date on which the resolution can be passed.

Agenda Item 3 – Consent Agenda

On a motion by Mr. Berry and seconded by Mrs. Shelling, the board approved the Board of Education Minutes August 5, 2025; permission to advertise for bids for Neville High School band uniform and one-time stipend for full time certified and support staff.

Sandie Lollie, Monroe Federation voiced her concerns about the stipend and withholding of deductions. She asks for this to be withheld prior to the employee receiving the checks.
She stated from the finance committee meeting that she never hear mentions about the support or classified employees. Superintendent provided clarity on the stipends. He noted that the stipends are governed by Act 311 and are for extracurricular duties and by law the additional stipends must be paid. Superintendent Moore stated for the record, there are a number of paraeducators, secretaries, bookkeepers that’s in the extracurricular role and are all compensated.

Agenda Item 4 – Consent Items for Separate Consideration

None

Agenda Item 5A - Adoption of the General Fund and Special Revenue Funds Budget Resolution - Revised Budgets for 2024-2025 and Beginning Budgets for 2025-2026

Public comments: Kathy Patrick Courtnney Alvernia, Narissa Bryant, K. Justus and Vickie Krutzer questioned the process and communication regarding the discontinuation of district funding for the Accelerated Reader Program. Clarification was provided from Superintendent Moore that schools may use their own funds to purchase AR.

On a motion by Mr. Berry and seconded by Mrs. Shelling the board approved adoption of the general fund and special revenue funds budget resolution - revised budgets for 2024-2025 and beginning budgets for 2025-2026. The motion carried on a majority vote.

In favor – Daryll Berry, Brandon Johnson, Brenda Shelling and Berry Ward Cooper

Not in favor – Michael Sampognaro, Jennifer Haneline and Bill Willson

Agenda Item 5B – Suspension of Board Policy BD introduction and second reading requirements to authorize immediate adoption of Corrective Polices for Audit Finding 2023-004
Agenda Item 5C - Adoption of Corrective Policies for Audit Finding 2023-004

On a motion by Mr. Berry and seconded by Mrs. Shelling the board approved both 5B & 5C the Suspension of Board Policy BD introduction and second reading requirements to authorize immediate adoption of Corrective Polices for Audit Finding 2023-004 and adoption of corrective policies for Audit Finding 2023-004

Agenda Item 5D - Approval of Diligent Community for BoardDocs service migration

On a motion by Ms. Haneline and seconded by Mr. Willson the board approved Diligent Community for BoardDocs service migration. The motion carried unanimously.

Agenda item 6A - Report of Superintendent

The Superintendent provided an update regarding recent changes with the alternative school and high school student supports.

- The Superintendent emphasized that the district is not "throwing kids away" but working to reduce violent acts on campus, including gang activity, fighting, and weapons.
- Since the implementation of the new measures, the district has had zero high school expulsions in the first 20 days of school, compared to ten expulsions during the same period last year.
- The Superintendent noted that these decisions were researched and planned, including visits to Ouachita Parish and discussions with other districts around the state implementing similar strategies.
- The purpose of the changes is to keep schools safe, address behavior issues more effectively, and create opportunities for students at risk of dropping out.

- Students significantly behind in credits are given the opportunity to transition into the district's online academy, paired with mentoring and support services.
- Three ISS positions have been added at each high school to handle minor offenses on campus, reducing suspensions
- These changes are intended to expand the alternative program so that students can catch up academically, graduate, and avoid incarceration.
- The Superintendent stressed that responsibility for discipline begins at home and that nationwide teacher shortages are often tied to discipline and behavior issues.

Dr. Bush addressed the Board regarding implementation details:

- Confirmed the daily attendance monitoring and weekly social worker visits for students in the digital learning program.
- Stated that students in the program continue to receive access to mentoring, academic support, and office hours for
- instructional assistance.
- Students can catch up through online courses, with mentor coaches monitoring attendance and social workers checking in weekly on Thursdays.
- Reported discussions with agencies to secure job placements for participating students.

Dr. Bush noted that our schools are safe schools

- Students participating in alternative or digital learning can still graduate with a diploma. The discipline record remains, but students are not barred from graduation ceremonies
- ISS expansion aims to keep more students in school and reduce out-of-school suspensions

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Superintendent Moore recognized the district leadership Team and discussed the district literacy gains. Discussion of the district's focus on foundational literacy, resulting in an 11-point increase in students scoring at or above benchmark on the statewide literacy screen, and recognition as a top gain school district by the state.

Child Nutrition Services

The audit conducted by CN Resource is complete and all required corrective actions have been received and accepted.

Custodial/Warehouse

In the Custodial Department, a meeting was held with building supervisors to discuss the need to maintain campuses. However, Neville High School and Neville Junior High School contract lawn services from private companies. In the warehouse a feasibility of purchasing shipping label scanners to ensure the accuracy of the contents of packages from amazon and other shipping services. Currently this department has to open packages and check contents before delivery, which delays the process.

HVAC

- Systems have been repaired at CHS (cafeteria) and NHS (baseball complex).
- Currently seeking bids for a system for the NHS Annex and installing stairs to access the roof on the same building. It has become a hazard for technicians to climb the ladders.

Maintenance

- Brightly Solutions is in the process of installing and training users for the automated ticketing system.
- Seeking approval from the board to move forward with the CHS ticket booth. (on agenda for Thursday's Facilities Meeting)
- needs assessments are completed and ready for review. Includes all Secondary Schools, Lexington, and J.S. Clark (on agenda for Thursday's Facilities Meeting)

Safety

continued talks with Homeland Security to address issues and will be scheduling a full-scale crisis event soon to determine what needs to be prioritized.

Transportation

looking to purchase the Tripfinder system, a software system used to schedule field trips. The system will allow tracking requests immediately, incorporate approval stages, track the history of requests, categorize expenses, run staffing costs analysis, and track mileage to optimize fleet utilization.

<u>Agenda Item 6B - Report of Board Members</u>

Board Vice-President Shelling

Mr. Moore was commended for his work and dedication. Board members noted that while they are not involved in daily decisions, their role is to ensure accountability. Mr. Moore was recognized for having staff present at meetings, supporting teachers, administrators, and especially students. Appreciation was expressed to staff for their continued commitment to the district.

Board Member Johnson

Thanked the administrators for their continued support for the district. A reminder was given that the Facilities Committee will meet Thursday at 5:30 p.m. in the boardroom. The committee will review recently completed needs assessments for each school. Mr. Johnson thanked everyone for coming out.

Board Member Sampognaro - No comment

Board Member Willson

Thanked the community for attending, noting the unusually long meeting and encouraging continued participation at future meetings. He reported on the ribbon-cutting at Sallie Humble Elementary School's new multipurpose building and acknowledged the efforts of staff, administrators, parents, and board members involved in the project. He specifically recognized Dr. Vidrine and Mr. McCarty for their teamwork and noted ongoing discussions about financing projects at both Sallie Humble and Lexington. Mr. Wilson addressed concerns regarding the tone of communication from the board president in an email that became public, stressing the importance of transparency, fairness, and a cohesive board. He revisited the board travel budget, reminding members of their overspending, which has not been reimbursed. Mr. Wilson reported that the matter has been referred to the Ouachita Parish Sheriff's Department for review as potential malfeasance and ethics violations. He called for the resignation of the board president and vice president from their leadership roles.

Board Member Berry

Expressed appreciation for the superintendent and staff, commending their accessibility and communication. He announced upcoming visits to Carroll High School and Carroll Junior High to meet with principals and teachers. Mr. Berry emphasized the shared goal of providing students with an education and encouraged respect among board members and the community despite differing opinions. Mr. Berry stated, "we are stronger if we work together".

Board Member Haneline

Appreciation was expressed to Dr. Bush and Mr. Moore for addressing concerns raised about first-day enrollment procedures. It was noted that families who rent are required to prove residency annually, while homeowners are not, creating a disparity that disproportionately affects families experiencing poverty. She encouraged exploring alternative, child-centered solutions to reduce the burden on these families and minimize the negative impact of frequent school moves on student performance. Thanks were extended to teachers, paraprofessionals, principals, and all support staff for a strong start to the school year. Their dedication and daily work were recognized as the foundation of student success. Human Resources reported the hiring of 12 new transportation staff members as of August 26. Ms. Haneline voiced her concerns about transportation. Recognition was given to Wossman for engaging families through its Parent Advisory Committee. The effort to involve parents in dialogue was commended as a valuable way to bring diverse perspectives into decision-making. Ms. Haneline emphasized the importance of receiving questions from employees, community members, and parents at face value. Members were encouraged to recognize personal biases, remain respectful, and approach inquiries with openness. Ms. Haneline noted that questions should not be mischaracterized and reiterated the need for respectful communication within the district community.

Board President Ward Cooper – No comment

<u>Agenda Item 7 - Board of Education Meetings - October 7, 2025, November 4, 2025 and December 9, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.</u>

Agenda Item 8 - Recess/Adjourn

There being no further business to come before the board, on a motion by Ms. Haneline and seconded by Mr. Willson, the meeting adjourned at 8:04 p.m.

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\Betty Ward Cooper/_____	\Sam L. Moore III/_____
Betty Ward Cooper	Sam L. Moore III
Board President	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.robinsons@mcschools.net.