

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

MINUTES

The Monroe City School Board met in regular session, Tuesday, January 23, 2024 at Monroe City School District Central Office, 2006 Tower Drive, Monroe, Louisiana 71201. The meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m. by Board President Bill Willson. Board Member Michael Sampognaro offered prayer and Board Member Brenda Shelling led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Agenda Item 1C – Roll Call

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

Action Item 1D – Adoption of the Agenda

Ms. Haneline asked to move item 5D (Extend Superintendent Search 30 days) to New Business

On a motion by Ms. Haneline and seconded by Mr. Johnson, the Board approved the agenda with changes made by Ms. Haneline as stated above. The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Action Item 2A – Approval of one vote method of electing Monroe City school Board Education Officers

On a motion by Mrs. Shelling and seconded by Mr. Berry, the board approved the one vote method. The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Action Item 2B – Election of 2024 Monroe City School Board of Education President

Interim Co-Superintendent Sam Moore open the floor for nominations for Board President.

It was moved by Mr. Sampognaro and seconded by Mr. Willson to nominate Jennifer Haneline as President.

It was moved by Brenda Shelling to nominate Brandon Johnson as President.

Mr. Johnson declined.

In favor of Ms. Jennifer Haneline: Mr. Sampognaro, Ms. Haneline, Mr. Berry, Mrs. Cooper, Mr. Johnson, Mrs. Shelling, and Mr. Willson

The motion carried unanimously.

Action Item 2C Election of 2024 Monroe City School Board of Education Vice President

It was moved by Mr. Willson and seconded by Mr. Berry to nominate Mr. Brandon Johnson as Vice president of the Board.

In favor of Mr. Brandon Johnson: Mr. Sampognaro, Ms. Haneline, Mr. Berry, Mrs. Cooper, Mr. Johnson, Mrs. Shelling, and Mr. Willson.

The motion carried unanimously.

### Agenda Item 3 Resolution – School Board Training Resolution 2023

Interim Co- Superintendent read the School Board Training Resolution. Each member of a city and parish school board shall receive a minimum of six hours of training and instruction, as required by ACT 705 of the 2011 Louisiana Legislature; and each member of a city and parish board shall receive one hour of ethics training, per year, of their tenure as board member. The School Board Training Resolution acknowledges it become public record that Michael Sampognaro, Jennifer Haneline, William Willson, Daryll Berry, Betty Ward Cooper, Brandon Johnson, and Brenda Shelling members of the Monroe City School District, 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 2023.

Interim Co-Superintendent Mrs. Serena White presented the Louisiana School Board Association Training Certificates based on records provided to the Louisiana School Board Association as per Louisiana revised statues, Title 17, Section 53. Monroe City School Board Members Daryll Berry - 27 hours, Betty Ward Cooper – 22 hours, Jennifer Haneline - 9 hours, Brandon Johnson -1 hour, Michael Sampognaro – 15 hours, Brenda Shelling – 37 hours, and Bill Willson – 25.5 hours. Mr. Daryll Berry, Mrs. Betty Ward Cooper, Mrs. Brenda Shelling, and Mr. Bill Willson were recognized as being 2023 Louisiana School Board Association Certified School Board Members.

### Agenda Item 4A presentation on Cinderella Bonds – Wes Shafto

Mr. Shafto presented information on Cinderella Bonds. Mr. Shafto stated Mr. Willson asked him to find a way to refinance the school board’s outstanding obligation bond. They met with the school board financial advisor and came up with a structure which is called an advanced refunding that allowed them at that time to refinance the bonds at a taxable rate pending a couple of years and eligible to convert to tax exempt. Part of the market allows you to lock in those low tax-exempt rates at that time. The board previously gave authorization to proceed with refinancing advanced refunding. Mr. Shafto reported the conversion date on the last series became effective and then converted to a tax-exempt rate of 2%. They were able to lock this in 2020 and 2022. The comparison right now the bonds would be 5 ½ and 6%. This is an enormous savings. The taxpayers otherwise would have paid 1.35 million on these bonds.

### Action Item 5 A, B and C – Consent Agenda

It was moved by Mr. Willson and seconded by Mr. Berry to table Agenda Item 5C – OIC- Letter of Intent until the letter is received.

Interim Co-superintendent stated when OIC did their presentation they wanted a letter of intent on behalf of the Monroe City School Board to sell the building.

Mr. Willson asked to remove his motion to table this item seconded by Mr. Berry.

Ms. Haneline stated after clarification from Interim Co-Superintendent Moore, this item is to draft a letter of intent from Monroe City Schools to sell property of the old Martin Luther King Jr. building campus to OIC (opportunities industrialization center)

On a motion by Mr. Johnson and seconded by Mr. Willson the board approved December 5, 2023, board meeting minutes; permission to advertise for bids for J.S. Clark gym and OIC letter of intent. The motion carried on a unanimous vote.

Action Item 6A – New Business (out of sequence/category added to the agenda) – Extend Superintendent Search 30 days.

Mr. Johnson voiced his concerns on extending the Superintendent search. Mr. Johnson feels the board should not extend the Superintendent search but extend the time as far as getting all the stipulations in line. Mr. Johnson believes as a board everything should be done in line with state statutes and making sure the board is of one accord and in line as well. Mr. Johnson stated the search has been completed, you either made the deadline or didn't, that shows an initiative and it's not fair to the ones that applied during the time limit that was set.

Mrs. Cooper stated she is for the extension for these reasons: it was a rush process; it was during the holidays and only four applicants applied and believes it could be better. She believes part of the problem was a requirement on the application receiving information from Louisiana Department of Education confirming their certification that will possibly take 30-45 days alone to receive and will hinder the number of applicants.

It was moved by Mr. Johnson and seconded by Mrs. Shelling to not extend the search but to extend the Superintendent process for 30 days for the board and board committees to meet and make sure everything is in line.

Ms. Haneline stated that there was a ad hoc meeting prior to this meeting to discuss the Superintendent hiring process. There are state statutes that must be followed that outline qualifications for Superintendent. There were four (4) applicants that successfully applied within the time frame and by the deadline. The four names submitted were Mr. Sam Moore, Mrs. Serena White, Mr. Clyde Washington, and Mr. Brian Bush.

Ms. Haneline gave a recap on what was discussed in the Ad Hoc committee meeting. She stated the Board set the standards on how the applications were going to be accepted and the above applicants met the deadline. She stated once the board review and the community meet the candidates, if they do not fit what this school system needs then the board will have the opportunity to find new applicants.

The recommendation was made to move forward with the four applicants and during that process they will define a job description, a rubric is being provided to board members to individually assess the applications. Human Resources has vetted the applications to determine if they meet the state requirements for Superintendent.

Mr. Johnson stated he would like to resend his motion because its not the exact wording that is on the agenda; therefore if Mrs. shelling will take her second back as well, the board will need to vote, or someone make a motion on whether to extend the Superintendent search. If the vote fails, then the board will come back and move forward.

It was moved by Mrs. Cooper to extend the Superintendent search for 30 days. There was not a second; therefore, the motion failed.

Public comment: Sandie Lollie congratulated Board President Ms. Haneline and Board Vice President Mr. Brandon Johnson and the Board for their outstanding job o receiving certificates. She thanked the board for making it easy for the employees to receive the thousand dollars and looks forward to the one in May. She supports the Board about extending the contract. She thinks time is of the essence, the most valuable commodity that we need not waste a minute.

Mr. Johnson stated since the motion failed, the Board can move at its on pace. Once Mrs. Haneline puts her committees in line the Board will look at the policies and move forward. Mr. Johnson hopes the Board will work together in this process.

#### Agenda Item 7A – Financial Reports (out of sequence)

Interim Co-Superintendent Mr. Moore reported that the November 2023 financial reports were pretty accurate. It shows the school system’s effort to be transparent and to share with the public what’s going on with the Monroe City School System. He believes this is the right direction for our citizens and taxpayers. Ms. Haneline asked if he’s identified any significant variance. Mr. Moore explained that certain things are paid for at once paid-up front and those things that are paid up front cause that variance to happen. We are still dealing with our COVID funding, allocations and spending and must monitor this closely. Ms. Haneline noted in future meetings, they would like Mrs. Howard to be present and standing finance committee meetings monthly that will meet an hour prior to every school board meeting. The board is looking to hire a board employee that is an internal auditor who can explain the finances. Ms. Haneline noted in the future if there are any pertinent agenda items that consist of department heads, she would like them to be present as well to make sure the information received is accurate.

Public comment: Vickie Krutzer congratulated Ms. Haneline and welcomed her to the board. Mrs. Krutzer stated speaking of the variance and 10%, knowing that the Superintendent is now retired, the expenses that have been spent on investigative audit. She stated the public would like to know how much it is and where in the line item of the budget we would put that money. She stated the audit for this year was due December 31<sup>st</sup> and for the last 2 years it was extended. She would like to know if this has been filed. Mr. Willson stated initially they indicated it should be ready in November, they felt confident it would be ready in December and to his knowledge it is not ready and he’s very disappointed with the local audit. Mrs. Krutzer asked if the board will file for an extension. Ms. Haneline noted as

President of the Board, she will be reviewing all contracts that we have with providers for any kind of professional services such as audits. Mrs. Krutzer inquired about the open bids on Monday for the new auditor that was on the website. She asked if it will be presented at the next board meeting.

Agenda Item 7B – Report of Co-Interim Superintendent (out of sequence)

- Mrs. White congratulated the Board Members and thanked them for their time.
- Currently finishing up the first round of literacy screening that is a part of the state assessment series.
- The state is utilizing dibbles as the assessment three times a year. It started in the middle of the year and will finish by next week. It will start again at the end of the year and beginning next year it will become a part of the accountability system. This year is a pilot year.
- Sixth, seventh, and eighth grades are taking the innovative assessment pilot.
- Mrs. Natalie Wexler, an educational expert in literacy, Author of *The Knowledge Gap*, and Co-Author of *The Writing Revolution* stopped by to see some of the writing results, implementation of the writing strategies with the content. During the day they observed 12 different classrooms and 3 schools. She did 3 different focus groups with teachers and book signing.

Mrs. Cooper asked a few questions about curriculum concerns from constituents. She wants Mrs. White to think about it and maybe report on it at a curriculum committee meeting. One question was the impact on Eureka math on student math understanding, the merging of ELA and social studies, does the assigned homework get graded and lastly the students handwriting needs to be addressed.

Interim Co-superintendent wanted to clarify the financial variance; it was due to the insurance premiums that we pay at the beginning of the school year. Time at home was extended this past week due to the inclement weather. There was communication with Todd Guice, Superintendent of Ouachita Parish School System on making these decisions. There were a few issues that took place in some of the buildings. Berg Jones, Minnie Ruffin, and Cypress Point had a heating situation that has been resolved. Cypress Point had serious water leaks and damage in four classrooms. The ceiling tile was damaged as well. Mr. Spencer and his crew moved the necessary physical classes until the repairs are complete. Neville High school had some issues at the east stadium with the water supply line and the repair was completed today and will be tested. The Sallie Humble project notice to proceed took place on January 2<sup>nd</sup>. The preconstruction meeting will be held on January 24<sup>th</sup> (tomorrow) at 10:00am at Sallie Humble. The charging stations are being completed for the electric buses. Mr. Moore reminded everyone of the 20 electric buses that will be arriving between March and April. Transportation is in the process of securing discarding the 20 buses that will have to be moved out; due to the grant that is being received these buses cannot be put up for resale or reused. These buses will have to be destroyed.

Ms. Haneline asked for an estimated time on completion for the Neville High School and Carroll High School band room. Mr. Moore stated Neville and Carroll are all in line as for ESSER funding and do not anticipate any problems with the deadlines or budgeting. Mr. Moore will find out the deadlines for this project for the next board meeting. Ms. Haneline voiced her concerns about inclement weather and flooding. Mr. Sampognaro asked if maintenance have a winterization plan that is put in place. Mr. Moore responded yes; they do. Mr. Sampognaro would like to see a copy of the plan if possible. Mr. Moore responded okay and wanted to add in terms of safety being a big concern, there was a camera system put in place for our district in 2013 and on its last leg. They have been talking to a vendor about

upgrading the camera system throughout the district. The initial cost is about 2.5 million dollars. We must have safety and look at other mechanisms, evaluating portable metal detectors that can be taken to games and buildings. He has been researching possibilities of trying to get additional school resource officers in our facilities. Ms. Haneline asked to have details about what our current system is not providing and why we will need camera upgrades and SRO plans.

Agenda Item 7C – Report of Board Members (out of sequence)

Mrs. Cooper reported that she served on the finance committee chaired by Mr. Sampognaro on December 12<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Sampognaro reported he's looking forward to a successful 2024 with the new Superintendent, Board President, and Vice President. He congratulated Mrs. Jennifer Haneline and Mr. Brandon Johnson.

Mr. Willson congratulated Ms. Haneline and Mr. Johnson. Mr. Willson spoke on Tarver Braddock, the young man from Neville High School that lost his life a couple of weeks ago and expressed how the community came together to show their love and support to the family. They will continue to be lifted in prayers. Mr. Willson thanked Mrs. Marie Brown for attending the United Way dollars and cents program at Carroll High School. He thanked Principal Patrick Taylor for hosting this event. Mr. Willson collaborated on what was offered such as financial literacy and budgeting. This was roughly a 2-hour program where over a hundred Carroll Seniors had to do a financial budget on everything from housing, groceries, insurance and more. He stated this was a good experience and an eye opener. Mr. Willson had the opportunity to speak with the group afterwards about a life game plan. He thanked the board for voting to allow all employees to receive the \$1,000 in January and looks forward to the one in May. Mr. Willson addressed a recent article that the editor of Free Press, Roosevelt Wright wrote.

Mrs. Shelling thanked Mrs. Lollie for the gift that was giving. She had an opportunity to present two students with money to help them along the way. Mrs. Shelling appreciates everything that everyone is doing for the Monroe City School System and hopes to continue to work as they are.

Mr. Berry reported it's a Blessing and he looks forward to working with Ms. Haneline as President and Mr. Johnson as Vice President.

Mr. Johnson thanked the Co-Superintendents for the work they are doing and stepping in when the district needed it. Mr. Johnson contacted them both about his expertise in transportation and they came with open ears and understood. He believes this is the type of Board, Superintendent relationship that helps move any school board in any school system forward. Mr. Johnson thanked the Board for their vote of trust to be Vice President. He thanked Mrs. Shelling for her nomination. Mr. Johnson explained why he declined being nominated as president. Mr. Johnson noted with the schedule he has; it will not allow him to give the Monroe City School District the time and effort that it needs to make this process go forward. He would like to charge the Board with the duty of cleaning up the mess that has been created. It has not all been on the Board, but the Board is taking the lick for it. The Board was elected by the people, and they have expectations on the job to be done. The Board does put trust in experts to do certain jobs to keep this district rolling. He

challenges the Board to make serious decisions and work together within their strengths like no other year. If there is conflict in times where it needs to be discussed as a board, it does not need to be political. He stated they all need to be present for whatever goes on with finishing this process to make sure this school system is giving the stability that it needs. Mr. Johnson would like to charge this Board to work together within their strengths to do what they said they came here to do, and that is, to make Monroe City School District Better.

Mrs. Haneline would like to echo what Mr. Johnson said and to add along with that, she stated it's a must to read all communications that are sent to them before coming to a meeting to make sure all background information is received. She appreciates the Board confidence and unanimous vote feels awesome. She will put the work in and for the Board to contact her with concerns. Mrs. Haneline appointed committee chairpersons. All spots are not filled.

Facilities – Michael Sampognaro  
Policy – Brandon Johnson  
Curriculum – Betty Ward Cooper  
Finance – Bill Willson  
Transportation – Daryll Berry  
Insurance – Brenda Shelling

Ms. Haneline next steps:

- Identifying the hiring process for the next Superintendent. The job description will be sent out.
- A community meeting will be held, and anyone can attend and submit their questions ahead of time and will have the opportunity to ask one per person if not read aloud. This will be one day soon.
- Reviewing of contracts with forethought consulting, which is the policy advisor for the district and other outstanding contracts.
- Hiring of internal auditor who answers to the board to ensure accurate and clear information.
- Standing finance committee meeting at 5:00pm before each Board meeting
- Safety committee meeting
- The policy committee needs to meet soon to review superintendent related policies.
- Need an audit of all schools needs and how to move forward on a digital submission for needs in our schools.
- Board Retreat
- Every board meeting rotates one student from each school to provide the pledge.

Ms. Haneline expressed her condolences to the Tarver Braddock family. She's in awe with the support from the surrounding schools in the parish. Ms. Haneline admires Mrs. Coopers passion with the committees. She appreciates the community's helpful advice and constructive criticism and hopes it continues.

Agenda Item 8 – Future Meetings (out of sequence)

Board Meetings – February 13, 2024, and March 19, 2024, at 6:00pm

Ms. Haneline noted, a finance committee meeting will be held on the same day at 5:00pm

Action Item 9 – Recess/Adjournment (out of sequence)

There being no further business to come before the board, on a motion by Mr. Willson and seconded by Mr. Johnson the meeting adjourned at 7:18 p.m.

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Jennifer Haneline  
Board President



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Sam L. Moore, III  
Interim Co-Superintendent



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Serena White  
Interim Co-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](mailto:tonya.robinsons@mcschools.net).*