



EYES ON THE SCHOOL BOARD



MARCH, 2015

SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH NEARS FINISH; BOARD DISCUSSES FUTURE BUDGET ITEMS

The March school board meeting was moved from March 18, 2015 to March 10, 2015, with an Executive Committee and Legislative Committee meeting from 5pm to 7pm that same day. The regular school board meeting began at 7:30pm, and all School Board members (districts 1-9) were present, as well as the Acting Superintendent. The meeting took place at 501 Manhattan Boulevard in Harvey. The meeting was adjourned at 10:20pm.

Superintendent Search

The School Board recently installed Michelle Blouin-Williams as Acting Superintendent and hopes to have a permanent Superintendent in place by April 15, 2015. The Board is planning to air 5 to 7 minute info segments on public access television (Cox channel 8, AT&T channel 199), where each of the six candidates can explain their interest in the position. Additionally, the Board will host a forum for stakeholders on Saturday, March 28, 2015 at 10am, where parents, teachers, students, and the general public will be able to meet and question the candidates. The School Board will take into consideration the opinions of the public, the experience and history of the candidates, and the results of the online survey.

Jefferson Parish School Board Joins Rest of Louisiana in School Board Association

The School Board presented on their recent trip to a conference held by the Louisiana School Boards Association (LSBA). Previously, The Jefferson Parish School Board was the only school board in the state not a part of the LSBA. Under its new leadership, the current school board has rejoined the LSBA and the National School Boards Association (NSBA). At the conference held in

Shreveport, Louisiana, six of the Jefferson Parish School Board members and the Acting Superintendent were able to exchange ideas around policy, leadership, and how to address local challenges.

BUDGET: Living Wages for Employees and Stipend

Board President Cedric Floyd condemned the Parish for paying its employees wages that were difficult to live on. He called for a legitimate salary schedule for these employees, and for an inquiry into the budget to help these employees.

School Board member Sandy Denapolis-Bosarge (District 9) introduced a second reading to increase the salary schedule for administrators at schools that changed from being elementary schools to K-8 schools. Middle school administrators get paid at a higher salary schedule, but the new K-8 administrators do not have an adjusted salary schedule. The issue was moved to the Budget Committee by a vote of 5-4.

How they voted on the motion to move salary schedule increases for new K-8 administrators to the budget committee:			
District	Representative	For	Against
1	Mark Morgan		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2	Ricky Johnson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
3	Ray St. Pierre	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
4	Melinda Bourgeois		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5	Cedric Floyd	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
6	Larry Dale		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7	Melinda Doucet	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
8	Marion "Coach" Bonura	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
9	Sandy Denapolis-Bosarge		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Denapolis-Bosarge introduced her other second reading that called for an additional stipend for social workers, speech and language pathologists, audiologists, and educational diagnosticians who obtained national board certification. A stipend for these employees was cut by the state in 2011, and Denapolis-Bosarge is calling for funding from the Jefferson Parish Public School System to increase their pay equal to that of teachers and counselors who receive the stipend. Two public comments were taken, and a crowd of 10-15 people stood up to show support for this issue.

Floyd questioned if the Parish had adequate funds for all these proposed pay increases. He asked for more research into prior stipends and stipend cuts, and reiterated that he wanted more funding for “people way at the bottom.” By a vote of 9-0, this was also deferred to the Budget Committee for implementation on July 1, 2015.

“I want everybody to be fairly treated. We have some cafeteria workers, monitors, bus attendants... They don’t make \$40 a day. That’s got to rank somewhere in this process to have living wages for people way at the bottom.”
—Board President Cedric Floyd

Superintendent Survey Prompts Debate Over Parish’s Website

Recently, District 8 School Board member Marion “Coach” Bonura created a survey for the public to comment on the search for a superintendent. This survey was posted on the parish’s website and allowed stakeholders to talk directly to the school board. Comments would inform the board’s decision. Denapolis-Bosarge was uncomfortable with an item being posted to the website as being from “School Board members” that was not voted on by the entire School Board. Larry Dale (District 6) voiced his support for voting, while Coach Bonura clarified that the survey was originally meant for his district only, but was mistakenly put out to the entire parish. Mark Morgan (District 1) made a directive to the administration to create a policy that would outline a standard procedure for posting on the parish public school system website. By a vote of 9-0, this motion was approved.

Property Insurance

The Board voted 9-0 to reject a \$270 million bid for Property and Inlands Marine Insurance. This insurance would be used for facility damages, such as in the case of a hurricane. The Board rejected the bid because a less expensive bid (potentially around \$165 million) may be proposed and later accepted. A special meeting will be held prior to the deadline on this policy.

Process to Obtain \$50 Million in Bonds Progresses

The School Board unanimously voted to go forward in the process to obtain \$50 million in bonds from the Federal Bonds Commission. The interest that would be due on the loans would be on par with previous budget allocations for debt services. Moving forward in the process to obtain these bonds does not necessarily mean that the board is utilizing the bonds; it can take 2 to 3 months for bonds to process. Melinda Bourgeois (District 4) commented early on in the discussion that she wanted some permanency in the Superintendent position before a decision was made, but Floyd countered that the Board has never defaulted on loans, and that the previous Acting Superintendent Dr. James Meza was never made permanent. Morgan brought up his experience with difficulties in past school boards over distributing large amounts of funding. He urged the Board to have a plan for the funds.

Federal Reimbursements for Wireless Services

The federal government can provide up to 85% in reimbursements for wireless services in schools, but this is a process that must be completed by the School Board before March 25. If this deadline is not met, the school system could potentially lose \$6.8 million. This will be taken up at a special meeting along with the property insurance issue.

Upcoming Dates:

Wednesday, March 18 - school board meeting cancelled.

Saturday, March 28 - meet and greet for Superintendent candidates at 501 Manhattan Boulevard, 10am.

Wednesday, April 15 - school board meets to vote on the Superintendent position & the bonds discussed above, 11am.