

SCHOOL BOARD PROCEEDINGS

The Avoyelles Parish School Board met in special session Wednesday, May 11, 2011, at 5:00 p.m. at the School Board Office with the following members present:

Van Kojis, President; Carlos A. Mayeux, Jr., Vice-President; Freeman Ford, Darrell Wiley, James Gauthier, Shelia Blackman-Dupas, Michael Lacombe, and Rev. Mary Hayward-Jones

Absent: Cynthia "Cindy" Hill.

An Invocation was offered by Rev. Mary Hayward-Jones.

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States of America led by Board Member James Gauthier.

1. President Van Kojis addressed the Board regarding various options to consider regarding the recent rising river stages. Mr. Kojis stated that it will be necessary for the Board to introduce a resolution declaring an emergency for the School Board because of the rising water.

On motion by Carlos A. Mayeux, Jr., seconded by Michael Lacombe, the Board declared an emergency due to the rising river stages. **MOTION CARRIED.**

2. President Van Kojis discussed the possible use of school facilities for school shelters. Mr. Kojis stated that he recently met with Mr. Anzel Jones, Director of Homeland Security for Avoyelles Parish, and one of Mr. Jones' question to Mr. Kojis was the possible use of some of the closed school facilities as shelters for the local evacuees due to the rising flood waters.

Superintendent Dwayne Lemoine suggested that should the Board authorize the use of the public schools for shelters, that he notify the Red Cross and allow the Red Cross to take control of the operation since they are prepared for taking care of the evacuees.

President Kojis further explained that once the Red Cross takes control of the evacuees at the schools, this would relieve the liability from the School Board.

Superintendent Lemoine added that once the Red Cross is given authorization, they would take control of the shelter and it would then become their responsibility. Mr. Lemoine further stated that the Red Cross had further discussed the use of closed school facilities for the purpose of storing items which presents an issue of liability for the Board. Mr. Lemoine stated that should the Board allow individuals to use the closed school facilities for storage, the School Board would be responsible for all equipment stored in the closed schools. Mr. Lemoine advised that this would not be a wise endeavor for the Board to consider.

Board Member Freeman Ford questioned whether it would be necessary to seek approval from the Federal Judge to utilize the closed schools. Mr. Ford recommended that the Superintendent confer with District Attorney Charles Riddle regarding this matter.

Superintendent Lemoine noted that Senator Mary Landrieu has contacted him regarding the Board's plans for using schools as shelters if the need arises and officials with the State Department of Education has also contacted him regarding support for closing schools earlier. Mr. Lemoine further stated that he was also contacted by officials in Pointe Coupee regarding using the schools as a place of relocation of students as the need arises.

Vice-President Carlos A. Mayeux, Jr. stated that the Board will open bids on property insurance on May 24, 2011. Mr. Mayeux noted that the areas in Simmesport, Moreauville, and Plaquemine flooded in 1927 and the Board may have to consider a need to acquire additional property insurance as a result on the impending flood possibility. Mr. Mayeux recommended that the Board continue with the process of accepting the bids for property insurance and if need be, look at other options afterwards.

President Kojis stated that he was informed that because President Barack Obama has declared a national disaster, he has been informed that in the event of a catastrophe, the Board would be eligible for FEMA funds. Mr. Kojis also recommended to continue with the insurance process as previously scheduled.

Board Member James Gauthier questioned that at the time the Red Cross takes charge of the facility and in the event of damage to the facility, who is responsible for the damages? President Kojis responded that it is his understanding that the Red Cross will be responsible for the damages.

On motion by Darrell Wiley, seconded by Shelia Blackman-Dupas, the Board granted permission to allow all public schools in Avoyelles Parish to be used as evacuation shelters due to the rising water and threat of flooding. MOTION CARRIED.

Board Member Michael Lacombe recommended that the Superintendent contact the Sheriff's office to advise that the public schools will be used as evacuation shelters.

President Van Kojis recognized Mr. Tom Hudson and Ms. Carmel Breaux, Insurance Consultants, for the Board. Mr. Kojis stated that the Board will continue to receive quotes until May 24, 2011 and a report will be presented to the Board at its first meeting in June.

Board Member Michael Lacombe requested that Mr. Hudson also request an alternate bid on flood insurance coverage.

3. Superintendent Dwayne Lemoine addressed the Board regarding the revision of the final examination schedule due to possible flooding of low-lying areas. Mr. Lemoine stated that Mr. Anzel Jones had informed him that the crest date was approximately from the dates of May 21 to 23, 2011. Mr. Lemoine further stated that after receiving a telephone call from representatives with the Louisiana State Department of Education regarding releasing school at an earlier date, he asked that the Board contemplate revising the final examination schedule in

order to release the students at an earlier date due to low lying area in Simmesport, Big Bend area, Brouillette, and Plaucheville.

Furthermore, Mr. Lemoine stated that after reviewing the final examination schedule, he recommended that the Board revise the schedule and ending week of school, as follows:

Friday, May 13, 2011: 1:00-3:00 p.m., seventh hour final test

Monday, May 16, 2011: 8:00-10:00 a.m., second hour final test
10:10 a.m.-12:10 p.m., fourth hour final test; and
1:00-3:00 p.m., sixth hour final test

Tuesday, May 17, 2011: 8:00-10:00 a.m., first hour final test
10:10-12:10 p.m., third hour final test; and
1:00-3:00 p.m., fifth hour final test

Therefore, all schools would be released at the end of the day on Tuesday for the students and on Thursday, May 19, 2011, for the teachers.

In response to a question from Board Member Freeman Ford, Superintendent Lemoine stated that the Board is in compliance with the required minutes.

Board Member James Gauthier expressed concern regarding scheduling three finals in one day.

On motion by Carlos A. Mayeux, Jr., seconded by Darrell Wiley, the Board agreed to revise the school calendar as indicated by Superintendent Lemoine, as follows: The last day of school for students will be Tuesday, May 17, 2011, and the last day of school for teachers will be Thursday, May 19, 2011. In addition, May 16 and 17, 2011 will be full days for students. All schools will be closed on Friday, May 20, 2011. MOTION CARRIED

4. Mr. Dexter Compton, Principal of Bunkie Elementary School, and Mr. Randy Littleton, Supervisor of Elementary Education, addressed the Board regarding the acceptance of a School Improvement Grant for Bunkie Elementary School.

Principal Compton first elaborated on the need for the School Improvement Grant for Bunkie Elementary School. Mr. Compton stated that the grant will greatly enhance the faculty and staff at the school as well as assist with resources, materials, and supplies.

Mr. Compton stated that Bunkie Elementary School is identified by the state as a persistently low achieving school based on a steady decline in the test scores in recent years. He said that this qualifies the school through the School Improvement Grant to receive up to \$1.5 million over a three year period. Mr. Compton further explained that the grant is designed to provide the school with a means to speed up the improvement process.

Furthermore, Mr. Compton explained that the plan of the grant specifies that all classroom positions are declared vacant, current staff would reapply, maximum of 50% rehired (14 teachers), sign-on bonus of \$2000 a year, and incentives based on student performance. Mr. Compton also stated that the plan calls for a calendar year beginning July 13 through June 1 with nine week grading periods with three week intercessions. Two of the weeks would be used to provide enrichment/remediation for the students. Staff (teachers, support staff, administration) would be added for an additional 20 days.

In addition, Mr. Compton explained the advantages of the grant which would include more instructional days prior to testing, job-embedded staff development and daily common planning, able to provide enrichment/recreational activities that time won't allow for in existing structure, and students will be more likely to conform and stay in routines without extended breaks

Also, incentives will enable the Board to attract and keep quality teachers based on a contractual agreement.

Board Member Shelia Blackman-Dupas questioned the qualifications of teachers currently employed at Bunkie Elementary School. Mrs. Anita Bonnette, Assistant Principal, shared that they have 12 certified teachers, six returned- to- work certified teachers, and 10 teachers working toward certification.

Mrs. Dupas further stated that regardless of the amount of the grant, the school will continue to be persistently low achieving if this School Board does not provide them with the necessary resources needed. Mrs. Dupas made specific reference to the schools consistent shortage of fully certified teachers as per Louisiana's Department of Education criteria. She added that this school has been used as a guinea pig for grants of all types and yet they continue to perform poorly on standardized tests. She stated that in her opinion the School Board has failed students at Bunkie Elementary School.

Mr. Randy Littleton, Supervisor of Elementary Education, addressed the Board regarding the sustainability of the School Improvement Grant. Mr. Littleton explained that each school will continue to receive their Title I and I-DEA district allotment of funds as they do at the present time. Additional funds for utilities and grounds for extended time at Bunkie Elementary will be provided by the District's general maintenance fund. Also, STEM activities at each school will receive supplemental funding for professional development and supplies from The Rapides Foundation STEM Initiative Grant. Literacy funds will end in the current year, however, the district is planning to apply for the "Struggling Readers" grant to sustain the "Literacy for All" efforts of the past five years.

Mr. Littleton also stated that data gathered from each of the School Improvement Grant schools will be shared with other schools and district staff each month at the monthly Principals' meeting. The data to be shared will include benchmark testing data, progress monitoring for special education and literacy students, attendance data for students and teachers; discipline reports; and classroom walk-through data gathered by central office staff, school administrators and Louisiana State Department of Education staff.

Board Member Shelia Blackman-Dupas stated that in order for the grant to be successful for Bunkie Elementary School, the Board must hire a teaching staff that will prepare the students for passage of the LEAP examination. Mrs. Dupas stated that she felt the Board was failing the students at Bunkie Elementary School; and she recommended that the Board allow the Superintendent to transfer teachers who can teach the students. Furthermore, Mrs. Dupas stated that Bunkie Middle School was robbed of teaching staff and resources. She stated that she does not have any problem with the grant, but felt that the school should be given the needed resources and teaching resources in order to insure the success of Bunkie Elementary School.

A motion was offered by Carlos A. Mayeux, Jr., seconded by Michael Lacombe, to accept the School Improvement Grant for Bunkie Elementary School as proposed.

The motion was adopted by the following vote:

Ayes: Darrell Wiley, James Gauthier, Van Kojis, Carlos A. Mayeux, Jr., Rev. Mary Hayward-Jones, and Michael Lacombe.

Nays: Freeman Ford and Shelia Blackman-Dupas.

Board Member Shelia Dupas stated that the reason she voted “nay” was because of the fact that there have been many grants which the Board has applied for Bunkie Elementary School and that this school has been used as a guinea pig for grants of all types and yet nothing changes.

The students continue to perform poorly on standardized tests. Also, based on history, she does not trust that anything will change. She stated that in her opinion the School Board has failed students at Bunkie Elementary School.

Board Member Freeman Ford stated that the reason he voted “nay” was because he did not have enough input prior to this meeting and that he is leery about voting on this matter at tonight’s meeting without more information.

Principal Compton expressed his thanks to Superintendent Lemoine, Supervisors Randy Littleton and Susan Welch; Assistant Principal Anita Bonnette, Title I Teacher Pat Ours, and Coach Debbie Bubenzer.

Superintendent Lemoine also expressed his thanks to the Board for their support in this endeavor.

5. Mrs. Celeste Voinche, Principal of Marksville High School, addressed the Board regarding the acceptance of a School Improvement Grant for Marksville High School. Mrs. Voinche stated that the School Improvement Grant for Marksville High School will focus on the transformation of classroom instruction in order to improve student academic performance. Mrs. Voinche further stated that in regards to professional development, teachers will receive ten days

of professional development before the beginning of the 2011-2012 school year. Teachers will be paid for attending this staff development and the professional development will focus on improving instruction. Also, Mrs. Voinche stated that an external consultant will be hired to facilitate the professional development. Also, an implementation coach will be hired (with school Title I monies) to provide follow-up to staff development and to monitor instruction, assessments, instructional strategies, etc. on a daily basis. The coach will work with teachers who are in need of individual assistance. Also, the external consultant will help train the implementation coach and will assist with follow-up and monitoring.

Mrs. Voinche further explained that four additional teachers will be hired to reduce class size and allow the teaming model to return to Marksville High School. Teaming will be on a structured schedule with at least 60% of the time devoted to instruction/curriculum. The teaming process will be managed by a staff development coach to be hired by grant monies. Also, the external consultant will help train the staff development coach.

Also, Mrs. Voinche stated that the instructional day will be increased by thirty minutes. The thirty minute period will be an intervention/independence period during which students who need additional remediation will receive help from teachers. Mrs. Voinche stated that the increase in instructional time is possible because all buses arrive at Marksville High School by 7:33 a.m. She further stated that under the grant, students will attend 170 days, but for a total of 69,360 minutes.

Mrs. Voinche further stated that she will participate in the Louisiana School Turnaround Specialist training and the School Administrator Manager training. Also, if Marksville High School achieves its goal, each teacher who signs the contract addendum and successfully completes all requirements will receive a year end bonus of approximately \$1200.00.

A motion was offered by Darrell Wiley, seconded by James Gauthier, to accept the School Improvement Grant for Marksville High School as proposed.

The motion was adopted by the following vote:

Ayes: Darrell Wiley, James Gauthier, Van Kojis, Carlos A. Mayeux, Jr., and Michael Lacombe.

Nays: Freeman Ford and Shelia Blackman-Dupas.

Abstained: Rev. Mary Hayward-Jones.

Board Member Shelia Blackman-Dupas stated that the reason she voted “nay” was because she felt that the document was weak and that the grant was focused on putting money in the pocket of teachers rather than improving the quality of education for the students. Mrs. Dupas stated that it appears that the grant was thrown together in the eleventh hour.

Board Member Freeman Ford stated that the reason he voted “nay” was because he was not informed of such a drastic change.

There being no further business, on motion by Freeman Ford, seconded by Carlos A. Mayeux, Jr., the meeting was adjourned.

AVOYELLES PARISH SCHOOL BOARD

Van Kojis, President

Dwayne Lemoine, Secretary-Treasurer