

SCHOOL BOARD PROCEEDINGS

The Avoyelles Parish School Board met in special session Tuesday, May 31, 2011, at 4:00 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, Rev. Mary Hayward-Jones, and Cynthia "Cindy" Hill.

Absent: None.

An Invocation was offered by Vice-President Carlos A. Mayeux, Jr.

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

1. On motion by Darrell Wiley, seconded by Carlos A. Mayeux, Jr, the Board adopted the minutes of the special Board meeting held Tuesday, May 24, 2011, as printed and mailed to Board members and published in The Weekly News, official journal of the Board. MOTION CARRIED.

2. President Van Kojis stated that the purpose of the special Board meeting was to discuss the approval or rejection of a reapportionment plan for the Avoyelles Parish School Board as presented and taken to the public hearing process held on Thursday, May 26, 2011.

Board Member Freeman Ford presented a prepared statement to the Board and audience, as follows:

"I have done a lot of thinking about this issue since Thursday night. I have weighed everything, both pros and cons. I think that everyone would agree with me that wanting to maintain three minority districts out of nine is not asking too much. Even though many say that the total population percentages are what you look at, I have a problem only looking at that and not the 18 plus population. In the overall population, there may be many 10 year olds or under that would not be eligible to vote until the next census count. On the other hand, we know that the 18 plus population are eligible to vote at this time. With this in mind, I don't feel that this plan assures the current three minority districts. District One, which is my district should in my opinion be a little higher from 55%, 18 plus population, but I can live with that, even though not totally satisfied, however, most definitely District 5, Mrs. Shelia Dupas' district at 53.36%, 18 plus population is very scary and cannot be called a majority-minority district. My conscience tells me that this district and District 1 could be made more majority-minority. I don't think, as I said earlier, asking for three secure districts out of nine is too much to ask for. If the shoes were on the other foot and white members had these type districts, I am certain they would have the same concerns and understandably so. I cannot support this plan as presented. There is too much risk in losing a minority district prior to the next census count.

Board Member Shelia Blacman-Dupas stated that Mr. Ford's statements were well-said and that she was in agreement to his comments.

President Van Kojis stated that in his home district, District 8, the plan indicated that the full population of the City of Bunkie (75%) would be included in District 6 rather than District 8. Mr. Kojis stated that he is agreement with the percentages, however, his constituents are upset with the plan as indicated in District 8. Mr. Kojis further stated that he had voiced his concerns at the public hearing on May 26, 2011.

Vice-President Carlos A. Mayeux, Jr. stated that he was not in favor of the reapportionment plan as presented at the public hearing because it calls for him to be disconnected to the Moreauville district. Mr. Mayeux said that he is beginning his third term on the Board and he has always represented this area.

A motion was offered by Shelia Blackman-Dupas, seconded by Cindy Hill, that the Board reject the reapportionment plan as submitted to the Board and presented at the public hearing which was scheduled on May 26, 2011.

President Van Kojis asked for any discussion from the audience.

Board Member Shelia Dupas recommended that the Board vote on the motion at this time.

The motion was adopted by the following vote:

Ayes: Freeman Ford, Darrell Wiley, Shelia Blackman-Dupas, Van Kojis, Carlos A. Mayeux, Jr., and Cindy Hill.

Nays: James Gauthier, Rev. Mary Hayward-Jones, and Michael Lacombe.

In response from a question from President Kojis regarding the Board's next step, Mr. Riddle stated that Federal Judge Dee Drell is awaiting his call regarding the outcome of the meeting. Also, Mr. Riddle stated that probably the Judge may schedule a meeting next week for the purpose of questioning each member, individually, as to whether they have justifiable reasons.

Mrs. Heather Urena stated that she will be available for the Board members and audience to view the plan as well as answer questions.

There being no further business, on motion by Freeman Ford, seconded by Shelia Blackman-Dupas, the meeting was adjourned.

AVOYELLES PARISH SCHOOL BOARD

Van Kojis, President
Dwayne Lemoine, Secretary-Treasurer

