

LINCOLN PARISH SCHOOL BOARD  
Ruston, Louisiana

REGULAR SESSION  
Tuesday, October 1, 2019 6:00 p.m.

The Lincoln Parish School Board met in Regular Session on Tuesday, October 1, 2019, at 6:00 p.m. at the Lincoln Parish School Board Office, Ruston, Louisiana. Members present were Ms. Debbie Abrahm, Mr. Otha Anders, Ms. Lisa Best, Mr. Mike Barmore, Dr. David Gullatt, Mr. Danny Hancock, Ms. Lynda Henderson, Mr. George Mack, Jr., Mr. Joe Mitcham, Mr. Hunter Smith, and Ms. Susan Wiley.

Mr. David Ferguson was absent.

President Joe Mitcham called the meeting to order, and Mr. Smith gave the invocation. Mr. Barmore led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the American flag.

President Mitcham asked if there were any comments from the public before the vote on the adoption of the agenda. A parent stepped to the podium, introduced herself, and requested to be put on the agenda. Ms. Best made the motion, Ms. Abrahm seconded, to amend the agenda and allow the parent to be added. A roll call vote was taken, there were seven yes votes, four no votes, and one absent. The motion was denied.

Upon a motion by Mr. Anders, seconded by Dr. Gullatt, the Board voted to adopt the agenda as printed.

Upon a motion by Mr. Barmore, seconded by Ms. Best, the Board unanimously voted to approve the minutes of the Regular Session held on September 3, 2019.

Cathi Cox-Boniol, Lincoln Achieve Coordinator, felt privileged and honored to recognize

Amanda Meng, a Ruston High School senior, who was the only student throughout all schools in Lincoln Parish to be announced as one of the approximately 16,000 semifinalists in the 65<sup>th</sup> annual National Merit Scholarship Program. This group of students represent less than 1% of all high school seniors in the United States. Ms. Cox-Boniol provided background information on Ms. Meng and noted she had been before the Board in the spring when her perfect ACT score was announced. She then presented a plaque to Ms. Meng in recognition of her outstanding achievement.

Ms. Meng thanked the Board, Mr. Milstead, her teachers and counselors, and her family for their support. Several board members expressed their pride and congratulations to this young person's accomplishments, stating she was among the elite of the elite.

Juanita Duke, Business Manager, shared that a resolution would be presented to call an election to be held on Saturday, May 9, 2020. The purpose would be for the levying of a new ½-cent sales and use tax. If the Board adopts the resolution, additional notices and advertisements would be made in accordance with state law. The Legislative delegation of Lincoln Parish had been notified and informed in accordance with state law of this special call. She then introduced Bond Attorney Grant Schlueter with Foley & Judell of New Orleans, and reported that he would present the resolution.

Mr. Schlueter stated that Saturday, May 9, 2020, was a regular election date. The proposition provides for a new ½-cent sales tax commencing July 1, 2020. The estimated amount to be received from the tax was \$4.6 million per year. This would be a permanent parish-wide sales and use tax. The purpose was to give additional support to the public elementary and

secondary schools in the parish including but not limited to the following:

- 1) Provide enhanced security at all public schools and facilities in the system. This would include a school resource officer at each school.
- 2) Additional salaries and benefits for permanent/salaried teachers and other public school employees.

The Resolution further provides that the LPSB would meet in Special Session following the election on May 12, 2020, at 6:00 p.m. to canvas the returns. He asked for questions from board members and the public. A board member questioned why all uses of the sales tax collections were not listed in the resolution. Mr. Schlueter explained that state law restricts wording in voter propositions to a maximum of 200 words. This resolution is already over 190 words as written. He stated that in the past, Lincoln Parish School Board had been diligent in putting out informational brochures detailing how funds would be spent, as well as presenting additional information in public meetings.

Upon a motion by Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Barmore, a roll call vote was taken. The Board unanimously voted to approve the resolution to call an election on May 9, 2020, for the voters of Lincoln Parish and to provide for all required matters and notices related to making this call.

New Construction Coordinator, James Payton, reported that the bids for the Ruston High School light and pole project were opened and reviewed on September 17, 2019. Two qualified bidders submitted bids on this project. Bids ranged from \$200,427.00 to \$146,000.00. After reviewing the bids, the district administration recommended acceptance of the lowest qualified

bid.

Upon a motion by Ms. Best, seconded by Mr. Hancock, the Board unanimously voted to accept the lowest qualified bid from Albritton's of Ruston of \$146,000.00 and award them as contractor for the RHS light and pole project.

Following a month of studying two policy revisions and one policy addition, Lisa Bastion, Assistant Superintendent/Chief Academic Officer, asked board members to approve the proposed changes to the policy manual.

Upon a motion by Dr. Gullatt, seconded by Mr. Anders, the Board unanimously voted to approve the revisions of IDDFB – *Service Animals* and JGCF – *Behavioral Health Services for Students* and the addition of ID DFA – *Special Education Advisory Council*.

Mr. Payton shared that bids for the Simsboro High School parking lot were opened on September 12, 2019, at 2:00 p.m. Four qualified bidders submitted bids on this project. The base bids ranged from \$308,865.00 to \$162,500.00. The alternate bids ranged from \$332,000.00 to \$52,500.00. After reviewing the bids, the district administration recommended acceptance of the lowest qualified bid.

Upon a motion by Dr. Gullatt, seconded by Ms. Henderson, the Board unanimously voted to accept the base bid of \$162,500.00 submitted by Triad Builders and the alternate bid of \$52,500.00 also submitted by Triad Builders for the construction of a new 49-space parking lot at Simsboro High School. The project would be funded from the Simsboro Maintenance & Operation Fund.

Three policies were being recommended for revision, along with the deletion of one

policy. Ms. Bastion asked board members to study the proposed changes to *School and Student Safety* – EBBB, *Emergency/Crisis Management* – EBBC, and *Student Fees, Fines, and Charges* – JS. *Threats of Terrorism or Violence* – JCDAH was being recommended for deletion. A vote would be taken at the next board meeting.

Ricky Durrett, Secondary & Vocational Supervisor/District Athletic Director, gave background information on Dave Anderson, former boys and girls cross country and track & field coach. Community members and present RHS alumni were supportive of an effort to name the RHS track and field at Ruston High in honor of Coach Dave Anderson. Mr. Durrett recommended the track and field be named in honor of Coach Anderson. There were several positive comments from the public.

Upon a motion by Ms. Abrahm, seconded by Ms. Wiley, the Board voted nine-two to approve the naming of the RHS track facility for Coach Dave Anderson, designated as the “Dave Anderson Track and Field.”

Rik Cason, Transportation Supervisor, requested permission to advertise for bids for the purchase of five new conventional buses. He explained this was a different process than in the past. In years past, he purchased buses through the state contract process, but felt the buses were inferior. He expressed this request was to replace aging buses in the fleet. He also communicated that it was vital that new buses be purchased on a yearly basis. The estimated total cost was \$382,500.00, and funds would be taken from the 1993 millage allocated for the purchase of buses.

Several board members asked questions regarding air-conditioned buses, Mr. Cason

explained that special education buses were always air-conditioned but it was not feasible for the rest of the fleet.

Upon a motion by Mr. Anders, seconded by Mr. Smith, the Board unanimously voted to grant permission to advertise for bids for the purchase of five new conventional school buses.

Mr. Payton asked Architect Mike Walpole to explain change order #1 on the RHS light and pole project. Mr. Walpole explained this was a change order with no cost and no change of days. He said that originally they were going to use cages and safety cable on the poles; however, man lifts were now used to service light poles. The center pole speaker bracket was also being omitted. In exchange for deleting these items, the company offered to upgrade the warranty on parts, labor, and bulbs from one year to ten years. Mr. Walpole recommended the Board approve this change order.

Upon a motion by Ms. Best, seconded by Dr. Gullatt, the Board unanimously voted to approve change order #1 for the Ruston High School light and pole project with no change in the contract price or completion date.

The following personnel items were communicated by Dr. Doris Lewis:

1. Employment of the following effective September 3, 2019:

Randall Hill, computer technician at the Central Office, replacing Nicholas Bracey who resigned; and

Yolanda Beckwith, paraprofessional at I.A. Lewis, replacing Alexis DeFreese who retired.

2. Employment of Sonya Boatner, bus operator in the Ruston area effective September 3, 2019, replacing Sandra Holloway who retired.

In a construction update, Mr. Payton stated that preliminary work on the Choudrant

Elementary four-classroom pre-k center had begun. The drainage work was almost complete. Fifty-six drill piers were in place and the grade beams would be poured tomorrow. Plumbing and electrical preliminary work would follow. The slab should be poured by the end of October. He reported that the 5,000 square foot building was a one-year project.

He shared that the State Fire Marshall would be in Ruston next week to inspect the Ruston High School press box. This was one of the last steps before the contractor would turn the building over to us. There was a small amount of interior work that should be completed soon.

Tim Nutt, Crisis Plan Coordinator, shared that he was happy to report what we were doing with our crisis plans. Our goal was to do what we could to minimize any damage done and try our best to keep the tragedies we see in the news from happening here. The most common emergency now was an active shooter, but we have a host of emergencies for which we are prepared. Since the early 2000s, all of our schools have had a written crisis plan that was reviewed and modified each year to allow for updates. We learn from studying things that have happened in other places and try to modify our plans to be prepared as possible. These crisis plans outline specific procedures for different types of emergencies and anything that we can possibly imagine that would happen in our schools. September 18, he hosted a meeting in the Title 1 building with representatives from each school, the Ruston Police Department, Lincoln Parish Sheriff's Office, both the Lincoln Parish Fire District and the Ruston Fire Department, as well as Kip Franklin from the Department of Homeland Security. LPSB representatives brainstormed with those present who have expertise in handling emergencies. He said it was a

great meeting. Many questions were answered by those with experience in emergencies. LPSB representatives would go back to their campuses and report the information shared and revise their crisis plan if needed. He stated that our goal was to be as prepared as possible.

Mr. Nutt reported that the district was currently looking at modifications to the main entrance at all the campuses so that it could be determined before anyone enters a building if that person was a threat to the safety of our students. When you approach many campuses you have to walk up, push a button, identify yourself, or someone must have a visual of you before you can enter the building. Ruston High School has gates that are closed during the school day. He explained that it may be less convenient but these things are necessary to ensure the safety of our students.

Schools are required to have fire, tornado, and lock down drills so that the students and staff are prepared as possible. Every school has at least one designated safe location in case that an evacuation off site was necessary. There are procedures in place in the event of a threat or weather related emergency at an athletic event.

He voiced that perhaps the best line of defense was the presence of School Resource Officers in our schools. They are crucial to adding to the safety of our students and staff. He shared that we are doing everything we can to keep our students and staff as safe as possible. He offered to share the crisis plans if anyone was interested and would like to come see him.

Ms. Duke reported that sales tax collections this month compared to the same month last year were up almost 6%. For the first three months of the year, collections were about even with this time last year.



In a Financial Update for August of 2019, she stated that the M & O funds were running at a slight deficient but these funds would be replenished in December with property tax collections. The Total Fund Balance was \$30.3 million; this was up \$872,000 from the previous month, but down about \$4.5 million compared to August 2018.

Ms. Duke stated that the Health Care Fund had a total of \$7.2 million in expenses and claims paid year-to-date, which was a little less than this time last year. The biggest change in the year-to-date figures from last year was due to the estimated occurred but not reported claims, which was an accounting estimate.

In a Report of the Superintendent, Mr. Milstead said that:

1. He appreciated all of the board members that attended the Adopt-A-School kickoff luncheon that was held today. It means a lot for the public to see elected officials involved in community activities.
2. The last tornado item to move on was the Eco-Car building at Ruston High School. The building was destroyed and declared a total loss, except for the slab. It was located near the football field, which was quite a distance from the main building. Options of where to relocate the building were being considered. This should be the last claim with the insurance company. He reminded the Board that the poles that were mentioned earlier would also be paid for by the insurance company, as well as the press box.
3. We are in the process of developing new web sites for all of our schools. We need a better way to share information and “sell ourselves”. We have not used social media to share all the great and wonderful things about our district. Going forward we plan to use Twitter, Facebook, and other social media to spread the word about Lincoln Parish. Once the websites are complete, parents will be able to electronically pay for school fees and school lunches. This was not a fast process; we hope to have the web sites up and running by January.
4. The first Faculty Advisory Committee meeting was held yesterday. The attendees were enthused and excited about the possibility of a \$3,000 pay raise. It had been ten years since they had received a raise, except for the \$1,000 raise they received last year. The teachers and administrators do an excellent job and should be compensated

for their hard work. We lost four or five teachers this year to a neighboring parish because their salaries were higher than Lincoln Parish. Custodians, bus operators, food service employees, and all support staff also deserve a pay raise. He encouraged those present to consider voting for the 0.5% sales and use tax next May.

5. Lincoln Parish schools would be out for Fall Break, for the first time, next week. All schools, auxiliary departments, and the central office would be closed October 14, 15, and 16.

After several comments from board members, Ms. Best made a motion to adjourn, the meeting adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

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Mike Milstead, Secretary

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Joe E. Mitcham, Jr., President