

LINCOLN PARISH SCHOOL BOARD
Ruston, Louisiana

REGULAR SESSION
Tuesday, September 3, 2019 6:00 p.m.

The Lincoln Parish School Board met in Regular Session on Tuesday, September 3, 2019, at 6:00 p.m. at the STEM Center, 525 Tarbutton Road, Ruston, Louisiana. Members present were Ms. Debbie Abrahm, Mr. Otha Anders, Mr. Mike Barmore, Ms. Lisa Best, Mr. David Ferguson, Dr. David Gullatt, Mr. Danny Hancock, Ms. Lynda Henderson, Mr. George Mack, Jr., Mr. Joe Mitcham, and Ms. Susan Wiley.

Mr. Hunter Smith was absent.

President Mitcham called the meeting to order, and Dr. Gullatt gave the invocation. Ms. Henderson led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the American flag. Mr. Mitcham welcomed those in attendance.

Upon a motion by Mr. Anders, seconded by Ms. Best, the Board unanimously voted to adopt the agenda as printed.

Upon a motion by Ms. Abrahm, seconded by Mr. Barmore, the Board unanimously voted to approve the minutes of the Regular Session held on August 6, 2019, as submitted.

Missy Wooley, STEM Center Director, welcomed those in attendance and stated she would be ready to welcome students to the center very soon. She encouraged everyone to tour the facility.

Mr. Mitcham introduced Senator and Mrs. Jim Fannin. He stated that Senator

Fannin was from Jonesboro and represented the 35th District. Senator Fannin shared what an honor it was to be at the meeting and what an honor it was to serve in the Legislature. He addressed several state financial concerns. He also explained that before he authored the Career Diploma Bill and it passed, the state graduation rate was 67%, which was unacceptable. The state graduation rate last school year was 81.4%, the best in over 40 years; 24% were career diploma graduates. He believes that all students need some type of training. In his view, the more students that are trained and educated, the fewer incarcerations there will be, which can only help the state move forward. He thanked the Board for all they do and encouraged all in attendance to continue to support the Career Diploma Program. He also thanked the teachers and administrators for their hard work.

Juanita Duke, incoming CFO/Business Manager, proposed that the salary supplement checks for November 2019 be \$3,000 for certificated personnel and \$1,500 for support personnel, which were the same amounts as last year. These checks would be funded by the 2000 sales tax fund, which had a balance of \$3.7 million as of June 30, 2019.

Upon a motion by Ms. Henderson, seconded by Mr. Barmore, the Board unanimously voted to approve the payment of salary supplements on November 22, 2019, in the amounts of \$3,000 to certificated personnel and \$1,500 to support personnel.

Superintendent Mike Milstead shared that over the course of the last two years, he had been in conversations with various City of Ruston representatives concerning property Cooperative Endeavor Agreements. One of those conversations had led to the opportunity to negotiate a CEA concerning the McLane Center adjacent to Ruston High School. Since the LPSB had allowed a lease of the Lincoln Center formerly used for our YRC program to Head Start, the

YRC program had been without a permanent home, having moved to several locations last year. The CEA would allow us to relocate our YRC to the McLane Building and make use of the RHS food services.

Upon a motion by Ms. Best, seconded by Mr. Hancock, the Board voted unanimously to approve the Cooperative Endeavor Agreement with the City of Ruston allowing LPSB the use of the McLane Building as a home for YRC.

George Murphy, present CFO/Business Manager, voiced that a public announcement of the Notice of Public Meeting was required in order for the Lincoln Parish School Board to adopt on October 1, 2019, the resolution calling the election to authorize the levy of a sales and use tax for May 9, 2020. He read the Announcement of Public Meeting in full as follows:

Notice is hereby given that at its meeting to be held on Tuesday, October 1, 2019, at 6:00 p.m. at the Parish School Board Office, 410 S. Farmerville Street, Ruston, Louisiana, the Parish School Board of the Parish of Lincoln, State of Louisiana, plans to consider adopting a resolution ordering and calling an election to be held in the Parish of Lincoln to authorize the levy of a sales and use tax.

After several questions from the public, the meeting proceeded.

Lisa Bastion, Assistant Superintendent/Chief Academic Officer, asked board members to study revisions to two policies, IDDFB – *Service Animals* and JGCF – *Behavioral Health Services for Students*, and the addition of ID DFA – *Special Education Advisory Council* until the October meeting.

Superintendent Milstead reminded Board members that a meeting was held last

Thursday introducing a new insurance plan to over 200 retirees. The plan was designed for us by Blue Cross Blue Shield. There were two goals in introducing the new plan: save LPSB funds with health care costs and provide a better plan for retirees with Medicare. The plan presented to the retirees would allow LPSB to save approximately \$550,000-\$600,000 per year. One main objective was to make the health plan viable over the next 20 years or so. We want to continue to offer this great incentive to our employees. After extensive internal review of the BCBS proposal by the retiree insurance committee, it was determined that the plan should be strongly considered, effective January 1, 2020.

Insurance broker David Charpentier, of Brown & Brown of Louisiana, reiterated Mr. Milstead's remark that the goal was to be able to continue to offer health benefits into the future and even perpetually. He shared several statistics as to what factors were driving health care costs up. Mr. Charpentier explained that the proposed plan was a Medicare plan and was very attractive to people of age. For example, under the current plan there was an annual limit for physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech therapy, which was not the case with the proposed plan. He summarized by stating his personal and professional opinion was this would be a good or greater plan than the retirees had now.

Upon a motion by Dr. Gullatt, seconded by Ms. Abrahm, the Board unanimously voted to adopt the 2020 Blue Advantage Plan specific to Lincoln Parish for all retired employees who presently receive Medicare benefits.

Mr. Milstead stated with the adoption that was just passed of a new insurance program for retirees, he assured the retirees that if the new Blue Advantage program does not prove to be equal to or better than the existing program for retirees as a group, then retirees as a

group would be brought back under the existing 2019 LPSB Health Plan.

Upon a motion by Mr. Anders, seconded by Ms. Wiley, the Board unanimously voted affirmatively to make a commitment, which would allow the retirees as a group, to return to the present 2019 Health Plan if the new Blue Advantage program was not equal to or better than the existing plan.

Ms. Duke communicated that every year a Resolution was required to renew LPSB automobile insurance coverage. The State Department of Insurance issues guidelines related to Uninsured Motorist coverage. Ms. Duke communicated that each school system was required to include in board minutes a consent item authorizing the Superintendent to sign the Uninsured Motorist form. After reading the Resolution in full, she asked the Board to adopt the Resolution authorizing the same.

Upon a motion by Mr. Barmore, seconded by Mr. Mack, the Board unanimously voted to adopt the Resolution authorizing the Superintendent to sign the Uninsured Motorist form.

President Mitcham declared a time of public hearing for the proposed budget for the year ending June 30, 2020.

Chairperson Lisa Best reported that the Finance Committee met prior to the start of the Regular Session at 5:45 p.m. She said the Business Manager had presented the proposed budget to the Finance Committee. She turned the floor over to Ms. Juanita Duke to summarize what was discussed.

Ms. Duke called attention to Exhibit "A" and pointed out recommended total budgeted revenues of \$74.6 million, total budgeted expenditures of \$76.1 million, and total ending fund balance of \$25.78 million for the 2019-2020 fiscal year. This included a deficit of \$1.56 million. This was an improvement over the 2018-19 revised budget estimate. She stated they were seeing an improvement in MFP revenue with the increase for pay raises for all board hired employees and the 1.375% increase in per pupil funding of the MFP formula. Sales tax revenues were anticipated to increase as well, as it appears collections

are at a cyclical low. There were projected reductions in staffing, at a savings of about \$790,000. She noted a reduction in a transfer from the 1992 ad valorem fund to the general fund of \$1.5 million was included. She stated they would continue to look at ways to reduce the deficit as we go forward.

She asked for questions or comments; there being none, she turned the meeting back over to Chairperson Best.

Ms. Best shared the Committee's recommendation to adopt the proposed beginning budget for the year ending June 30, 2020. Upon a motion by Dr. Gullatt, a roll call vote was taken.

The Board unanimously voted by roll call to adopt the 2019-2020 proposed budget as presented and grant permission for the administration to amend the budget as needed throughout the year and bring a final revised budget to the board for approval at year-end.

The time for public hearing was closed.

Ms. Bastion reported things were going well with the start of the 2019-2020 school year with few concerns or complaints. She stated numbers were up 28 students compared to the same time last year, with 5,616 students as of today. The average class size was 22-25 students. All departments were going well; the only negative was transportation on the north frontage road. This problem would be eliminated once the Tarbutton Bridge opens. Overall, it had been a good start of the new school year.

A personnel report was the next item on the agenda. Dr. Doris Lewis, Human Resources Director, voiced the following:

1. Resignation of Maria Delacallemayo, Spanish teacher at I.A. Lewis/Ruston Junior High, effective September 3, 2019.
2. Employment of the following effective August 7, 2019:

Rebecca Smith, math teacher at I. A. Lewis, replacing Kimberly Cormier who resigned;

Stephanie Britt, teacher at Ruston Elementary, replacing Kathryn Taylor who resigned; and

Brienna Dugdale, ELA teacher at Simsboro School, replacing Lauren Mauer who resigned.

3. Resignation of Vanessa Beales, cafeteria technician at Simsboro School, effective August 16, 2019.
4. Employment of Stephanie Dutton, cafeteria technician at Simsboro School, replacing Karen Blade who retired, effective August 12, 2019; and

Astin Franklin, cafeteria technician at Simsboro School, replacing Vanessa Beales who resigned, effective August 22, 2019.

5. Resignation of Richard Garrett, bus operator in the Ruston area, effective August 19, 2019; and

Stephen Wilson, bus operator in the Ruston area, effective August 8, 2019.

Mr. Payton narrated several photographs and gave the following construction update:

1. The northeast corner of the Ruston High Spirit Building was heavily damaged during the April 25 tornado. Twenty percent of the roof had to be replaced. The repairs were complete.
2. RHS press box repairs were moving along. The plumbing was complete and the electrical work would be complete this week. Work was approximately 40% complete.
3. It was unclear if the scoreboard was damaged during the tornado. Nevco (sign company) would be here within the next ten days to connect all the wiring and test the scoreboard. Bid opening for the lights would be September 17.
4. The Choudrant Elementary carline was a wonderful project that the police jury graciously helped us build. It had eliminated the staging of cars on Highway 80.
5. Pre-construction work had begun on the Pre-K Center at Choudrant Elementary. Trees had been cleared from the building site. The drainage

system was being rebuilt in preparation for the slab to be poured. The building would consist of four classrooms and be ready for the 2020-2021 school year.

Sales tax collections for August 2019 were up 2.5% compared to last year and down 2.8% year-to-date, according to Juanita Duke. After speaking to the sales tax collector, it was determined that the 7% decrease in July was due to vendors not reporting collections. Those taxes were collected last week; she hoped this would enable us to break-even next month.

Although June and July 2019 financial statements were included in packets, Mr. Murphy said he would summarize the July report. The Total Fund Balance was up \$1.3 million compared to last month, but was down \$4.7 million compared to July of 2018.

As of July 31, 2019, the Health Care Fund was down \$81,000 and it was up \$263,000 year-to-date. Mr. Murphy stated that he hoped the changes that were approved tonight would keep the plan moving upward.

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

1. As a reminder, the October 1 Regular Session of the Lincoln Parish School Board was scheduled at 6:00 p.m. at the Lincoln Parish School Board office, instead of Ruston Elementary as originally planned.
2. The School Safety Committee continues to meet. Our architect has drawn plans for each of the schools. The committee would now make changes and modifications, then get back with the architect to finalize plans. This would be funded with the insurance settlement from the old Head Start building that burned in 2017. He plans to bring a summary of the meetings before the Board soon.
3. The State Department sent out kudos from State Superintendent John White and others. These were released to the media and Lincoln Parish fared extremely well, ranking in the top ten schools in the state. Lincoln Parish ranked in the top ten in several categories including economically disadvantaged students and students with disabilities. Dollars spent in the last several years have been invested in our students to help them achieve at a

higher level. He gave credit to teachers, supervisors, principals, central office, and of course the students. When progress points are mentioned, this was how students actually perform on a State Assessment. All students, grades 3-11, in the state take some type of assessment. This shows students growth in a given year. He expressed how proud he was of our district.

After several comments from President Mitcham, upon a motion by Ms. Best, the meeting adjourned at 6:56 p.m.

Mike Milstead, Secretary

Joe E. Mitcham, Jr., President