



Morris Jeff Community School (MJCS)  
Board of Directors Meeting  
Monday, October 8, 2018  
5:30 pm  
211 South Lopez Street New Orleans, La 70119  
Library (2nd floor)

Members Present: Bill Payne (arrived at 5:42pm), Blaine Lescene, Maria Newman Carrere, Shannon Williamson, Lisa Amoss, Brandy Smith, Irvin Bell, Leslie Lawrence, Missy Sparks, Richard Perque (arrived at 5:44pm),

Members Absent: Tiffany Lucas

*Meeting was called to order at 5:35 pm*

**I. Review and consideration for approval of Board meeting minutes**

Lisa Amoss motioned to approve the August meeting minutes as presented. Maria Newman Carrere seconded. No public comment. Motion passed unanimously.

Irvin Bell moved that we move to item VII in the interest of saving Ms. Mack's time. Missy Sparks seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

**II. Morris Jeff Principal's Update**

See written report.

**III. Finance committee update**

The financial statements have limited activity because school didn't start until August and we don't have some of the expenses when school is first starting the school year in July. We did budget for a 1.2 million dollar loss due to the move to new building for the high school. The audit is scheduled for October and we usually have them in December. No questions from board or public comment. Brandy Smith motioned to approve the financials. Lisa Amoss seconded. Motion carries unanimously.

**IV. Secretary's Update**

Shannon is working on website updates with Crystal Daspit. No other updates

**V. Board President Update**

Bill Payne got several emails from OPSB and there is a learning curve for what the OPSB is looking for. Bill is attending their session at Sophie B Wright from 6-7pm for board chairs. They would like to do



some compliance training and have a regulation on compliance training for new board members within the 3 months. It is unclear currently what OPSB means by compliance training.

## VI. Open Public Comment Period

Julie Thibodaux, development director, indicated that Gala tickets are on sale on the website. The ticket went five dollars in price to cover credit card fees. We have several sponsors (Hammonds transportation, HGI, and others). Julie is still looking for a Capital One connection. We are already over sponsorships than we had at the end of Gala last year with 2 months left to the date. We are still looking for bigger ticket items for the auction. There will be a photo booth and the tables will feature students and teachers so patrons can understand why to support Morris Jeff. You can purchase teacher tickets for \$30 so teachers don't have to pay to attend the gala. Open house is coming up on October 23<sup>rd</sup> (lower school) and November 1<sup>st</sup> (H.S.). The 8<sup>th</sup> graders will be able to shadow a high school student. Ultimately this will be great for retention from middle to high school. The high school open house will be student led and they are training student leaders to be ambassadors for open house.

Brian \*\*\*\*\* has two children, \*\*\*\*\* in third grade and \*\*\*\*\* in kindergarten. They are concerned about navigating the special education testing and evaluation. They had some confusion about getting their kindergartner to get evaluated for speech pathology and potentially other developmental issues. Their second grader has also had trouble with when they tried to get \*\*\*\*\* tested for a gifted IEP. They thought this testing would happen sooner but the annual evaluation in the spring. Brian indicated that he wanted to board to be aware of the issue and asked that the process be more transparent for how to get through the process and he indicated that they were having difficulty working with the school administration.

Bill Payne asked to clarify the difficulty with the administration. Ms. \*\*\*\*\*, Brian's wife and the children's mother, indicated that their second grader told them that a teacher was pulling her out for special course work but no adult including the child's teacher notified the parents. They tried to get her tested in the moment but testing was moved to the spring. Ms. \*\*\*\*\* is frustrated and she feels that it's difficult to get information from the school's teacher. She indicated that she feels like she is fighting for a school's scarce resource rather than partnering with the school and is find it to be tough to navigate.

Bill Payne asked what the parents to specify what would make things easie for them. Ms. \*\*\*\*\* indicated that she is getting advice from outside of the school and is unsure of why it seems challenging. She indicated that she spoke to 4 professional staff members just to find the name of the contact person for who to connect with for testing. She said that she had her son evaluated independently at a local hospital but was told by the school that she needed to ensure that their evaluation was compliant with state standards. Mr. \*\*\*\*\* indicated that transparent, written policy readily available for parents would be helpful. Missy Sparks suggested that this go in the parent handbook. Patrica Perkins indicated that she and Dr. Lang are looking at putting those policies on the website.

Bill Payne indicated that he was extremely grateful that the \*\*\*\*\* family came forward and thanked them for sharing their stories and encouraged them to continue coming to meetings and updating us.



Ms. \*\*\*\*\* indicated she wanted to share this with the board because it seems like a vital part of the mission of the school.

Shannon Williamson explained to the \*\*\*\*\* family that meeting minutes are public record and will be published on the web, but that the parents had the right to request their names be removed from the minutes to protect the privacy of their children. Both parents requested that their names be withheld from the record. As a result the family name and the first name of the children have been removed from the minutes.

Irvin Bell indicated that the student support committee needs a board rep and he is stepping down after 2 years of service. Bill suggested that the governance committee discuss this and that we vote at next month's meeting.

## **VII. Presentation on IB Diploma Program by Carmen Mack**

Ms. Carmen Mack is coordinating the IB Diploma Programme committee. The board is scheduled to meet on October 9 from 9-9:30 to address the IB authorization visit. The team will come to meet with teachers, students, parents, and administrators to assess if what we've put in our application is actually in place and are you making progress to meet the expectations in place.

The Diploma Program is for 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders. This program optional (unlike the IB program for primary and middle years) and is for students who want to take on the rigor of this program. Our goal is for 50% taking a DP course and 20% completing the program. Ultimately, we will try to ensure that 70% of students attempting the diploma to complete it.

Leslie Lawrence asked if IB credits are accepted at universities. Carmen clarified that universities look for IB similarly or even more favorably than AP credits. She expanded on several examples of very competitive colleges accepting these credits and looking to reward students for university credit or scholarship funds. Ultimately this program, will be really beneficial for our students.

The visitors will be looking for the board to have general knowledge of the IB model and have a strong commitment to supporting the elements required to run the program.

The major elements of the program are an exam, 4,000 word essay, a theory of knowledge course, and completing hours of creativity, physical activity, and service. Ultimately the goal is to create a well-rounded individual not just an academically strong student.

Irvin Bell asked what type of preparation for teachers is required. Patricia Perkins clarified that they have already completed this training. He also asked if there is external funding to support this. Carmen Mack is researching options. Currently IB fees will be paid by students which are nearly \$900 for students. They will set up a payment plan for families. Next week we are working on meeting with parents to begin educating them on why the investment is worth it.

Shannon Williamson asked how this fits in with dual enrollment. Carmen indicated that those logistics still need to be worked out. Patricia Perkins added that nearly all of the local universities accept these credits in some capacity.



It will be great to offer the full continuum of IB from pre K- 12 in a public school. Students end up with strong management skills and high-quality writing. This program will ensure that our students have access to a high quality, internationally recognized education.

Blaine Lecesne commented that this will give us a great opportunity and advantage. He asked if parents were aware of this program. Missy Sparks, high school parent and board member, indicated that parents are very excited and it was a major selling point for many families. We should receive recommendations fairly soon after their visit.

Allison Cruze, a parent in attendance asked if the high school also offer AP courses in addition to IB courses. Carmen indicated that currently there are no plans. Ms. Cruze also followed up by indicating that an open access school and this elite program seem to be competing missions. Carmen clarified that that is an ongoing concern to keep this open and inclusive. The parent expressed concern that this will turn into a "school within a school." Missy Sparks clarified that with students not in the DP program taking IB courses and the students in the program taking core courses, there will be lots of integration. The parent asked if the school will be solvent to pay for staffing for this program. Patricia Perkins explained that the expansion is careful so we expand in the ways we know we can afford while still offering as many options as possible for our students. The state has designed many tracks for students to increase their opportunities. IB is an additional option. We are cognizant of cost. The parent also asked how many students stayed at the high school. The first year 60% stayed on for the high school. Last year 70% of them stayed on for high schools. Missy Sparks said that she believes this will only grow stronger based on parent conversation and that many parents really see the appeal of an MJCS high school education.

VIII. Adjourn

*Meeting was adjourned at 6:43 pm*

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Shannon Williamson".

M. Shannon Williamson

Board Secretary