



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, Shannon Williamson, Lisa Amoss, Brandy Smith, Leslie Lawrence, Missy Sparks (arrived at 6:11)

Members Absent, Richard Perque (prearranged), Blaine Lescene (prearranged), Maria Newman Carrere (prearranged), Irvin Bell (prearranged)

*Meeting was called to order at 5:34 pm*

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

Leslie Lawrence motioned to approve the September meeting minutes with corrections. Bill Payne seconded. No public comment. Motion passed unanimously.

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

Our IB Diploma Programme visit started today. It went very well. The teachers were rock stars with the authorizers. The authorizers are school leaders at public schools in Chicago and Detroit. They are really excited about meeting students, parents and board members tomorrow. At the end there is an exit interview where they present feedback about strengths and challenges so we can develop an action plan.

Open house is October 23<sup>rd</sup> and November 1<sup>st</sup>. Board members are encouraged to attend. Contact Patricia if you plan to attend so she can give you instructions on what is needed. Open house at Fisk Howard is mostly PreK and is very teacher directed. The Open House at the high school is really student led to show off high school.

There are 3 billboards up around the city advertising the school. High School enrollment has 14 seats open. Shannon Williamson asked about how board members might best advocate for a smoother enrollment process as it is likely that the reason we have vacant seats is due to our inability to drop students who we knew were not returning in a timely fashion.

See written report for further details.

**III. Finance Committee update**

For the month of August we have a loss of \$134K. In July salaries and expenses are low but uptick in August when school starts. We get an advanced MFP for August and September because we are adding



a grade level until the final census on October 1<sup>st</sup>. You see a small fluctuation here but it's more accurate to what we actually will be spending to make payroll. We will start requesting reimbursement from grants in October. Also, some costs are front loaded and there are comments on the finance sheet indicating those categories. Leslie Lawrence asked about the timeline for reimbursements and Jared Frank clarified that most come in between 2 weeks and a month. Finally, our external audit starts next week. For our external audit, we have to complete a compliance questionnaire that is signed by the board.

Shannon Williamson moved to amend the agenda to include a resolution to approve the Louisiana Compliance Questionnaire for the financial audit. Lisa Amoss seconded. No public comment. Motion carries unanimously. Item added below.

Brandy Smith motioned to approve the October financials as presented. Leslie Lawrence seconded. No Public Comment. Motion carries unanimously.

#### **IV. Added Item\* Resolution to Approve the Louisiana Compliance Questionnaire.**

Shannon Williamson moved to accept the resolution to approve the Louisiana Compliance Questionnaire for the financial audit with no corrections. Bill Payne seconded. Jared Frank read through the compliance questionnaire and explained each question. There was no further public comment or board discussion. Motion carried unanimously.

#### **V. Development Committee Update**

Julie Thibodaux reported on the Gala in lieu of the board representative from Development. We are still securing food and beverage donations. If board members have contacts with food and beverage folks please introduce them to Julie. We are working to secure entertainment. Within the silent auction there is \$19K items in. We are looking to add an item called a party board where we sell seats at various experiences across the city. We have one house in Hawaii, one cabin in Minnesota, and possibly a home in Belize. If you have a timeshare or vacation rental please contact Julie. She is a little concerned about Gala Ticket sales so please purchase your ticket and encourage your friend to do the same.

We got a \$3500 grant from the Jazz and Heritage Festival this month. IB also has grants for schools looking to expand the IB program that is due in March. Crowd funding like Donors choose or Go fund me is a viable option for teachers but are not affiliated with the development office.

#### **VI. Governance Committee Update**

The governance committee failed to meet due to Bill getting caught up. He is going to work with Blaine to see if he can assist in chairing that group and starting the next call.

OPSB has asked that we meet at 5 pm next month so their board compliance representative can visit our meeting. Bill asked the board if they would be amenable to this change even though the timing was inconvenient for most board members. Shannon Williamson commented that she was concerned that this change might impact family members or people in the community who want to attend meetings.



The board has tried to meet at the same time in the same place to make it easy for families to know when meetings are. Shannon suggested that the board offer to hold a meeting from 5:00-5:30 to meet with OPSB and then hold our traditional meeting at 5:30pm. Both meetings would be open to the public but this would not displace families unnecessarily. Bill is going to take it under advisement and reach out to schedule something in the coming weeks.

## **VII. Open Public Comment Period**

Sarah Douglas, 3 year parent of 2 MJCS students. She is concerned about the recent curriculum change in PreK of not offering Spanish. Sarah sent a letter to the board president expressing concern this week. She feels that the curriculum was changed without notice to the parents.

Bill explained that the board functions to review policy, review financials for compliance, help raise money and support the school with our time, but the board does not administer the programs or make curriculum decisions. The administration makes all those decisions. Bill indicated that when someone skips the administration and comes to us we can only say thank you for the information and send the concerned party back to the administration for review. As a result, Bill sent the letter back to Patricia Perkins, the head of school.

Patricia Perkins, indicated to Ms. Douglas, that she would be happy to speak with her at any time about her concerns and offered to address the issue now or have a separate conversation offline.

Sarah Douglas indicated that while she did not email administration directly she did bring it up at family night in a public forum. She asked that Patricia address the concern now since we were all together.

Patricia Perkins explained that MJCS did not remove Spanish Instructors from PYP. We still have 3 Spanish instructors. When faculty and administration looked at PreK curriculum, daily schedule mandated by the state (preK is regulated differently than K+) we realized a shift was needed to accommodate all the state mandates. The Language Policy that IB provides as a framework is that all children beginning at age 7 must begin a second language daily. MJCS has tried to back that down as young as possible but the PreK team and Spanish teachers decided together to reduce Spanish Instruction.

One of the primary motivators for this shift was that PreK teachers have a new evaluation as of this last year. There are 3 entities that evaluate (New Orleans Early Education Network, The Siesel Picard Center, and Internal Evaluations). Internal evaluations do not count toward teacher credentialing. The outside evaluators were always coming were often coming at times when students were learning music, movement, and Spanish—so they were not seeing students learning from certified early childhood teachers. The stakes of the evaluation are too high. As a result the decision to reduce the amount of exploratory time (for Spanish, movement, music, etc) during the week was made.

Ms. Perkins apologized that the school did not communicate these changes through updating the website as they should have. She is working to correct this as soon as possible.

Sarah Douglas asked if they would get daily Spanish in kindergarten. Principal Perkins indicated that currently the kindergarteners are getting daily Spanish and she does not foresee that changing right



now. Ms. Perkins reiterated that it really is about state licensing in PreK that doesn't impact Kindergarten and above. Essentially preK has a whole separate set of mandates that we have to honor within our larger school.

VIII. Adjourn

*Meeting was adjourned 6:34 pm*