

Morris Jeff Community School (MJCS)
Board of Directors Meeting

Tuesday, September 17, 2019 5:30 pm
211 South Lopez St.
Library (2nd floor)

Members Present: Blaine LeCesne, Lisa Amoss, Maria Newman Carerre, Shannon Williamson, Dwight Barnes, Missy Sparks, Keyana Scales
Members Absent: Bill Payne, Leslie Lawrence (Prearranged)

Meeting was called to order at 5:33pm

I. Review and consideration for approval of Board meeting minutes

Maria Newman Carerre motioned to approve the minutes as presented. Dwight Barnes seconded. No public comment. Motion carried unanimously.

II. Morris Jeff Principal's Update

The bus situation has been challenging but has vastly improved. The town hall meeting had 30-40 parents attend and made some impact on the vendor. Initially the vendor was slow to respond but after Labor day added additional buses. We had many more riders than we have had in the past. It seems the routes have settled and policies and procedures have been clarified. Missy Sparks added that she heard a lot of good feedback about separating the lower and upper school route. She also mentioned that Ms. Hunter at the high school resolved concerns at the high school quickly. Ms. Perkins mentioned that one adjustment is that in the past parents had direct access to the bus drivers but this new vendor has a strict union contract that doesn't allow drivers to share with parents. This is an adjustment for families. Overall things seem to be running better.

The Clark campus AC has a lot of old unit challenges and we are continually trying to improve the environment without putting money into a facility we may not stay in. Keona Scales asked if with the unit's issues there were any environmental concerns. Jared indicated there is one room that has been marked offline due to a leak and will remain offline until the control issues are finished. There are no other air quality issues we are aware of at this time.

III. Finance Committee Update and Approval of Statements

Because we are early in the school year we have not had a lot of activity. In the income section the main item is the MFP which was increased in August due to our enrollment. In expenses the big differences in salary cost in July and August because teachers work August-June. Our initial plan was to potentially hire some of our contracted sped services fully time. If folks are not hired full time their cost will shift to contracts instead of salary, but all the services are appropriately budgets. Our August SPED contracting is somewhat high because we received the invoice for gifted testing that occurred over the summer and at the end of last school year. The big gaps of transportation and foodservice are due to the invoice not being received yet. In materials and supplies, the school store supplies number is largely an arbitrary number because the store sells and recoups the revenue. The curriculum and technology budget will have large expenses in September and typically most of these expenses are purchased early in the year. The utilities at the Clark campus fully shifted to MJCS from the prior occupant and we had to place a large deposit with Entergy to maintain services. We do plan to have a budget revision to match up items more true to cost, mainly transportation, contracted SPED and the curriculum and technology. We will also look more closely to revenue and see if we can project MFP and SPED funding more accurately for the next school year. We are in the middle of the financial audit and the board has signed the compliance sheet. This is about a month earlier than we have had in the past.

Lisa Amoss indicated that we are actively seeking additional finance committee members. From a meeting standpoint, that group meets just before the general board meeting. Dwight Barnes agreed to attend next month.

Shannon Williamson mentioned that it would be helpful to receive the finance reports further in advance to the meeting in order to have adequate time to review and prepare for board meetings. Jared mentioned that it was really difficult to complete the report in time for the board meeting and suggested that if the time constraint was challenging that we go back to a previous system of reviewing statements two months behind. Shannon responded that she would defer to the finance committee determination on the best approach.

Lisa Amoss moved to accept the financial statements as presented. Keyana Scales seconded. No public comment. Motion carries unanimously.

IV. FUNdraising

We received a grant from the NOLA Jazz and Heritage foundation for our art program. We are getting some pottery wheels that will better serve students on the autism spectrum. We

also received some items that will help us display children's art in more meaningful ways. We are working on the playground project with MJFP.

In regards to the Gala, We have a one \$10K sponsorship and two \$2500 sponsorships. We have over \$4000 in ticket sales. Currently ticket sales are discounted. This year we will have an event program we will sell ads for smaller businesses who may not be able to afford sponsorship. Parents and families can also purchase ads as well. Please invite your friends to attend the gala so we have more folks present for silent auction and to learn about our amazing school. The patron party is at 6pm and the gala will begin at 7pm. The middle school band will play 7:00-7:45, preservation hall will play 8:00-9:30, and Los Pelicanos are closing the night. Maria Newman has chaired our food and beverage donations so we have really exciting food options and Julie has secured beverage donations for the evening as well. We are still looking for additional Silent Auction donations. Contact Shannon for more details, especially if you have high end donations like concert tickets, golf rounds, fishing expeditions, etc. You can donate credit card points and airline miles also so we can put together a raffle for a trip.

Ms. Perkins stated that fundraising is critical for the school and that the most vital support we can give to the school is through fundraising. She asked that the board make additional efforts to garner support and awareness for Morris Jeff. Ideally we would like each board member to find 3 sponsorship or advertisements for this years gala by sharing with our networks. Maria Newman Carerre requested that Shannon share the digital copies of the sponsorship packet with the board. Keyana Scales asked if we can provide targeted giving (e.g. support the arts, donate to sports, etc). Jared and Julie indicated that the accounting on this is challenging. If there is a large gift we can accommodate that but it is very hard to accommodate the accounting for smaller gifts. Mrs. Perkins indicated that a helpful talking point is the appeal of IB and our commitment to it. Julie will send out highlights of IB to the board. Julie also mentioned that on September 24th we have a school tour and guests at morning meeting. Please invite any interested parties so they can learn more about our amazing school. Blaine LeCesne mentioned that Morris Jeff has been extremely successful with open admissions and we can continue to share our story of how important it is for every child to have access to this high quality education.

V. Modifications to Public Comment Procedure

Blaine indicated that this item has carried over from several previous meetings. Blaine wanted to continue the conversation with the board. Blaine shared that the reason why we may want to consider limiting the open public comment period is because almost always the

comments brought forward are nearly always related to operations which are not in the purview of the board. Furthermore, there are often staff members or other students or families are mentioned without their knowledge that this would be covered during the meeting on the agenda. If it is something that is within the purview of the board it will likely not be resolved in the meeting and be referred to a committee for additional research and then elevate to the general board.

Missy Sparks shared that she is agreement that the open comment portion should be limited. Keyana Scales asked about the legal requirements. Shannon Williamson indicated that the Open Meetings Law requires that the public be able to comment on agenda items but that an open comment period is not required. Shannon went on to say that she viewed the open comment period as unfair because the open meetings law also requires meetings agendas to be published in advanced so that stakeholders can attend the meeting if items concern them. By allowing an open comment portion, members of the public may bring up topics or issues that were not publicized in the agenda and community members who potentially would have attended to voice their concerns may be blindsided by meeting minutes after the fact. Keyana agreed but indicated that the board also needed to consider how this change might make families feel if their comments are limited when they were previously open. Keyana proposed that we post the agenda and allow feedback for a window before finalizing.

Dwight Barnes agreed that feedback should be collected from families suggested that our website have a feedback form that went directly to the board. Maria Newman Carerre suggested we add a statement to the agenda about public comment. Grace Slattery of the Morris Jeff Family Partnership was present at the meeting and asked the board to post on the board webpage the roles and responsibilities so there is clarity on the role of the board for families. Many were in agreement with this idea and Lisa Amoss asked what the next steps would be for the board and who would post these items. Blaine and Maria indicated they would pull the language from the Louisiana Association of Public Charter Schools handbook so the Governance committee can review the language for the website and the process for complaints from parents. Once this is finalized it will get posted on the website through Shannon Williamson.

VI. Open Public Comment Period

Jenny Dickheber asked that the board publish the meeting agenda in Spanish and in English.

VII. Adjourn

Missy Sparks motioned to adjourn. Dwight seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 6:43pm