

Shreveport Charter Schools, Inc.
Linwood Public Charter School
401 W. 70th Street ~ Shreveport, Louisiana 71106

Board of Trustees Meeting

August 2024 MEETING MINUTES

This meeting was held at 331 E. 71st Street and Zoom Meeting (ID: 267 635 4207) on August 19, 2024, at 4:00 p.m.

Board Members Present: *In-Person:* Gard Wayt, Travis Morehart, Dr. Kerry Laster, Lauren Marchive, Buck Magee, Cynthia Franklin, Whitney Polley, Dr. Bernard Kimble

Leadership Team/Faculty: *In-Person:* Shirley Pierson, Starla Ross, Letisha Williams, Richard Hilliard, Wanda Austin-Lewis, Jennifer Hamilton-Myles

Contractors Present: Kevin Cox (*4th Sector Solutions*)

Call to Order: Mr. Wayt called the meeting to order at 4:09 p.m.

Quorum Check: A quorum was present.

Approval of Agenda:

- Mr. Magee moved to approve the agenda as presented.
- Mr. Morehart seconded the motion.
- All voted in favor and the agenda was approved.

Conflict of Interest Advisements: There were none.

Visitor Comments: There were none.

Approval of Minutes from Previous Meeting:

- Mr. Magee moved to approve the July 2024 minutes as distributed.
- Dr. Kimble seconded the motion.
- All voted in favor and the July 2024 minutes were approved.

Financial Report:

Kevin Cox (*4th Sector Solutions*) presented the *proposed* 2024-2025 Fiscal Year Operating Budget for review.

- 2024-2025 Operating Budget was advertised in the Shreveport Times Newspaper and shreveporttimes.com on 8/15/2024.
- Invited public participation.
- No action taken. BOT will review presented information for adoption at the September 2024 BOT meeting.

Mr. Wayt asked if anyone had any questions.

Question, Answer, Comment:

Q: Mr. Morehart: Were the staff given any raises or are there any raises included in this budget?

A: Mr. Cox: I don't know if we have raises but we do have potential additional pay items for a few things built in the budget. Mrs. Myles might have further information.

C: Mrs. Myles: No sir, no raises this year.

C: Mrs. Lewis: We do have the state-mandated stipend to issue, \$2000 for certificated staff and \$1000 for support staff. The same one from last year. However, the \$2500 that Caddo Parish is giving out, we've already given it out. When we 1st received the ESSER monies, we gave out stipends to the staff and every year thereafter.

Q: Mr. Morehart: So, what you are saying is that there are no built in raises but there is some extra money there for special situations?

A: Mr. Cox: Yes, there is a budgeted amount for different things such as sign-on bonus, achievement bonuses, additional duties stipend, things like that. But it's not going to be the numbers that we've seen in the prior years. ESSER allowed us to do the different stipends, but this year is going to be much tighter.

C: Mr. Morehart: I tell all the companies that I work with that all the additional funding is gone and inflation is here, and everything cost much more than it did 2 years ago. It is time to get real with what we are facing.

C: Mr. Wayt: Any additional questions? If not and you some arise when you're reviewing this information, please reach out to Mrs. Austin-Lewis or Mr. Cox between today and the next board meeting. Thank you for your hard work. It is a big job to balance a budget but an even bigger job to cut a budget.

C: Mr. Marchive: I agree.

Executive Director's Report:

Mrs. Pierson gave the Executive Director's report in the absence of Dr. Jennings.

LA SB207 Law – Cell Phone Policy

Question, Answer, Comment:

C: Mrs. Pierson: LPCS's Cell Phone Policy was created and already in place prior to the mandate. Our policy is very stringent, and we want to keep it that way. Our policy has always been that it cannot be seen or heard. We've had students to use their cell phone for everything except its intended nature, i.e. recording fights, make arrangements to fight, film teachers inappropriately, they film students inappropriately (so much as when they are using the restroom) ... those types of things. The cellphones have become a big problem because students film things and put it on social media.
Mrs. Pierson read the policy violations/consequences.

Q: Mr. Magee: I see the 3rd offense recommends expulsion but are there any disciplinary actions taken in offenses 1 and 2?

A: Mrs. Pierson: Normally, we counsel the students always. We have the students meet with the Counselors or Social Workers to get an understanding of the seriousness of our policy as well as the actions they've taken. Remember, if a student is expelled, they are still in our charge because we've created our own expulsion center called the Fresh Start Academy.

C: Mr. Magee: I was just thinking that when we say expulsion, that's sort of a step beyond a suspension.

C: Mrs. Pierson: Yes, it is.

C: Mr. Magee: It does not look like there are any disciplinary actions taken prior to the 3rd offense. I am just wondering how that plays out legally.

C: Ms. Polley: May I piggy-back off Mr. Magee? I think there is an opportunity for restorative practices here. That is so extreme to expel a child for a cellphone, and I'm not speaking as someone who hasn't been in those positions. I think there is an opportunity for restoration and education.

C: Mrs. Pierson: We do believe in Restorative Practices. We started that a couple of years ago. I do agree with you. Perhaps that is something we can incorporate between the 2nd and 3rd offense, Restorative Practices, in addition to counseling them.

Q: Dr. Kimble: When the phones are confiscated, after the period has expired, do you give the phone back to the student or does the parent come in to get the phone?

A: Mrs. Pierson: We ask the parents to come in and pick it up.

Q: Mr. Marchive: Is the parent notified about these incidents?

A: Mrs. Pierson: Always, and we send a notification home with the student.

Q: Mr. Morehart: What are we doing now?

A: Mrs. Pierson: Basically, we are keeping the phone for 3 days or 7 days, but the parent always has to come pick the phone up.

Q: Mr. Wayt: Could the two of you (*Ms. Polley and Mrs. Pierson*) work on it together?

A: Ms. Polley: Yes.

A: Mrs. Pierson: Certainly.

C: Mr. Wayt: I'd like for you to add "Parent Notification" to # 1 and #2. Also, that the "Parent will pick it up" in #2.

This is a good framework, and we all agree that we do not want students using cell phones during class. After the two of you work on it, add the additional information that you discuss, we can finalize it at the next board meeting.

Q: Mr. Morehart: Can we keep someone's personal property for an entire school year?

A: Mrs. Pierson: I'm sure someone could challenge it.

C: Mr. Marchive: I think the state legislature says that we can.

C: Mrs. Franklin: It's the state law now.

C: Mr. Magee: They will still bring it. They're saying they will still bring it.

C: Mrs. Pierson: I somewhat sympathize with them because cell phones are important to the students, especially the latchkey kids. That is how they let their parents know they have arrived home safely. However, they have to learn that there are times when they cannot use their phone. That is the issue.

Q: Mrs. Franklin: Are things in place to explain these things to them? Are they making plans to show them other ways to communicate? It is traumatic to those kids who are used to having their phones with them.

A: Mrs. Pierson: What we do is meet with every student, including PreK, to review our policies and procedures. This is mainly an issue with our middle school students. They do understand. We have to have a consequence that they respect.

C: Mrs. Franklin: I understand and believe in having the consequence, but I am speaking of giving them the tools to cope and manage. Explaining to them what to do since they can't use it but giving them some tools of what they can do.

C: Mrs. Pierson: They can use the school phone. They can also have their Teacher, Student Management, or Front Office personnel contact their parents.

LA "Let Teacher Teach" Recommendations

Question, Answer, Comment:

Q: Mr. Magee: Are these recommendations that they are going to implement or being considered?

A: Mrs. Myles: Yes.

Q: Mr. Magee: I have some concerns as it relates to Non-Academic Responsibilities. I believe that those who make decisions and are deeply involved with the mental and behavioral health of children should be professional persons. These are things I think we should look at. How are we going to address those students that

should be taken out of the classroom that have mental health and behavioral health issues? Are we going to look at Social Workers? Are we going to increase the number of Counselors and Social Workers at the school? Do we need other professional help or services? I don't know number or magnitude, but I know there is an increasing number of students who fall in this category. Are we looking at a plan to address the behavioral and mental health challenges that our students face.

A: Mrs. Pierson: We are very fortunate to have 2 social workers and 2 counselors. Also, David Raines provides a psychologist and a social worker as well. So we have the resources to help. We also have SEL (Social & Emotional Learning) that our social workers spearhead. In addition to that, we allow outside agencies to come. We do not want them to interrupt instructional time because we are a firm believer that they should start at home because that's where most of the problems stem from. It's really a village. It takes the entire community to help with this.

Q: Mr. Wayt: We've added people to that department within the recent years?

A: Mrs. Pierson: Yes, we had 3 social workers and 2 counselors.

Q: Ms. Polley: Are we seeing the impact of those positions on behavior and academics, discipline as a whole?

A: Mrs. Pierson: I would say that we have.

C: Ms. Polley: I'm referring to the data. Is it showing the impact? Are we seeing less referrals? Are we seeing more students in the instructional classrooms? Are we seeing less expulsions?

A: Mrs. Pierson: Yes, and I can only speak for Linwood. We have seen less. And certainly, since we have incorporated the additional positions. The other thing is we are getting new students that are not really acclimated to Linwood and that can be a challenge. We don't have a lot of expulsions or suspensions because we believe in restorative practices, which we started 3-4 years ago. Our goal is to keep kids in class, and we have the advantage of Student Cultural Support, better known as Student Management. They're on the halls. They make a big difference in our school culture here.

C: Ms. Polley: I've seen them.

Q: Mr. Magee: This is my next concern which has been a challenge for years for teachers and that is to pay teachers for non-academic work. The question is, where does the funding come from? How do we come up with ways to address that additional pay? I'm not sure if we have the answer but those are things that we know the legislators have somewhat of a responsibility to ensure we get the additional dollars if they are appropriate at the federal level, so we address these concerns. This is something that's not just unique to us, this is nationwide.

A: Mrs. Myles: What I can say is pay for grading papers and additional planning time, right now there isn't additional compensation for that. However, for things such as After-school tutoring, Auxiliary sponsors, Saturday tutoring, things like that, they are being compensated for.

C: Mr. Magee: I hope we can find ways to compensate our teachers for the extra things such as those listed in the recommendations document.

C: Mrs. Franklin: I am glad we have those mechanisms in place like David Raines and Student Cultural Support Team. We are unique to having those supports because I haven't heard of any other schools having those in place. We are fortunate that we are already ahead of the curve, and we have time to investigate funding.

Consent Agenda Reports Received

Consent agenda reports were sent electronically for the board's review prior to today's meeting. The floor was open for questions. (Reports included: Academics, Operations, Marketing/Recruitment, Human Resources)

Mr. Wayt asked the BOT if there were any questions regarding the Consent Agendas.

Question, Answer, Comment:

- Q: Mr. Morehart: I have a question regarding the HR Consent Agenda. I just want to make sure I understand the Holy Cross information. It says Holy Cross 5, is that the number of teachers we had participating and then we had 2 they became certified because of the training.
- A: Mrs. Myles: Yes. With the 1st cohort, we had 5 in program and since then we've had 2 to pass the necessary parts of the Praxis exam which qualifies them for their Practitioner License. They have also entered the 2nd year of the program, which is the final year.
- Q: Mr. Morehart: And the remaining 3?
- A: Mrs. Myles: The other 3 are still testing. They did not fare well on the test this time around. Then 2nd cohort is just starting in the program.
- C: Mr. Morehart: Okay.
- Q: Mr. Magee: Yes, with Enrollment. Just a couple of observations. Based on what we just received with the budget, enrollment is going to change from 1050 to 1080.
- C: Mr. Wayt: Mrs. Williams, will you address this? She actually has more than that enrolled now.
- C: Mr. Magee: I'm just referencing the budget. Enrollment is going to change from 1050 to 1080.
- A: Mr. Wayt: Yes, that is correct.
- Q: Mr. Magee: In looking at the 2nd grade line item, it says 104 students currently registered or returning. Is that correct? It says that we are budgeted for 110, which means that it's not 100% as its stated. It's probably like 95%. It's not 100% if the enrollment is at 104.
- A: Mrs. Williams: It is 104 returning students plus 18 new students give us a total of 122 students in 2nd grade. We are 12 students over budget.
- C: Mr. Wayt: Mrs. Williams has done a really good job this year of getting the numbers that we need to make the budget.
- C: Mr. Morehart: Absolutely.
- C: Mr. Wayt: At one point, we were talking about less than 1000 and that will not do it. Now we are up to 1100. Thank you, Mrs. Williams, for the wonderful job you've done this year.

Approval of Consent Agenda Items:

- Mr. Morehart moved to approve the Consent Agenda reports as presented.
- Mr. Marchive seconded the motion.
- All voted in favor and the Consent Agendas were adopted.

Board Chairman's Report: (provided by Mr. Wayt)

Renovations of the 2nd Campus

Mr. Wayt called on Mr. Marchive for an update on the renovations of the 2nd campus.

Question, Answer, Comment:

C: Mr. Marchive: I would like to start off with thanking Mrs. Pierson for a couple new items in the consent agenda. You will see a document included called *Operations Monthly Report*. Mrs. Pierson and I discussed her sharing a little more information about the other departments in the school. Also, on page 4 of this report, she included a list of improvements that we have made to the existing facility over the last 4 years just so we kind of have an idea of what they do to make the building better each year. From that, we discussed having a 5-year plan, however, they have prepared a 3-year plan for the existing facility. She will work on a 3–5-year plan on the annex facility.

On the annex facility, the contractor has completed the work less a punch list item. Completed work today is \$ 3,763,269. There is a retainage being withheld that is \$198,066. The Certificate of Substantial Completion was filed with the Caddo Parish Clerk of Court on 7/26/2024. So, 45 days from that period, the contractor has to be finished with all his punch list items and he can request final payment.

By-Laws Review

The by-laws committee will meet before the next board meeting to finalize the by-laws due to some changes being made.

Review of Board Retreat

We learned some things during the retreat. Such as:

- Board members cannot vote via zoom.
- Board members cannot count in the total for a quorum if in attendance by zoom.
- Board members can listen and participate in the meeting via zoom however, it isn't official.
- CEO Evaluation
- Additional items will be discussed at the next board meeting.

Unfinished Business: There was none.

New Business:

Mr. Marchive mentioned the changes in the state legislature; notifications of public meetings and how to make our public meetings available to the public.

Question, Answer, Comment:

Q: Mr. Morehart: Kevin is going to follow up on this, correct?

A: Mr. Cox: Yes.

Q: Mr. Marchive: So, there is no immediate action?

A: Mr. Cox: No, not just yet.

C: Mr. Wayt: Once the Public Meeting Law is finalized, we will comply.

Adjourn: Mr. Magee moved; Dr. Kimble seconded to adjourn the meeting at 5:07 p.m. All voted in favor.