

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

Board of Trustees Meeting

NOVEMBER 2024 MEETING MINUTES

This meeting was held at 331 E. 71st Street and Zoom Meeting (ID: 267 635 4207) on November 18, at 4:00 p.m.

Board Members Present: *In-Person:* Gard Wayt, Travis Morehart, Dr. Whitney Polley, Dr. Kerry Laster, Cynthia Franklin
Virtually: Buck Magee, Dr. Benard Kimble, Mildred Tolliver, Lori Graham

Leadership Team/Faculty: *In-Person:* Dr. Staughton Jennings, Shirley Pierson, Richard Hilliard, Jennifer Hamilton-Myles, Tara Sealy, Marilyn Johnson-Preston, Roy Peterson, Shoyla Bryant, Aaryenne Strickland, Gerrice Brown, Ella Dotson, Letisha Williams

Contractors Present: *In-Person:* Kevin Cox (*4th Sector Solutions*), Rhonda Conley (*SLA Food Management*)
Virtually: Tess Bradford (*4th Section Solutions/School Food Solutions*)

Call to Order: Mr. Wayt called the meeting to order at 4:10 p.m.

Quorum Check: A quorum was not present.

Conflict of Interest Advisements: There were none.

Visitor Comments:

Mr. Wayt asked Dr. Jennings to present the visitors.

Dr. Jennings introduced Rhonda Conley (*SLA Food Service Management*) and Tess Bradford (*4th Sector Solutions/School Food Solutions*) to present the remaining food service requirements to open the 2nd location.

Question, Answer, Comment:

C: Dr. Jennings: There is still the matter of replacing the grease trap.

C: Mr. Wayt: We need a grease trap and running water before we can open.

C: Dr. Jennings: We have running water.

C: Ms. Conley: I am Rhonda Conley, with SLA Food Service Management, your Food Service Vendor. I've been working with Linwood for the past 7 years and we enjoy the great working relationship with the Linwood Team. I've been following the progress of this 2nd location for a while. In the past, I've applied for no less than 15 permits to operate new locations in the state of Louisiana, so I am very familiar with the process. When building a full kitchen, similar to what you're doing here, certain things have to be in line before the state will allow a permit to service students. 1st, you have to have the basic things in place: You have to have hot and cold running water, a grease trap, a 3 compartment sink at least. Dr. Jennings, I noticed a dish machine in the kitchen; I'm not sure what the plan is for that machine.

A: Dr. Jennings: The plan is to remove it.

C: Ms. Conley: Okay good. So, we need a 3 compartment sink to wash dishes and we will need a separate 2-compartment sink for washing vegetables and such. You can't mix

those things; they must be separate. All of these things have to run separately to ensure no cross-contamination. You have to have appropriate lighting in certain areas. They won't permit us without all of the equipment in place. There also need to be hand sinks for the students to wash their hands before going to lunch. You need a hand sink. I noticed a hand sink in the wall. We need to ask if we need another hand sink as it has been a concern lately. Recently, they mentioned needing an available hand sink in every place that the cafeteria team is. So, we may need a few more. However, I can follow-up on this. In other words, the kitchen has to be fully operational and ready to receive food in order to apply for a permit.

- Q: Mr. Wayt: Who is the organization that inspects us?
A: Ms. Conley: The Department of Health.
C: Mr. Wayt: Okay.
Q: Mr. Morehart: How long does that typically take? Are you saying that once we have everything in place and ready to go, then you will apply for the permit?
A: Ms. Conley: Yes, I will fill out an application, blueprints of the cafeteria, equipment list, and everything they ask for. Once I submit the application, they will be out within 7-10 days.
Q: Mr. Morehart: So, the biggest hurdle we have in there is what?
A: Ms. Conley: I will say its plumbing because everything has to run through the grease trap. I'm not sure what the status of that is but that is always the challenge, especially when you're dealing with an old building. A lot of times, they won't permit the equipment that's currently in place.
C: Mrs. Pierson: I met with Keith today and we walked everything while reviewing the punch list. The grease trap is filled with a lot of old stuff. It holds about 2500 gallons and it's under concrete. He thoroughly explained that the problem is that the water cannot go in with the grease, it has to be separated. So, we have the hot water tank, running water, but the grease trap is the issue, and it will definitely have to be replaced before we move forward.
Q: Mr. Wayt: Are you getting some prices on that?
A: Mrs. Pierson: Keith and Robin are getting the pricing on that.
Q: Mr. Wayt: You don't have prices yet?
A: Mrs. Pierson: No, they haven't given them to me.
C: Mr. Wayt: We talked about this last Thursday. You were going to get prices for this meeting today.
A: Dr. Jennings: We tried, but today was the earliest Keith could come meet with us.
Q: Mr. Morehart: Who is Keith?
A: Mrs. Pierson: Keith is the contractor. Mrs. Cruse met with Bobby Green plumbing. There are some specific things that they have to know before they can give us a price on it. We are talking about tearing up the entire back area. I asked Keith for an estimate on the grease trap; however, he couldn't provide one just yet. He said he is going to get with the plumbing engineer.
C: Dr. Jennings: Mr. Wayt, keep in mind, we just met on Thursday to discuss this. Today is Monday. We would've had to get someone out here Friday.
C: Mr. Wayt: Dr. Jennings, we have been talking about this grease trap for 2 months.
C: Dr. Jennings: I understand that, but it takes time.
Q: Mr. Morehart: Didn't we get a proposal a long time ago and the cost was a large amount?
A: Mrs. Pierson: Yes, in the kitchen.
A: Dr. Jennings: It was like \$600,000.
Q: Mr. Morehart: Do you think that quote is irrelevant now?

A: Dr. Jennings: I spoke with Mr. Marchive about that because there may be some major upcharges for it because of when it was done. He was sure there would be an increase in the quoted amount.

C: Mrs. Bradford: Good evening team. I know we are talking about the grease trap. I know we have to have our grease trap in place before we can operate the kitchen. One thing we need to keep in mind is that on January 23, 2025, we are going to have our USDA Audit of our Food Service program. This audit happens once every 5 years. I do not recommend that we transition students and the food service program to the new facility before the audit. Although we are doing everything in compliance, moving to a 2nd location is a big change and there are always hiccups and kinks that we have to work out as part of that change. Rhonda and her team are great, and they will do whatever we want them to do, but I wanted to make sure we kept this piece in mind. It is also why we cannot open until we have this permit because it will more than likely be the first thing we will be required to present. We have to submit it to the Louisiana Department of Education Child Nutrition Department before we can serve student meals here.

Q: Mr. Morehart: I think what you are saying is that we don't need to be in construction or anything before this audit is finished? So, the other option we were going to have is if we don't do a kitchen initially was transport food from the main campus. Is that an issue with the USDA to transport meals over here?

A: Mrs. Bradford: That is logistically more complicated. However, if we feed students here, we have to have a permit to operate the kitchen. It does not matter if we are preparing the food here or bringing it over from our other facility.

C: Mr. Wayt: So, we need the grease trap.

C: Mr. Morehart: When were we planning on kids being here? We were hoping by the start of the year but that does not look like it is going to happen. How hard is it to get a permit to transport food over here instead of doing all the construction?

A: Ms. Conley: It depends. Tess and I have both had experience with this. There have been times when they will not issue a permit if they know we are building a kitchen because they don't want you to have a temporary permit. But we can always ask. No matter when, I think we need to get through January for sure and pass the audit before we move on to the next steps.

Q: Mr. Morehart: Even if we had plans on what we are going to do in the kitchen, and certainly it would be done by January. But if we had the plans laid out as to what we're going to do, does that affect the audit your referencing?

A: Ms. Conley: The plans? I don't understand.

Q: Mr. Morehart: In other words, if in our December meeting we decide we are going to get bids for renovating the kitchen, does that affect this audit?

A: Ms. Conley: No, not at all. They are coming to see our operation. Our operation is what we are doing at the main campus.

C: Mr. Morehart: Okay.

A: Ms. Conley: Keeping that operation to what we've been doing and what we know to do is what we're trying to do.

Q: Mr. Morehart: They will be on site in January?

A: Ms. Conley: Yes. Actually, the audit has already started. We're going through the paperwork process now. There is a lot of pre-audit work going on right now. However, the site visit is in January.

C: Mrs. Bradford: January 23rd. I think by the week of the 24th, we will be through with the on-site portion of the audit. One thing we can do that Rhonda and I have talked about is reaching out to the USDA health department and ask them maybe to come walk the site with us and let us know what they will allow us to do. I think that's really where we are because it depends on the local health department. I know Rhonda

has been actually trying to get in touch with them for over a week to ask about a mended permit to operate instead of a full service one, but they would not give her a straight answer. The reason is because there's not straight answer. If they feel that you have the ability to turn a site into a functional kitchen, they normally will not permit it as bended until you have everything that you need to prepare the meals. Once you have a permit to operate, it doesn't matter if it is for a mini kitchen or a full kitchen. It is the same permit, and they don't differentiate between them in their system.

C: Mr. Morehart:

I know they do all the senior servicing sites, and they contract those meals out. I don't see the distinction, but you are familiar with this business. I think we as the board need to decide how we are going to move forward. It is good to know all of this. If we decide we're not going to do the kitchen, then we go down one road. If we decide we're not going to do the kitchen, then we go down to another one. We need to come up with plan A and plan B in December so we can march forward next year to get it done one way or another.

C: Mr. Wayt:

We need more information. If we have to, we will call a special meeting. But we need to know the cost and we need to know it now, not next year. I don't see any reason why we can't get that information.

Q: Mr. Morehart:

I think we're going to have to rebid it. Is that your understanding Dr. Jennings?

A: Dr. Jennings:

My understanding is the bid is the bid. However, because of the time that has passed, we need what the upcharge and the cost of the materials are going to be now. We already have a kitchen design. We had a cost to get it done. At the time, it was roughly \$600,000. Is that correct Kevin?

Q: Mr. Morehart:

Was that a part of the bids with construction or was it a separate bid?

A: Dr. Jennings/Mr. Cox:

It was separate.

C: Mr. Morehart:

That's been so long ago, I think it has to be rebid. We need to get it done to get the permit.

Q: Dr. Jennings:

When you say rebid, what are you referencing? The kitchen design and layout are done. It just needs the appliances and the grease trap. I have been speaking with Mrs. Bradford about how to get those appliances needed.

Q: Mr. Wayt:

Okay, what is the plan and the timing?

A: Dr. Jennings:

Remember, at the last board meeting we talked about moving the equipment from the main building to this building. Most of the appliances at the main building are relatively new, they were replaced within the last 2 years. We are still 1 site code, not 2 site codes. We are still 1 operation.

Q: Mr. Morehart:

The reason we can move the equipment is because of the funding options over there through the grant.

A: Dr. Jennings:

Correct.

A: Mrs. Bradford:

Yes.

Q: Mr. Wayt:

What's the timeline on that?

Q: Dr. Jennings:

Tess, do you have a timeline for that?

A: Mrs. Bradford:

I was thinking it would be done this spring. We can move quicker if needed.

However, I keep going back to the question of if we are going to cook on site at the 2nd location? What equipment is needed and what equipment we're moving? We can probably have that done in a few months. Equipment was on back order, but it doesn't take nearly as long to get it as it did in the past.

Q: Mr. Wayt:

Tess, did you say within a few months?

A: Mrs. Bradford:

Yes.

C: Mr. Wayt:

This is getting ridiculous.

C: Mr. Morehart:

If you order equipment, you're going to be a couple months getting it.

C: Mrs. Bradford:

It depends. We can always try locally to see what is available. We can work with Mrs. Pierson to get quotes from local providers based on what they have in-house

and then look for equipment from other places. If we do have to order something and wait for it to come in, it's usually around 6 weeks or so.

Q: Mr. Morehart: Staughton, you're telling me that we have the design laid out. We just don't have the grease trap and the plumbing, right?

A: Dr. Jennings: Yes, that's correct.

Q: Mr. Morehart: So, all of the equipment you're thinking we will be able to get out of the grant?

A: Mrs. Bradford: Yes, just as Dr. Jennings was saying. We will move the current equipment from the current location to the new location and we will purchase new equipment for the current location.

Q: Mr. Morehart: And that will come out of the Food Service program?

A: Mrs. Bradford: Yes.

Q: Mr. Morehart: And it will be done without hurting the food purchasing and everything? It will be enough room in there to buy everything.

A: Mrs. Bradford: Yes, we have a surplus in our non-profit food service account. There are rules and regulations on what the funds can be spent on.

Q: Mr. Morehart: Dr. Jennings, of that \$600,000, do you remember how much of it was equipment?

A: Dr. Jennings: I don't remember.

Q: Mr. Morehart: Do you think it's about 70% of it or the majority of it?

A: Dr. Jennings: I think it's the majority of it.

C: Mr. Morehart: I know we keep adding and adding but with the grease trap done to me, we ought to be able to do it.

C: Mrs. Bradford: The grease trap is the critical part. Once you start that, we can start ordering the equipment.

C: Mr. Morehart: I think we need to move a warp speed to get some prices on the grease trap. Unless it gets over \$250,000, I don't think we have to do a 30-day formal bid. I think we can just get some quotes.

Q: Mr. Wayt: We already have quotes. Can we just get updates?

A: Mr. Morehart: But they are probably a year old.

A: Mr. Cox: Our internal policy states that we will make a formal bid for \$50,000.

C: Mr. Morehart: I think we need to move a warp speed ahead on getting some quotes for the grease trap. Then we immediately get on the equipment.

C: Mrs. Bradford: We require an engineer to sign off on the design. A lot of times, a permit is needed to get this done. Just want to make sure that whatever person we select and whatever quotes that we get, that we have that engineer sign-off available. That has been my experience with putting in grease traps.

C: Ms. Conley: Yes, you have to go through the Department of Permits to get a grease trap permit installed.

Q: Mr. Morehart: Is our design team tagged into all of this?

A: Mrs. Pierson: Yes, I spoke with Robin, and he was going to get the plumbing engineer to work on this. Evidently, he wasn't aware of the grease trap. We had someone come out and take a look at it. It is underground and it's 2500 gallons. It is a big project. Robin is supposed to get quotes and information on that.

Q: Mr. Morehart: So, we need to go through our current design team to get the quotes on that. Is that the right way to do it right now?

A: Mrs. Pierson: That's the direction I was given.

C: Mr. Morehart: I think that's the direction we push them to get 3 quotes.

Q: Mrs. Bradford: Mrs. Pierson, in reference to the grease trap, they can't fix the current one?

A: Mrs. Pierson: No.

A: Dr. Jennings: No.

A: Mrs. Pierson: It has been inoperative for a number of years. They have no idea what's in it. The piping there. So now the entire grease trap has to be replaced. It is huge.

C: Mrs. Bradford: It is under the concrete. It is huge.

C: Ms. Conley: It is filled with sludge-like material.
C: Mrs. Pierson: Right, but from about 50 years ago.
C: Mr. Morehart: So, Gard, I think the move is for Staughton and Shirley to keep pushing on the design team to get us something on that.
C: Mr. Wayt: At warp speed.
C: Mr. Morehart: Then we will make plans for the equipment. Maybe a project during spring break.

Approval of Minutes from Previous Meeting:

Due to the absence of a quorum, no action was taken towards approving the minutes. However, Mr. Wayt asked if there were any revisions to the minutes. There were none.

Financial Report:

Mr. Wayt asked Mr. Kevin Cox from 4th Sector Solutions to present the Financial Report. Mr. Cox presented the October 2024 Finance Report.

Question, Answer, Comment:

Q: Mr. Morehart: Mr. Cox, on your debt ratio are you counting the lease?
A: Mr. Cox: Yes, counting all the liabilities.
Q: Mr. Morehart: Are you doing those ratios for the state?
A: Mr. Cox: They calculate it themselves when we turn in our AFR and our audit financials.
Q: Mr. Morehart: Are they counting regular leases?
A: Mr. Cox: For that particular one they take total liabilities over total assets.

Approval of October 2024 Finance Report:

Due to the absence of a quorum, no action was taken towards approving the October 2024 Finance Report.

Executive Director's Report:

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*)

Dr. Jennings requested to enter into a contract with Dr. Williams for the 2024-2025 school year. He provided the board with a copy of his Scope of Work for the year.

Question, Answer, Comment:

Q: Mr. Morehart: How much is this contract?
A: Dr. Jennings: We haven't negotiated it yet. I know it won't be for the same amount as last year.
C: Mr. Wayt: We will take it under advisement for the next time we have a quorum. I want everybody to study this very carefully. I asked Dr. Jennings to provide exact details of what Dr. Williams will be doing.
C: Mr. Morehart: It could be that he could give the report to the Academic Committee for them to review.
A: Dr. Jennings: Technically, he works for the school and the teachers. He is not an employee of the board. So he should give the report to me and I will provide it to the board.
C: Mr. Morehart: I think it would make more sense for the Academic Committee to review.
C: Mr. Wayt: Everyone study this carefully and be prepared to give feedback at the next meeting.

Dr. Jennings mentioned that he asked Mrs. Lewis to work up some numbers to give the staff a stipend at Christmas time like she normally does.

Q: Dr. Jennings: Kevin, did she give those numbers to you?
A: Mr. Cox: Yes, it was going to be around \$80,000 if we gave a \$500 stipend and double if we gave them \$1000.

C: Mr. Wayt: Dr. Jennings, can you tell us more about this?
A: Dr. Jennings: Every year we give them something at either Thanksgiving or Christmas. We didn't do sign-on bonuses this year because things are tight. We are thinking hopefully we can give them something, either a \$500 stipend or a \$1000 stipend. We normally give them something at Thanksgiving or Christmas and at the end of the school year.

Q: Mr. Wayt: When you say them, who are you referencing?
A: Dr. Jennings: The staff.
Q: Mr. Wayt: Do you divide them into two categories?
A: Dr. Jennings: We have the teaching staff and support staff. However, we gave the same amount across the board, correct?

A: Mrs. Myles: Yes, that's correct.
Q: Mr. Morehart: Is any of this budgeted?
A: Mr. Cox: No, not for a Christmas stipend, no.
Q: Mr. Wayt: I thought you were going to give us a written proposal for that.
A: Dr. Jennings: Mrs. Lewis did prepare something. Mrs. Lewis couldn't make it, and I don't have it.
Q: Mr. Wayt: Can you get it distributed to the board for review?
A: Dr. Jennings: Yes.
Q: Mr. Wayt: Didn't already approved other stipends this year?
A: Dr. Jennings: Yes, that was from the state. Although it had to be approved by the board, we were required to disburse it.

Q: Mr. Morehart: Kevin, do you foresee any problems with this?
A: Mr. Cox: Its too early to tell as we are only about 4 months into the year. Right now, the budget is pretty tight. Its hard to foresee what may happen in the coming months.

Q: Dr. Jennings: I was going to request to go into Executive Session, but we can discuss it here. I am supposed to receive a bonus every year along with the leadership team and the scores will be released Wednesday. I am asking since there is already a committee assigned to my evaluation, could the board allow that committee to meet Thursday to discuss my evaluation and bonus since we will all be together at the conference.
A: Mr. Wayt: I would like to see the numbers first.
Q: Mr. Morehart: How many of you are on that committee?
A: Mr. Wayt: 5 of them.
C: Dr. Jennings: I'm going to be with Mr. Magee and Mrs. Tolliver at a conference on Thursday.
A: Dr. Laster: I want to see the numbers.
C: Mr. Wayt: I want to see the numbers too. We're going to have to set another board meeting right after Thanksgiving and we will deal with it then.

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

Renovations of the 2nd Campus

Mr. Wayt stated that Mr. Marchive could not make it today but there was a thorough discussion already about the 2nd campus.

Question, Answer, Comment:

C: Mr. Wayt: I want to see the numbers. I don't see any reason why we can't have those numbers next week.

A: Mr. Morehart: I can tell you one reason because I have been in business a long time. When Thanksgiving hits, everything comes to a screeching halt between Thanksgiving and Christmas.

C: Mr. Wayt: The way I look at that Travis, if they want the business, they can get it done.

C: Mr. Morehart: All we can do is try. I just wanted you to know it is hard. I know how my clients are. They all take off the entire week, almost the whole month.

CEO Evaluation Process

Mr. Wayt stated that this process is almost complete.

LSUS Weightlifting Partnership

Mr. Wayt mentioned that everyone is still very excited about the Weightlifting partnership and the way it's going.

RSD Visit

Mr. Wayt invited our BESE Board member to do a tour before Thanksgiving.

Question, Answer, Comment:

Q: Mr. Morehart: Who are you trying to get over here?

A: Mr. Wayt: Stacey Melerine, our BESE Board Member.

C: Mr. Morehart: It would have to be this week.

C: Mr. Wayt: I told her before the holidays. I didn't get specific. I asked that she give us 2 or 3 dates to select from. She and I have already talked about it twice. Now it's just a matter of nailing it down.

C: Mr. Morehart: Give us as much lead time as you can.

C: Dr. Laster: I just don't think that she should come when school is closed. I'd rather her see good instruction going on and not an empty building. Maybe the 2nd week in December.

C: Dr. Jennings: Why don't we ask the principals when a good time for her would be to visit because they are the ones that run instruction, and they know what the kids are doing.

C: Dr. Laster: Again, I'd rather her see good instruction going on and not an empty building. Maybe the 2nd week in December.

C: Mr. Morehart: I agree with everyone. Lets get some dates.

C: Mr. Wayt: I will ask her to give some dates in between the Thanksgiving and Christmas break.

C: Mrs. Strickland: We have a lot of testing when we return from the Thanksgiving break. It would be better for her to visit in January.

C: Ms. Bryant: We have testing and Literacy screening.

Q: Mr. Wayt: You don't think it would be good for the BESE Board Member to come while your testing?

A: Mrs. Strickland: No, that is not a good time.

C: Mr. Wayt: Thank you for the input.

Unfinished Business: There was none.

New Business: There was none.

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 5:07 p.m.

Next meeting scheduled for Tuesday, December 10, 2024, at 3 p.m.