

GENERAL COMMITTEE REPORT

TUESDAY, AUGUST 11, 2020

The St. Bernard Parish School Board met as a Committee of the Whole on Tuesday, August 11, 2020 at 6:01 p.m. in the Board Room of the St. Bernard Parish School Board Office. Following the Prayer and Pledge of Allegiance, the Secretary called the roll. Members present were, Mrs. Diana B. Dysart, President, Mrs. Darleen P Asevedo, Mr. Donald D. Campbell, Ms. Carly C. Jackson, Mrs. Katherine K. Lemoine, Mr. Clifford M. Englande, Mr. Shelton P. Smith, Mr. Sean K. Warner and Mrs. Rosiland R. White. Mr. William H. Egan and Mr. Joseph V. Long, Sr. were absent.

On a point of privilege, Mrs. Dysart first wished Mr. Long a Happy Birthday and then congratulated the students, parents, teachers and Administrators on a successful first day of the 2020 – 2021 school year. Mrs. Dysart next asked for a moment of silence to honor the former Assistant Principal of Andrew Jackson High School, Ms. Lenette Ladner Zulli, who recently passed away. Condolences were offered to Ms. Ladner Zulli's friends and family.

Mrs. Dysart began by addressing the next agenda item regarding a Request to Appear from the St. Bernard NAACP. Mrs. Dysart welcomed Ms. Keisa Rodney to speak on behalf of the NAACP Organization. Ms. Rodney began by introducing herself as a member of the NAACP of St. Bernard's Executive Committee and on their behalf she asked to make a request to remove the name of Andrew Jackson from the now Andrew Jackson Middle School which was the former Andrew Jackson High School and the former Andrew Jackson Fundamental High School. Ms. Rodney explained her reason for this request.

Ms. Rodney began by acknowledging some of Andrew Jackson's prominent history such as the fact that he was our 7th President of the United States and was the commander of troops at our very own Battle of New Orleans. However, she pointed out that he was involved in, the Trail of Tears and that he was the owner of over 100 slaves at his plantation in Tennessee. Ms. Rodney also mentioned that Andrew Jackson, an all-girl High School, was opened in 1965 on the heels of efforts to de-segregate schools. She feels this was done to segregate the sexes with females at Andrew Jackson and P.G.T. Beauregard High and males at Chalmette and St. Bernard High in an effort to avoid race mixing. Ms. Rodney noted that the current population of Andrew Jackson Middle School is approximately 40% students of color and she feels that the Board should consider re-naming the school for a prominent African-American from St. Bernard Parish.

Mrs. Dysart thanked Ms. Rodney for coming before the Committee tonight. Ms. Rodney asked for a timeframe as to when the NAACP could get a response to her request. Mrs. Dysart explained that NAACP was on the agenda only as a Request to Appear and not as an agenda item for a vote, that this discussion will be taken under consideration by the Committee members present, and that someone would get back to them.

Mrs. Dysart next welcomed Mrs. Alex Schneider to present Super News.

Mrs. Schneider first shared that many of the normal print publications that have been previously made available to the public have been moved to online/website content. This online format was chosen in an effort to reach a wide variety of families in the timeliest manner. Those online publications include the brochure titled “Returning to School – What You Need to Know” and the “Student & Parent Guide to Reopening”.

Mrs. Schneider also noted that all of the beginning of year information can be found on the district website which is www.sbpsb.org/strongstart2020. Ms. Schneider said that on that page you will find information like links to the Guide to Reopening Schools, policies on dress code, school supply lists, virtual school options, etc. Mrs. Schneider also included in her presentation the social media analytics. She then encouraged everyone to visit school websites and facebook pages to find a delightful menagerie of info and amusements regarding the reopening of each school. In addition to the social media videos done for schools and the school system, Ms. Schneider acknowledged the many fine videos that Jack Jackson and Barry Lemoine have prepared to assist in keeping our families informed on YouTube, including a special message from Ms. Voitier as our virtual new school year Kick-Off. Mrs. Schneider stated that all of this social media and internet messaging was produced by the school system in an effort to effectively communicate with students, families and employees during this time of COVID-19.

At this time Mrs. Schneider asked the men from PEN to roll the Super News which included topics such as: Educators honored by the Reading Association; Tessie White-Stein, Brenda Montalbano and Mrs. Schneider; Cheramie Kerth-Special Education Supervisor was chosen as one of four leaders in the state to serve as a mentor to a cohort of 15 young educational leaders. Mrs. Kerth will provide specialized training and resources to this cohort while they serve students with disabilities. There was a montage that highlighted the many interventions being put into place to keep safety and health in the forefront at our schools. The Superintendent took time to deliver checks to employees with perfect attendance for the previous school year. Informative and fun

videos were included in back to school nights for many schools, samples from those videos were shown.

Mrs. Dysart thanked Ms. Schneider and the Men from PEN for their informative video.

Next, Ms. Dysart asked Mr. Warner, Finance Committee Chair, to handle the next agenda item. Mr. Warner invited Mr. David Fernandez to appear for recognition of the School Board receiving both the GFOA (Government Finance Officers Association) and ASBO (Association of School Business Officials) Certificate of Achievement for excellence in financial reporting. Mr. Fernandez acknowledged that the school system has achieved this honor for over 25 years which Mr. Fernandez stated could not be done without his incredible staff in the business office. Mrs. Dysart, Ms. Voitier and the entire Committee commended the employees responsible for these awards which assure the public that the school system is being responsible with public funds. By joint acclamation the Committee gladly received these awards on behalf of the School Board Business Office.

Mrs. Lemoine, as education chair, invited Ms. Voitier, to provide an update regarding the opening of school. Ms. Voitier stated that today was the opening of school for 25% of kindergarten through 8th grade and 50% of high school students reported for class. The rest of the students will be phased in with the remaining 25% of k-8 coming to school in the remaining three days of this week and for high school, students will have a hybrid schedule where 50% of students attend every other day. This slow opening allows teachers and students to acclimate to new health and safety procedures inside and outside of the classroom. She also stated that Mr. Dewey of Maintenance has done a great job in providing sanitation stations and personal protective equipment within the schools. Teachers take temperatures in the morning, if students are symptomatic, they are sent to the room in each school that is dedicated as a place for assessing students and their symptoms by healthcare professionals. The partnerships with The Methodist Foundation and Ochsner for testing possible cases have also been a tremendous advantage in operating during this time. Ms. Voitier stated that the virtual school portion of student attendance is already being readied for an August 17th start date with students being verified and provided necessary hardware for internet capability and virtual lessons. She also stated that by Monday, August 17th all students should be engaged in their assigned learning environments.

Mrs. Lemoine thanked Ms. Voitier for the update. She thanked everyone for their efforts in preparing for the reopening of schools. Mr. Warner inquired about the

number of students who have opted for the virtual learning to which Ms. Voitier stated that 28% of students had chosen the virtual option.

Ms. Voitier next presented the August 2020 personnel changes for the Committee's review.

Mr. Englande filled in for the absent Mr. Long as Executive Committee Chair for the next agenda item regarding policies to adopt for the School Board Policy Manual. Mr. Englande welcomed Mrs. Alex Schneider to present the policies.

Mrs. Schneider began by stating that the first change is to Policy II. She explained that these changes are in response to Bulletin 118- Statewide Assessment Standards and Practices of the Louisiana Department of Education. The changes included verbage changes due to revisions in the bulletin and slight changes to testing procedures and guidelines. All changes were displayed in the handouts to each Committee member.

At this time the Committee decided to discuss each policy individually and then vote to on them as a group instead of individually.

Mrs. Schneider then addressed policy EBBD regarding the emergency closing of schools. She explained that this policy change allows for additional provisions if the Superintendent needed to close schools in an emergency situation including the right to excuse employees during the designated emergency.

The next six policies are related to sexual harassment for students and/or employees. Ms. Schneider states that the following policies have been updated, revised or added following the United States Department of Education May publication of its final rule which recognizes that sexual harassment as unlawful sex discrimination under Title IX of the educational amendments of 1972. These new regulations fundamentally change student and employee sexual harassment policies. Previously, the St. Bernard School Board had two sexual harassment policies, one for employees and one for students. Following the new regulations, the Administration is proposing the adoption of six School Board policies, four for employees and two for students.

The two policies pertaining to students are JAAA-Title IX Sexual Harassment and JCEA - Sexually Related Student Misconduct. Policy JAAA requires policy notice that the School Board does not discriminate on the basis of sex in its educational programs or activities and that it is responsible and responsive to actual knowledge of sexual harassment promptly. It also states that we clearly present these new definitions as used in the new regulations and calls for the appointment of a Title IX Coordinator to

lead School Board efforts to comply with regulations. It also outlines the response of teachers upon knowledge of sexual harassment. Mrs. Schneider noted that this is separate from policy JCEA which is for anything that is student related which does not rise to the definition of sexual harassment as defined by the new regulations in Title IX.

Regarding employees, as Title IX sexual harassment is now addressed separately, the employee sexual harassment policy has been revised to limit its scope to probation contained in Title VII of the civil rights act of 1964. These changes required revisions to employee policies including those about Equal Opportunity Employment (GAAA), Non-Title IX Complaints and Grievances (GAE), Investigations (GAMC) and Title VII Employee Sexual Harassment (GAEEA).

Mrs. Dysart moved to recommend to the full Board to approve the Administration's request to adopt the new and/or revisions to the Board Policies; II, EBBB, GAE, GAAA, JAAA, JCEA, GAMC and GAEEA. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Lemoine and was approved unanimously by a voice vote of the member present.

Mrs. Warner, as Finance Committee chair, next introduced Mr. Fernandez to present the next agenda item regarding the adoption of 2020 Ad Valorem Millages. Mr. Fernandez stated that Board is required to levy Ad Valorem properties on a yearly basis. He presented the resolution that outlines the specific millages for the current year.

Mr. Englande moved to approve the Administration's recommendation to adopt the 2020 Ad Valorem Millages as presented. Seconded by Ms. Jackson, the motion passed unopposed by a voice vote of the members present.

Mr. Fernandez next presented the Louisiana Compliance Questionnaire for the Committee's approval. He explained that the questionnaire is completed each year at this time in conjunction with the district's annual financial audit. The questionnaire basically states that the district is in compliance with all state laws and must be approved by the Board prior to the audit so that it may be submitted to the auditors for inclusion in their opinion.

Mr. Smith moved to recommend to the Board to approve the Louisiana Compliance Questionnaire. Seconded by Ms. Jackson the motion passed unanimously by a roll call vote of the members present.

There were no Superintendent's Recommendations.

There being no further business to discuss, on motion of Mrs. Asevedo, seconded by Ms. Jackson and passed by a unanimous voice vote, the meeting was adjourned.