

Minutes – October 15, 2020

The Beauregard Parish School Board met in regular session Thursday, October 15, 2020, at 6:00 pm in the Central Office Board Room. Board members in attendance: David Vidrine, Darrin Manuel, Ray Bowman, Kathy Bruner, Garrett Greene, Cassie Henry, Wesley Taylor, Martha Jackson, Casey Jones, Nikki Weldon, and Student Representative Brylee Cooley.

Timothy J. Cooley, Superintendent, was present and acted as secretary.

The Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance were led by P. J. Crowe.

David Vidrine asked whether board members had received an agenda and stated that he would accept a motion to adopt the agenda as presented. Kathy Bruner offered a motion to adopt the agenda as presented, which was seconded by Darrin Manuel, and approved upon voting. David Vidrine stated that he wished to add an agenda item: "To discuss the Superintendent's evaluation process." Board members were reminded that an amendment to the agenda needed a unanimous vote to pass. Upon motion of David Vidrine, seconded by Cassie Henry, board members voted unanimously in favor of adding agenda item 8) "To discuss the Superintendent's evaluation process."

Next, board members were asked to consider adopting the minutes of the September 10, 2020, regular meeting as published in the official journal. Wesley Taylor offered a motion, to adopt the minutes of the September 10, 2020, regular meeting as published in the official journal, which was seconded by Casey Jones, and passed upon voting.

Before beginning the Superintendent's Report, Mr. Cooley asked Brylee Cooley to share her Student Representative's report. Ms. Cooley began by letting board members know that seniors who missed the free administration of the ACT in the spring would have another opportunity to take the test this month. K. R. Hanchey sponsored a book drive which ended October 9 and junior high basketball season is just getting underway. Ms. Cooley concluded her report by advising board members that students at the parish high schools will be busy planning fall and homecoming festivities this month.

Next, Mr. Cooley invited Tiffany Koch, Fort Polk School Liaison, to share an update regarding Fort Polk. Ms. Koch began by noting that the last time she spoke to the board, the area was dealing with the aftermath of Hurricane Laura, and that this time, the area is coping with damage from its second storm, Hurricane Delta. Board members were advised that the base suffered little "new" damage, but some of the buildings damaged in the first storm, were further damaged by Hurricane Delta. Ms. Koch explained that Colonel Roseberry was unable to attend the meeting due to Fort Polk Change of Command formalities, as Brigadier General Patrick Frank received his second star and departed Fort Polk, being replaced by Brigadier General David Doyle. Board members were advised that Colonel Roseberry wished to convey his appreciation for all the board does to ensure that students receive a quality education during their time at the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk.

Mr. Cooley began by advising board members that students have had a successful third, first day of school, thanking teachers and staff for the hard work it took to get to that point again, following the second hurricane of the year, Hurricane Delta. Board members learned that all schools and cafeterias were operational, although students in Beauregard Waterworks District 3 were being provided bottled water, while their area water system is under a boil advisory.

According to Mr. Cooley, the ACT composite score in the parish for 2019-2020 was 18.8, just one-tenth of a point down from the previous year, which was remarkable considering the difficult end to the school year caused by the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Next, board members learned that the October 1 student count was down from the 2019-2020 student count by just 59 students. Mr. Cooley stated that he was encouraged by this number, considering the tumultuous start to the 2020-2021 school year caused by the pandemic and Hurricanes Laura and Delta, adding that if the count were taken at this point, the decrease in student numbers would be further reduced, as more parents choose to return their students to the classroom.

Board members were reminded to submit their LSBA board member profile update surveys, as requested.

The next agenda item was for board members to recognize the 2020-2021 Beauregard Parish Principal of the Year. Kari Ifland spoke to board members about the program, which is sponsored by the Louisiana Department of Education, noting that the program recognizes exceptional commitment to student success, innovative leadership, and consistent support to educators. The Beauregard Parish Elementary Principal of the Year is Pamela March, a 28-year veteran educator currently serving as Principal at G. W. Carver Elementary School.

Following the recognition of the 2020-2021 Principal of the Year, the 2020-2021 Beauregard Parish Teachers of the Year were presented to board members. Board members learned that this LDOE program honors the most outstanding educators each year, focusing on commitment to student success, willingness to collaborate, ability to innovate, and other criteria. This year, the Beauregard Parish Elementary Teacher of the Year is Cassie Thompson, of East Beauregard Elementary, who was presented by her principal Mark Weldon. In addition to being named Teacher of the Year at the parish level, Ms. Thompson was recognized for being a state semi-finalist, one of only eight educators to earn that distinction. The Beauregard Parish Middle School Teacher of the Year is Crystal Underbakke, of East Beauregard High School, who was presented by her principal, Jeffrey Odom. The Beauregard Parish High School Teacher of the Year is

Angela Stout, of DeRidder High School, who was recognized by Assistant Principal, Cassady Hickingbottom. Each of these teachers received a plaque honoring them for their exceptional service to students.

The next item on the agenda was for board members to consider approval of the Pupil Progression Plan for the 2020-2021 school year. Kim Hayes began by advising board members that the changes were few and noted that the suggested changes had been sent to board members and posted on the BPSB website. Ms. Hayes began her review of the changes by noting that the first change (page 9), shown on the summary sheet provided, was to add language giving the superintendent the authority to deny a foreign exchange student application due to unforeseen circumstances. Board members learned that on pages 14-16, wording was added to comply with new directives from the Louisiana Department of Education stating that students may take no more than two credit recovery courses each school year, and a total of no more than seven such recovery credits may be applied to meeting graduation requirements. Also, LDOE added an NCAA policy and clarification was added to the Beauregard Virtual Courses and Acceleration section to include information on the number of Beauregard Virtual Program courses that can be taken during each school year and in the summers in addition to the regular school course load. Ms. Hayes continued her summary on page 26, Grading Procedures, where additional language was suggested requiring students who take a Dual Enrollment (DE) English IV/English 101 course during the fall semester to enroll in English IV for the spring semester, if they wish to opt out of the English 102 dual enrollment for the spring semester. The final suggestion was for Appendix D, to add wording that explains how Class Rank will be determined for the Class of 2021-2022 and beyond due to the addition of the 5 Point Scale and the use of Quality Points to determine academic awards. Casey Jones offered a motion to approve the Pupil Progression Plan for the 2020-2021 school year, which was seconded by Wesley Taylor. In the discussion which followed, concern was expressed that the seniors who completed DE English 101/English IV during the fall semester and normally left campus early might have to stay on campus later in the day to wait for the required English IV class for the spring semester, if it were scheduled later in the day than the DE fall classes. The pros and cons of doing this were discussed for several minutes and Ray Bowman offered a motion to strike the section on "Seniors and English IV" on page 26, but after further discussion, withdrew this motion. Following this action there was discussion about the way grades would be calculated for the fall semester, given the extreme conditions that prevented a smooth start to the school year. In response to a question, board members were advised that in consideration of the hardships that affected the entire area following two hurricanes (including lack of electric service and continuing internet issues parishwide), all students would receive an "I" for their first, 9-week grading period, and teachers would work with students through the end of the second, 9-week grading period, then progress would be considered for both of the first two quarters, and the "I" grade corrected to a letter grade after the first semester. Board members were assured that every effort would be made to help students who were struggling. Mr. Cooley and Mr. Vidrine emphasized that regardless of how the school year began, it was important to focus on the task at hand, which is to provide the best education possible for the students of Beauregard Parish, going forward. Upon voting, board members approved the Pupil Progression Plan for the 2020-2021 school year by a margin of 9-0. (Wesley Taylor had stepped out of the room during the discussion and was not present for this vote.)

Following action on the Pupil Progression Plan, board members were asked to consider rescinding the public health emergency declaration related to Covid-19. David Vidrine advised board members that a proposed resolution authorizing the Covid-19 public health emergency declaration to be rescinded had been placed in each of their folders. Mr. Cooley read the resolution and board members were reminded that the public health emergency declaration was very similar to the emergency resolution adopted following Hurricane Laura and that the adoption of policy File:EBBI, Public Health Emergency in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic covered all of the provisions of the original public health emergency declaration. In a roll call vote, board members unanimously adopted the following resolution rescinding the public health emergency declaration related to Covid-19:

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, on the 19th day of March, 2020, in DeRidder, the Beauregard Parish School Board adopted a public health emergency declaration in consideration of the COVID-19 pandemic declared by the World Health Organization; and

WHEREAS, this declaration was necessary for the safe and efficient operation of the school system during the COVID-19 public health emergency; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards announced that the state will move into Phase III of reopening the state for business;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the public health emergency declaration in relation of the COVID-19 pandemic is hereby rescinded.

Next, board members were asked to consider revision of the 4-day and 5-day calendars for the 2020-2021 school year. Cord Ensminger addressed the board, noting that since the calendar committee met, Hurricane Delta had necessitated the addition of four more days. Mr. Ensminger reviewed the changes, which consisted mainly of designating some of the days in the multi-day holiday periods as virtual learning days, which would mean students and staff would not meet on campus on those days. In addition, Election Day, Veterans' Day, Martin Luther King, Jr., Day, and a few others would become virtual learning days. After discussion, it was suggested that the January 18, Martin Luther King, Jr., holiday be restored and the January 15 parent-teacher conference day become a virtual day in its place. In response to a question, Mr.

Cooley advised board members that although a request had been submitted to the LDOE for a waiver of days, no response had been received and districts have been advised to prepare a plan for making up days missed due to Hurricanes Laura and Delta, in the event that the requests are denied. After additional discussion, Ray Bowman offered a motion to approve revision of the 4-day and 5-day calendars for the 2020-2021 school year, with the adjustment discussed regarding Martin Luther King, Jr./parent-teacher conference day. The motion was seconded by Casey Jones, and approved upon voting.

The final item on the agenda was the item added at the beginning of the meeting: To discuss the Superintendent's evaluation. David Vidrine reviewed the procedure that had been established, noting that the year had been complicated by not only the pandemic, but also two hurricanes. Mr. Vidrine suggested that the extenuating circumstances would justify a slight modification in the timeline for the evaluation to be completed and returned. Board members were told that they would receive a blank evaluation form and a return envelope at the meeting and it was important to return the evaluation in this particular envelope which was marked only with a school board district (no name) and the school board office address, to ascertain when all school board districts had returned an evaluation form. Mr. Vidrine stated that the evaluation forms needed to be received by Ms. Crain no later than November 9, and that a compilation of the results would be reviewed at the November 12, 2020, regular school board meeting. Upon motion of Wesley Taylor, seconded by Casey Jones, board members voted to approve the change in the Superintendent's evaluation procedure for this year, due to the extenuating circumstances, by a margin of 9-1 (Manuel.)

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned.

Secretary

President