The Ouachita Parish School Board met in regular session on Tuesday, March 10, 2020 at two (2:00) o’clock p.m. at its regular meeting place, the Ouachita Parish School Board office.

President Hicks called the meeting to order and welcomed visitors and guests to the meeting.

The roll was called and the following members were present: Tommy Comeaux, Shere May, Scotty Waggoner, Jerry R. Hicks, Harold McCoy, Dabo Graves and Greg Manley. There were none absent.

The Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag was led by Board member Shere May.

The Invocation was given by Greg Manley.

On motion by Greg Manley, seconded by Dabo Graves, the Board unanimously approved the Minutes of February 11, 2020 as written.

Tommy Comeaux moved, seconded by Shere May, that the Board approve the Agenda as presented. Motion unanimously carried by all members present.

No Personnel Report was discussed.

Communication Specialist Aline Smead invited Dr. Coker and President Hicks to come forward and help recognize an eighth grade art student from West Ridge Middle School. Caroline Joslin was selected the first place winner of the statewide 2020 Louisiana School Board Association art contest. Her art was displayed on the screen as Dr. Coker proudly presented her an award from the LSBA.

Upon motion by Sherri May, seconded by Dabo Graves, the Board approved the following policies recommended by Title I Supervisor Cynthia Osborne, that were reviewed and approved in advance by district personnel, Board attorney Elmer Noah and the Board’s policy provider, Forethought Consultants, Inc.: (1 Policy: GAEAA (Sexual Harassment) and (2 Policy: GBN (Dismissal of Employees) as presented. In addition, the following two policies are to be presented for the Board’s consideration at their next meeting: (1 Policy: GBRL (Holidays) and (2 Policy: II (Testing Program). Following an offer for public comment by President Hicks, motion carried unanimously by all members present.

Finance Committee Chairman Todd Guice presented a brief report by the Finance Committee from their meeting of February 27, 2020 along with a copy of the Agenda for that meeting. Chairman Guice informed the Board that the Director of Business Regina Mekus and her staff reported on finances along with a report on cash investments from accountant Sharon Bennett. A recommendation was also made by the Finance Committee to consider a request
for a donation of $2,500.00 from Youth Services of Northeast Louisiana to assist with the funding of Teen Court. This recommendation will be brought for consideration before the Board at a later date. A substitute teacher for our system, Diane Porter-Lloyd, presented a request to the Committee to grant a pay raise for certified substitute teachers. Following discussion, no action was taken at this time. In conclusion, Mr. Guice announced that the next Finance Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, May 14, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. in the Board Room.

On motion by Scotty Waggoner, seconded by Shere May, the Board approved the Financial Committee report as presented by Chairman Guice. Following an offer for public comment, motion unanimously carried by all members present.

Personnel Director Todd Guice reported that the 2020-2021 School Calendar Committee met and gave two options to employees and principals and they overwhelmingly accepted the one with a full week before Christmas to return the first of January. Whereby, Shere May moved, seconded by Dabo Graves, that the Board adopt the 2020-2021 School Calendar as recommended by the School Calendar Committee. President Hicks offered a brief period for public comment and motion carried unanimously.

The monthly 2019-20 Interim Financial Report for the Period ended January 31, 2020 was presented to the Board by Business Director Regina Mekus. From Page 1 she pointed out that the General Fund had a fund balance of $36,562,542 and the District #1 M&O ending fund balance was 99% of the prior YTD balance or $17,503,537. Consequently, she announced that she would be looking at a budget revision in May as we are running close to the budget for the year and no major revisions need to be made. In anticipation of a partial drop in students, she stated they will be revising additional revenues according to what was actually seen in February and will be addressing that issue between now and the end of the year. The refunding of the bonds will significantly reduce the balance in the sales tax revenue account due to the repayment of those bonds. Ms. Mekus concluded her report referring the Board to the last 2 pages of the report, where she pointed out the comparison of monthly accumulation of revenues and expenditures to prior fiscal year periods provided for the Board’s review on the accumulation of funds for the current fiscal year and the prior two fiscal years. This enables all to see the trend of performance in these two primary operating funds of the School Board. Whereby, Greg Manley moved, seconded by Dabo Graves, that the Board approve the Interim Financial Report for the Period ended January 31, 2020 as presented by Business Director Regina Mekus. Following a brief moment allowed for public comment by President Hicks, motion carried unanimously.

Purchasing Agent Bobby Jones reported that at the last Board meeting, the Board allowed him to approve the copy paper bid prior to the next meeting and on February 19, 2020,
Mr. Jones accepted the low responsive/responsible bidders for the copy paper [Bid No. 44-20] as listed in bold print on the bid sheet provided the Board members.

On the recommendation of Supervisor of Safety/Construction Kenneth Slusher, Tommy Comeaux moved, seconded by Dabo Graves, that the Board grant permission to select an architect for roof replacements at Pinecrest and Lenwil to be paid from next fiscal year’s budget to begin at the end of April or 1st of June. TBA was selected as the architect for both schools. Motion carried unanimously following much discussion.

Supervisor of Safety/Construction Kenneth Slusher reported that Entergy is proposing a 13 foot right of way request for School Board property at Sterlington High School and a 17 foot portion of the right of way from the property owner adjacent the school property for a total of 30 feet of right of way along Panther Drive. Following much discussion, Greg Manley moved, seconded by Dabo Graves, that the Board decline Entergy’s easement request for a 13 foot right of way along Panther Drive at Sterlington High School. President Hicks offered a brief moment for public comment and motion carried unanimously by all members present.

Before concluding his report, Supervisor of Safety/Construction Kenneth Slusher stated that Woodlawn needs a lot of dirt work performed and property needs to dry out before the project can be completed. Edgewood’s parking lot at West Monroe High School is also too saturated from rains to finish their parking lot.

There were no Evaluation of Bids reported.

On motion by Tommy Comeaux, seconded by Shere May, the Board granted permission to bid the following 3 items: 1.) Large Cafeteria Equipment [Bid No. FS11-20], funded with Child Nutrition Funds with a budget of $75,000; 2.) Kiroli WI Cooler Freezer [Bid No. FS6-21], funded with Child Nutrition Funds with a budget of $55,000; 3.) Shady Grove WI Cooler/Freezer [Bid No. FS7-21], funded with Child Nutrition Funds with a budget of $55,000. Motion carried unanimously by all member present.

At the time, Superintendent Dr. Coker reported on the Coronavirus problem invading America right now. As he reported, this is a BIG concern and is trying to be cautious because the safety of our students/faculty/staff is our priority. He intends to be pro-active as possible by keeping his administrators/principals informed. All the information he receives is forwarded to his Safety Director, Marsha Baker for review. He is taking this very serious in trying to prepare. A time is being set up to meet with all his directors and principals to establish some type of plan for travel in regard to trips that are already scheduled. He assured the Board and the public that he is giving top priority to the safety of our students/faculty/staff at this time. He will keep everyone up to date as he receives directions from our governor and the President of the United States.
President Hicks set the next meeting for April 21, 2020 at 12:00 noon.

There being no further business to discuss, Greg Manley moved, seconded by Dabo Graves, that the meeting adjourn. Motion carried unanimously.

OUACHITA PARISH SCHOOL BOARD

Jerry R. Hicks, President

ATTEST:

Don Coker, Secretary

/ps