

Audubon Charter School
FAME, Inc., Board Meeting
Sept. 27, 2008
Broadway Campus

Meeting was called to order by Chairman Carlos Zervigon at 10:08 a.m. Board members present: Sharon Nossiter, Olivier Brochenin, Edwin Shorty, Carlos Zervigon, Teddi Locke, Laura Watts, Wynn Seeman, James Reiss.. Excused: Cornelius Tilton and Allen Wood.

Present representing ACS administration: Lynette Brice, Ellen Selvidge, Alisa Dupre, Janice Dupuy, Dawn Collins.

1. The minutes of FAME's regular monthly meeting, last held June 28, 2008, and a specially-called meeting held Sept. 27, 2008, to discuss and approve Audubon's response to the School Facilities Master Plan for Orleans Parish, were approved unanimously after a motion by James Reiss, seconded by Olivier Brochenin.
2. Nominations. Carlos introduced Dr. Linda Blakely, who was nominated to the FAME Board by (now former) board member Ken Ducote. Dr. Blakely has a background in curriculum development and information systems, and her doctorate is in curriculum development. Dr. Blakely said she hopes to bring to the board information on how to use technology to help students understand its value. Wynn Seeman moved election of Dr. Blakely to finish out Ken Ducote's term of office. She was seconded by Teddi Locke. The vote was unanimous, and Dr. Blakely was welcomed to the board.
3. Laura Watts moved adding an agenda item to address changes in the school calendar due to days lost to hurricane evacuation. James Reiss seconded. Agenda change approved. Janice Dupuy reported that students lost five days because of Gustav and Ike. Those days will be recaptured by eliminating full-day professional development, which reclaims two days. Four days originally scheduled as half-days for students are now full days. One full-day professional development day is a half-day. The last day for students and staff is now June 1, rather than May 29. Changes in the school calendar must be approved by the board and reported to OPSB. Teddie Locke moved to accept these changes, Laura Watts seconded. With no discussion, the calendar revisions were approved unanimously.
4. Administration Report:
Montessori Director Ellen Selvidge reported that she and Teddi Locke met with the American Montessori Society's Conference Committee to discuss the 2009 AMS Conference which will be held in New Orleans, Feb. 26-March 1, 2009. Many local volunteers will be needed then to help with registration and other conference-related matters. Conference attendees will be working at Audubon on Feb. 25 on a service project, as well as at other schools around the city.
Montessori trainers Peter and Rosann Larrow held training classes at Audubon from

Sept. 17-27.

Both French and Montessori classes at Broadway and Carrollton campuses celebrated Pinwheels for Peace on Monday, Sept. 22.

French Director Loetitia Ducos arrived at the meeting at 10:24 a.m., delayed by testing a student for entrance into the French Program. She noted how pleased she was to show Audubon's program to the French Minister of Education, who visited last week, and thanked Alisa Dupre for helping to get the French school supplies released from U.S. Customs.

Business Manager Alisa Dupre reported minor roof damage at both campuses following Hurricane Gustav. NOPS has already seen to the repairs. A large tree fell on the Carrollton playground, but did not damage any equipment. Windows were broken at the Carrollton Campus, but Dupre reported, in response to a question from board member Edwin Shorty, that the portable buildings were quite untouched. The NOPS budget includes money to replace the roof and renovate bathrooms at the Broadway Campus. The funding source is a portion of the Harrah's gaming tax that is dedicated to education. The project is scheduled to start in December, although the administration has received no information on how long the project will take or whether it might disrupt classes.

Audubon now has a full-time technology director, as well as a model classroom funded by NOPS. The model classroom includes six laptops, a smart board, a video camera, a digital camera and lots of different software programs for use at school and home. We are also starting Blackboard, which teachers can use to post lessons online, students can use to e-mail teachers and post their homework. The new technology director will be in charge of professional development and hands-on technical assistance.

Dupre noted that the phone broadcast system has been well-received by parents, who need to make sure the office has correct contact information.

Principal Janice Dupuy said the Accountability Committee will begin meeting to discuss changes in the school's admissions policy, and anticipates having a policy for the board to vote on at the October FAME meeting. Membership of the committee is FAME board members Teddi Locke and Wynn Seeman, the Montessori and French directors and Janice, who also plans to ask the PTO president and a parent liaison to join the committee.

Current enrollment is at 713 students, with MFP funding for 617. Janice anticipates getting enrollment up to 625 by Oct. 1.

Applications for the 2009-10 school year will be available at the beginning of November, once a decision has been made on admissions policy.

Lynette Brice introduced the new CPA/Director of Finance the ACS is sharing with Hynes Elementary, John Gaudry. Gaudry said his goal is to make the expected fund-raising/donations line-item as small as possible. It has been revised down to \$126,000, he said.

Carlos Zervigon proposed adding a budget item to today's agenda. Such was moved

by Laura Watts, seconded by Edwin Shorty, and approved unanimously.

5. Budget Item.

Laura said she has been struggling with the fund-raising line. Our pre-K programs are essential to the school and its upper level success; however, apart from some LA4 money, they are largely unfunded. It's a major challenge to balance revenues with expenses that aren't covered by MFP figures. The goal is to reduce the fund-raising line to zero, and in order to do that, she has been working with admissions and operations. Carlos said the subject of admissions arises because we're going to look at balancing the pre-K and the rest of the student population. It's a huge challenge because the students need those first two years of French and early immersion in Montessori, so if we reduce our pre-K, what purpose does it serve? We run on a skeleton staff in the office. If we manage to reduce the fund-raising need to zero for this year, what about next year? The time for hard decisions in regard to next year's budget is upon us.

Janice said the procedural changes are left up to the administration, while the board must approve the policies.

Alisa said that whatever is approved by the board will change the charter. The charter also states that we can test for admissions starting in kindergarten, although it's a policy that ACS has not implemented before.

Carlos argued that unless we run counter to the charter, we haven't changed it. Any changes to the charter must be approved by OPSB.

Alisa said we have to develop a budget with zero fund-raising so that we can see what our decisions will be in regards to the pre-K – really a budget template to develop the policy.

Laura and Edwin asked about the possibility of requiring a balanced budget.

Carlos said perhaps the minutes should reflect that board members want to see recommendations on a balanced budget template for 2009-10, and explanations for how it's going to work. He asked for a motion to approve the updated budget for 2008-09.

Laura moved it, Edwin seconded and with no discussion, it was unanimously approved.

6. Update on Orleans Parish Capital/Maintenance Policy.

Alisa reported that the vote on this by the OPSB has been delayed.

7. Update on the progress of the School Facilities Master Plan for Orleans Parish, and approval of Audubon's official response to the plan.

A packet went out to parents, and was also posted on the Rare Bird forum, and Blackboard, said Carlos. He emphasized again the need to take a positive tone. The public forums are held by facilities people who are not interested in hearing about a school's programs. However, facilities impact programs and we have to make that clear. Janice said they make it clear at each forum that they looked at the school, the community, the square footage, the half-mile radius in which children should be able to walk to school – not programs or enrollment.

8. Update on French/Montessori high school efforts, and report on the French Minister of Education's visit to Audubon.

A proposed French high school was one of the main topics of French Minister of

Education Xavier Darcos, who visited Audubon last week, said French Consul and FAME board member Olivier Brochenin. The minister spoke with RSD Supt. Paul Vallas and State Supt. Of Schools Paul Pastorek about cooperation on a French high school, and the need for the existing language schools to have input on RSD's proposed international high school. Olivier said that M. Darcos was very interested in the Montessori program at ACS as well, and how the two programs interact. And he was impressed by how well ACS French students were testing compared to students of their age in France.

Sharon Nossiter reported that ACS has been in discussion with RSD and other language schools on the topic of an international high school. RSD plans to open an international business/international baccalaureate school in August 2009 at the ninth grade level and hopes to attract graduates of the existing language programs. The advantage of working with RSD is that it has money and facilities; none of the existing language programs field a class big enough to support an individual high school. The hope is that by working with RSD, the international business students will provide enough financial impetus for the school that the international baccalaureate students will be able to proceed with a demanding language program, even if it is not a French lycee program.

9. Briefing on legal action (Executive Session)

Teddi Locke moved an executive session for the purpose of discussing legal action, seconded by Wynn Seeman. Unanimously approved.

Executive session began at 11:34 a.m., and concluded at 11:51 a.m., when the board returned to open session. James Reiss moved adjournment, seconded by Teddi, unanimously approved.

Minutes submitted by Sharon Nossiter