

**MARION COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD MEETING MINUTES**  
**MARION SCHOOL DISTRICT CONFERENCE ROOM**  
**719 North Main Street – Marion, South Carolina 29571**  
**August 15, 2023**

**Board Members Present:** Chairperson Atkinson, Vice Chairperson-Nadine Foxworth, Rev. Cynthia V. Brown, Mr. Kevin Dozier, Mr. Hill, Ms. Ogleretta White and Mrs. Susan Pridgen.

**Call to Order & Notification of Board Workshop:** The Board meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Vice Chairperson Foxworth. In accordance with the S.C. Code of Laws, 1976, Section 30-4-80 (d) as amended, the local media was notified of the time, date and place of the meeting. Ms. Deciera Gause stated that the media was notified of the meeting and a copy of the agenda was also provided.

**Invocation:** The invocation was given by the Rev. Cynthia Brown. The Board thanked Rev. Brown for the invocation.

**Welcome to Staff and Visitors Present:** Chairperson Atkinson welcomed everyone to the August 15, 2023 Meeting.

**Establishment of Quorum:** Chairperson Atkinson verified that a quorum was present.

**Approval of Agenda:** Chairperson Atkinson asked for approval of the agenda. Rev. Brown moved, seconded by Vice Chairperson Foxworth to approve the August 15, 2023 agenda; and the Board voted unanimously to approve the August 15, 2023 agenda. (Rev. Brown, Vice-Chairperson Foxworth, Mrs. Pridgen, Mr. Dozier, Ms. White, Mr. Hill and Chairperson Atkinson).

**Approval of Minutes:** Chairperson Atkinson asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting for July 18, 2023. Vice Chairperson Foxworth moved, seconded by Mrs. Pridgen to approve the minutes. (Vice-Chairperson Foxworth, Rev. Brown, Mrs. Pridgen, Chairperson Atkinson, Mr. Hill, Ms. White and Mr. Dozier).

**Marion County School District Special Presentations:** Dr. Bunch recognized the 2023 MCSD Summer Graduates, CBSA for achieving STEM certification through Cognia and the July MCSD Superhero Award Recipient. The Board commended the students for their outstanding accomplishments. Dr. Bethea introduced the MCSD 2023 Principals and expressed gratitude and appreciation to all students and staff.

**Finance:** Mrs. Angel Cooper presented the July 2023 financials. This report was presented as information.

**Operation/Facilities:** Mr. Jordan gave an Operations and Facilities update. He also gave a brief update on Aramark and how well the transition is going. Mr. Jordan also gave an update on a resurfacing project at AEL. The Board asked questioned during this time. Mr. Dozier asked for an update on the gym floor and the carpet at CBSA. Mr. Jordan assured them that it was being handled. Mr. Jordan will give and update on the red building. He asked for executive session for contractual matters.

**Human Resources:** Mrs. Stacy Wilbanks requested an executive session for the personnel actions. Mrs. Wilbanks also gave a staffing update.

**Instruction:** Dr. Holcombe gave a detailed update on the Montessori Program. The Board asked questions during this time. Dr. Holcombe will report data after Benchmark testing.

**Superintendent's Report / Update:** Dr. Bethea gave an update of the opening of the 23-24 school year. She gave additional updates from each department. Dr. Bunch is in charge of Student Services. Parent involvement will be discussed at the September meeting and how the district react to complaints.

Dr. Bethea gave an update of the happenings throughout the district (Board Walks and iNoVate Smart Lab Unveiling and a possible mobile lab).

Dr. Bethea made the recommendation to change the verbiage on the Public Participation form to be precise to read:

**To participate in public participation, a citizen must submit a written request for an item to be placed on the agenda no later than 4:30 pm on the tenth working day prior to a scheduled meeting of the board. You will be placed on the agenda unless notified.**

#### **Review and Action:**

Dr. Bethea presented Student Transfers and Releases to the Board for approval. Chairperson Atkinson asked for a motion to approve the request. Ms. White moved, seconded by Vice Chairperson Pridgen. Motion carried. (Chairperson Atkinson, Vice Chairperson Foxworth, Mr. Dozier, Rev. Brown, Mrs. Pridgen and Ms. White).

Dr. Bethea presented out of state travel for approval:

- MuHS MJROTC – Carowinds – Charlotte, NC

Chairperson Atkinson asked for a motion to approve the request. Vice Chairperson Foxworth moved, seconded by Ms. White. Motion carried. (Chairperson Atkinson, Vice-Chairperson Foxworth, Mr. Hill, Mr. Dozier, Rev. Brown, Mrs. Pridgen and Ms. White).

**Public Participation:** Ms. Lisa Seabrook brought before the Board concerns about the rumors of the possibilities of closing Johnakin Middle School.

**Agenda Items for Next Month / Calendar Reminders:** Board members were given the opportunity to express any concerns or comments that they may have. Chairperson Atkinson expressed concerns and adjustments for committee meeting. Committee meeting must inform the public. Dr. Bethea shared an example to hold committee meetings prior to a regular Board meetings at 4:30. Rev. Brown asked for clarity from Attorney Boykin about 3 committee members meeting without posting to the public. Attorney Boykin explained the differences between meeting for “Board business” and just meeting for pleasure. He further explained if 2 or 3 board committee members are meeting to discuss board business that is considered a formal meeting and must comply with FOIA (Freedom of Information Act). If 2 or 3 members meet for lunch or just meet for conversation that is not a meeting. If 4 board member come together, that is considered a meeting and should be noticed. If 1 committee member and 2 non committee members meet that is not worthy of a notice.

Dr. Bethea asked that a committee member make contact with Board Chair, herself or Dr. Bunch prior to the meeting date in order for the proper staff to be available for the meeting.

The Board had an extensive conversation regarding meeting twice per month. Vice Chairperson Foxworth suggested meeting only if needed i.e. for budget. Rev. Brown suggested that following the agenda would alleviate a lot of unnecessary conversations and the use of the gavel by the board chair. Chairperson asked for a motion to have two meeting per month. Ms. White made a motion to have two regular meetings per month. Seconded by Vice Chairperson Foxworth. Mrs. Pridgen asked

for clarity on meeting twice per month when it was not necessary versus just have a called meeting. Mrs. White expressed thanks to Dr. Bethea for clarifying the staffs willingness to stay for meetings. The board vote 4 Yes (Ms. White, Mrs. Pridgen, Vice Chairperson Foxworth and Mr. Dozier); 3 No (Chairperson Atkinson, Mr. Hill and Rev. Brown). The motion carried. There will be two regular board meetings per month. Mr. Hill asked when will these meeting begin and how will it fit into the budget. Chairperson Atkinson opened the floor for discussion for a new meeting date. Ms. White suggested the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month. Mrs. Pridgen made a motion to reconsider the meeting twice per month. Seconded by Vice Chairperson Foxworth. The Board voted 4 Yes (Mrs. Pridgen, Chairperson Atkinson, Mr. Hill, Rev. Brown); 3 No (Ms. White, Mr. Dozier and Vice Chairperson Foxworth). The motion carried. There will be one regular board meeting per month.

Dr. Bethea asked that the topic of Revision of the budget process be added to the Budget Workshop.

Chairperson Atkinson asked Attorney Boykin to elaborate on the recusal process. Attorney Boykin explained the process and procedure. If there is a personal or family conflict in the matter that is coming before the board. A board member must submit in writing that they are recusing themselves and what the conflict is and submit it to the Chair. The board member shall not participate in any discussion or vote regarding the matter that the recusal is required. The board member should exit the room until retrieved by a board member.

Attorney Boykin will update Policy BD: AR BD-R Organization of the Board.

Ms. White asked about an update on the Bond Attorney. Dr. Bethea explained that an RFP is not needed for a relationship with the bond attorney. Ms. White asked if the bond attorney can be present at the next board meeting. Ms. White asked about salaries and where the district is in regards to the salary study. Dr. Bethea recommended starting the conversation with the salary committee. Ms. White will hold a salary committee meeting to include the bond attorney.

Chairperson Atkinson is preparing for executive session to discuss personnel actions, legal briefing and contractual matters.

**Executive Session:** Chairperson Atkinson asked for a motion to go into executive session for Personnel / Legal Briefings / Contractual Matters. Vice Chairperson Foxworth moved, seconded by Mrs. Pridgen to approve this request; and the Board voted unanimously to approve. (Chairperson Atkinson, Rev. Brown, Vice-Chairperson Foxworth, Mrs. Pridgen, Mr. Dozier, Mr. Hill and Ms. White).

**Open Session:** Chairperson Atkinson asked for a motion to come out of executive session. Vice Chairperson Foxworth moved, seconded by Mr. Dozier to come out of executive session back into open session; and the Board voted unanimously to approve. (Chairperson Atkinson, Vice-Chairperson Foxworth, Rev. Brown, Mr. Dozier, Ms. White, Mr. Hill and Mrs. Pridgen).

Chairperson Atkinson stated that no action was taken in executive session.

Dr. Bethea responded to two executive session discussions. She stated that with the increased interest in Creek Bridge STEM Academy the goal is the find out the architectural capacity and fill it. Also look into adding STEM to other school within the district. Dr. Bethea asked that the athletic committee add commonality (uniform, fundraising, attire) to their agenda. The goal fundraising should be to offset cost.

**Personnel:** Chairperson Atkinson asked for motion to accept the Superintendent's recommendations for personnel action and personnel action addendum.

Ms. White made the following motion from the August 15, 2023 Personnel Action:

- Employee A.3.a on the Personnel Action be submitted for breach of contract to the State Board of Education and for review and if appropriate a hearing and suspension of this

educator's certificate in accordance with the law for failing to honor their contract with Marion County School District for the 2023-2024 school year.

- Employee A.1.a on the Personnel Action Addendum NOT be released from their contractual obligation.
- Employee A.2.a on the Personnel Action Addendum NOT be released from their contractual obligation

And all other personnel actions on the regular personnel actions and the addendum by approved, seconded by Mr. Hill and the Board voted 6 Yes (Chairperson Atkinson, Rev. Brown, Mr. Hill, Mr. Dozier, Ms. White and Mrs. Pridgen). 1 No (Vice Chairperson Foxworth).

**Adjournment:** Chairperson Atkinson asked for a motion to adjourn. Vice Chairperson Foxworth moved, seconded by Mr. Dozier to approve this request; and the vote was unanimous (Chairperson Atkinson, Vice-Chairperson Foxworth, Rev. Brown, Mr. Dozier, Mr. Hill, Ms. White and Mrs. Pridgen). The meeting adjourned at 8:25 pm.