

McDonogh #35 Parent Teacher Organization Meeting

Wednesday, December 5, 2018, 5:30 p.m.
McDonogh #35 Library – 4000 Cadillac Street

Attendees: PTO Officers: Treschere Washington (President), Lynn Pittman (Vice President), Trenise Pittman (Corresponding Secretary), Dave Cash (Recording Secretary), Ronald Magee (Sergeant at Arms); Courtney Taylor (Parent Liaison); parents (TBA)

President Treschere Washington called the meeting to order at 5:37 p.m.

Introductions and Purpose

President Washington introduced several PTO Executive Board members. She asked anyone who had questions to write them down, so we can stay on schedule for this meeting.

Trenise Pittman moved and Catalian Colbert seconded to waive the reading of the minutes of the December 5, 2018 meeting.

Carried

Lynn Pittman moved and Trenise Pittman seconded to accept the minutes of the December 5, 2018 meeting.

Carried

Committee Reports

Lynn Pittman reported on some of the upcoming activities we have planned for the spring. We are planning

- an essay/art contest for students in January
- a video of students expressing love and gratitude to teachers and administrators for February
- a college research and presentation project for March

We will report on further activities at future meetings.

President Washington reported on the status of the PTO t-shirts. She reported that Xavier's printing press is not operational, so this has delayed production of the shirts. She asked for suggestions for t-shirt companies in the city.

Reading of the Financial Report

Zanda Dandy reported that our current account balance is \$1,809.88, unchanged from her last report.

Trenise Pittman moved and Catalian Colbert seconded to accept the financial report.

Carried

InspireNOLA Presentation

InspireNOLA CEO Jamar McNeely stated that they center their work around Frederick Douglass' idea that it is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men. He noted that InspireNOLA's schools are the highest performing in the city.

He stated that the job InspireNOLA has taken on is a difficult one, given the current letter grade, ACT score, etc.

He said that the way InspireNOLA runs schools the same way that Mr. Clay has been running McDonogh 35 this year.

He reported that InspireNOLA met with about 30 students of many different subsets (Student Council, athletics, disinterested students, etc.) and asked them lots of questions. He reported on their answers.

He guaranteed that students' experiences will be better under InspireNOLA. He said they will ensure students have qualified, certified teachers, resources, and school supplies.

He said he wants to hear from parents and get as much input as possible. He said that all current faculty and staff members have the opportunity to apply, but he said that the school's scores indicate that the school has problems that need to be understood and corrected.

President Washington thanked Mr. McNeely for coming. She said that what he said is what we have been wanting to hear, but we want to see action. She asked for a timeline related to staffing. She said that if students and parents see people acting on their promises, they will be all in.

Arthur Williams expressed concern with enrollment. He wants to get the numbers back up to what they were back in the Kerlerec days. When Mr. Williams graduated from McDonogh 35 in 1987, the student population was approximately 1,600.

Mr. McNeely hopes to have a staff in place for next year by May. He also said that billboard and radio ads will begin running shortly to recruit students, so parents know the school is okay to send their children here.

Ronald Magee said that staffing has been a problem, since we have lost lots of staff members. He expressed concern that evaluations are more about the evaluators than those being evaluated. He said that students are the best evaluators.

Mr. McNeely said when they talk to teachers, the first question they ask is why do you believe in our children?

Danielle Washington thanked Mr. Clay for rebranding the school. She is active in the school because of the band. She said that her daughter, who is a junior, just took the ACT for the first time and said that she didn't know anything on it. She also said that we need more parent participation in the school.

Mr. McNeely said that he won't tolerate inequity between his schools: academically, athletically, etc. He also said that parents need to be recruited to be involved.

Arthur Williams asked if tenth graders will be enrolled next year. Mr. McNeely said that some current students are behind and will not graduate on time.

President Washington asked if the credit recovery InspireNOLA will be offering will be similar to the credit recovery offered by McDonogh 35 last summer, when nearly half the school population was in credit recovery.

Harold Clay said that he did a forensic audit of student credits when he came on board and then started credit recovery as soon as the school year started. He said that some ninth graders recently moved up to

tenth grade, and some tenth graders to juniors, but not everyone is currently on track. He said that he fought to have a counseling team that would focus on getting students caught up.

Teesa DeBose asked if national and regional college tours would be happening. Mr. McNeely said yes. Mr. DeBose said it's important for students to see physically where they will be going after high school.

Danielle Washington reported that she paid for credit recovery for her child that was then offered for free. She wants things to be on one accord.

A parent asked if there will be mandatory reading lists and books students can bring home. Mr. McNeely said they do have summer reading lists, but that

Tyra Mansion, parent of a student who is an athlete, asked if the students will be separated like they have been at other charter schools.

Mr. McNeely said he plans to consider this as one school, academically and athletically. He said all resources will be available to all students. He said they plan to take approximately 215 ninth graders. OPSB has InspireNOLA locked in to just ninth grade.

Danielle Washington said that the students who are here now have been through a lot of instability regarding administration. She hopes that stability of staff will be considered. Mr. McNeely repeated that all current staff can apply, but that there will be transitions.

Kenyatta Domino, a parent, talked about rebranding. She understands that the school cannot be brought back to selective admission, but she hopes we can reassure the citizens of the city that McDonogh 35 is going back to how it was. She said the McDonogh 35 they know now is not what they want. She said we need to let people know that we are striving for that.

Mr. McNeely said they are here to work with everyone, regardless of what their levels are. He encouraged parents to stop saying things negative about McDonogh 35. He said they have plans in the works that can't be disclosed at the moment that he hopes will bring back McDonogh 35's legacy.

Mr. McNeely asked if President Washington would be on a committee with InspireNOLA. Several parents also indicated interest and Mr. McNeely said to give him their names.

President Washington asked several questions for Mr. McNeely to consider:

- Will we restore global study opportunities for our students?
- Will McDonogh 35 have a middle school again? (Mr. McNeely said their plan is to use feeder schools to recruit students for the high school.)
- Will the yard be maintained so it is safe for students?
- Will InspireNOLA help students who don't want to attend college?
- Will we have DECA again?
- Will we have something like peer mediation to help students with conflict resolution?

Kenyatta Domino recalled how powerful the Big Brother/Big Sister program was when she attended McDonogh 35.

Courtney Taylor said that although some alumni have chosen not to send their children here, she has chosen to send her child here, because she believes in McDonogh 35. She talked about her commitment to the children in the building and the advocacy she provides to both students and parents.

Zanda Dandy said she wants to see Ms. Taylor rehired. President Washington also spoke on her behalf.

Trenise Pittman moved and Courtney Taylor seconded to adjourn the meeting at 6:55 p.m.

Carried

Respectfully submitted: Dave Cash, Recording Secretary.