

**Vermilion Parish School Board Special Meeting, Mon. 8-6-18**  
***Superintendent Puyau's "competence & character"***

\*The first order of business was a couple of resolutions: (1) The first resolution overturned the hiring of attorney Kathy Boudreaux, who, the Board claims was improperly hired by Superintendent Jerome Puyau without prior Board authorization, and whose employment was to begin Mon., August 6. The resolution was approved by a unanimous vote and Ms. Boudreaux's hiring is null and void. (2) Second resolution -- the Board, and only the Board, is the governing body which can either hire an attorney, or authorize the hiring of an attorney who may be recommended by the Superintendent. If the Board chooses to hire a specific attorney to represent their collective interests, then the services of the Vermilion Parish District Attorney would be rendered null and void by the hiring of an outside attorney. Mark Robinson, Attorney at Law, from Baton Rouge, whose specialty pertains to public school board legal issues, was resolved to be the new attorney of record for the Board with the unanimous passage of the second resolution.

\*The Board convened into a closed-door executive session to discuss the lawsuit brought by La. Attorney General Jeff Landry. Before going into executive session, Superintendent Puyau requested that any discussion of his "character and competence" happen in a public forum which was assembled last night, and which is the typical School Board open meeting format. The Board concurred in honoring Mr. Puyau's request.

\*Upon returning from the executive session, the Board entered into a "second executive session," which was the public discussion of Mr. Puyau's character and competence. Board President, Mr. Stacy Landry, began the discussion by stating that he would read out loud numerous complaints which came from various Board members, based on their observations, and input received from teachers, administrators, and the public.

\*The Superintendent is not thorough when providing performance evaluations of school principals and other system administrators in the central office.

\*The Superintendent signs performance evaluations without observations.

\*Takes leave without notifying anybody.

\*Overrules decisions by others by being vindictive.

\*Erratic behavior and sudden mood changes

\*Banging hands on desks and disrespectful body language.

\*Doesn't hold true to promises.

\*Contract employees hired without Board knowledge.

\*Inappropriate use of technology on school campuses.

\*Denial of public record information to the Board.

Board Member Kibby Pillette made a motion, actually during the "public executive session, that Mr. Puyau be placed immediately on paid administrative leave pending the conclusion of the investigation into complaints about Mr. Puyau's competence and character. That motion had to be deferred until the conclusion of the executive session. When the issue was revisited, only one board member voted "no" to place Superintendent Jerome Puyau on paid administrative leave. **Paid Admin. Leave is effective immediately (as of Mon. evening, 8-6-18) until the conclusion of the investigation of character/competence charges against Puyau.**

\*Board President Stacy Landry commented that he's tried to bring the Board together. Several Board members concurred and commended Mr. Landry for his leadership as Board President.

\*Mr. Landry commented that "the problem with this investigation is that I'm tired of seeing lawyers, I'm tired of talking to lawyers, and we don't have the money for more lawyers." Landry recommended that Brad Prudhomme, a school board administrator who handles student welfare issues such as census and attendance, head up the investigation of Superintendent Puyau. No vote or board concurrence took place.

## Verm. Parish School Board special meeting

### Page 2

\*Member Jean Moreno stated, “Here in Verm. Parish, we are a microcosm of the United States right now . . . split right down the middle. Those who spoke in favor of Mr. Puyau give reasons and justifications for their support. Those who spoke against him did not give concrete reasons for their complaints. I’ve received 50 anonymous letters from citizens . . . those mean nothing to me without people standing behind their comments with a signature.”

\*\*Moreno commended Puyau for his leadership and his commitment to bettering the school system.

\*President Landry commended Puyau for his leadership and stated that the only criticism he has of Puyau is hiring an attorney without Board approval. Landry commented that Verm. Parish is one of the best school districts in the state. “Sorry the staff, from cafeteria workers to administrators, and teachers have to endure this – they do not deserve this nonsense. I’ll do whatever I have to do to make things better.”

\*Other than Board members Landry and Moreno speaking out, other members’ comments were general statements that the investigation into Puyau’s competence and character should be fully investigated.

\*Comments from the public about Puyau were 50% in support of Payau, and 50% who had critical comments about the superintendent. See a sampling below:

#### *Positive comments:*

- (1) Female citizen – based on attending a previous school board meeting, citizen #1 stated “there is obvious retaliation going on here – it makes Verm. Parish look bad. Superintendent Puyau is a good leader who is doing a good job. This is personal and it’s obvious.” (reporter’s note: there is some “controversy at Indian Bayou Elementary involving personnel matters).
- (2) Male Vermilion Parish Teacher of the Year – After I was named Teacher of the Year [in a prior year], Mr. Puyau called me on a Friday night to congratulate me, and to thank me for my efforts to optimally educate my students. He thanked me for staying at this school, which is a “difficult” school. He cares about the kids, just as I do. He has been to my classroom about five times in the last two years.”
- (3) Male Vermilion Parish teacher with 40 years experience – Kudos to Superintendent Payau for his leadership in our school system, and for the superintendent’s recent nomination to a national education board for administrators. Thanks in part to the superintendent, the Verm. Parish school system is among the top systems in the state, and ranks prominently nationally.

#### *Negative comments:*

- (1) Female teacher, new to Verm. Parish system – My UL professor encouraged me to accept a teaching position in Verm. Parish, instead of in Lafayette Parish. I have problems in my classroom, but I can’t even come to you [speaking to Puyau].
- (2) Female citizen – We came to you [Puyau] about a problem and you laughed in our face.
- (3) Female citizen – Challenged the Board and Superintendent to “do the right thing” in improving the education system in Verm. Parish. “John White [Louisiana Superintendent of Education] has reduced our children to a statistical dot on a page.”

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