



LITTLE ROCK SCHOOL DISTRICT  
810 WEST MARKHAM STREET  
LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 72201

**MINUTES  
SPECIAL BOARD MEETING  
September 29, 2011**

The Board of Directors of the Little Rock School District held a special board meeting at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, September 29, 2011, in the boardroom of the administration building, 810 West Markham Street, Little Rock, Arkansas. President Melanie Fox presided.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Melanie Fox  
Jody Carreiro  
Michael Nellums  
Greg Adams  
Charles Armstrong  
Dianne Curry  
Katherine Mitchell

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

None

**ALSO PRESENT:**

Morris Holmes, Interim Superintendent  
Beverly Griffin, Recorder of Minutes

**I. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL**

Ms. Fox called the meeting to order at 5:36 p.m. All members of the board were present at roll call.

**PURPOSE OF THE MEETING**

The meeting was called to conduct an employee hearing. In addition, a brief presentation on STEM was conducted prior to the hearing.

Ms. Fox provided an explanation in introducing a brief presentation regarding a STEM initiative in Manor, Texas. Mr. Armstrong also briefly reviewed a STEM program offered by UAPB. Additional information and a Memorandum of Understanding will be developed and presented at a future board meeting. Ms. Curry left the meeting at 5:50 p.m., prior to convening the employee hearing.

## HEARING

Transportation employee, Marilyn Robinson was recommended for termination for failure to follow a request from Principal Ericka McCarroll and for other child safety and unsafe operations of a school bus. The letter recommending termination from Superintendent Holmes was provided for the board's review. David Hartz conducted the hearing on behalf of the district; Michael Coleman represented the employee.

A video recording from the school bus was presented for review. In the video, the employee was on a personal cell phone and was asked by Principal McCarroll to move the school bus so that she could get her car out. Ms. Robinson refused to move the bus and continued to speak on the cell phone for several minutes after the request to move was made. She moved from the driver's seat and continued the phone conversation from another seat on the bus.

Ericka McCarroll was present as a witness. Mr. Hartz and Mr. Coleman questioned her regarding the day of the incident and her reasons for needing to leave the campus.

Edna White, secretary at Bale Elementary, worked as a paraprofessional during the summer program. Ms. White was asked about where her car was parked and specifically about the reason she went to her car during the incident with Ms. Robinson's refusal to move the bus.

The board took a brief recess and returned to session at 7:10 p.m.

The board reviewed video clips recorded from the cameras on Ms. Robinson's bus on July 8, 11, 12 and 13. In these clips, Ms. Robinson was seen driving with one hand, driving without a seat belt, speeding, eating while driving and turning off the checkmate security system without following proper protocol for ensuring all students had exited the bus.

Mike Martello, transportation director, was called as a witness. He responded to questions regarding the video clips reviewed by the board. He also discussed the school bus safety training required of the drivers, including the required hours of testing and reviews by the Arkansas transportation department. He also responded to questions from Mr. Coleman regarding the investigation into this incident.

Mr. Coleman stated his contention that Ms. Robinson wasn't afforded due process in this incident. He admitted that her behavior was inexcusable, but he believed the actions weren't severe enough for termination. She was not granted a meeting with her supervisor prior to the letter of termination being sent, nor was she offered a level two hearing prior to coming before the board for hearing.

He called McKinley Malone as a witness for Ms. Robinson. Mr. Malone stated on the day of the incident, Ms. McCarroll became visibly upset about Ms. Robinson's behavior. He stated it would have been easier for another car in the drive to move rather than the bus. He also stated that the incident could have been avoided had Ms. Robinson just moved when she was asked.

Mr. Coleman questioned David Hartz regarding the process used to recommend an employee for termination and setting disciplinary meetings. Mr. Hartz discussed level one and level two hearings, and the requirements of due process.

Ms. Robinson was called to respond to questions regarding her employment. She stated she was a substitute bus driver at the time of the incident, but she had worked for the district for 23 years. In response to questions regarding the checkmate security system, she stated she received the key for turning off the child safety system from a mechanic. She says she wasn't certain who recommended her for termination, but she stated Mr. Hartz was unable to tell her why she was being recommended when she visited him in his office on August 1.

Ms. Robinson appealed to the board to allow her to remain employed as a driver. She admitted being disrespectful and regretted her poor behavior toward Ms. McCarroll on the day of the incident. She responded to other questions from the board.

Mr. Hartz closed by reviewing the items presented for consideration and asking the board to uphold the recommendation from the superintendent.

Mr. Coleman asked that a record of this hearing be provided to Ms. Robinson. He did not deny the behaviors exhibited by Ms. Robinson, but he did question whether due process and disciplinary procedures had been followed prior to the recommendation. He stated a proper investigation was not conducted and he asked for an alternative sanction to be suspension instead of termination.

The board recessed for deliberations at 8:30 p.m., and returned 8:56 p.m. Ms. Fox reported no action was taken in closed session.

The superintendent's recommendation letter contained thirteen allegations of impropriety. Mr. Carreiro made a motion to find the administration had proven all 13 findings in the letter. Mr. Nellums seconded the motion and it **carried unanimously**.

Mr. Carreiro then moved to modify the superintendent's recommendation for termination. The recommendation was to suspend Ms. Robinson without pay until March 1, 2012. She would also be required to participate in safety training as prescribed by Mr. Martello before being reinstated. Mr. Armstrong seconded the motion and it **carried 4-2**, with Ms. Fox and Mr. Adams voting no.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the board, the meeting adjourned at 8:58 p.m.

APPROVED: 10-27-11

Originals Signed by:  
Melanie Fox, President  
Michael Nellums, Secretary