

DES MOINES PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SPECIAL SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
901 WALNUT STREET
MINUTES
JANUARY 10, 2013

SPECIAL MEETING

The Board of Directors met in a special open session on Thursday, January 10, 2013, Dick Murphy presiding. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss and/or take action on the school calendar and inclement weather make-up dates.

The meeting was called to order at 5:18 p.m.

Present: Boesen, Caldwell-Johnson, Elsbernd, Howard, Jongewaard, Murphy, Sweeney
Absent: None

Ms. Caldwell-Johnson moved that the current 2012-2013 school year, both Martin Luther King Day on January 21 and Presidents' Day on February 18, remain as no-school days and that weather make-up days be held during the first week of June as previously approved by the board and, second, that the district invite members of the NAACP Youth Council to join with the school district's Youth Advisory Committee in developing a recommendation for us to consider on how, in future school years, the Martin Luther King Day can be best observed and used as an opportunity to raise awareness and understanding among our students on issues such as civil rights, discrimination, community service, bullying or other topics that they identify. Second by Ms. Elsbernd.

Speakers: Elsie Jackson, 7117 Harbour Drive, Johnston
Ronni Palmer, 1310 Norton Avenue, Des Moines
Imani Mitchell, 1535 23rd Street, Des Moines
Avery Jackson, 7117 Harbour Drive, Johnston
Billy Kirby, 1609 46th Street, Des Moines
Andrew Rasmussen, DMEA, 206 Center Street, Des Moines
Gretchen Woods, 6715 Brookview Drive, Des Moines
Renee Hardman, 4611 Turnberry Drive, West Des Moines
Quinton Jenkins, 5206 SE 32nd Street, Des Moines
Jon Knapp McAlister, 1445 Forestdale Drive, Des Moines
Rosemary Parson, 3608 129th Street, Urbandale
Joy Gachii, 3606 E. 43rd Street, Des Moines

Mr. Howard stated he will support the motion and previous statements cover the issue.

Mr. Jongewaard stated he also supports the motion. He expressed pride in speaker Avery Jackson and the outstanding students in all five comprehensive high schools and Scavo.

Mr. Sweeney expressed his support of the motion and thanked the speakers for the information they shared and commended his colleagues for taking quick action in response to the community.

Ms. Boesen applauded the speakers, especially the students. She hopes the conversations raised the awareness of what the day is all about, that there will be more participation, that we can work with the students to come up with better alternatives for a more impactful day for everyone to understand the legacy and meaning. She supports the motion.

Ms. Caldwell-Johnson thanked her colleagues on the board for listening to the public at the public forum for also listening to the plea for a special meeting to reconsider a matter that had come before them that needed to be corrected. The students have really lead by example and adults can learn by their courage and their words. She thanked the students for speaking truth to power. They took their voice and elevated it to a level to get attention of the people who can make a decision and make a difference. Their words need to be thought about when thinking about our role as school board members and the role we play in representing their interests. She will be supporting the motion and hopes that they are not put in a position again where they have to rethink a decision that has to be corrected.

Ms. Elsbernd will also support the motion. She looks forward to the opportunity to work with the students through the Youth Advisory Committee and the impact that can be very powerful, meaningful, and impactful, not only to the speaker from SE Polk and what she might have the opportunity to do in her district, but to other districts around Iowa and what this conversation has brought about.

Mr. Murphy thanked the speakers for sharing their ideas. He shared history of activities previously held related to Martin Luther King Day when classes were held. The day has now become more of a "white sale" day with people spending their time at the malls. The students are now challenged to come back to the school board with a proposal on how the Martin Luther King holiday can best be observed to meet the goals that Dr. King established. He also challenged the adults to help the students out.

The chair then called for a roll-call vote on the motion.

Aye: Howard, Boesen, Caldwell-Johnson, Murphy, Elsbernd, Sweeney, Jongewaard

Nay: None

Motion passed 7-0.

Comments were made by Superintendent Ahart prior to the meeting being adjourned at 6:02 p.m.