

New school board members are ready to go to work

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Their official swearing-in is still almost two weeks away, but the Montgomery school board's three new members are ready to get started any time.

Melissa Snowden, Charlotte Meadows and Eleanor Dawkins said making students safer, getting parents more involved and pushing for middle and high school reform will be at the top of their to-do lists when they take office next month.

The women replace Dave Borden, Mark La Branche and Tommie Miller, who attended their last board meeting Tuesday night. Borden and La Branche decided not to seek re-elec-

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tion; Miller was defeated in the June 6 primary.

In a joint interview, the new members shared a little bit about themselves, discussed their goals for the district and weighed in on where they think the district is at right now.

What are some of your goals as you come onto the Montgomery County Board of Education? What do you think the system's biggest issues are?

Snowden: I think we have some safety issues and some building quality is-

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sues that need to be addressed. I think we are on the right track with the Alabama Reading Initiative, but I think that needs to carry over into mathematics, science and history. We are moving in the right direction, but I would like to set the pace a little bit faster. I'd also like to see more professional development and more teacher and principal support than what we have now.

I am concerned beyond

the DeJong (facility) plan. In some ways, I think the DeJong study is almost outdated. I don't think there were some subdivisions that they knew of, especially out on Interstate 85 past the Arrowhead and Towne Lake (subdivisions). I think there will be a large influx of students that we don't have a plan for and I think we need to work on that immediately.

Meadows: My biggest concern is the lack of communication, from all angles. We need stronger communication between the home and the school. I also see a lack of communication between schools and central office and between teachers



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Go to montgomeryadvertiser.com for video interviews with incoming Montgomery Board of Education members, from left, Eleanor Dawkins, Melissa Snowden and Charlotte Meadows.

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and principals.

I think one of the biggest issues is going to be reform for the middle and high school areas. I know that there have been some committee meetings where people have been talking about that, and that is just a really crucial thing that is going to drive a lot of the facility plan.

As we go forward, I don't think we can build a new Carver High School until we have an

NEW SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

Here is how to contact the three new Montgomery County Board of Education members:

CHARLOTTE MEADOWS District 2

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- **E-mail:** cbmeadows@att.net
- **Phone:** 334-277-6166 (home)
- **Schools in District 2:** Chil-

better position. We want them all to improve.

Tell us a little about yourself. Are you a graduate of MPS or do you have children who attend MPS?

Snowden: I was born in Utah, but I have lived here most of my life. I went to MPS, graduated from Jefferson Davis High School. My husband and I have three children and they are all enrolled in MPS right now.

Meadows: My parents are both from Montgomery, but I

idea of what the educational structure of that school will be. Likewise, I think we need to look at all of the high schools in Montgomery and see what type of programs each high school needs. I don't understand how we can continue thinking about high schools until we address all seven high schools and look at the big picture of what high school education in Montgomery needs to look like.

Dawkins: One of my major goals is (to address) discipline and safety. We've also got to get more parental involvement because I think that's a key to some of the discipline problems and hopefully, it will help us as we attack and try to eliminate the safety issues. I want success for our students. I want our schools to improve and I want our children to continue on the reading program and take it into as many different subjects as possible.

What shape do you think Montgomery Public Schools is in right now?

Snowden: That's a good question, depending on whose eyes you are looking through. I think we have some pockets of excellence and have schools that are doing extremely well, but I think the public perception of Montgomery Public Schools is not very good at all. In my district, a lot of families are moving out of Montgomery County to put their children in other public schools and I think we need to put a stop to that. We need to listen to our community and their concerns and address those concerns so that our community stays intact.

Meadows: I see wonderful teachers, wonderful principals and I see kids that are learning a lot. But overall, I think we have

Davis Center and Davis Learning Center, Dozier, Flowers, Head and Vaughn Road elementary schools, Capitol Heights and Goodwyn junior high schools and Robert E. Lee High School

ELEANOR DAWKINS District 3

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- **Phone:** 334-262-3889 (work); 334-262-1301 (home)
- **Schools in District 3:** Chisholm, Forest Avenue and Paterson elementary schools, Baldwin Arts and Academic Middle School, Houston Hill Junior High School and Booker T. Washington Magnet High School

MELISSA SNOWDEN District 5

- **Address:** 8407 Chadburn Crossing Court, Montgomery, 36116
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- **Phone:** 334-244-1626 (home)
- **Schools in District 5:** Brewbaker Primary, Brewbaker Intermediate, Halcyon and Blount elementary schools, Dunbar Ramer School, Georgia Washington Junior High School and Brewbaker Technology Magnet High School

a long way to go, both from an educational and facilities viewpoint. I think we all realize that we have a big job ahead of us and we are eager and ready to get started.

Dawkins: I think the schools are in fair shape. There are some successes going on. What's important is for us to get the majority if not the entire system into a

moved here when I was in the third grade. I went to Dannelly Elementary School, Goodwyn Junior High School and Jefferson Davis High School. My husband and I have three children and they are all in public schools.

Dawkins: I was born and reared here in Montgomery. I grew up, graduated from college and moved away. I stayed away for a very long time, but have been back in Montgomery for about 16 years. I have grown children and my grandchild lives in another state, so they have not been part of MPS. However, my roots are very deep here. My father was a federal marshal and state legislator, my mother was a business owner.

I came back to Montgomery to live, wanting this to be the best place it could. Instead of complaining about (the) school system, I made it my business to try and be part of the group that can help the school system because education is key to our growth and development.

Is it your hope that the vote for the next superintendent comes before or after you are sworn in?

Meadows: It really doesn't matter. We have been so involved throughout the whole process. We were all able to do equal interviews with the candidates. We are confident in both candidates.

Snowden: I don't see that (naming a superintendent) happening before Dec. 1. We are all committed to really making sure we have the right fit and in order to do that, I don't think we are going to rush in and have somebody named before Dec. 1. But if we do, that's OK because we have all had a voice.

Dawkins agreed with Meadows and Snowden.

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