

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF ALACHUA COUNTY, FLORIDA
APPROVED MINUTES OF INFORMAL SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
September 9, 2008

The School Board of Alachua County, Florida, met in informal session duly called at 9 a.m. in the Boardroom, 620 East University Avenue, Gainesville, Florida. Present were: Janie S. Williams, Chairman; Tina Pinkoson, Vice-Chairman; F. Wesley Eubank, and Eileen Roy, members; and W. Daniel Boyd, Jr., Superintendent.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Williams.

JOINT MEETING WITH
THE CITY
COMMISSION

Superintendent Boyd informed the Board that the City Commission wished to schedule another Joint Meeting.

Following Board discussion, the Board agreed to meet with the City Commission on Tuesday, November 25, 2008, 9-11 a.m. The Board also requested that the following Board issues be added to the agenda for discussion:

- Replacement of the current GRU Business Partner Contract with an Interlocal Agreement with the City/GRU/SBAC
- Stormwater fees paid to the City of Gainesville
- Section 8 Housing – performance of children
- Recycling—City assist Food Service in converting from Styrofoam to biodegradable products.

The School Board will provide the City with the following information prior to the meeting: Performance data and capacity of schools attended by city residents; capital program –new schools vs. rebuilding/renovation of existing schools; dedicated millage proposal; and opportunities for the city to assist in improving local schools.

ALACHUA COUNTY
ENERGY
CONSERVATION
STRATEGIES
PRESENTATION

Superintendent Boyd informed the Board that the Alachua County Energy Conservation Strategies Commission would like to make a powerpoint presentation regarding energy-related challenges and opportunities the community will face in the future.

Following Board discussion, it was agreed that the presentation could be made at the upcoming Tuesday, October 14, 2008, 9 a.m., Informal School Board meeting, as the first item on the agenda.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The Board was provided with a current copy of the 9/9/08 student counts. Board members expressed concern with charter schools. The following comments were made by the Board:

Mrs. Roy:

- Suggested looking at the KIP charter schools sponsored by the Bill and Melissa Gates Foundation. These charter schools are very successful models with low socioeconomic students, which include a longer school day/year and many behavioral techniques. Many of the

techniques that the KIP model uses could be used in the District's schools to make schools more attractive and high-achieving academically.

- Evolution handout—Distributed information on an event Saturday, September 13, related to evolution.
- Truancy—Project Payback handout. Provided the Board with data relating to truancy, unexcused absences, and dropouts. Believes early intervention and identification is the key. 1) Schedule meeting with the Housing Authority to discuss the possibility of including language in the Section 8 Housing leases dealing with attendance; 2) Have a short training (with an in-county expert) for new teachers on how to engage students; 3) Consider paying students for perfect attendance on a pilot basis with an elementary school, and request the Chamber of Commerce assist with funding; and 4) Require principals to participate in the School Attendance Review Board (SARB) program.
- Hawthorne Community—Will work with Heather Surrency in Hawthorne to engage the community in helping to decrease student absenteeism.
- Provided information on the federally funded Florida Ready-to-Work Program.

Mrs. Childs:

- District can make some minor adjustments to fix part of the problem of students entering charter schools—allow zoning exemptions into schools under a behavior contract, if there is space, keeping in mind class size numbers.
- Does not support paying students to go to school.
- Supports working with the Housing Authority to make parents responsible for getting younger students to school.
- Believes principals are discouraged by the lengthy process involved with the SARB program, and feels it can be streamlined to move faster and with better results.
- Board/Staff Attorney Position—Met with Staff Attorney Tom Wittmer to discuss several options available to the Board for legal representation. Suggested developing a specific job description for the Board attorney.

Mrs. Pinkoson:

- Noted that charter schools are out of the District's control, possibly allow zoning exemptions to find a closer charter school.
- Does not agree with paying students to attend school.
- Believes teachers do not require training on how to engage students—they already know how to get students to come to school.
- Agrees that the School Board should work with the Housing Authority on getting kids to come to school.
- Concern that the data in Infinite Campus is not accurate.
- Requested that due to low morale, a note of reassurance be added to teacher paychecks informing them of the status of their step increase.

- Need to be prepared for future cuts, i.e., P.E. and continue to inform the community that the One Mill increase on the November ballot is very important.
- Develop a policy on the Florida Schools of Excellence (FSE)--If a charter school applies to FSE, their request will not be processed by the District.
- 403(b)—Concern with one company.
- Requested graduation rate data to compare whether we are graduating more students.

Mrs. Williams:

- Agrees that the Housing Authority should be involved in helping to get kids in school.

Mr. Eubank:

- The District needs to become more user-friendly and provide better parent satisfaction, to keep students from entering charter schools.
- Does not agree with Mrs. Roy's suggestion related to teacher training or paying students to attend schools, with the current budget crisis.
- Board/Staff Attorney Position—suggested the Board develop a Board Attorney contract similar to Volusia County as opposed to a job description. Board members should individually contact Mr. Wittmer to discuss this issue.
- School Uniforms—Suggested the District implement a mandatory uniform policy and inform the community in early spring.
- Declining enrollment—With the upcoming retirement of the Shell Elementary School principal, suggested combining the Waldo/Shell schools under one Principal. Also discussed several different school consolidations, including converting Hawthorne to a K-12 school.
- Position Cutbacks--Requested a comparison of positions within the District vs. 3-4 years ago.
- Infinite Campus new Student System—Where did the students go and why. District is losing students and would like to know what type of follow-up is done with parents.
- Energy Costs—Consider a new position entitled Energy Educator/Manager to educate and observe.
- Styrofoam—Apply for grant funding to convert from Styrofoam to biodegradable material and ask the city and county for assistance. Get the community involved in the effort.

NOTE: Mrs. Pinkoson and Mrs. Roy left meeting before it was adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

The Informal School Board meeting adjourned at 11:15 a.m.