

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF ALACHUA COUNTY, FLORIDA  
MINUTES OF INFORMAL SCHOOL BOARD MEETING  
September 8, 2009

The School Board of Alachua County, Florida, met in informal session duly called at 9 a.m. in Conference Room E, 620 East University Avenue, Gainesville, Florida. Present were: Tina Pinkoson, Chairman; F. Wesley Eubank, Vice-Chairman; Ginger Childs, Eileen Roy, and Barbara Sharpe, members; Susan Seigle, School Board Attorney, and W. Daniel Boyd, Jr., Superintendent.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Pinkoson.

BOARD ATTORNEY  
COMMUNICATION

Board Attorney Susan Seigle informed the Board that her new School Board email account is active and she welcomes Board member input. She requested the Board provide her with suggestions on how they wish for her to communicate with the entire Board.

Mrs. Childs urged Ms. Seigle to view the School Board as a single entity and suggested that when a response to an inquiry for a Board member is provided, it should be given to the entire Board so that everyone is aware of what the question was, as well as the response. She feels it is important to have some feel of what kinds of things Board members are asking her and what the cost is to the district.

Ms. Seigle She stated that in the future she will provide all Board members with copies of responses and requests.

Mrs. Sharpe also feels it is important that the Board operate as a team. She pointed out that Mr. Wittmer is the Staff Attorney and is also a salaried employee. She noted that Ms. Seigle should actually be the last resort in order to cut down on the amount of fees. She suggested the Board develop standards on how to handle Board inquiries and suggested that if a Board member has a legal question, they should go to the Chairman. At that point, it can be decided by the entire Board whether to have Ms. Seigle or Mr. Wittmer handle or respond to the issue.

She feels that if Board members go directly to Ms. Seigle and the rest of the Board is not aware, there is a lack of "teamsmanship." She noted that to be fair to Ms. Seigle, there has never been a job description or communication procedure for the Board Attorney. She feels that the process the Board puts in place should be respected in order to avoid large fees, with issues Mr. Wittmer could have handled.

Mr. Eubank explained that the reason he sought Ms. Seigle's assistance was due to the fact that his wife was on an agenda to go into DROP, and he relied on the Board Attorney for advice. He prefers to deal with the Board Attorney, not the Staff Attorney on this type of issue. He informed the Board that he has already written a check in the amount of \$264 to

cover the fees he did not feel the Board should pay. He noted that if the Board chooses, he is willing to write an additional check.

Board discussion focused on new communication procedures and the need to ensure that all Board members are kept informed. Ms. Seigle suggested that any requests for legal advice be presented at a Board meeting for full Board discussion on how to proceed.

Ms. Seigle thanked the Board for the discussion and information on how to proceed in the future. She also noted that she will be absent from the upcoming 9/15 School Board meeting and David Delaney will attend in her place.

The Board thanked Ms. Seigle for her efforts.

#### GENERAL DISCUSSION

Mrs. Childs informed the Board that she has volunteered to assist Gretchen Howard, Project Payback, and Mr. Jim Stringfellow, "Success by Six", to collect data, i.e., scores, discipline history, free/reduced, etc. related to juvenile offenders.

Mrs. Roy believes that if you can get a handle on the kids committing the crimes and build case histories (excluding ID information), it would spur people to action.

Mrs. Roy made the following comments/requests:

- Has been informed that teachers who wish to attend technology workshops at Sivia cannot because there is no money for substitutes. A suggestion was made that the presenter could go to the school sites and train teachers on their planning periods.

Superintendent Boyd noted that he will look into this issue and stated that possibly One Mill funds could pay for it.

Mrs. Roy continued:

- School Utility Report Card--noted that some schools are reducing their energy use, but she is also shocked that rates are still higher than previous years due to increasing fuel costs, etc. She suggested the administration continue to encourage less usage and requested a status report on the number of rewards awarded and who received them.

Superintendent Boyd indicated he would provide Mrs. Roy with a breakdown.

- Has received a couple of letters defending freedom of speech (T-shirts in schools) and expressed concern that the District could possibly be legally challenged or sued.

Chairman Pinkoson pointed out that there is a legal opinion that when a child walks into the door of a school, the freedom of speech right is not taken away, but it is limited (due to disruption).

Mrs. Roy requested a copy.

Mr. Eubank made the following comments/requests:

- Commended the Superintendent for his stance on the President's speech.
- Provided a report on his recent FSBIT meeting related to self-insured health insurance.

Mrs. Pinkoson stated that she will send a thank you note to Ms. Seigle on behalf of the Board.

The Board requested a status report on the stormwater fee issue.

Chairman Pinkoson commended the excellent efforts of the Transportation department for a smooth school year opening.

She also stated that she is very impressed with Loften and the many positive things happening--getting kids ready for the work force. She also noted that she will be attending the Chamber of Commerce roundtable public meeting on September 22.

Following Board discussion, the Board requested Mrs. Hollinger present an update on the progress of the Board's long-term goals and closing the achievement gap at the October 13 Informal School Board meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

The Informal School Board meeting adjourned at 10:23 a.m.