

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF ALACHUA COUNTY, FLORIDA
APPROVED MINUTES OF **BUDGET** WORKSHOP
March 24, 2009

The Board met in workshop session duly called at 1:30 p.m. in Conference Room E, 620 East University Avenue, Gainesville, Florida. Present were: Tina Pinkoson, Chairman; F. Wesley Eubank, Vice-Chairman; Ginger Childs, Eileen F. Roy, and Barbara Sharpe, members; W. Daniel Boyd, Jr., Superintendent; and staff members. The meeting was called to order by Mrs. Pinkoson.

Brief discussion was held on how Board members might appropriately provide direction to the Superintendent on matters under consideration.

Dr. Boyd stated that he has no updates concerning state budget cuts, but staff is prepared for discussion on some items that the Board has expressed interest in: DES contracts, Leadership Pool and student enrollment projections (< 300 for next year).

Mr. Ed Gable, Executive Director, Facilities, distributed a tentative schedule of capital outlay projects over the next four to five months. It represents twelve different projects and \$5.5 million in construction costs. He provided information on the projects and procedures involved.

Mrs. Roy inquired as to whether any decisions have been made about Hawthorne schools. Dr. Boyd stated that there will be a principal change, restructuring of administration, possibly closing some of the wings. But he will not recommend closing the school, since he doesn't see it to be in the best interests of the Hawthorne community or the District.

Mr. Gable reported that he will soon be prepared to provide an update on property acquisition. Discussion on building configurations will need to be held at that time.

Regarding a suggestion concerning cost reductions involved with retirements, Mr. Keith Birkett, Assistant Superintendent, Planning and Budget, stated that a committee had calculated various factors and felt that immediate savings would not be significant. Mr. Eubank stated that he also made some calculations, reflecting how much DROP and DROP extensions cost the district. He then reviewed the calculations and expanded on his view that DROP extension approvals should be extremely selective. At a question from Mrs. Sharpe, Mr. Birkett provided a brief explanation of the various DROP programs and how requests are handled.

Dr. Boyd contended that principals are responsible for the original teacher hiring and has the best knowledge with which to make a determination on a DROP request. He pointed out that ACEA president Gunnar Paulson has never challenged a principal's decision on DROP.

Mrs. Roy stated that if extended DROP is continued, she favors an incentive program for early retirement. She expressed appreciation to Mr. Eubank for his research. She indicated that principals' might find it difficult in some cases to turn down a request for DROP extension, if the teacher is well-liked, even though perhaps not best suited for a particular course.

Discussion was held on how the DROP extension works, including the policy development. Mr. Eubank stressed the seriousness of the economic climate and stated that he cannot justify \$1.5 million in post-five-year DROP costs.

Mrs. Childs felt that principals do not have difficulty declining a teacher's request to extend DROP. She stated that she will continue to look to Dr. Boyd for budget recommendations. She also referred to specific teaching skills and experience that would often make a post-DROP teacher more valuable to the children, which is the most important factor.

Mrs. Roy pointed out that the choice is not always as stark as choosing between an experienced teacher and someone unqualified.

Mr. Eubank informed the Board that FSBA is not going to pursue the adequacy litigation. He also reported on a Pinellas County lawsuit that challenged stormwater fees as unconstitutional, citing education as the 'paramount duty,' according to the Florida Constitution. Mr. Eubank recommends that we follow the example of Pinellas, Duval and other counties and notify the City of Gainesville that we will no longer pay stormwater fees, and also notify the County that we will no longer pay false alarm fees, understanding them to be unconstitutional. Those agencies may then choose to become a party to a Supreme Court appeal.

Mrs. Roy was not averse to informing them that the fees are felt to be unconstitutional, but she cautioned against antagonizing those agencies, since they partner with the School Board, as in Teen Zone.

Mr. Birkett reviewed and commented on Estimated 2008-09 FTE compared to Projected 2008-09 FTE.

Mrs. Sandy Hollinger, Deputy Superintendent, reviewed and commented on Administrative Pool information. She and Mr. Birkett then reviewed and explained Proposed Staffing Allocations information. Mrs. Hollinger reported that music and art teacher placements have been made.

Discussion was held on costs for graduation ceremonies. Mrs. Roy suggested the possibility of using University Auditorium for smaller schools. Dr. Boyd stated that alternatives will be explored.

Regarding proposed allocations, Mrs. Childs inquired whether changes could be made at High Springs and Lanier. Mr. Eubank also favored reviewing the allocations of smaller schools. The Board agreed that the One Mill funding could be used for Media Aides. Mrs. Pinkoson discussed that we should review all facets of the budget for reduction prior to making any salary reductions.

Regarding the tentative schedule of Capital Outlay projects, Mr. Eubank questioned the remodeling of kitchen/dining areas at underenrolled schools. Mr. Gable noted the safety issues involved and discussion ensued on the handling of repair needs. Mr. Eubank would like to see a more extensive project list prepared.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:40 p.m.