

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF ALACHUA COUNTY, FLORIDA
APPROVED MINUTES OF REGULAR BOARD MEETING
January 15, 2002

The School Board of Alachua County, Florida, met in regular session duly called at 7 p.m. in the Boardroom, 620 East University Avenue, Gainesville, Florida. Present were: ,Bill Cake, chairman; Jeannine Cawthon, vice-chairman; Bev Carroll, Chester Leathers and Barbara Sharpe, members; Mary L. Chambers, superintendent; and James F. Lang, attorney for the Board.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Cake, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

APPROVAL OF
MINUTES

Motion by Dr. Leathers Seconded by Mrs. Sharpe

Moved to approve the minutes of December 4, 2001, as presented.

The question was called. Upon Vote: Motion passed 5-0

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Motion by Mrs. Sharpe Seconded by Mrs. Carroll

Moved to adopt the agenda for the meeting of January 15, 2002, as presented.

Delete Consent Agenda Item 11, Agreement with Schultz Center for Teaching and Leadership.

The question was called on the agenda as amended.

Upon Vote: Motion passed 5-0

BOARD MEMBER/
SUPERINTEDENT
ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mrs. Cawthon noted that she received a newsletter from the National Center for Construction Education and Research and is pleased to say one of the featured articles was about Lofton High School’s building construction program. Mr. Ed Prevatt, lead teacher for the program, writes national curriculum for the construction programs for the schools. Lofton will be featured again later in the year. Dr. Ellen West, principal, is looking forward to moving into the new building that will house the construction and the technology programs for the district. Mrs. Cawthon pointed out that these are wonderful programs for students who may not be interested in attending college now or may be seeking another direction for employment.

Mrs. Sharpe asked to reiterate by reading into the record the following from the Dec. 4, 2001, Board minutes:

Budgeting/Financial Update

Mr. Keith Birkett, deputy superintendent, Budgeting, provided the Board with a copy of the 1992 Budget Task Force Report and a status update on the 1992 task force recommendations and the 1996 and 1997 Citizens Budget Advisory Council recommendations. He noted that 22 of the 39 recommendations of the 1992 task force were implemented. Five recommendations were still in progress at that time and 12 had not been recommended. One of the items not recommended at that time was the recommendation to save about \$121,000 if administrators were to substitute in the classrooms. During 1996-97 the district implemented the Social Security alternative plan, which resulted in a savings of \$100,000, in lieu of administrators substituting in the classroom and that program is still in place today.

He noted that the district does have committees that provide information, and the district does follow-up and take their recommendations seriously.

Superintendent Chambers pointed out the character trait for January is "Cooperation" and acknowledged the Boardroom artwork displays from Metcalfe, Chiles, Norton and Williams Elementary Schools; and Buchholz and Eastside High Schools.

She announced a Board workshop on Staffing Allocations scheduled January 24, 2002, 7 p.m., in the Boardroom. If another workshop becomes necessary, she is requesting it be held March 21.

The Superintendent extended condolences to the families and friends of the following student and former employees:

Miss Equisha Crumedy, student at Eastside High School
Mr. Willie Zell "Sonny" Anderson, retired school bus driver
Mrs. Lilla Mae Mattox, retired Food Service manager
Mrs. Anna Beth Pierson, retired teacher and former School Board member, 1953-1960
Mrs. Annie B. Lee, retired computer lab technician

RECOGNITION/PRESENTATION/REPORT

Character Education Student Artwork

Depicting this month's character trait, "Cooperation," Jessica Goble and Michael Consolazio, Chiles Elementary School, were presented certificates for their artwork, entitled "Sunny Day at the Beach," and Mikeal Smith, Metcalfe Elementary School, was presented a certificate on his artwork of a football team.

Santa Fe High School Agri-Science Student Recognition

Alyce NeJame, SFHS junior, was recognized as the national winner of

the FFA Agri-science Fair in the Zoology Division with her project entitled “Efficacy of Bortes on House Flies.” Zachary Bryan, SFHS graduate and UF student, was recognized as the state winner and national bronze finalist in the Extemporaneous Public Speaking contest.

National School Nurse Certification Recognition

The National School Nurse Certification is comparable to the national certification for teachers. Six school nurses obtained this certification and were presented to the Board—Jane Burns, GHS; Cheryl Foltz, Mebane Middle School; Nancy Richards, Archer Community School; Barbara Speiss, Westwood Middle School; Jeff Ketts, lead nurse for the district; and Pat Hughes, Health supervisor for the district.

Recognition of National Board Certified Teachers

The Board recognized thirteen teachers who recently earned their National Board Teacher Certification—Louise Brown, Jean Cunningham, Liana Glanville, Becky Hutchison, Julie Knighton, Lawelle Oswalt, Kathleen Valdes, Henry Couch, Elizabeth Filippi, Rebecca Heinzmann, Hanne Jackson, Elena Mayo, and Susan Swain.

School Improvement Highlights

Representatives from Duval Elementary School and Hawthorne Jr./Sr. High School shared highlights of activities and programs in these schools that help contribute to higher student achievement.

The regular Board meeting was recessed and a Public Hearing convened.

PUBLIC HEARING

A public hearing was held to consider:

- a. Amendments to the following policies that specify and clarify requirements of law and district practices: 7.31, Purchasing and Bidding; 7.41, Payroll Procedures; 8.01, Safety of Pupils, Employees and Visitors; 8.02, Safety Program; 4.111, Graduation Exercises; 6.132, Alcohol and Drug-free Workplace; 7.13, Audits; 6.441 Sick Leave; and 7.01 School Budget System.
- b. Proposed Amendment to Policy 5.11, School Attendance Zones/Areas
- c. Proposed Amendment to Policy 7.32, Selecting Professional Services
- d. Proposed New Policy 8.72, Acceptable Use Policy for the Exploration and Utilization of the Internet as a Tool for Learning

Dr. Scaggs, staff attorney, via video reviewed each policy and addressed changes recommended.

It was clarified for the Board that Policy 8.01, item 7, should read, “The Superintendent or designee “may” develop”

Mrs. Sharpe posed the following questions regarding Policy 5.11 with staff responding:

Item 1 -- How “sufficient” is determined? How overcrowding would be alleviated? Dr. Mel Lucas, director, Research, Evaluation & Testing, noted that this is the original wording in the policy with no change proposed. He feels “sufficient” would be a judgment made by educators and staff. In the past, overcrowding has been addressed by rezoning schools when necessary and opening magnet programs, and the school zoning exception policy encourages moving students from crowded schools to under enrolled schools.

Explain “Treat neighborhoods as intact units.” Dr. Lucas stated that staff prefers not to draw school zones lines through the middle of a neighborhood but treat as an intact unit and zone all the students to the same schools.

How do you balance the socio-economic diversity among schools? Dr. Lucas noted that in being practicable, staff would try to get a usable balance between the percentages of students on free/reduced lunch in a variety of schools. Board would determine the practicality.

Explain “Limit high percentage of free and reduced lunch students, except in such cases where this would qualify such schools for special funding.” Dr. Lucas noted this is in consideration of federal program funding like Chapter I where there are certain rules about the percentage of students and the need to meet certain criteria before the funds flow. This is kept in consideration when school zone lines are being drawn.

Mrs. Sharpe expressed concern that this could be tricky and could result in clumping if not careful—pay strict attention to this.

Item 2.c. -- How will zoning exceptions be granted? Dr. Lucas explained that there is an admission procedure for school choice. Forms are filled out, same as zoning exception, and action is taken on school zoning exception and school choice assignment requests in the form of communication by letters letting the parent know of the decision in respect to choice assignment or magnet school assignment. The idea is to try to get parents to indicate

their acceptance of choice assignment or zoning exception assignment by going to the school where they are seeking entrance and registering. This is important for planning purposes in allocating teacher units to schools. School Choice is on a space available basis. If more students apply than space available, there will be a lottery to determine which students will fill the seats. Socio-economic is not considered in this proposal.

Item (3)a.6. – Dr. Lucas noted that if the student’s choice assignment is revoked, the student would return to the zoned school.

Mrs. Sharpe read the following into the minutes. *“The Superintendent and this Board and the staff must be very careful not to allow the zoning exception rules and the choice assignments to throw us back into a segregated school system. Alachua County district schools are presently in the unitary system status. But as Dr. Scaggs knows from a meeting that he and I attended at the FSBA this past November, we can be taken back to court if someone challenged a segregated school system. We must do what is right and what is right may not always be popular and what is popular may not always be right, but it is without a doubt our job to do the right thing.”*

She asked if the guidelines just given to her questions were going to be specifically spelled out. Dr. Lucas stated that he would be sharing the same kind of dialogue with principals.

Mrs. Sharpe asked who is going to monitor the Internet policy. Mr. Jim Utley, chief officer, Technology and Information Services, reported that there is software that can be placed on the system that can generate reports as to what kind of activity is occurring on network, right down to the person. Staff has evaluated the software and is pleased with what it does and intends to purchase that software and use it to monitor activity on the network.

Dr. Leathers feels very strongly that it is in the best interest of kids to go to schools nearest to where they live, and feels any deviation from this is going to present more problems. He does not feel social gains weigh nearly as significantly as the academic losses. In reviewing whatever plan, he will be most interested in seeing how many kids leave the area nearest to where their school is and go to another school. Wants to see this as being a final kind of choice.

When we call it a neighborhood school, we need to seriously consider what has been accomplished over the past 40 years. The free and reduced lunch kids have and continue to suffer the most and a better

support system needs to be provided throughout the district and community. The FCAT results show schools with the lowest grades have the most free and reduced lunch kids. Adjustments have to be made.

Mrs. Carroll noted that she supports neighborhood schools for young children. She pointed out under Policy 5.11 that one bullet is limiting bus transportation time and distance and the next bullet is balancing the socio-economic diversity among schools. This could be a contradictory statement. She wanted assurance that the language “to the degree practicable” will take care of the contradiction.

Dr. Lucas assured her that the Board would help staff decide what is “practicable.”

Dr. Lucas explained the purpose of the one-week timeframe for students with zoning exceptions to register and agreed to bring to the Board the timeframe for students granted choice assignments or admission to a magnet program to register at the new school. He pointed out on the last page included in this policy the portion labeled “Choice Assignment Rules,” Section (3)(a), shall take effect for the 2003-2004 school year and thereafter.

Mrs. Sharpe, responding to Dr. Leathers’ comments, noted that one of the problems we have had is that we have bused the low socio-economic students across town to another school with the same type of students, and Duval Elementary is a good example. This compounds the problem and is what she is trying to guard against. There has to be a healthy mix.

Dr. Gunnar Paulson, president, ACEA, addressed item 9 of Policy 7.41. He would like to see added to the new language “and fulfill the requirements of Florida Statute.”

Mrs. Barbara Gallant requested for future public hearings the School Board allow the public who specifically come to talk on the issue to speak first, after which point the School Board discusses it and makes a decision.

Mr. Kali Blount voiced agreement with neighborhood schools.

Mrs. Cawthon referring to Policy 7.01, fund balance reserve, asked what is considered operating expenses. Mr. Birkett stated the operating budget should run around \$160 million. The Board has a half million dollars unrestricted reserve and hopes to be able to add to this to bring the district into a better financial condition.

Responding to Dr. Leathers, Mr. Birkett stated that the 4% figure is a standard through Best Practices and whether districts have it in their policies to comply with OPPAGA. Dr. Leathers would like to see a specific plan that elevates this systematically until the 4% is reached.

The Public Hearing was adjourned and the regular Board meeting reconvened.

CITIZEN INPUT

The following concerns/suggestions/requests were presented:

- The infusion of African-American and African history into the curriculum.
- ACEA president made the statements that (1) the ACEA instructional bargaining team never had any intention of going to impasse. First time they saw any language presented by the School Board bargaining team was Thursday night. They received three pieces of language, looked at the language and said they would be glad to get back to the bargaining team about this language. The next statement made within 30 seconds was tomorrow we intend to file for impasse. They find it very hard to believe you can go to impasse when you don't have disagreement; and (2) On February 5, FEA is conducting a rally in Tallahassee. This date was picked because the American Federation of Labor will be there for a conference and the budget will be presented the next week. They wanted to be proactive and try to have an effect on what goes into the budget.
- Citizen feels that the district should be able to negotiate construction contracts that preclude continuing cost overruns involving millions of dollars. Requested that the Board ask school administrators to prepare a statistical accounting of all cost overruns that have been paid over the past five years and that this figure be made public.
- Suggested staff check roofs underneath and see what needs to be replaced and when you come out with bid specifications, note what has to be replaced and you get an idea of what is the actual price for replacements.

OPPAGA UPDATE

Mr. Andy Andiric, internal auditor, noted that the 2001 Florida Legislature passed the "Sharpening the Pencil Act" to improve the efficiency of school district management and identify cost savings. OPPAGA (Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability), a research unit of the Florida Legislature was established. This act requires each school district in Florida to undergo a Best Financial Management Practices Review once every five years.

Mr. Andiric gave an overview of the process and the highlights of the OPPAGA review. The district is scheduled for a full review in July of 2002.

BUDGETING/
FINANCIAL UPDATE

Mr. Birkett gave an update on the district's continued efforts in the budget stabilization process. He reminded the Board that since the district started its budget process last May and by the time it ends this year, the district would have made budget adjustments in excess of \$10 million. The Governor's proposed budget includes some increased funding for education, but it may not be passed intact by the Legislature.

INDEPENDENT
AUDITOR'S REPORT—
FISCAL YEAR ENDED
JUNE 30, 2001

Mr. Bob Watson and Ms. Donna Brown, audit partners of James Moore & Company, presented the audit report and noted that the audit was performed in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards and government auditing standards prescribed by the Comptroller General of the United States. The report was highly favorable.

Motion by Mrs. Sharpe

Seconded by Dr. Leathers

Moved that the Independent Audit Report prepared by James Moore & Co., P.L. Certified Public Accountants, for the year ended June 30, 2001, be filed as part of the public records of the School Board.

The question was called.

Upon Vote: Motion passed 5-0

BUDGET
STABILIZATION AND
COST CONTAINMENT
PLAN—PHASE I

Mr. Birkett presented Phase I of the Budget Stabilization Plan which included a review of budgetary cuts for the current school year totaling just over \$10 million. The worksheet included recommendations for budget cuts for the 2002-2003 school year, including additional administrative reductions, the elimination of the seventh period from high schools, a limited summer school program, and other budgetary adjustments.

Motion by Mrs. Carroll

Seconded by Dr. Leathers

Moved the administration's recommendation to approve the Budget Stabilization and Cost Containment Plan as outlined.

Mrs. Carroll mentioned two line items that might mean a lot to the schools and most impacts students--the national competition match and the elementary playground equipment. She expressed particular concern with the elimination of the playground equipment.

Dr. Cliett clarified that there will be PE in summer school this year.

Following concerns expressed regarding the elimination of early retirement, Superintendent Chambers noted that all procedures would be followed regarding any recommendations that involved collective bargaining.

The question was called. Upon Vote: Motion passed 5-0

Mr. Birkett read Resolution No. 02-1, Authorization to Use Program Funds to Maintain Board-Specified Academic Classroom Instruction.

Motion by Mrs. Carroll Seconded by Mrs. Sharpe

Moved the administration's recommendation to approve the Budget Stabilization adjustments and Resolution No. 02-1 as presented.

The question was called. Upon Vote: Motion passed 5-0

CHANGE ORDER
NUMBER NINE FOR
PROJECT SBAC CB909—
EASTSIDE HIGH
SCHOOL REROOFING

This final change order adds \$535,393.02 to the contract, revising the contract to \$3,323,608.62, and represents an increase in cost for replacing 19,476.20 square feet of existing metal deck and insulation found to be structurally unsound. This change order adds fifty (50) consecutive calendar days to the contract time.

Motion by Mrs. Sharpe Seconded by Mrs. Carroll

Moved the administration's recommendation that the School Board authorize execution of this change order as presented.

Asked if he would have anything to offer in assessing or doing anything different in the future, Mr. Gable did not think there was anything in the process of the change order but felt it does reinforce the idea to stay with the plan to repair the roofs in a timely manner.

Mr. Gable clarified for Mrs. Carroll that when the bid goes out to the contractors, a prebid conference, in which each contractor would have walked through the building, is mandatory for submission of the bid. As he recalls, there were six or seven contractors that bid on this project and the bids were fairly tight from low to high with all bidders. He continued that before the bidding process, during the design process, borings of the roof assembly are done to verify how it is built and to try and determine any conditions that might affect the bid. In the future, one thing that might be done differently is take additional borings, but without boring the entire roof, you still are going to miss some of the areas that might need to be repaired once you demolition. This contractor has done considerable work over the state that was gotten through the competitive process as low bidder. The contractor

has done other work throughout the state for our design professional on the project, and his recommendation was that we accept this contractor, who was low bidder.

Mrs. Carroll requested information on the spread of the bidders. If there was not an unusually large spread, she is going to assume that each contractor that walked through this building missed this problem.

Responding to Mrs. Sharpe, Mr. Gable noted that the damage was actually concealed by the building materials that were removed as a part of the process. Although some investigation was done in the beginning, it was not revealed that there was as large of a problem as it turned out to be.

Mrs. Sharpe pointed out that the district could learn from this, but it was also something that could not be helped and that the Board had to go ahead with the project.

The question was called. Upon Vote: Motion passed 5-0

Mrs. Carroll left the Boardroom.

STUDENT CASE
NO. 01-56-X

The student was charged with committing battery on another student. A hearing was held on November 20, 2001. The Hearing Agent recommends that the Board expel the student for the remainder of the 2001-2002 school year, but allow the student to enroll and attend the alternative center on probation. No exceptions have been filed.

Motion by Mrs. Sharpe Seconded by Dr. Leathers

Moved the superintendent's recommendation to enter a final order adopting the Hearing Agent's Recommended Order.

The question was called. Upon Vote: Motion passed 4-0

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion by Mrs. Sharpe Seconded by Dr. Leathers

Moved the superintendent's recommendation to approve the Consent Agenda as described in items 1-16, with the deletion of item 11. (See Supplementary Minutes Book.)

The question was called. Upon Vote: Motion passed 4-0

CITIZEN INPUT (Cont'd)

- Citizen recommended not moving Citizen Input to the end. Wants to see more School Board and administrator interaction into investigation issues that are important to the teachers and community members. Asked that the Board get involved in the rally with ACEA scheduled February 5, in Tallahassee.

Mrs. Carroll returned to the Boardroom.

Mrs. Sharpe asked to go on record as saying, "We do not as School Board members just pick one day to go and lobby for education. We are in the trenches everyday, 24/7. Our Board, as well as other Boards in the state of Florida, is faced with some of the toughest challenges ever. We have always had to make tough decisions but are now presented with more at one time than ever before. We must stay focused on our main reason for being and that is doing what is best for our students as well as for our employees. If it were not for our students, we would not even be having this conversation. There would be no Board; there would be no employees. While pleasing everyone would be nice, it is impossible and it really is not our job. If we can please some people along the way, providing the best quality of education possible for our students and providing for our employees and continue the pursuit of academic excellence as we always have, then I believe that we are doing our jobs. We have to keep in mind though that sacred cows are only sacred to their mothers and sometimes that is hard to do. The political signals are pretty clear. We are going to have two fiscal years instead of one this time. We have to go to the budget twice. We are going through what one school district's attorney calls "turbulent field environment" but we must stand up to the challenges. We can and we will."

BOARD MEMBERS/
SUPERINTENDENT
REQUESTS

Mrs. Cawthon thanked staff for providing a summary of the most recent workshop and expressed hope that staff will continue to do that for every workshop as well as the School Board meetings. She noted her reason for requesting the upcoming staffing allocation workshop to be held at 7 p.m. was to allow personnel the opportunity to attend.

Dr. Leathers would like to see as much support as possible for the Feb 5, 2002, FEA Rally in Tallahassee.

Mrs. Carroll noted that Board members have all agreed to help substitute if needed.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:35 p.m.