

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF ALACHUA COUNTY, FLORIDA
APPROVED MINUTES OF REGULAR BOARD MEETING
March 19, 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; Chester Leathers and Barbara Sharpe, members; Mary L. Chambers, superintendent; and James F. Lang, attorney for the Board. Mrs. Bev Carroll was absent.

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

APPROVAL OF
MINUTES

Motion by Mrs. Sharpe

Seconded by Mrs. Cawthon

Moved to approve the minutes of March 5, 2002, as presented.

The question was called.

Upon Vote: Motion passed 4-0

Chairman Cake announced that Mrs. Bev Carroll is in Washington, D.C., serving as one of 21 negotiators on the U.S. Department of Education negotiating committee that will help develop new rules related to standards and assessments under Title I (Part A) of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Motion by Mrs. Sharpe

Seconded by Dr. Leathers

Moved to adopt the agenda for the meeting of March 19, 2002, as presented.

Delete from Action Item H.6. Student Cases a. and b. and add Student Case No. 01-56-X

The question was called on the motion as amended.

Upon Vote: Motion passed 4-0

BOARD MEMBER/
SUPERINTENDENT
ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dr. Leathers commented on the public hearings for spot rezoning of elementary schools and the superintendent's decision to postpone the process and commended the community members for coming out and voicing their concerns and suggestions. He noted that the overcrowding issue of schools would have to be addressed and if the Board doesn't have to rezone for financial reasons, he hopes the Board will encourage a further developed plan that will deal with these issues and maybe for longer term.

Superintendent Chambers extended condolences to employee Cheri Crane and her family on the loss of her brother Mr. Roy “Donell” Smith of Williston.

RECOGNITION/
PRESENTATION/
REPORT

Alachua Elementary School Quiz Bowl Team

The Alachua Elementary School six-member Quiz Bowl team scored 98% in the statewide academic competition and earned first place for the third straight year. It was noted that Congresswoman Karen Thurman has entered a commendation into the Congressional Record and would be making a presentation to the team in April. The Board recognized the students on their achievement with a certificate.

Eastside High School Key Club Community Project at Rawlings

Each year each Key Club is required to choose a single service project which is a year long undertaking and is intended to include all aspects of service from hands-on work to fund raising to raising public awareness. The EHS Key Club chose to adopt the playground of Rawlings Elementary School last summer. In the fall the Key Club and sponsor, Gator City Kiwanis Club, worked at Rawlings to landscape and repaint parking lot lines. During the fall they researched improvements needed on the playground and created a projected budget, which included funds for a slide, swing set, picnic benches and landscaping materials. They realized they would need to undertake a massive fund raising effort. During the last week in February they returned to Rawlings to follow through on the first phase of the playground project. With paint and plant donations they repainted current playground equipment as well as planted trees and plants. There is much to do before the project is complete. They especially thanked all the participating parties in the community and the schools for helping in this effort.

Alachua County Public Schools Foundation—Waste Management, Inc.

Mr. Jim “Red” Hoggatt, Waste Management, Inc., of Jacksonville, presented to the Foundation a check in the amount of \$3,300 for the Take Stock in Children program in Alachua County and challenged other Alachua County businesses to get involved saying one of the best things you can possibly do for the future of Alachua County is to support the Take Stock in Children program.

2002 Commissioner’s Business Recognition Award Recipients

Ms. Kelley Kostamo, Volunteer Business and Partnership program, recognized the efforts of two of our business partners who recently received the Florida Commissioner of Education Business recognition award—Papa John’s Pizza and the Florida Credit Union.

School Improvement Highlights—Fearnside and A.Q. Jones

Representatives from Fearnside Center and A. Q. Jones Center shared highlights of activities and programs in these schools that help contribute to the moral and social/emotional development of the students and higher student achievement.

Budgeting/Financial Update

Mr. Keith Birkett, deputy superintendent, briefly reviewed the budget amendments on the Consent Agenda. He also gave a comparison of salaries February 2002 to February 2001. For teachers salaries this year the district paid out \$601,000 more than last year because over one million dollars were received in teacher retention/recruitment money that paid the \$850 bonuses to our teachers; other instructional personnel \$152,000 more; career service \$372,000 less as a result of a hiring freeze this year; and for administrative, the district spent \$304,000 less this year compared to the same time last year. A recap of the benefit area shows the district spent \$1.1 million less than last year for retirement because the contribution rate was adjusted downward; a slight decrease in social security payment as a result of calculations against salary; group insurance an increase of \$734,000 and other benefits a reduction of \$61,000; total reduction or less paid than last year is \$477,000. The total expenditures this year was \$101,466,000 compared to \$102,951,000 last year, about \$1.5 million less at this point in time than last year. In order to balance the budget this year staff anticipated earning about \$2.5 to \$3 million in balances. This is an indication of heading in the right direction toward our goal.

SCHEDULED AGENCIES
ACEA

Dr. Gunnar Paulson, ACEA, read letters he sent to the Chairman regarding school starting times and his alternate proposal that would allow early Wednesday to continue. He expressed concern that staff's proposal leaves no choice but to eliminate early Wednesday. He suggested the Board explore his presentation and those of others and that there be discussion and dialogue on school starting times with all stakeholders involved.

He also read a teacher's letter sent to the Gainesville Sun on the rezoning issue and questioned the School Board's involvement with the Comprehensive Plan Board over the years in regional planning.

CITIZEN INPUT

Citizens addressed the Board with the following comments, concerns, suggestions, requests:

- In December 1970 the Supreme Court sent an order down that the district would be rezoned into a unitary school system within three weeks. That was the end of neighborhood schools. When there are overcrowded/undercrowded schools, it is up to

the School Board to do what has to be done. Suggested the Board involve the public with rezoning, a possible task force in the fall, and meetings be held at a time citizens are available.

- Citizen addressed F.S. 233.061(2) and noted information staff should and should not spend time preparing for the upcoming discussion item on African American curriculum in the schools
- Last fall the public was informed that the Board planned to change the way it conducted business, mainly citizen input--reserving one meeting for citizen input, and one meeting to conduct regular business and curriculum update, beginning in January; feel it is disrespectful to those who come out to voice their concerns when Citizen Input time is split.

The lack of participation with the city and county government especially attending growth workshops and giving input about school growth. Include the public in any discussions regarding rezoning proposals.

- Concerned that there will not be a Drivers Education summer program for the students; willing to pay an activity fee.

INSTRUCTIONAL
MATERIALS ADOPTION
FOR ELEMENTARY
READING (K-5)

Dr. Marcia Buchanan, supervisor, Instructional Media, shared that a very special educational odyssey has taken several years, the outcome of which is a recommendation for a new K-5 basal reading program for Alachua County schools. The Elementary Reading Adoption Committee developed a vision statement--*All students in Alachua County schools will be provided the essential components of a high-quality reading program, based on the latest research, which will afford them the opportunity to become successful readers.* Then the overall goals and objectives were developed.

Dr. Buchanan reported that beginning in Florida this year, a new statute, from this point on, requires that all instructional materials recommended for state adoption must be fully grounded in research-based principles. The principles are Phonemic Awareness: Ability to hear, identify, and manipulate individual sounds in spoken words. Phonics Instruction: Teaching the relationships between the letters of written language and the sounds of spoken language. Vocabulary Development: The acquisition of words we must know in order to communicate effectively. Fluency: The ability to read a text accurately and quickly. Text Comprehension: Processing and understanding what is being read.

She also reported that on March 1, 2002, Dr. Susan Newman, assistant

secretary, Elementary and Secondary Education for the United States Department of Education, met with representatives from the Association of American Publishers and the five publishing companies with titles on the new Florida Reading Adoption List and issued a statement saying that, indeed, all of the six programs on the Florida State Adopted List for Elementary Reading had met the burden of proof of research-based criteria as required by the new federal legislation entitled, "No Child Left Behind." On the following Monday, March 4, 2002, members of the Florida Department of Education and the newly created Reading Office met and verified that these programs had met the burden of proof of being scientifically research-based. The Commissioner of Education then issued a press release verifying these findings as regards to the six new Florida State Adopted Reading Programs, which are Harcourt Brace, Houghton-Mifflin, McMillan-McGraw Hill, Scott Foresman, SRA Open Court and SRA Reading Mastery.

A detailed presentation was made outlining the procedures used by the Elementary Reading Textbook Adoption Committee to select a new reading series for the district. The committee included representatives from all Alachua County elementary schools. Teachers in the elementary schools were provided with an opportunity to preview sample materials from the six state adopted, scientifically research-based reading series and give feedback. The committee overwhelmingly selected the Harcourt Brace "Trophies" reading series.

Motion by Mrs. Sharpe

Seconded by Dr. Leathers

Moved the administration's recommendation and approve the elementary Reading (K-5) textbook adoption and authorization of purchases for implementation, growth and replacement in 2001-2002 and thereafter, subject to availability of funding.

Board members and the Superintendent commended the committee members, expressed confidence in their recommendation and thanked them along with the staff for their efforts and the long hours spent on this important endeavor.

The Superintendent shared that Mrs. Carroll does support the full funding of the adoption and the training.

Responding to a question on the vocabulary development of the students, Dr. Diana Lagotic noted the basal program is designed to help all children at all levels. It is one of the best and it has an eclectic approach. It is set up for the teacher and the student with a strong background-building component that helps to build a foundation for

understanding what the story is going to be about. It has a strong vocabulary component that helps introduce the children to the vocabulary, and in Harcourt the new vocabulary is highlighted in the text. Harcourt also has an intervention reader for below average children so that the teacher can work with average and above average children and have children in an intervention reader with the same vocabulary, the same comprehension skills and they can work side by side. The whole goal of a basal program is to provide that background, a strong vocabulary component, a strong comprehension component, and strong, especially in the primary grades, word recognition, phonological awareness, which is the key new term in research. It also has an ESOL component.

The question was called.

Upon Vote: Motion passed 4-0

GUARANTEED
MAXIMUM PRICE
PROPOSAL FOR
PROJECT SBAC CB734—
EASTSIDE HIGH
SCHOOL CLASSROOM
ADDITION

Motion by Mrs. Sharpe

Seconded by Dr. Leathers

Moved the administration's recommendation to accept the Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) of \$4,547, 885 for construction of this project and enter into a construction management contract with W. G. Mills, Inc., Jacksonville, Florida, with completion to be within 365 consecutive calendar days from the date indicated in the "Notice to Proceed."

Staff reported that subcontractors that are envisioned by this price through W. G. Mills, Inc., represent 96% local participation.

The question was called.

Upon Vote: Motion passed 4-0

EXTENDED SCHOOL
YEAR PROGRAMS 2002

Motion by Mrs. Sharpe

Seconded by Dr. Leathers

Moved the administration's recommendation to approve the Extended School Year programs for 2002.

Dr. Cliett noted that the proposal now is for those programs required for graduation and remediation. Drivers Education could be offered on a fee basis, but the student would not receive credit.

Mrs. Cawthon asked that high school principals be surveyed to determine if there is an interest for the course in the summer on a fee basis, just for experience.

Mrs. Sharpe feels Drivers Education is important but expressed concern with having a program that is fee-based as it would limit students who could not afford the fee. If this is initiated, she suggested looking at ways of supplementing for students in this category.

It was noted that this course would be offered during the school year for students who want to take Drivers Education as part of their regular program.

Mr. Paulson requested staff let him know whether Drivers Education would be offered through Adult Education this summer or is it being paid through Workforce Development funds for this district? Also, is Drivers Education personnel hired from this district or other districts?

The question was called.

Upon Vote: Motion passed 4-0

CHARTER SCHOOL
FINANCIAL AUDITS

Charter Schools are required by state law to submit to the Department of Education an independent financial audit conducted by a certified public accountant or the auditor general. Davis Monk & Company, certified public accountants, have completed the charter school financial audits for the year ended June 30, 2001.

Mr. Richard Trainor, director, Finance, reported that seven of the eight charter schools were financially sound at the end of last year and one had a negative fund balance. The auditor included a going concern comment in that audit meaning the negative fund balance raised substantial doubt about the school continuing to operate. Staff has been working with this school in the current year and reviewing financial statements each month. The school has made progress in controlling expenditures but still must make more adjustments prior to year-end to keep from having a negative fund balance in the current year. He reviewed other auditor comments regarding the charter schools and noted the schools can and most have already made corrections.

Dr. Leathers expressed concern with the amount of staff time and effort involved with no return and with possible additional schools the deeper into the process we continue to get.

Responding to Mrs. Sharpe, it was noted that Alachua Learning Center is the school with the negative fund balance. She felt a need to have it on record should the Board have to take action in the future. She noted that the Board previously closed a charter school because of financial deficiencies. There were numerous hours of human resource time spent trying to keep the school afloat. There were hearings locally and hearings in Tallahassee suggesting one thing, but the ultimate decision on any of those schools that are unable to overcome financial difficulty, with assistance, lies with the School Board as to whether or not to keep the school open. That is why it is important not to wait until we get this type of report but when we have a school getting into this type of

difficulty, have periodic updates at Board meetings on the progress or non-progress of that particular school, what we are doing to assist and where that assistance is going and how that assistance is helping.

Chairman Cake noted that a bill has been put forth in legislation that would change the school code so that the final appeal would lay in the hands of the state department.

Mr. Lewis noted that on the new charters and renewals a line has been added under the financial management part that basically states there is cause for termination if after the second consecutive year there is a fund deficit, and there is no discussion.

Motion by Dr. Leathers Seconded by Mrs. Sharpe

Moved the administration's recommendation to accept the charter school financial audits as submitted for the year ended June 30, 2001.

Motion by Dr. Leathers Seconded by

Moved to amend the motion and add a second sentence that the Board recognizes the precarious financial situation of Alachua Learning Center which could jeopardize the future of this school.

The amendment fails for lack of a second.

The question was called on the original motion.

Upon Vote: Motion passed 3-1
Yes: Mr. Cake, Mrs. Cawthon
 Mrs. Sharpe
No: Dr. Leathers

FLORIDA SCHOOL
BOARDS INSURANCE
TRUST (FSBIT)
RENEWAL

Mr. Dave Hotary, director, Risk Management, reported that the Board has an option to withdraw or not from the Trust and there is a timeframe. If the Board chooses to explore alternative programs, this action of the Board must be communicated to the Trust prior to April 1. The events of September 11, 2001, and the associated losses has thrown the insurance industry into a crisis state causing many companies to go bankrupt and others with the inability to write business. A projection of the escalating cost for the renewal year is 50%. Roughly, this means an additional \$1,000,000 over our expiring cost of \$2,000,000. Additionally, the coverage in the coming fiscal year may not be of the same quality and quantity as currently in place. Property insurance coverage will be the worst hit, followed by workers' compensation, general liability, auto liability and employment practices.

The Trust is not going to look at alternatives, but the district could ask the current broker to put together alternative programs to review and consider.

The Superintendent noted that the recommendation is that we send a withdrawal notice to FSBIT at this point, look at our options knowing that we can opt back into the Trust prior to July 1.

Board member discussion continued.

Motion by Dr. Leathers Seconded by Mrs. Cawthon

Moved the administration's recommendation to send notification of withdrawal to FSBIT at this time to pursue other options.

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

Mrs. Sharpe noted that she voted with the caution that we are allowed to get back in the Trust.

STUDENT CASE
NO. 01-56-X

Dr. Jim Scaggs, staff attorney, reported that the student and parent is present and would like to address the Board at the end of the meeting.

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion by Mrs. Sharpe Seconded by Dr. Leathers

Moved to approve the consent agenda as described in items 1-11. (See Supplementary Minutes Book.)

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

BOARD MEMBERS/
SUPERINTENDENT
REQUESTS

Mrs. Cawthon questioned whether the district is getting updates from Mrs. Joy Frank, legislative lobbyist. The Superintendent assured her that Mrs. Frank is talking with staff almost daily and that financial updates are being sent. She will make sure that the Board members receive the reports.

The Board Meeting was recessed to allow the parent and student to address the Board. Following parental input and discussion the Board took action.

STUDENT CASE
NO. 01-56-X

Dr. Scaggs reported that by Final Order dated January 15, 2002, the student was expelled for the remainder of the 2001-2002 school year but allowed to enroll and attend the alternative center on probation. The student has violated the terms of probation set forth in the Final Order.

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The Superintendent recommends that the Board revoke the probation and that the student be expelled through May 31, 2002.

Motion by Dr. Leathers

Seconded by Mrs. Sharpe

Moved to give the student one more chance, deny revocation of the probation and require the student to continue attendance at the alternative center subject to the probationary conditions as set forth in the Final Order dated January 15, 2002.

The question was called.

Upon Vote: Motion passed 3-1

Yes: Mrs. Cawthon,

Dr. Leathers, Mrs. Sharpe

No: Mr. Cake

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 p.m.