

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF ALACHUA COUNTY, FLORIDA  
APPROVED MINUTES OF REGULAR BOARD MEETING  
JULY 2, 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. Absent: Board member Bev Carroll.

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 June 18, 2002, as presented.

The question was called.

Upon Vote: Motion passed 4-0

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Motion by Mrs. Sharpe

Seconded by Dr. Leathers

Moved to adopt the agenda for the meeting of July 2, 2002, as presented.

The question was called.

Upon Vote: Motion passed 4-0

BOARD MEMBER/  
SUPERINTENDENT  
ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairman Cake informed the Board that Mrs. Carroll is out ill.

Superintendent Chambers announced that in order to communicate more effectively with the public, the scheduled presentations will be presented in a workshop format.

The Board extended their condolences to the family and friends of Mr. Ralph Lee, custodian at Mebane Middle School.

RECOGNITION/  
PRESENTATION/  
REPORT—STUDENT  
ACHIEVEMENT  
INITIATIVES

Dr. Bill Cliett, deputy superintendent, Curriculum and Instructional Services, presented an overview of the new Comprehensive Curriculum Plan, which aligns the written, tested and taught curriculum for K-12, with Action Plans that assure alignment in the continually evolving plan.

Representatives from the Curriculum and Instructional Division presented information on student achievement and reviewed the following items included in the Comprehensive Curriculum Plan:

- Curriculum Frameworks K-12
- Inservice Opportunities being offered to teachers

- Testing
- Update on African-American History Initiatives
- 2002-03 Curriculum Division Goals
- Action Plan to better provide services to schools
- Additional assistance being provided to low performing school

Dr. Mel Lucas, director, Research/Evaluation, using the Sunshine State Standards, explained the differences between the FCAT and Norm Referenced Tests.

Mrs. Sharpe pointed out that a child's intelligence should not be determined by a test. She also noted that a school's grade could easily drop simply based on the number of students, but stated that teachers, staff and students are doing a good job.

Dr. Lucas addressed the issue of socio-economic status, and pointed out that schools with a lower grade have a higher rate of students on free and reduced lunch status.

Mrs. Sharpe stated that low socio-economic status students do not do as well on tests, particularly when they are in a school with a high rate of low socio-economic students. Where there is a healthy mix of students, studies have shown that both groups of students do well. She feels it is an injustice to the students and supported a healthy mix of students. Parents also need to assume responsibility for their children and need to stop making excuses.

Mrs. Cawthon stated that schools are making the effort to reach parents and get them to come to their child's school, but parents are not coming.

STRATEGIC  
PLANNING  
UPDATE/BUDGETING  
THE PLAN

Ms. Robin Snyder, coordinator, Communications, presented a review of progress made in 2001-02 in the district Strategic Plan, including a full review of designated Board priorities, and a review of progress in other areas of the Strategic Plan.

Mr. Keith Birkett, deputy superintendent, Budget/Planning, discussed alternative financing options for the district, including a 4-year "Pay as you Go" plan to provide additional dollars for operations, and a one-half cent sales tax, which could provide funds for construction and renovation. He introduced Mr. Jerry Ford, Ford and Associates, Inc., Financial Advisors, to present possible funding initiatives.

Mr. Ford presented an overview of possible funding initiatives the Board may wish to pursue and explained what would be involved to carry out a successful campaign. He suggested that the Board may

wish to schedule a workshop for further discussion.

Mrs. Sharpe preferred the sales tax option because she felt it would be a fair way for everyone to participate, and it can be used for operations.

Mr. Ed Gable provided an overview on the status of construction projects and facility needs.

Mr. Richard Trainor, provided a brief update on the status of Charter schools and their financial positions through May 31, 2002. He will continue to provide the Board with periodic updates.

Mr. Birkett provided a budget update based on the most recent information from the state.

Mr. Gable provided information on the facility operations area and explained that staff has been asked to explore possible cost savings. Services must be prioritized and maintenance items deferred to deal with curriculum areas and to focus on the classroom. He presented the following cost reduction options that require further study:

- Cost shifting from operating budget to Capital Outlay/Food Service budgets.
- Providing services through outsourcing to private vendors and contractors
- Reduction or elimination of services provided to the district
- Reduction in the work force

Staff will be looking at benchmark savings of approximately \$600,000 from the operating budget. Further study will be conducted and a detailed proposal will be developed and presented to the Board at a future meeting.

Superintendent Chambers reminded the Board that Mr. Gable was referring to reduction in force, but there is a need to evaluate the critical areas of need and painters are used as an example. She pointed out that nothing has been decided and facilities personnel will identify critical areas.

The Board took a break and reconvened the regular business meeting.

SCHEDULED AGENCIES There were no scheduled agencies.

CITIZEN INPUT Citizens addressed the Board regarding the following:

- Urged the Board to place an item on the agenda related to the

- issue of elected vs. appointed superintendents and discuss the process involved to place this initiative on the ballot.
- A public records request will be presented to the Board in the future dealing with the number of minority students who are designated ESE.
- A resident of Elizabeth Gardens thanked the Board for reaching an equitable compromise on the Glen Springs building project.

PERSONNEL  
APPOINTMENTS

Motion by Mrs. Sharpe                      Seconded by Mr. Herschleb

Moved the superintendent’s recommendation to appoint Bill Herschleb as principal of Santa Fe High School (effective July 3, 2002).

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

AMENDMENTS TO  
POLICIES 6.31, SALARY  
SCHEDULES, AND 7.01,  
SCHOOL BUDGET  
SYSTEM—SECOND  
READING

A public hearing was held June 18, 2002, to consider amendments to Policies 6.31, Salary Schedules, and 7.01, School Budget System.

Motion by Mrs. Sharpe                      Seconded by Dr. Leathers

Moved the administration’s recommendation to adopt the amendments to Policies 6.31 and 7.01 as presented.

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

SCHEDULE WORKSHOP

Motion by Mrs. Sharpe                      Seconded by Dr. Leathers

Moved to schedule a workshop to discuss loss prevention and safety with Arthur J. Gallagher and Company on Monday, August 26, 2002, 1 p.m., in the Boardroom.

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

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion by Mrs. Sharpe                      Seconded by Dr. Leathers

Moved to approve the consent agenda as described in items 1-17. (See Supplementary Minutes Book.)

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

DISCUSSION ITEM—  
TASK FORCE FOR  
COMPREHENSIVE  
ELEMENTARY  
REZONING PLAN

Staff briefly reviewed the 1982 Rezoning Task Force report and provided the results of responses received from other districts which recently have undergone a rezoning effort. Staff also reviewed the Board’s choice and attendance policies.

A citizen urged the Board not to hire a consultant, but to follow the

process used in 1982 and appoint a community task force to present recommendations to the Board. The incoming Board can either accept, reject or amend their recommendations.

Dr. Lucas referred to Board policy 5.11, School Attendance Zones/Areas/Choice, and recommended that as the Board proceeds to the next phase, the task force should focus on or consider the factors included in the current policy, which the Board should rank in priority, in developing a rezoning plan for Board consideration.

He provided the following suggested functions of the task force:

- Review the Board policy and make recommendations to the Board for clarification of the factors listed in the policy.
- Recommendations to the Board about how rezoning plans should be developed, what would be the role of the community in general, who would develop the plans, what kind of consultant to hire to develop the plans, etc.
- Recommendations concerning communication strategies.
- Composition of the task force similar to the 1982 Emmer committee.

Mrs. Cawthon felt that a major element the Board should address would be a periodic review and the need to revisit on a regular basis so parents would never be confused and would know that this is always a possibility.

Mrs. Sharpe stated that on every zoning exception form it states that the zoning exception is to be renewed on an annual basis and that it is not guaranteed. The record will show that when the Board approved Policy 5.11, School Attendance Zones/Areas/Choice, she had a real problem with it, but went ahead and voted for it anyway because she knew something had to be done. She has always had a problem with the phrase “to the degree practicable” included in the policy and does not know what that means, or if anyone does, because it can be interpreted in a different manner.

Mrs. Cawthon believes that in addition to the task force submitting suggestions, other groups should have the same ability to put forth a plan. The Board needs to set a deadline (12/1) for suggestions to be submitted. Also must have a good plan for advertising through the schools, newspapers, PTAs and inform everyone when the recommendations are due. Board should take a vote the first meeting in February after the plans have been reviewed by staff for practicability.

Dr. Lucas referred to the timeline presented by Mrs. Cawthon and

pointed out that it would not be feasible and would be a difficult timeline to meet. He does not feel that a community-wide task force would be able to accomplish their task for implementation early enough in the year, communicate well with the community, have the necessary public input and pass it in time for implementation in 2003-04. He feels it would be a difficult timeline to meet with the kind of input that the Board is hoping to generate.

Mrs. Sharpe stated that the Board needs to be very careful not to move too fast. She understands that the Board does need to get it done, but that was part of the problem last time. She is not being critical of anyone's opinion, but just because the 1982 Emmer task force took two months to accomplish their task doesn't mean that the same circumstances exist to the same magnitude. The magnitude now could be greater than it was then and there could be different variations. She believes, based on Dr. Lucas' comments, that the Board needs to be very cautious about placing a timeline just to get a rezoning done. The Board needs to be sure that it is well thought out and that it is done right. Because if it is not, the Board stands the risk of being in the same situation in a couple of years from now. Need to take the time to work this out to be beneficial to the students and families since they are the ones the Board is doing this for.

Mr. Cake expressed a word of caution to the Board and pointed out that there is a major difference between this county and the counties that were surveyed. He explained the many differences from the last major rezoning and noted that in the 70's and 80's Alachua County was a growing county, the student population was growing and the district could qualify for state funds to build new schools. Currently Alachua County is in a declining and shifting population, and the schools that the Board was rezoning students to then were newer. The district now has older schools, schools where there are not many students and full schools where they are still building. This is an era where parents want to be involved and they will come to board meetings and he is not opposed to that, but back in the 70's and 80's parents knew that schools needed to be built and populations needed to be shifted and they did not protest against rezoning.

Superintendent Chambers stated that she wanted to hear Board members' thoughts at a time when rezoning is not immediate and imminent. She respects the Emmer task force report, but the district is in a different time with declining enrollment, and has competition such as charter schools that didn't exist then, private and church schools, vouchers and school choice. Parents have many more options than they previously had and the Board now needs to be more competitive and more responsive to the needs of parents and students.

Following Board discussion and in order to provide staff with direction, Chairman Cake stated that Board members preferred a task force rather than a consultant.

Superintendent Chambers suggested enlisting the assistance of the City and County planning departments to identify housing patterns, growth areas, declining areas, birth rates, population trends and look to see where the planners believe that the growth and the movement will be in Alachua County prior to proceeding, which will provide the district with a good basis upon which to begin discussion.

Mrs. Cawthon stated that she does not believe that comprehensive rezoning is really needed, but maybe a more thought out process for spot rezoning to keep schools equalized socio-economically.

Chairman Cake referred to Manatee County, a county similar in population to Alachua County in number and demographics (east side vs. west side), and noted that they went to full choice and found that 80-90% of their students, when they had freedom of choice, chose to stay in their neighborhood schools. He also noted that Manatee County recently had three "F" schools, even with choice.

BOARD MEMBER/  
SUPERINTENDENT  
REQUESTS

There were no Board requests.

Mrs. Sharpe thanked the entire staff for their excellent presentations and for their efforts in compiling the various reports and information presented at the Board meeting.

Mrs. Cawthon expressed her appreciation to the Superintendent and staff for the informative presentations in workshop format held during the Board meeting to better inform the public.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:31 p.m.