

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF ALACHUA COUNTY, FLORIDA
APPROVED MINUTES OF REGULAR BOARD MEETING
MARCH 16, 2004

The School Board of Alachua County, Florida, met in regular session duly called at 6 p.m. in the Boardroom, 620 East University Avenue, Gainesville, Florida. Present were: Barbara J. Sharpe, chairman; Tina Turner Pinkoson, vice-chairman; Jeannine M. Cawthon, Virginia S. Childs and F. Wesley Eubank, members; Sandra H. Hollinger, interim superintendent; and James F. Lang, attorney for the Board.

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

APPROVAL OF
MINUTES

Motion by Mr. Eubank

Seconded by Mrs. Pinkoson

Moved to approve the minutes of Special Board Meeting of February 27, 2004, and Regular Board Meeting of March 2, 2004, as presented.

The question was called.

Upon Vote: Motion passed 5-0

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Motion by Mr. Eubank

Seconded by Mrs. Cawthon

Moved to adopt the agenda for the meeting of March 16, 2004, as presented.

Delete Item E., Recognition(s), Item G., Scheduled Agencies, and Consent Agenda Item 5., Inventory Droppage Report. Add as Action Item 6, Purchase of One 47-Passenger School Bus.

The question was called on the motion as amended.

Upon Vote: Motion passed 5-0

BOARD MEMBER/
SUPERINTENDENT
ANNOUNCEMENTS

Superintendent Hollinger commended Howard Bishop Middle School teachers and students on a lot of hard work and coordination for a live interview Wednesday, March 17, 9:30-11:00 a.m., with the Expedition 8 crew of the International Space Station as a part of their NASA Explorer School program.

Mrs. Childs reminded everyone that Mr. Bob Howland, Buchholz High School teacher, would be riding his bicycle from Ocala to Tallahassee this Friday to raise money for Take Stock in Children.

CITIZEN INPUT

High Springs Elementary School teacher and SAC chair shared the concerns that a principal had not been assigned to High Springs Elementary School for next year. They would also like to know what is happening with the building and site plans.

Superintendent Hollinger noted that principal appointments are in May.

PRESENTATION(S)/
REPORT(S)

Budgeting/Financial Update

Mr. Richard Trainor, director, Finance, presented a brief summary of revenues, expenditures and encumbrances as of February 29, 2004.

Oasis Charter School Update

Mr. Trainor presented financial information as of February 29, 2004, showing a negative general fund balance of \$17,000. Cash balances have gone from \$67,000 in August to \$1000. Liabilities have increased to \$12,000 which indicates they don't have the cash to pay the liabilities. The ability to be able to pay off those current liabilities with current assets was at 12.51% in October and is now down to .1%.

Oasis has responded that the following action has been taken: Reduced school director's salary to \$25,000 (from \$35,000); reduced office expenses and school operational expenses; reduced audit/financial management services; reduced teaching staff by one; and reclassified one teacher out of the general fund to Title 1.

Mr. Trainor noted that he received a budget from Oasis today for the next four months, showing total revenues in the amount of \$123,415 and expenditures totaling \$104,369. Some of the numbers look okay and some are a concern as to whether some things can be met. If this does happen, Oasis will come up with \$19,000 and they are down \$17,000, leaving a balance of \$2,000 for the year.

Mr. Eubank asked, based on past presentations, if the numbers are in line with where staff thought they would be?

Mr. Trainor expected the numbers to be a little better, but the teacher reduction did not happen until March 1.

Mrs. Pinkoson expressed concern about the reduction of a teacher. If the student population is increasing by 30% and you are reducing the teachers, this would not be a good thing for the students.

Mr. Trainor noted that Ms. Charla Jones, principal, worked primarily in the office and is now helping in the classroom.

Mrs. Cawthon asked if the school received more money for the increase in students.

Mr. Trainor stated they are getting approximately \$17,000 a month where they were getting \$14,000.

Chairman Sharpe noted that it looks like we have a charter school in deep trouble. She asked if the district has given the school the technical assistance required. She stated that the charter school is a public school under the umbrella of the School Board, and we are held accountable to give technical assistance and know what is going on in the school.

She would like to have technical assistance provided and would like to hear from the Board members as to what the next move is as far as how long the school can continue without sinking; see if we can turn the school around.

Mrs. Childs stated that the Board of Directors for the school should be looking at finding ways to economize or rewrite a business plan, and she asked if there are any more specifics as to how they are cutting their expenses.

Ms. Jones noted they had met with various members of the school and faculty. The bookkeeper/accountant and the maintenance person agreed to take a reduction in pay, and the Board of Directors is looking at a new business plan.

Mrs. Childs requested a copy of the business plan as soon as it is designed.

Mrs. Pinkoson noted that in reading the auditor general's report for the school system, she realized how responsible the School Board is with regard to charter schools when schools were cited for not properly certifying their teachers, and they were not approved by the School Board. The School Board is held accountable. It is the taxpayer's money, and we need to make sure it is done prudently.

Mrs. Cawthon asked how the school planned to get enough money to start the next school year.

Ms. Jones stated that the school has applied for three grants, is in the process of applying for seven more, and has the opportunity of applying for the charter dissemination grant. If they receive half of those grants, it will provide an additional \$200,000 for the school. They will seek private donations from business partners.

Mrs. Cawthon asked what other charter schools have done differently to generate dollars after their start-up funds were expended.

Mr. Trainor replied that the majority are not generating new dollars; they are within the FEFP dollars and the capital outlay dollars provided by the district. Most are not getting a lot of grants; some are getting dissemination grants and you must do specific things with grant dollars--they are not necessarily to be used for operations.

Mrs. Pinkoson stated this Board needs to see more than what is based on grants and money that is coming in, if you get it. It has to be solid and substantial, living within your means.

Mrs. Childs is not sure the government will award a dissemination

grant to a school that is not functioning within the confines of its financial constraints. The money that comes in the first two years is strictly to get the school on its feet, after that it becomes a small business where you have to operate within your means. She expressed the following concerns:

- What is going to happen when the money runs out and expenses have been incurred?
- Make sure all potential people that could be affected by this are aware how tenuous this situation is, that it is a day-to-day concern.
- We have some students out there whose education is at stake and she doesn't want them to be unnecessarily disrupted.
- She doesn't want parents coming in asking why they were not made aware of the situation, or why didn't you do something to keep it from happening.
- I want the district to be on the front end so that those parents know this is happening, so if they want to volunteer or make donations to get the school through the year. Then they can make a decision about where they want their children to go next year. She does not want any surprises. She thinks it is important to make sure people know that.
- What happens if the electrical bill is not paid, do they look to us? What about the insurance for these people? What about all the things vendors are owed? I want it clear to those people that this is the school's responsibility and not the School Board allowing it to get there.

Chairman Sharpe stated the responsibility is outlined in the contract. The School Board is definitely not responsible for any liability or for money owed to anyone. She noted that Don Lewis, director, K-12 special programs, knows a lot about what we do and the parameters. She expressed the following concerns:

- The dependence on grants; there is nothing to guarantee you will get them. Good management is not based on ifs.
- You need to let the parents know when you are facing such financial difficulty.
- Don't wait until the ship sinks before you have a plan B.
- What is it that we do next?
- We want to be sure the district has provided all the technical assistance required and maybe go a little beyond what the law requires trying to help this charter school.

Mr. Robinson, staff attorney, noted the School Board is not liable for the debts of the charter school unless previously agreed to in detail in writing. Also there are certain standards of financial records to be maintained by the school and a statutory standard called Financial and Program Cost Accounting and Reporting for Florida Schools that the charter schools are supposed to abide by. He would be available to assist staff and the school.

Chairman Sharpe wants to be sure that the district has done everything to help the school recover, and if it doesn't recover, the alternative is clear.

Superintendent Hollinger noted that Mr. Lewis is very knowledgeable about charter schools and as mentioned he does sit on the Governor's Appeals Committee. She will avail herself and Mr. Robinson's support, have Mr. Lewis take initiative and talk with Ms. Jones, and come back to the Board with a written report.

Mrs. Childs believes it is in the contract with Oasis that if they have two years of financial problems, they would withdraw their charter. Should they manage to pull this out for the rest of this year, it still requires a concerted effort to make sure they are not in the same situation next year or they would be under the obligation to withdraw.

Mrs. Jones welcomes and appreciates the technical assistance to be given and will report back to the Board after meeting with all the parties as mentioned.

PROCLAMATION—
APRIL AS “JAZZ
APPRECIATION
MONTH”

Motion by Mrs. Pinkoson Seconded by Mr. Eubank

Moved the administration's recommendation to adopt the Proclamation proclaiming the month of April as “Jazz Appreciation Month” in Alachua County Schools.

On behalf of Gainesville Friends of Jazz & Blues, Mr. Scott Koon, president, thanked the Board for the proclamation and invited Chairman Sharpe to be their guest at their concert on April 13, 2004. Mrs. Sharpe has a previous commitment and Mrs. Pinkoson will represent the Board.

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

SCHEDULE BUDGET/
CAPITAL OUTLAY
WORKSHOP

Motion by Mrs. Pinkoson Seconded by Mrs. Cawthon

Moved the administration's recommendation to schedule a Budget/Capital Outlay workshop at 9:30 a.m., May 6, 2004.

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

NEW JOB DESCRIPTION
FOR ASSISTANT TO
SUPERINTENDENT FOR
COMMUNITY AND
SCHOOL RELATIONS—
SECOND READING

A public hearing was held February 17, 2004, to consider the new job description.

Motion by Mrs. Pinkoson Seconded by Mr. Eubank

Moved the administration's recommendation to adopt the new job description, Assistant to Superintendent for Community and School Relations, as presented.

ADMINISTRATIVE
APPOINTMENT(S)

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

Motion by Mrs. Pinkoson Seconded by Mrs. Cawthon

Moved the superintendent's recommendation to appoint Philoron A. Wright, Sr., as Assistant to Superintendent for Community and School Relations, effective March 22, 2004.

STUDENT CASE
NO. 03-22-X

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

The student is charged with being under the influence of alcohol and assault on law enforcement officials while on school property. A hearing was held on October 30, 2003. The Hearing Agent recommends that the student be reassigned to the Horizon Center.

Motion by Mrs. Cawthon Seconded by Mrs. Pinkoson

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

STUDENT CASE
NO. 04-02-HC

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

The student was reassigned to the alternative center as a result of a history of disruptive behavior. A hearing was held on January 13, 2004. The Hearing Agent recommends that the Board confirm the assignment of the student to the Horizon Center.

Motion by Mrs. Cawthon Seconded by Mr. Eubank

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

STUDENT CASE
NO. 04-06-X

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

The student was charged with making threatening remarks to another student and possessing a weapon, razor blade(s), while at school. A hearing was held on February 17, 2004. The hearing Agent recommends that the student be reassigned to the Horizon Center.

Motion by Mrs. Eubank Seconded by Mrs. Cawthon

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

PURCHASE OF ONE 47-
PASSENGER SCHOOL
BUS

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

Staff noted that the school bus firm fixed price of \$76,164 is based on rates contained in the Florida Department of Education School Buses contract. The 47-passenger bus will be used to transport ESE students and is being funded through the IDEA grant.

Motion by Mrs. Pinkoson Seconded by Mr. Eubank

Moved to purchase one 47-passenger school bus for the firm fixed price amount of \$76,164.

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

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion by Mrs. Pinkoson Seconded by Mr. Eubank

Moved to approve the Consent Agenda as described in items 1-10 with the deletion of item 5, Inventory Droppage Report November 21, 2003, through February 27, 2004. (See Supplementary Minutes Book.)

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

INFORMATION
ITEMS(S)

Gifted and Referral Process

Mr. Jose Catusus, school psychologist, provided information to the Board on referrals for the program for the gifted. From August 11, 2003 through March 15, 2004, 361 referrals were received and completed. Psychoeducational Services has 5 elementary referrals that have not been tested. There are 69 referrals in process at schools that have not been received by Psychoeducational Services—66 at the elementary school level and 3 at the middle school level.

He noted that a referral process normally takes three or four weeks, but there are several things that can happen to delay the process. The department has 16 psychologists doing tests, with one testing only for the gifted.

The customary tests used for gifted evaluations are the Wechsler-Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC) (fourth edition) and the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale (S-BIS) (fifth edition).

Chairman Sharpe asked what alternative test is used for low socioeconomic students.

Mr. Catusus stated the Reynolds Intellectual Assessment Scales (RIAS) is used first. They have the best experience with this as it gives a verbal and non-verbal. Another one is the Differential Ability Scales (DAS), and there are other tests used for children with limited English proficiency.

Chairman Sharpe asked about the referral process for identifying low socioeconomic status students who may qualify as gifted.

Mr. Catusus responded that there is a 7 point check list that every teacher should have and the school determines the time of the year to use this to rate all students in the class. The formalized process is

using this together with the standardized test results to determine which ones will be referred to the educational planning team at each school. Then the planning team determines which ones will be referred. There is also a formal process in which a teacher, parent, or anyone in the community can nominate a student to be looked at specifically for referral for gifted.

Mrs. Childs pointed out that the program at Lincoln Middle School does not require a gifted background. They look at students that perform well in school, that are motivated and high achievers.

Mrs. Childs expressed surprise and delight at the low number of students waiting to be tested.

Mrs. Hollinger pointed out that the magnet program at Foster Elementary School, concentrating on science, math and technology, does not require gifted eligibility. Next year, we are expanding our opportunities by looking at Westwood having the Cambridge program so we would have feeder schools for those children who are high achievers but are not gifted eligible.

CITIZEN INPUT (cont'd)

There was no additional citizen input.

BOARD MEMBER/
SUPERINTENDENT
REQUESTS

Mrs. Pinkoson thanked Deputy Superintendent Keith Birkett for the information provided Board members on substitutes. She reiterated her desire to look at the pay for substitutes and see what can be done.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:13 p.m.