

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF
ESCAMBIA COUNTY, FLORIDA

MINUTES, APRIL 10, 2014

The School Board of Escambia County, Florida, convened in Special Workshop at 3:00 p.m., in Room 160, at the J.E. Hall Educational Services Center, 30 East Texar Drive, Pensacola, Florida, with the following present:

Chair: Mrs. Linda Moultrie Vice Chair: Mrs. Patricia Hightower

Board Members: Mr. Jeff Bergosh
Mr. Gerald W. Boone
Mr. Bill Slayton

School Board General Counsel: Mrs. Donna Sessions Waters

Superintendent of Schools: Mr. Malcolm Thomas

Meeting was advertised in the *Pensacola News Journal* on April 1, 2014 - Legal No. 1621440

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mrs. Moultrie called the Special Workshop to order at 3:00 p.m.

II. OPEN DISCUSSION

- Tate High School's Health Science Academy – *Superintendent*

Ms. Beverly Vincent, instructor at Tate High School, addressed the School Board regarding the school's Biomedical Health Services Academy. Tate High School student Nathan Chestnut highlighted various aspects of the academy.

- Pensacola State's "Kids' College" – *Superintendent*

Ms. Frances Yeo, Coordinator of Continuing Education at Pensacola State College, reviewed [information](#) provided to the School Board regarding Pensacola State Kids' College 2014.

- FADSS Study – *Superintendent*

The Superintendent noted that a group of experts from the Florida Association of District School Superintendents (FADSS) had conducted a focus study on the School District's financial and human resource operations in the Fall of 2013 and had issued a report on that study in November 2013. The Superintendent asked Dr. Alan Scott, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resource Services and Mr. Terry St. Cyr, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Business Services, briefly review the recommendations outlined in the FADSS study. (NOTE: *Copies of the FADSS study had been provided to School Board*)

Members prior to this session.) It was noted that many of the recommended changes to Department Personnel Planning Document for 2014-2015 (Item V.b.3.A.7.q on the April 15, 2014 Regular Meeting agenda) were a result of the recommendations outlined in the FADSS study.

- Homeless Camp Near Montclair Elementary School (issue discussed by citizen at March Board Meeting) - *Moultrie*

Mrs. Moultrie initiated a discussion regarding student safety concerns that a citizen had expressed during the Public Forum segment of the March 25, 2014 Regular Meeting. The Superintendent said there was little that the School District could do about the location of the homeless camp; however, staff would of course “keep a watchful eye” on the situation to ensure the safety of students.

- Notification to Board Office of District/School Events and Activities – *Moultrie*

Mrs. Moultrie advised that several School Board Members had mentioned that they were often not made aware of special events taking place in the schools; she recalled a recent visit by nationally-recognized motivational speaker Stedman Graham at Warrington Middle School and Pensacola High School which the School Board did not receive any notification about. The Superintendent said he was not aware either and quite honestly, that had been quite embarrassing for him. The Superintendent said that most of the time, schools did notify him that someone was going to be speaking at their school whether to the entire student body or just a classroom full of students; however, there were occasions when someone would be visiting the school for just a short amount of time and he was not notified. He pointed out that if he was not aware, then obviously he would not be able to notify the School Board. In light of the concerns expressed, the Superintendent said he would communicate with the schools that they needed to work much closer with his office when bringing in guest speakers, especially someone considered to be a national figure, so that such information could be posted to the Master Calendar. On a related note, Mrs. Hightower took the opportunity to remind District and school staff that if they wanted to ensure that information was relayed to School Board Members, they should always notify Mrs. Linda West, Coordinator of Board Affairs. Mrs. Hightower noted that in the past School Board Members had received invitations to various School District events but now instead of receiving an invitation, they would only know about many of the events by checking the Master Calendar. Upon inquiry by Mrs. Hightower, the Superintendent confirmed that School Board Members were to assume that they were invited to all events posted to the District’s Master Calendar. He noted that his office would need to continue to “work through the process” to ensure that the Master Calendar specified those events that the public was permitted to attend and those that were by invitation only.

- April and May 2014 Calendar – *Moultrie*

April 2014 - There were no changes to the School Board’s schedule of workshops/meetings for April.

May 2014 - There were no changes to the School Board’s schedule of workshops/meetings for May.

June 2014 – The following changes were made to the School Board’s meeting schedule for June:

- The June Special “Open Discussion” Workshop originally scheduled for June 12th was canceled; however, the agenda for the June Regular Workshop would include an “open discussion” segment
- The June 13th Regular Workshop was rescheduled to June 19th beginning at 2:00 p.m.
- The June Regular Meeting originally scheduled for June 17th was rescheduled to June 24th

July 2014 – The following changes were made to the School Board’s meeting schedule for July:

- The July Special “Open Discussion” Workshop originally scheduled for July 10th was canceled; however, the agenda for the July Regular Workshop would include an “open discussion” segment
- The July 11th Regular Workshop was rescheduled to July 17th, beginning at 2:00 p.m.
- The July Regular Meeting originally scheduled for July 15th was rescheduled to July 22nd and would begin immediately upon adjournment of the 5:30 p.m. Special Meeting

- Response to Southern Poverty Law Center Complaint – Moultrie

Mrs. Moultrie recalled that during the Public Forum segment of the March 25, 2014 Regular Meeting, a speaker alleged that a class action lawsuit had been filed by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) against the Escambia County School District regarding student discipline issues. At the request of Mrs. Moultrie, Mrs. Waters had prepared a timeline of the communication that had occurred between the School District and the SPLC. Mrs. Waters briefly reviewed the timeline that she had provided to the School Board Members prior to this meeting. Mrs. Waters clarified for the record, that there was no class action lawsuit of any type pending against the School Board. She did advise however, that SPLC had in fact, made a complaint on the School District to the Office of Civil Rights. Mrs. Waters pointed out that an OCR complaint is not a lawsuit. She said the most recent communication she had with the OCR was within the last three months at which time she had responded to their request for information; she advised that she had yet to receive any response from OCR.

Because School Board Members planned to attend an event at Washington High School beginning at 6:00 p.m., it was decided that all remaining topics would be deferred until the following morning, beginning at 9:00 a.m. prior to the Regular Workshop.

The following speakers requested to address the School Board during Public Forum:

- Lucinda Martin and Rosa Dukes, representing Montclair on a Mission, expressed concerns about student safety due to the recently established homeless encampment (Satoshi Forest) located in very close proximity to Montclair Elementary School. The Superintendent said he would follow-up with Ms. Martin regarding the concerns expressed. Mr. Slayton asked that Mrs. Moultrie as the School Board Chair consider drafting a letter on behalf of the entire School Board expressing concern for the safety of the students in that area. It was noted that the letter should be addressed to the Chair of the Escambia County Commission.

The Special Workshop was recessed at 5:16 p.m. on April 10, 2014 and reconvened at 9:00 a.m. on April 11, 2014.

- Conversation Regarding Citizen Awareness of “Good Things” within the School District – Hightower

Mrs. Hightower said she had recently realized that there were many citizens in the community, especially those without school-age children, who were unaware or misinformed about the operations of the School District and the roles of the Superintendent and the School Board. Mrs. Hightower recalled Mrs. Moultrie having suggested the establishment of a citizens education academy that would give interested citizens an opportunity to learn more about the School District (see: Minutes, February 12, 2009). Mrs. Hightower suggested that this might be something for the Public Relations Coordinator to address (should the School Board approve the establishment of that position at the April 20, 2014 Regular Meeting). The

Superintendent cited several goals for the Public Relations Coordinator, such as creating a YouTube channel and using various forms of social media (i.e., Facebook, Twitter) to share the “good things” that were happening in the School District.

- Request for Detailed (gender/ethnicity), yet FERPA Compliant, Disciplinary Statistics for Change of Placement/Expelled Students over the Last 5 Year Period – Bergosh

Mr. Bergosh wanted it on the record that he had recently requested data/information from the Superintendent. His request was due to recent and on-going accusations that the School District was treating students differently in terms of discipline recommended for the various races of students who had committed the same offense. In order to determine if there had been disparate treatment of students, Mr. Bergosh wanted the following information on those students who had been expelled or had received a change of placement over the last (5) five years. He specifically wanted to know the number of referrals that each student had received prior to expulsion or change of placement and he wanted that information broken out by gender, age, and race. The Superintendent said he was not unwilling to provide the requested data/information – but he was concerned about having staff expend the time and energy during this busy time of the year – to compile data/information that may not address Mr. Bergosh’s concerns - was not sure that the data/information would answer the questions Mr. Bergosh was wanting answered. He wanted assurance that compiling such data/information would actually accomplish something meaningful before he asked staff to put in a lot of time and energy into compiling this data. Mr. Bergosh was to send the Superintendent an email message outlining the exact data/information that he was requesting. Mr. Bergosh said he realized that compiling and formatting such data/information would be quite an undertaking for staff especially during this busy time of the year so he noted that he was in no hurry to receive it.

- District/Faith-based Partnership to Begin Intramural Sports Leagues to Facilitate Community/Parental Involvement in Schools – Bergosh

Mr. Bergosh narrated a brief PowerPoint® [presentation](#) that outlined his proposal for driving community engagement via a basketball league at schools that needed more parental involvement, schools that struggled academically, and high poverty schools (specifically, Weis, Montclair, Semmes, Holm, West Pensacola, Warrington, and Navy Point elementary schools and also Global Learning Academy). Mr. Bergosh believed that the creation of these basketball leagues would help drive citizenship skills, engage the community, get parents involved, develop teamwork, incentivize doing well in school, and of course learn basic fundamentals of basketball.

- Project 1-12 Save a Generation, Save the Future – Bergosh

Mr. Bergosh narrated a brief PowerPoint® [presentation](#) that outlined his proposal for *Project 1-12: Save a Generation, Save the Future*. His proposal called for the establishment of a boarding school in the Pensacola area for the purpose of reaching children who would typically “fall through the cracks” due to concentrated generational poverty, dysfunctional home environment, mobility, apathetic caregivers/parents, and/or dangerous, unsafe neighborhoods. At the request of Mr. Bergosh, Mrs. Moultrie said she would forward the information outlined in this presentation to the “Closing the Achievement Gap” task force so that they could determine whether this proposal was feasible for the local area.

III. PUBLIC FORUM

Mrs. Moultrie called for public forum; however, there were no speakers.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Special Workshop adjourned at 10:36 a.m. on April 11, 2014.

Attest:

Approved:

Superintendent

Chair

PENDING BOARD APPROVAL