

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF  
ESCAMBIA COUNTY, FLORIDA

MINUTES, OCTOBER 16, 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 October 1, 2014 - Legal No. 1630649

NOTE: The minutes from this session have been prepared according to *Roberts Rules of Order, Newly Revised*. The video from this session is available at <http://escambiacitysdf.com/play/10162014-723>

[General discussion among School Board Members, the Superintendent, and staff occurred throughout this session.]

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

II. OPEN DISCUSSION

- October, November and December Calendar – Moultrie

*October Schedule of Workshops/Meetings*

There were no changes to the School Board's schedule of workshops/meetings for October.

*November Schedule of Workshops/Meetings*

The School Board agreed to schedule the following additional meeting for November:

- Installation Ceremony & Organizational Meeting, November 18, 2014, beginning at 5:00 p.m.  
(It was noted that the November 18, 2014 Regular Meeting should be advertised to begin immediately following the 5:00 p.m. Installation Ceremony & Organizational Meeting.)

*December Schedule of Workshops/Meetings*

The following workshops/meetings were tentatively scheduled for December:

- Special Workshop, December 11, 2014, beginning at 3:00 p.m.
- Regular Workshop, December 12, 2014, beginning at 9:00 a.m.
- Regular Meeting, December 16, 2014, beginning at 5:30 p.m.

All December sessions were to be held in Room 160, at the J.E. Hall Educational Services Center. It was noted that the December schedule would be officially decided during the November Organizational Meeting.

- Mandatory Ethics Training – Boone

[S. 112.3142, F.S., requires all constitutional officers to complete four (4) hours of ethics training annually that addresses, at a minimum, the constitutional “Sunshine Law” provisions (Article II, Section 8), the Code of Ethics for Public Officers and Employee (Chapter 112, Part III, F.S.), and the public records and public meetings laws.] Mrs. Linda West, Coordinator of Board Affairs, advised that the Florida School Boards Association (FSBA) offered both live-delivery and webinar format ethics training options. The live training session would be held on December 5<sup>th</sup> in conjunction with the Annual Joint Conference in Tampa, Florida, while the on-demand webinar training was available individually or as a group (via a Special Board Meeting) through December 31<sup>st</sup> wherever internet access was available. Both Mrs. Hightower and Mrs. Moultrie indicated that they would attend the training session offered during the Annual Joint Conference; Mr. Boone, Mr. Slayton, and Mr. Bergosh indicated that they did not plan to attend the Annual Joint Conference and therefore, would pursue the webinar training individually. The Superintendent said he would work with Mrs. West on the registration and payment for the webinar training.

- Resolution on Accountability – Moultrie

Mrs. Moultrie advised that she, as School Board Chair, had received a copy of a resolution recently passed by the School Board of Palm Beach County, Florida, which reiterated their call for a three-year transition for implementation of Florida’s accountability system. Mrs. Moultrie said that the School Board of Palm Beach County, Florida was asking the Escambia County School Board to consider adopting a similar resolution. Discussion ensued with several School Board Members commenting that the resolution passed by Palm Beach County was too wordy and too lengthy. The Superintendent noted that the Palm Beach resolution called for a three-year transition for implementation of Florida’s accountability system; a request that he did not believe the Legislature would ever agree to. Several School Board Members commented that this type of resolution was nothing more than a “statement” which should simply send a clear and succinct message that the Escambia County School Board believed in accountability but there was currently just too much student testing required in Florida. The Superintendent commented that it might be better for School Board Members to make their viewpoint known in conversations with members of the local legislative delegation. Mrs. Hightower recalled that a similar resolution had already been adopted by the Escambia County School Board; she suggested that a copy of that resolution be located and that the School Board simply reaffirm that which they had previously adopted.

- Due Process in Student Athlete Investigations – Moultrie

In light of the recent investigation at Escambia High School, Mrs. Moultrie wanted to make sure that students and parents understood their right to due process; she had discussed with the Superintendent that perhaps the matter could be addressed with clearer verbiage in the School Board’s policies and the School District’s standard operating procedures (SOP), and/or perhaps by adding a signature line to the investigative reports for a parent/guardian to indicate that they understand their right to due process.

On a matter related to due process, Mr. Bergosh expressed some concern that students at Escambia High School may have been interviewed by the School District’s Investigator without their parent’s knowledge. The Superintendent advised that in the midst of the recent investigation at Escambia High School, the student interview process had changed so that anytime the School District’s Investigator was planning to interview a student, that interview would not occur until such time as the student’s parent/guardian had been notified and was given an opportunity to be present during the interview; also, a school administrator would be present during the interview as well.

- West Florida High School’s Cox Communication Academy – Superintendent

Students enrolled in the Cox Communication Academy at West Florida High School commented on the knowledge and experience they had gained through this telecommunications program. Students recalled several major projects that had enhanced their learning opportunities, including: the installation of Lightspeed audio systems in over forty (40) classrooms at Warrington Middle School, installation of

Ethernet cables from communication closets to every classroom at West Florida High School as part of the bring-your-own-device (BYOD) project, and the installation, ceiling mounting, and programming of over twenty (20) projectors at Myrtle Grove Elementary.

- Discussion of Process for Calling Meetings and Developing, Adding and Revising Agendas and Back-up Materials for the Board – Bergosh

[The following discussion refers to a Special Meeting originally scheduled for September 30, 2014 that was ultimately canceled due to an advertising error in the *Pensacola News Journal*.] Mr. Bergosh wanted a better understanding of the process whereby a School Board Member, such as himself, could add items to a special meeting agenda. It was his understanding that the September 30<sup>th</sup> Special Meeting was called by the Superintendent at the request of the Board Chair who had received a request from an individual School Board Member. Mr. Bergosh said he had requested that the Superintendent revise the agenda for the September 30<sup>th</sup> Special Meeting but that the Superintendent refused to do so; as such, he wanted to know how a School Board Member was supposed to have something added to or changed on a special meeting agenda if the Superintendent refused to do so. At the request of Mrs. Moultrie, Mrs. Waters advised the School Board of the procedure for regular and special meetings as outlined in Section 1001.372, F.S. Mrs. Waters advised that Superintendent was not required to put something on the “consent agenda” or as an “Item from the Superintendent” unless it was his recommendation; however, there was always the ability for a School Board Member to add an item under a section entitled “Items from the Board” which she noted was really what should have occurred for the items that Mr. Bergosh wished to submit for the September 30<sup>th</sup> Special Meeting. The Superintendent requested an opportunity to explain the situation from his perspective. He recalled that the Board Chair had advised him that she wished to call a special meeting\* and had provided him with a proposed agenda that outlined four (4) separate items; however, he pointed out that none of those items fell under a heading of “Items from the Board.” [\*Mrs. Moultrie advised that the special meeting was actually requested by an individual School Board Member. In response to that request, she as Board Chair, asked Mrs. Waters to draft a letter to the Superintendent requesting the meeting and providing a proposed agenda.] As requested by the Board Chair, the Superintendent called the Special Meeting and published an agenda based on the proposed agenda provided by the Board Chair. While he had no problem calling the special meeting so that the School Board could discuss the items listed on the proposed agenda, he had made it clear that he had no recommendations on those items; therefore, when Mr. Bergosh made a request to modify items on that agenda, being that those items were not listed under a heading of “Items from the Board,” he had rejected Mr. Bergosh’s request as it would have appeared from the way that the agenda was structured that any backup provided was actually a recommendation from him (the Superintendent), though it was not. The Superintendent noted that when he calls a meeting, it is presumed that all items, other than those listed under “Items from the Board” or “Items from the General Counsel,” are a recommendation from him. While he had no problem with discussion of the items listed, he would not link the backup that Mr. Bergosh provided to the agenda as outlined and he never received a request from the Board Chair, who was the one who provided the agenda to begin with, to add a section entitled “Items from the Board.” Discussed ensued and ultimately School Board Members were advised that in the future, it was important to request that their items were listed under the section “Items from the Board” should there be a need to modify the item and/or add any supporting backup documentation.

- Discussion of Measuring the Teaching-time Lost in Dealing with Excessive Referrals/Behavior Issues in Historically High-discipline Schools – Bergosh

Mr. Bergosh provided his fellow School Board Members with a copy of a study that was related to this topic. His concern was with the amount of time that was being spent on a small percentage of students who were repeatedly disruptive in the classrooms; he believed there was a simple way for teachers to quantify the amount of time those students were taking away from the learning opportunities of other students. While there was much discussion under this item most of the discussion swayed from the true topic that Mr. Bergosh was attempting to address; therefore, Mr. Bergosh indicated that he would bring this issue back as a discussion topic for another time. In the meantime, he encouraged his fellow School Board Members to review the study that he had provided.

- Adding Cameras in the Classrooms of Historically High-discipline Schools to Enhance the Security of the Learning Environment - *Bergosh*

Mr. Bergosh provided his fellow School Board Members with several news articles on the topic of cameras in the classroom. He expressed his belief that the addition of cameras in the classroom would enhance the security of the learning environment and possibly improve student behavior, especially in those schools with historically high discipline rates. He asked that his fellow School Board Members, consider as other school districts had done, the addition, particularly in the new schools under-going construction in the near future. It was his belief that cameras in the classrooms would provide a level of protection for students, faculty, and even School District assets, would be helpful particularly in situations when a teacher had been accused of inappropriate behavior/actions, and would put students on notice that their classroom behavior was being monitored. Discussion ensued with several School Board Members saying they were willing to consider the possibility of installing cameras in the classrooms but that they would need to know the costs associated with doing so first. Mrs. Hightower believed that Mr. Bergosh's suggestion should first be limited to perhaps only in-school suspension classrooms, before being considered school-wide. A few School Board Members commented that the cameras would probably be a deterrent for student misbehavior in the beginning, but eventually students would probably forget they were being monitored and the cameras would serve more as an evidence device. The Superintendent commented on the importance of first ensuring that all schools in the District had basic surveillance systems and alarm systems before considering cameras for individual classrooms district-wide.

- Annual Wellness Update – *Superintendent*

The following staff narrated a brief PowerPoint® [presentation](#) that provided an update to the School Board on the 2013-2014 wellness policy operational procedures:

Ms. Jaleena Davis, Director of Food Service, provided the progress report on School Food Services and Physical Education; Dr. Michelle Taylor, Director of Workforce Education, provided the progress report on Health Education; Ms. Martha Hanna, Coordinator II-Health Services, provided the progress report on Health Services; Ms. Lisa Joyner, Coordinator III-Student Services, provided the progress report on Counseling, Psychological and Social Services; Mr. Bryan Oakes, Safety Officer I-Protection Services, provided the progress report on Healthy School Environment; and Mr. Patrick Palmer, Coordinator II-Employee Benefits & Wellness, provided the progress report on Health Promotion for Staff.

- Focus Curriculum Goals – *Superintendent*

[*Handouts were provided to School Board Members.*] Ms. Vicki Gibowski, Director of Middle School Education, reported on the updated focus curriculum goals at the high school and middle school levels; and Ms. Linda Maletsidis, Director of Elementary Education, reported on the updated focus curriculum goals at the elementary school level.

- Strategic Plan Update – *Superintendent*

[*A handout was provided to School Board Members.*] Mr. Tom Ingram, Director of Information Technology (IT), reviewed each of the goals and objectives associated with the “environment” pillar of the proposed 2014-2015 Strategic Plan. While there was discussion regarding some of the information provided, under Goal E.1, *Safety – To improve safety in the learning, work, and virtual/technological environment*, specifically Objective E.1.2., *Increase comprehensive monitoring capabilities including building surveillance systems on all campuses and work locations*, and Objective E.1.3., *Increase parent satisfaction\* with safety as measured by item 8 in the Parent Satisfaction Survey (\*on a scale of 1-5)*, no changes were requested. Due to time constraints, it was decided that staff would review the remaining pillars of “service, quality, people, and finance” during the October 17, 2014 Regular Workshop.

III. PUBLIC FORUM

Prior to Public Forum, the Superintendent took a moment to thank Mrs. Donna Waters, School Board General Counsel and Ms. Sharon Goshorn, Legal Assistant, for the “well-received” training session that they conducted with Level 1 and Level 2 hearing officers. The Superintendent left the meeting at 5:50 p.m. Mr. Norm Ross, Deputy Superintendent served as Superintendent for the remainder of this session.

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

- James C. Nims, Jr., speaking as an individual, asked that the School Board consider recognizing, by formal resolution, those deputies who were present at the September 16<sup>th</sup> Regular School Board Meeting. Mr. Nims commented on the professional way in which those deputies handled a situation that “could have gotten out of hand.”

IV. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Special Workshop was adjourned at 6:15 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

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Superintendent

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Chair

PENDING BOARD APPROVAL