

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF
ESCAMBIA COUNTY, FLORIDA

MINUTES, JULY 20, 2015

The School Board of Escambia County, Florida, convened in Special Workshop at 8:00 a.m., in Room 160, at the J.E. Hall Educational Services Center, 30 East Texar Drive, Pensacola, Florida, with the following present:

Chair: Mrs. Patricia Hightower
Vice Chair: Mr. Bill Slayton
Board Members: Mr. Jeff Bergosh
Mr. Gerald Boone
Mrs. Linda Moultrie

School Board General Counsel: Mrs. Donna Sessions Waters

Superintendent of Schools: Mr. Malcolm Thomas

Meeting was advertised in the *Pensacola News Journal* on June 27, 2015 - Legal No. 1643858

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://escambiacountysdfl.swagit.com/play/07202015-588>

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

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mrs. Hightower called the Special Workshop to order at 8:00 a.m. She noted that this session had been called at the request of the School Board in order to discuss the School District's student population growth and explore the current plan for addressing that growth through the construction of new school facilities.

II. DISCUSSION REGARDING DISTRICT POPULATION GROWTH

At the request of the Superintendent, Mr. Shawn Dennis, Assistant Superintendent for Operations, narrated a brief PowerPoint® presentation entitled *The School District of Escambia County Facilities Strategic Overview: 2018-2023* (as of July 2015). NOTE: *This was a follow-up to a presentation that was given at the February 13, 2014 Special Workshop and the November 13, 2014 Special Workshop. The overview illustrated the School District's facilities needs for the next five (5) years of the One-Half Cent Sales Tax referendum.*

The presentation consisted of two segments:

- Major District Wide Facilities Challenges (for 2014-2018 and 2018-2023 and beyond)
- Strategic Overview

Mr. Bergosh said that he agreed with much of what was outlined in the presentation, however, there were several key points that he disagreed with and as such, he chose to narrate his own PowerPoint® presentation

entitled *Addressing District Growth Pockets Through Prudent Facility Planning*. Mr. Bergosh noted that the School District would soon be embarking upon a building campaign, with contracts being presented to the School Board over the next eighteen (18) months allowing for the construction of a new middle school in the Beulah area and the relocation of the Woodham Middle School population to that site; the closure of Brown Barge Middle and the PATS Center and the relocation of that school/center to the West Florida High School campus; and the movement of West Florida High School to the Woodham Middle School campus. It was his belief that the plan as outlined did not ensure that all students would be relocated from portables into permanent classrooms; did not do anything to reduce the significant overcrowding at Jim Bailey Middle School; and did not rebalance existing district facilities before new construction was planned, contracted and executed. Furthermore, the plan called for the relocation of the last middle school in District 3, meaning all District 3 students would be bused out-of-district to attend middle school; something that he was very concerned about.

Mr. Bergosh recalled that a plan for a Westside K-8 (recommended by the Watson Study) was originally in the Facilities Work Plan but for 2012-2013 the plan was altered to a Westside elementary instead, along with a rebuild at Ernest Ward Middle and A.K. Suter Elementary. He noted that a Westside K-8 would have alleviated overcrowding at existing Westside elementary schools (i.e., Hellen Caro Elementary, Blue Angels Elementary, and Pleasant Grove Elementary) and Jim Bailey Middle School. Mr. Bergosh pointed out that a Westside elementary school would not solve the overcrowding at Jim Bailey Middle School.

Mr. Bergosh noted that with all of the new home construction occurring in the Northwest part of the county, the Beulah area had become the new growth area of concern. He pointed out that Beulah Elementary School was drastically overcapacity with approximately 1,000 students and as such the core facilities of that school were stressed with eighteen (18) portable classrooms, a brand new modular unit consisting of eight (8) classrooms and an add-on permanent wing that was constructed in 2009. He expressed concern that home builders in the Beulah area had reported that potential home buyers were not happy about the portable situation at Beulah Elementary School and as such, many were choosing to send their children to private schools instead. He also noted that many parents of students who were already attending Beulah Elementary School were not happy about the portable situation.

Mr. Bergosh stressed the need for rebalancing existing district facility capacities. He noted that district-wide, middle schools were only at 76% utilization; and on the elementary side, the District was at 90% utilization, with massive overcrowding at schools like Beulah and Oakcrest while other schools, like West Pensacola and Montclair were drastically underutilized. It was his belief that a rebalancing effort could resolve many of the district-wide utilization issues.

Mr. Bergosh had concerns about the School District's plan to construct a new middle school in the Beulah area. It was his belief that it was an additional elementary school was needed in the Beulah area, not another middle school. He also noted that there was already a middle school, Beulah Academy of Science (charter school), literally next door to the site for the new middle school. He wanted to know why no thought had been given to expanding the capacity for Beulah Academy of Science, noting that it would be much less expensive to add additional capacity at that site then to build an entirely new site.

Mr. Bergosh pointed out that the School District had made some poor decisions in the past with regard to facilities, including: the site selection for Northview High School; the designation of a K-8 for Molino Park/Dogwood Park; the site selection for Lipscomb Elementary/McArthur Elementary/Westgate Center; and the location of Pine Forest High, West Florida High, George Stone Technical Center, and Longleaf Elementary. He suggested that the School District would be making yet another poor decision with the construction of a new middle school in the Beulah area. To ensure that the right decisions were made and to remove any outside, political influences on either the timeline or the final needs determination, Mr. Bergosh asked for:

- support for a new-construction needs analysis conducted by an unbiased, independent planning firm;

- immediate re-engagement of SAZAC to address immediate overcrowding/balance issues;
- the formation of a district study committee to vet the needs analysis recommendations in concert with the One-Half Cent Sales Tax Watchdog Committee and District Facilities staff before new construction projects were approved; and
- support for the creation and implementation of School Board policy mandating assessment and rebalancing of boundaries every two (2) years.

In addition, he suggested that in an effort to save money and time on the District's construction process, the School Board consider design-build versus design-bid-build; and site-adaptation of existing designs/plans. He also suggested consideration of rotating source-selection committees.

There was much discussion among the School Board, the Superintendent, and Mr. Dennis for the remainder of this session. However, when pointedly asked whether or not they would support Mr. Bergosh's suggestion for an independent new-construction needs analysis, Mrs. Moultrie was the only School Board Member who indicated that she would consider doing so. Mrs. Hightower, Mr. Slayton and Mr. Boone indicated that they would not be in favor of an independent study at this point, primarily because they did not wish to delay the School District's facilities work plan any further.

III. PUBLIC FORUM

Mr. Jim Taylor registered to address the School Board regarding school plans. Mr. Taylor asked that School Board Members carefully consider what was truly best for the students of Escambia County when making their decisions.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Special Workshop was adjourned at 10:03 a.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Superintendent

Chair