

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF
ESCAMBIA COUNTY, FLORIDA

MINUTES, APRIL 13, 2017

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 (District III)
Vice Chair: Mr. Gerald W. Boone (District II)
Board Members: Mr. Kevin Adams (District I)
Mrs. Patricia Hightower (District IV)

Absent: Mr. Bill Slayton (District V)

School Board General Counsel: Mrs. Donna Sessions Waters

Superintendent of Schools: Mr. Malcolm Thomas

Meeting advertised in the *Pensacola News Journal* on April 3, 2017 - [Legal No. 2035555](#)

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/04132017-638/#18>

[*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

- Ransom Middle School Multi Media Academy – *Superintendent*

Students enrolled in the Multi-Media Academy at Ransom Middle School addressed the School Board regarding their experiences and an overview of this program. *“We live in a media driven world, full of texts, video and audio....this prepares us for future higher education and the workforce.”*

- Calendar

May 2017

The Annual Retirement Ceremony for employees will be held on Monday, May 1, 2017, at 6:00 p.m., at Booker T. Washington High School. Master Board Training will be conducted in the Superintendent’s Conference Room on Friday, May 12, 2017, beginning at 9:00 a.m.

June 2017

Mrs. Hightower noted she would be attending the FSBA Joint Conference in June; the Superintendent indicated he would be attending that same conference. In addition, Superintendent Thomas said the district would again be on the summer work schedule, therefore the workshop date(s) should be changed. After further discussion, it was determined that a combined open discussion/regular workshop would be held on Monday, June 19, 2017, at 9:00 a.m., in Room 160 of the J. E. Hall Center.

July 2017

The July open discussion/regular workshop date was moved from Friday, July 14, 2017, to Thursday, July 13, 2017, at 9:00 a.m., in Room 160 of the J. E. Hall Center. Mr. St. Cyr, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Business Services, noted the “*Truth in Millage*” (*TRIM*) meeting would be held on July 20, 2017, at 8:30 a.m., in Room 160 of the J. E. Hall Center.

- Update on Library Card Issuance – *Hightower*

Mrs. Hightower requested an update on this subject, as this was previously discussed during the March 7, 2017, Joint School Board Meeting held with the Board of County Commissioners. Superintendent Thomas said there had been several meetings with the district’s Information Technology Department, and West Florida Public Libraries Director Mr. Humble, with most of the conversation centered on the policy of no fines or fees for late item returns for parents of students as a result of their using the library card. Superintendent Thomas stated logistics were being worked out, with a memorandum of understanding also being developed, pending confirmation by the West Florida Public Libraries Board of Governance. He said the intent was to facilitate distribution of the library cards during the first two weeks of May, rather than sending them home the last week of school. Superintendent Thomas also noted an opportunity for the district to participate in the National Challenge by the Urban Libraries Council, called *The Leaders Library Card Challenge*. Superintendent Thomas thanked the district IT Department for their efforts to make this happen, and Mr. David Bryant, Director of Internal Auditing, for his leadership on the West Florida Public Libraries Board of Governance.

- NSBA Recap – *Hightower*

Mrs. Hightower provided a brief overview of the conference that she and Mr. Adams attended given by the National School Boards Association, in Denver, Colorado. Mrs. Hightower mentioned how well our district reported and assisted in student attendance, and also how we were leading the way with Workforce Education. She had attended a national presentation on competency based education, which had no grade levels, but instead proficiency levels (based on mental capacity, not chronological age.) Mr. Adams stated he realized very quickly during his attendance that the definition of a school district varies widely at the national level; some communities have fifteen school districts with only 400 – 500 students comparatively speaking. He also noted he attended a session where they used our district as an example, discussing the Studer Pre-K vocabulary readiness, as well as hearing speaker Ruby Payne, on the topic of poverty. Mrs. Hightower noted finally the district in Denton, Texas that utilizes an old school bus which had been turned into a food truck for their culinary arts students to use for events.

Mrs. Moultrie acknowledged the Honorable Chris Jones, Property Appraiser for Escambia County, who was in attendance for an agenda item presentation. Superintendent Thomas asked Mr. Jones to give his presentation at that time.

- Property Appraiser Presentation – *Superintendent*

Mr. Chris Jones, Escambia County Property Appraiser, introduced Mr. Keith Hodges, Chief Deputy, and Mr. Tom Findley, as his Counsel. Mr. Jones provided a brief update regarding the Pensacola Beach Property Tax issue, which had been ongoing since 2004. He noted there were two lawsuits still pending, and had met previously the Mr. St. Cyr, Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Business Services. Mr. Jones noted multiple courts had ruled in our favor except one. These two lawsuits are before the appellate court now, and the school district is holding money in reserves for those two lawsuits. Mr. Jones stated that since the time in 2004 that Pensacola Beach was placed on the tax rolls, they had collected in excess of \$200M dollars, of which approximately half would go to the School Board. If the current case from the district court of appeals is returned in a negative manner, the school board would have to refund approximately \$7 million. Mr. Jones noted there were presently more than thirty (30) new lawsuits regarding taxes from Pensacola Beach which if also ruled in a negative manner, could cost up to \$375 million dollars. He provided additional information on properties (visual) map with possible changes to leased properties, which would also result in

losses annually of approximately \$5 million. Mr. Jones noted the district kept funds in reserve for this possibility, and presented the opportunity for the School Board to join in the lawsuit seeking clarity from the Supreme Court of Florida. The position of the School Board would be as an injured party, and could challenge a statute to secure the funding necessary to educate students. Mr. Jones asked the School Board to join with his office to seek that clarity at the Supreme Court.

Mrs. Hightower said she was aware that every year on budget the district sets aside funds for this purpose. She asked how much is in that reserve. Mr. St. Cyr stated approximately \$7 million, and then briefly explained the required local effort/per pupil funding formula. Mrs. Hightower asked if all of the Pensacola Beach lease owners pay lease fees. Mr. Jones said everyone on the island pays on the “improvement value” and the question is the land under their buildings, as people don’t want to pay taxes and lease fees. Mr. Jones also noted that paid lease fees go straight to the Santa Rosa Island Authority (SRIA) and therefore stays on the island; the school district general fund gets none of those funds.

Mrs. Waters agreed it was true that the School Board would have standing as a sympathetic plaintiff. Mr. Adams asked if the School Board won, would there be other levels of appeal. Mrs. Waters stated that as this was a state law, it would not go to the U.S. Supreme Court. Mr. Tom Finley, General Counsel for the Property Appraiser noted the research had been conducted to raise this constitutional argument, as typically they rule on the most “narrow” ground. He stated these are good arguments, and can serve to help the school district. Mrs. Hightower noted this was a large amount of funding being discussed; Mrs. Moultrie agreed there needs to be a resolution to benefit our students. Superintendent Thomas noted the support from the Board, and he suggested securing an attorney who is an expert (working with Mrs. Waters and Mr. Finley), bring a resolution or an agreement, or formal action to join with Mr. Jones. Mr. Jones indicated he would communicate with the School Board to set meetings to discuss this further. He expressed his appreciation to the School Board for their time.

- Risk and Suicide Prevention Assessment Training Update – *Superintendent*

Mrs. Teri Szafran, Director of Exceptional Student Education, provided a copy of the Powerpoint presentation. She introduced Dr. Lisa Joyner, Coordinator III – Student Services, and provided information on the Multi-Disciplinary Team at the district and school levels. Mrs. Szafran described the steps taken to identify risks and appropriate reactions. She also noted this did not mean that staff members are asked to diagnose students, just assist with intervention services they may need, and levels are categorized. Their ultimate goal is to maintain a safe school environment as a part of their mission.

- Update on Vision 2020 Chromebooks – *Superintendent*

Mr. Thomas Ingram, Director of Information Technology, provided an update on the Chromebooks being utilized in the district. He noted that two years into the process, there were currently 33,698 Chrome Devices in use by students and staff. Mr. Ingram stated that approximately 31,000 are being used by students, and he could provide a firm number following the next FTE count this spring. After some discussion, Mr. Ingram advised those present of the district’s Digital Showcase scheduled for May, 5, 2017, at 5:30 p.m., at the Spencer Bibbs Center. Mrs. Moultrie asked if charter schools were included in the number of students using our Chromebooks, and Mr. Ingram said no, with Mrs. Vickie Mathis, Director of Alternative Education, stating charter schools they use their own devices. Mr. Ingram then provided a brief explanation of bandwidth, and how it affects connectivity.

III. PUBLIC FORUM

- None

IV. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Special Workshop adjourned at 4:44 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Superintendent

Chair

PENDING BOARD APPROVAL