

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF
ESCAMBIA COUNTY, FLORIDA

MINUTES, DECEMBER 13, 2018

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. Patricia Hightower (District IV)
Vice Chair: Mr. Bill Slayton (District V)
Board Members: Mr. Kevin L. Adams (District I)
Mr. Paul Fetsko (District II)
Dr. Laura Dortch Edler (District III)

School Board General Counsel: Mrs. Donna Sessions Waters

Superintendent of Schools: Mr. Malcolm Thomas

Meeting advertised in the *Pensacola News Journal* on November 22, 2018 – Legal No. [3262591](#)

NOTE: Minutes from this session have been prepared according to *Roberts Rules of Order, Newly Revised*.

Video available at <http://escambiacountysdfl.swagit.com/play/12132018-761>

[*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 3:00 p.m.

II. OPEN DISCUSSION

- Calendar

In addition to reviewing and discussing their monthly schedules of workshops/meetings, School Board Members also reviewed and/or discussed various events posted on the School District's calendar.

-December 2018

There were no changes to the remaining schedule of workshops/meetings for December.

-January 2019

There were no changes to the schedules of workshops/meetings for January.

-February 2019

There was mention of rescheduling the workshops in February. Final determination would be made at the January 10, 2019 Special Workshop.

-March 2019

There was mention of rescheduling the Regular Meeting in March. Final determination would be made at the January 10, 2019 Special Workshop.

ADD

- General Counsel Contract Renewal

It was noted that the [current contract](#) with Donna Sessions Waters, Esquire, would expire on June 30, 2019. Mr. Fetsko said his only concern about renewing the contract was with the term being for two years, when instructional and administrative employees had received only one-year contracts since about the year 2000. Discussion concerning the term of the contract renewal ensued. It was noted that the contract for the General Counsel position was previously for a three-year period. At some point, the School Board considered reducing the term to just one-year; however, the General Counsel at that time had suggested they would find it difficult to hire someone for that position when offering only a one-year contract. The General Counsel at that time also noted the importance of continuity by having the same individual in that position for more than just one year. Ultimately, the School Board at that time, compromised by reducing the term from three-years to two-years rather than just one. Dr. Edler was concerned that there was no discussion regarding the two-year term reflected in the minutes from the May 2017 sessions when Mrs. Waters'

contract was last renewed. The Superintendent noted that regardless of whether any discussion was reflected in the minutes from those sessions, it was the contract itself that memorialized the School Board's approval of that two-year term. Following further discussion, both Mr. Fetsko and Mr. Adams said they would support a two-year renewal with Mrs. Waters given that the two-year precedent had been set, and because it would take her through to her anticipated retirement date. Dr. Edler said that because of the work required of that position, and because the School Board needed the continuity of having the same individual in that position, she too, would support a two-year renewal.

- FSBA Conference Comments

Mrs. Hightower offered each School Board Member an opportunity to share information gleaned from the recent Florida School Boards Association Annual Joint Conference. Mr. Fetsko said the conference had been a great opportunity to network with school board members from across the state of Florida. There was mention of a presentation regarding Osceola County School District's effective use of social media and other communications to spread positive and informative messages about their public schools to the citizens in their county. School Board Members agreed they should consider a similar initiative for Escambia County. Mr. Slayton suggested inviting a representative from Osceola County to conduct a workshop on their methods/approach.

- Review of School Board Procedures – Hightower

Mrs. Hightower referred newly elected School Board Members to the *Rules and Procedures of the District School Board*, specifically Chapter 1 – Administration, Section 1.20 – Standards for School Board Members' Conduct. Mrs. Hightower noted that Mrs. Waters would be able to answer any questions regarding the information outlined in policy.

- School Board Committee Appointments – Hightower

Mrs. Hightower provided a brief synopsis of purpose and typical meeting schedule for each of the following committees that the School Board could either serve on or select an appointee for:

Escambia County Planning Board – current representative/appointee: Patricia Hightower

Community Action Committee – current representative/appointee: Linda Moultrie

Early Learning Coalition – current representative/appointee: Gerald Boone

Escambia County Value Adjustment – current representative/appointee: Kevin Adams

Military Affairs Committee – current representative/appointee: Kevin Adams

Escambia County Public Schools Foundation – current representative/appointee: Patricia Hightower

Value Adjustment Board – current representative/appointee: Gerald Adcox

Mrs. Hightower said items related to the appointment of a representative/appointee for each of those committees would be placed on the January 15, 2019 Regular Meeting agenda.

- Community Magnet/Academy School Choice Options – Adams

Mr. Adams prefaced this discussion by noting that his proposal was for the School Board to consider for the future when going through the process of selecting an appointed superintendent. His primary concern was with fairly stagnant, and at times, declining student enrollment. He cited Warrington as an example of a community with low-performing schools that had caused a decline in enrollment due to parents "choicing out" of the community, for other public and private options. Mr. Adams noted that it was becoming more challenging for public schools to compete for students and increase enrollment; as such, the School Board should consider providing greater choice opportunities. He suggested that the following proposal would give parents an opportunity to choice into, rather than out of the Warrington community: *Turn Warrington Elementary into a magnet school with the mission of nurturing the intellectual curiosity of Escambia County students by providing hands-on learning experiences to further their understanding of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM)*. Mr. Adams noted the following benefits to the proposal: provide a magnet school choice option for the west side of the county to complement an existing magnet school (N.B. Cook Elementary) on the east; and provide active duty military families and the community in Warrington, an excellent choice option to remain in their community. As a STEM school, he proposed a partnership with NAS Pensacola, and NAS Corry. The Superintendent cautioned the School Board that by establishing a magnet school, meaning a school without an attendance zone, they would essentially be pulling students

from neighboring schools and thereby leaving those schools more challenged. Mr. Slayton was concerned about any program that would in essence “rob Peter to pay Paul,” noting that magnet school typically attracted the most outstanding students at the expense of the home schools those students were leaving behind. He did not believe the School Board needed to turn Warrington Elementary into a magnet school, they simply needed to offer attractive options to the parents in that community. Because School Board Members had just received the information concerning Mr. Adam’s proposal, she suggested that further discussion should be scheduled for a future workshop. Mr. Fetsko suggested that the School Board should engage others in the discussion, including School District staff, particularly those in the areas of workforce education and elementary education, as well as the military and other community partners. Dr. Edler suggested that future discussion should include conversations about the possibility of restoring neighborhood schools in District 3.

- Legislative Priorities – *Superintendent*

Due to time constraints, the Superintendent elected to postpone this topic to the December 14, 2018 Regular Workshop.

- Middle School Schedules – *Superintendent*

Ms. Vicki Gibowski, Director of Middle School Education, narrated a brief PowerPoint® [presentation](#) outlining the various middle school schedules in Escambia County. Following her presentation, Ms. Gibowski responded to questions posed by School Board Members concerning the various schedules and the impact of those schedules on teacher planning time. Mr. Slayton, being the School Board Member who initially requested this presentation, said he would need time to review the information presented, but would resubmit the topic for additional discussion at a future workshop.

III. PUBLIC FORUM

-Donna Harper, representing the Escambia Education Association (EEA), made a personal announcement on behalf of the Executive Director of EEA.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Special Workshop adjourned at 5:41 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Superintendent

Chair