

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF
ESCAMBIA COUNTY, FLORIDA

MINUTES, MAY 16, 2019

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)

Superintendent of Schools: Mr. Malcolm Thomas

School Board General Counsel, Mrs. Donna Sessions Waters

Meeting advertised in the *Pensacola News Journal* on May 1, 2019 – Legal No. [3519738](#)

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

Video available at <http://escambiacountysdfl.swagit.com/play/05162019-972>

[*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

- [Booker T. Washington High School Marine Science Academy](#) - Students enrolled in the Marine Science Academy at Booker T. Washington High School, addressed the School Board regarding their experiences in this program.

- “Who We Are” – Mrs. Hightower advised that the School Board, during a recent Master Board training session, had created a “Who We Are” statement. It was suggested this statement be posted to the School Board’s page of the School District’s website.

- 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.*

-*May 2019*

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

-*June 2019*

There were no changes to the current schedule of workshops/meetings for June.

-*July 2019*

There were no changes to the current schedule of workshops/meetings for July.

-*August 2019*

There were no changes to the current schedule of workshops/meetings for August.

- Public Forum Follow-Up

The Superintendent and/or his staff provided follow-up to issues raised by the following speakers during the Public Forum portion of the April 16, 2019 Regular Meeting:

- *Jerry McIntosh, representing Movement for Change* – Mr. McIntosh had registered to address the School Board regarding the closing of McMillian School and specifically questioned whether District III was receiving its share of the School District’s Title I funding. The Superintendent said Mr. Steve Marcanio, Assistant Superintendent – Curriculum and Dr. Laura Colo, Director – Title I, had recently met with Mr. McIntosh and provided documents outlining the School District’s total amount of Title I

funding, broken out by allocation for each of the five individual districts. Given that Mr. McIntosh was most interested in the funding allocated to District III, they provided further documentation showing the number of students served and percentage by district illustrating that each individual had received its share of the District's funding. List of schools sorted by district, number of students enrolled, total of all their projects and shows you how you get to the summary data on the first page and the last sheet was one that took the pages in the R&R book where it shows the cost for all funds and put the district number next to the school so that if they were interested and then we sorted it by the amount with the largest amount per FTE first.

- *Dr. Gloria. G. Horning, representing NAACP #5124* – Dr. Horning had registered to address the School Board regarding water testing. Mr. Shawn Dennis, Assistant Superintendent – Operations, said staff had made contact with ECUA because of an indication by Dr. Horning that they would provide free water testing. Staff was advised by ECUA that they do not offer free testing, but do serve as a testing service provider so if the School District finds itself in need of supplemental testing, ECUA certainly could be a viable option. Mr. Dennis said proactive testing at most schools was planned for the second week in June, once students had left for the summer; while schools conducting summer schools would be avoided until such time as students were no longer present. Once all testing was complete, Mr. Dennis was to provide the analytical data to the School Board, hopefully mid-July. Upon inquiry by Mrs. Hightower, Mr. Dennis clarified that the School District would be testing the water delivery system in schools for contaminant intrusion. Mr. Dennis said he would continue to keep Dr. Horning abreast of information concerning water testing.

- Creation of Walking Boundaries for Magnet Schools – Mrs. Hightower initiated a discussion on this topic noting that every year around this time, she would be contacted by parents of students who had applied to, but were not selected to attend a magnet school though they lived within ½ mile walking distance of that school. Mrs. Hightower said the issue was brought up most often with N.B. Cook Elementary; as such, she wanted to know if the School Board would be interested in giving special preference to kindergarten students living within ½ mile walking distance of N.B. Cook Elementary. (NOTE: *N.B. Cook Elementary is a fine arts magnet school. Students must apply for admission. Placement is based on random selection. Student selection is currently based on criteria including but not limited to, military priority, sibling preference, and employee preference.*) Upon inquiry by Mr. Adams, the Superintendent confirmed that adding an additional preference would certainly impact the chance for other students across Escambia County to be selected to attend the school; however, he did not believe there was an overwhelming number of kindergarten students who would even qualify for this additional preference. Mr. Adams, Mr. Fetsko, and Mr. Slayton were not in favor of adding the additional preference for N.B. Cook Elementary, at least not at the moment. Dr. Edler was neither for or against adding the additional preference; but she believed that rather than simply disregarding the matter after just a brief discussion, the School Board should instead, be open to reviewing it further to ensure they are addressing the current needs of parents and students. Given that there was not much support at the moment, Mrs. Hightower said she would consider revisiting the matter at another time.

- Social Media - Adams

Mr. Adams commented that he was quite impressed with the very active social media accounts of school board members in other Florida school districts, such as Osceola County. Mr. Adams noted that the school board members in Osceola actually provide all their contact information (i.e., phone number, address, email address) as well as links to their individual social media accounts (i.e., Facebook, Twitter). Mr. Adams suggested the possibility of establishing official social media accounts for members of the Escambia County School Board and permitting access to those accounts via links from the School Board's page on the School District's website. In response to concern expressed by Mrs. Hightower, the Superintendent confirmed there were a number of guidelines and requirements associated with any social media account attached to the School District's website, including the disabling of public comments and the archiving of all postings given that even records produced in digital form were submitted to Florida public records law. The Superintendent suggested that rather than having a link from the School Board's page on the School District's website perhaps individual school board members could simply add their own social media handle under their contact information. He said the concern with having an official social media account accessible via the School District's website, was that it would put School District staff in the "uncomfortable" position of

monitoring to ensure what was posted by an individual School Board Member was accurate and appropriate. Mr. Slayton did not believe the School Board was ready to “launch” an official social media account without gathering additional information first. It was suggested that perhaps Ms. Kim Stefansson, Coordinator II – Public Relations, could conduct a workshop with the School Board on how to effectively share the information posted on the School District’s website. The Superintendent said this session would probably not occur until August or soon thereafter. School Board Members were agreeable to Mr. Adam’s request to have his Facebook username and Twitter handle posted under his contact information on the School Board’s page of the School District’s website, but not ready to do the same for themselves.

- Legislative Update - Adams

Mr. Adams noted that the next session would begin on January 14, 2020 and adjourn on March 13, 2020. The first week of committee meetings is September 16-20, 2019. He felt it important that the School Board, over the next few months, think about their five main topics for the Legislative Platform.

At the request of Mr. Adams, the Superintendent quickly reviewed the recently passed changes to legislation concerning:

Best & Brightest Scholarship/Bonus (Senate Bill 7070) – high school ACT/SAT requirement removed
Guardian Program (Senate Bill 7030) - expanded to allow teachers to volunteer to carry weapons

The Superintendent confirmed that a policy recommendation was forthcoming to clearly define for the Escambia County School District, that the only individual allowed to carry a weapon on a school campus, was an individual who had been specifically hired to do so.

- Discipline Intervention

The Superintendent prefaced this presentation by noting that in response to much discussion about student discipline, he had asked staff to assemble a presentation outlining just the primary interventions used by schools in dealing with student behavioral issues. Mr. Jeremy Tompkins, Court Liaison, narrated a PowerPoint® [presentation](#) illustrating a decade of progress with intervention based discipline in the Escambia County School District. Dr. Edler commented that she was most impressed with the Capturing Kids’ Hearts Program (Flippen Group) noting that positive relationships between staff and students was so important in redirecting student behavior and decreasing the number of discipline referrals.

Mrs. Hightower questioned why all school wide behavior management plans were located on the Superintendent’s page of the School District’s website rather than each school’s individual page, especially given that a parent would probably seek information specific to their child’s school on the individual school’s page. The Superintendent said her concern could be easily remedied by placing a hyperlink to that information on each school’s individual page.

III. PUBLIC FORUM

-No registration forms submitted

IV. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Special Workshop adjourned at 5:04 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Superintendent

Chair