

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF
ESCAMBIA COUNTY, FLORIDA

MINUTES, JUNE 15, 2020

The School Board of Escambia County, Florida, convened in Regular Workshop at 9:00 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 (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

Not present: Mrs. Donna Sessions Waters, School Board General Counsel

Meeting advertised in the *Pensacola News Journal* on June 3, 2020 – Legal No. [4209841](#)

Minutes prepared according to *Roberts Rules of Order, Newly Revised*

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

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mrs. Hightower called the Regular Workshop to order at 9:00 a.m.

The Superintendent introduced Dr. Kimberly Thomas as the new Coordinator-Employee Services (effective July 1, 2020 - pending approval by the School Board at the June 16, 2020 Regular Meeting – *see: [Item V.b.3.A.1, Appointments](#)*).

The Superintendent recognized Betco Corporation and Pro Clean Restoration & Cleaning for their substantial contributions to help with the School District's upcoming high school graduation ceremonies.

II. DISCUSSION

-What does the new High School Civics requirement mean to graduation requirements for our students? - Slayton

Ms. Cherie Arnette, Social Studies Specialist, clarified there was no additional high school Civics requirement at this point, given that House Bill 581 and Senate Bill 918 did not pass during the last legislative session. Ms. Arnette said she would continue to monitor legislation given that similar civic literacy initiatives were likely to surface in the future.

-Calendar

July 21: *School Board to consider advertisement of 2020-2021 tentative millage and tentative budget.* It was determined that this matter could be incorporated into the agenda for the July 21, 2020 Regular Meeting; therefore, no special session was necessary.

July 28: *School Board to consider adoption of 2020-2021 tentative millage and tentative budget.* Special Meeting scheduled for 5:01 p.m., in Room 160, at the J.E. Hall Educational Services Center.

September 10: *School Board to consider approval of Annual Financial Report & Cost Report.* Special Meeting scheduled for 2:45 p.m., in Room 160, at the J.E. Hall Educational Services Center.

September 15 – *School Board to consider final adoption of the 2019-2020 Millage Rates & Budget.* Special Meeting scheduled for 5:01 p.m., in Room 160, at the J.E. Hall Educational Services Center.

-FY 2020-2021 Board Travel

School Board Members were asked to specify any out-of-district and/or out-of-state travel plans for fiscal year 2020-2021. This information would be submitted for the School Board's consideration at the July 21, 2020 Regular Meeting.

-Covid-19 Budget Impact - Adams

Mr. Adams referenced a June 11 headline from FitchRatings.com entitled “Fitch Rates Escambia County School District, FL’s \$40 MM COPS ‘AA-‘; Outlook Revised to Negative.” His concern was that Fitch Ratings had downgraded the School District’s credit rating because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Mr. Terry St. Cyr, Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Business Services, clarified that Fitch Ratings had not downgraded the School District’s credit rating. In fact, Fitch Ratings had assigned a ‘AA-‘ rating to the School District’s \$40 million certificates of participation (COPS), series 2020A, had affirmed a ‘AA-‘ rating to the School District’s \$9.2 million refunding certifications of participation (COPS), series 2014, and had also affirmed a ‘AA‘ rating to the School District’s \$38.4 million outstanding sales tax revenue bonds. As for the outlook being revised from stable to negative, Mr. St. Cyr noted that that was ‘out of our control’ and reflects the unknown extent of changes in future state and federal aid to the School District given shutdown measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the School District’s potential vulnerability if such revenue cuts are significant.

Charter School Quarterly Report – Ms. Kerri Coots, Director*-Alternative Education, reported no issues with any of the charter schools. There were no questions/concerns from School Board Members specific to information outlined in the quarterly report.

*Effective June 1, 2020 - pending approval by the School Board at the June 16, 2020 Regular Meeting – see: [Item V.d.1.A, Administrative Appointments.](#)

APPOINTED SUPERINTENDENT (moved forward as time certain)

School Board Members discussed the following topics with Florida School Board’s Association (FSBA) Superintendent Search Team [Andrea Messina, John Reichert, and Dr. Bill Vogel (all present via phone)]:

- Confirming Tour Details & Finalist Interview Schedule
 - Wednesday Dinner Option
 - Hotel Location
 - Providing Breakfast & Lunch at District Board Office on Thursday
 - Community Reception Location & Time for Thursday
 - Breakfast & Lunch Options on Friday
 - Rental Car Provision
 - Community & Staff Tour Guides
 - Individual Interviews Location
- Semi - Finalists to Finalist
 - Form for Question Response
 - Timeline for Responses to be Submitted
- Sample Interview Schedule ([3 Finalists](#), [4 Finalists](#), [5 Finalists](#))

The Regular Workshop recessed at 10:53 a.m. and reconvened at 11:05 a.m., with all School Board Members and the Superintendent.

III. COMMENTS FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

The Superintendent and/or his staff briefed the School Board on the following matters:

Update on Military Council – The Escambia County School District/NAS Pensacola Joint Military Council for Educational Excellence would hold quarterly meetings, currently scheduled for August 27, October 22, January 29, and April 22. Each quarterly meeting would include an opportunity for public forum. School District and/or military personnel would follow-up on any issues/concerns expressed during public forum. Mrs. Hightower asked that the School Board’s representative on that Council provide an update following each quarterly meeting.

Instructional Continuity Plan – Report highlighting the successes and challenges of the Instructional Continuity Plan implemented during the fourth nine weeks of the 2019-2020 school year in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Plan for next school year (2020-2021) – Reopening plans for the 2020-2021 school year to be shared with the School Board at the July 20, 2020 Regular Workshop.

IV. MINUTES

-No items discussed

V. COMMITTEE/DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

-Charter School Quarterly Report

-Addressed earlier in this session

VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

-No items submitted

VII. NEW BUSINESS

a. PROPOSED ADDITIONS OR REVISIONS TO SCHOOL DISTRICT RULES

2. Permission to Advertise

A. Approval to Advertise Notice of Intent to Adopt Amendments to the School District of Escambia County Student Progression Plan

There were no questions/concerns regarding the Student Progression Plan as submitted; however, Dr. Edler did inquire as to “what is done with this document” once approved by the School Board. The Superintendent, District staff, and several School Board Members responded that the Student Progression Plan was the School District’s guide for ensuring student progression and as such, it was referenced regularly by all schools. In addition, the Student Progression Plan often referenced when communicating student progression requirements to parents.

b. CONSENT AGENDA

1. Curriculum

-No items discussed

2. Finance and Business Services

E. Purchasing

27. Agreement: Use License Agreement for Pensacola Bay Center

There were no questions/concerns specific to the agreement with Pensacola Bay Center; however, Ms. Lesa Morgan, Director-High School Education, reviewed the important safety measures/rules put in place in order to adhere to social distancing guidelines process for the upcoming “socially-distanced” 2020 high school graduation ceremonies for the class of 2020. (NOTE: *Earlier this year, the School District postponed commencement ceremonies were in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.*)

3. Human Resource Services

-No items discussed

4. Operations

G. Protection Services

1. 2019-2020 Facility Life Safety Inspections

Upon inquiry by Mr. Fetsko, Mr. Kyle Kinser, Coordinator-Protection Services, confirmed that only an ‘executive summary’ sheet was linked to the agenda for the June 16, 2020 Regular Meeting; however, the actual inspection reports had been provided electronically to the Superintendent and School Board offices.

c. ITEMS FROM THE BOARD

1. Selection of the Florida School Boards Association Advocacy Committee Member and Alternate

There was some discussion as to who would serve as the Florida School Boards Association Advocacy Committee Member and who would serve as the alternate. Formal nominations would be made at the June 16, 2020 Regular Meeting.

- d. ITEMS FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT
-No items discussed
- e. INTERNAL AUDITING
-No items submitted
- f. ITEMS FROM GENERAL COUNSEL
-No items submitted

VIII. PUBLIC FORUM

-No registration forms submitted

IX. APPOINTED SUPERINTENDENT – *Addressed earlier in this session*

- 1. Confirming Tour Details & Finalist Interview Schedule
 - a. Wednesday Dinner Option
 - b. Hotel Location
 - c. Providing Breakfast & Lunch at District Board Office on Thursday
 - d. Community Reception Location & Time for Thursday
 - e. Breakfast & Lunch Options on Friday
 - f. Rental Car Provision
 - g. Community & Staff Tour Guides
 - h. Individual Interviews Location
- 2. Semi - Finalists to Finalist
 - a. Form for Question Response
 - b. Timeline for Responses to be Submitted
- 3. Sample Interview Schedule ([3 Finalists](#), [4 Finalists](#), [5 Finalists](#))

X. ADJOURNMENT

Prior to adjournment, the Superintendent and School Board recognized Mr. Tony Noles, Director-Facilities and Dr. Michelle Taylor, Director-Workforce Education for the years that each had provided to the School District and wished them both well in their upcoming retirement.

There being no further business, the Regular Workshop adjourned at 12:48 p.m.