

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF  
ESCAMBIA COUNTY, FLORIDA

MINUTES, FEBRUARY 14, 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)  
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

*Vice Chair Mr. Bill Slayton (District V) was not present.*

Meeting advertised in the *Pensacola News Journal* on January 27, 2020 – Legal No. [4020992](#)

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. She asked all those in attendance to join her in a moment of silence in honor of Marjory Stoneman Douglas Remembrance Day. Mrs. Hightower reminded those who wished to speak during public forum, to submit a registration form.

II. COMMENTS FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Budget Overview – Mr. Terry St. Cyr, Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Business Services, reviewed information (narrated a PowerPoint presentation) entitled, *2020-21 Budget Overview Legislative Session, District Outlook for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2021*.

February 18, 2020 Regular Meeting – The Superintendent listed changes made to the February 18, 2020 Regular Meeting agenda made since initial publication and prior to this workshop session.

III. MINUTES

-No items discussed

IV. COMMITTEE/DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

-No items submitted

V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

-No items submitted

VI. NEW BUSINESS

a. PROPOSED ADDITIONS OR REVISIONS TO SCHOOL DISTRICT RULES

1. Rule(s) Adoption

-No items submitted

2. Permission to Advertise

-No items submitted

b. CONSENT AGENDA

1. Curriculum

-No items discussed

2. Finance and Business Services

A. Finance

4. [A Resolution of the School Board of Escambia County Florida establishing its intent to reimburse certain capital expenditures with proceeds of a future tax-exempt financing; providing certain other matters in connection therewith](#)

Mr. Will Reed, Vice President-Ford & Associates, Inc. (Financial Advisor to the School Board), addressed the “mechanics” of the recommended proposal for financing the Pleasant Grove Elementary rebuild as outlined during the February 13, 2020 Special Workshop. (*see also*: Item V.b.2.A.3, [Certificates of Participation, Series 2020](#) – March 24, 2020 Regular Meeting agenda)

3. Human Resource Services

-No items discussed

4. Operations

A. Facilities Planning

2. Miscellaneous

- a. [Sales Agreement between the School Board of Escambia County, Florida and John G. Ralls Jr.](#)

Mr. Adams said he was unsure whether he would support the Superintendent’s recommendation to approve this real property\* sale given the uncertainty of what the property could be used for in the future. (*\*Located at the Northeast Corner of Avery Street and Hollywood Avenue, the former site of Brownsville Middle School.*) Dr. Edler said she would not support the Superintendent’s recommendation to approve this sale given that it was the property happened to be the former site of a middle school and her continued belief that a middle school was needed in that area (District III).

c. ITEMS FROM THE BOARD

-No items submitted

d. ITEMS FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

4. Other Items

- B. [Agreement for Legal Services between the School Board of Escambia County, Florida and Carver, Darden, Koretzky, Tessier, Finn, Blossman & Areaux, LLC](#)

Upon inquiry by Mr. Fetsko, Mr. Shawn Dennis, Assistant Superintendent-Operations, Mrs. Waters advised that this was an agreement to retain additional counsel to handle real property and construction matters. She noted that the School Board would essentially be keeping the same legal representation as current, given that Stephen Shell, formerly of Shell, Fleming, Davis & Menge, P.A. was now with the firm of Darden, Koretzky, Tessier, Finn, Blossman & Areaux, LLC.

e. INTERNAL AUDITING

-No items submitted

f. ITEMS FROM GENERAL COUNSEL

1. [Appointment of Hearing Officer](#)

Mrs. Waters advised that this this was a recommendation to add Richard John Westberry, Esq. to the School District’s list of qualified hearing officers from which to assign to preside over formal hearings requested by students recommended for expulsion.

2. [MOU with Property Appraiser and Tax Collector](#)

[*Materials provided to School Board Members*] Honorable Chris C. Jones, Escambia County Property Appraiser and attorney Mr. Adam C. Cobb, Emmanuel Sheppard & Condon, addressed the

School Board regarding the hiring of Assessure Systems to audit the tax rolls in Escambia County and identify invalid homestead exemptions and collect unpaid taxes from up to 10 years ago, plus penalties and interest. Assessure Systems would receive 28% of the collected tax amount at the time of the lien satisfaction, but would have no claim to future revenues. The taxing authority will receive the remaining taxes, along with the penalties and interest. This item represented a request for the School Board to approve this Memorandum of Understanding with the Property Appraiser's Office agreeing to give up a 28% fee.

VII. PUBLIC FORUM

-No registration forms submitted

The Regular Workshop recessed at 10:22 a.m. and reconvened at 10:31 a.m. with Mrs. Hightower, Mr. Adams, Mr. Fetsko, Dr. Edler, the Superintendent, and General Counsel present.

VIII. DISCUSSION ON APPOINTED SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH PROCESS

1. Citizen Advisory Committee Appointees
2. Update on Search Timeline

Mrs. Hightower led the discussion on appointed superintendent search process. School Board Members were reminded that appointments to the Citizens Advisory Committee were due by March 27. Formation of the Citizens Advisory Committee would be done by formal resolution. Appointees to the Citizens Advisory Committee would not be officially appointed until April 21 and therefore, should refrain from discussing applications with other appointees until then. Florida School Boards Association (FSBA) Superintendent Search Team would attend the March 13 Regular School Board Workshop. Past practice had given both the Escambia Education Association (EEA) and the Union of Escambia ESP (Educational Support Professionals) representation on School District committees. There was no objection, to allowing the president (or designee) from each of these groups to serve on the Citizens Advisory Committee.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Regular Workshop adjourned at 10:48 a.m.