

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF
ESCAMBIA COUNTY, FLORIDA

MINUTES, MAY 13, 2021

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

School Board General Counsel: Mrs. Ellen D. Odom

Superintendent of Schools: Dr. Timothy A. Smith

Advertised in the *Pensacola News Journal* on April 30, 2021 – Legal No. [4693648](#)

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Slayton called the Special Workshop to order at 3:00 p.m.

II. DISCUSSION:

- Calendar

There were no changes to the remaining schedule of workshops/meetings for May 2021. There were no changes to the current schedule of workshops/meetings for June or July 2021.

- Public Forum Update

The Superintendent provided an update on topics addressed by the public during April 2021 sessions:

-Pensacola High School IB Convocation – *scheduled for May 27 at Blue Wahoos Stadium*

-Fine Arts Performances – *addressed in updated guidelines for student events issued April 29*

-Department of Transportation Physicals – *Item V.b.3.D.1., May 18, 2021 Regular Meeting agenda*

-School Bus Operator Pay – *to be discussed at future bargaining session*

- Mask Mandate – Fetsko

Mr. Fetsko initiated a discussion regarding this topic, noting that some parents still might not feel comfortable sending their child back to a traditional school campus for the 2021-2022 school year, without the continuation of mask mandates. In addition, he noted there were still some employees who preferred wearing masks. He questioned whether a principal could allow a teacher to require students to wear masks while in his/her classroom. Mr. Adams said he did not want to “get into allowing certain classes to have mandatory masks and others not.” Several School Board Members noted that the 2021-2022 school year would present a choice situation for all – students, parents, teachers, employees, and staff. Anyone could still “choose” to wear a mask; anyone over the age of 12 could “choose” to be vaccinated; a parent could “choose” to send their child to traditional school with or without a mask; a parent could “choose” for their child to attend school virtually through Escambia Virtual. The Superintendent said the goal was to open the 2021-2022 school year in a normal state. He clarified that masks were certainly an option for any individual still concerned about health and safety on a traditional school campus. He also noted that Escambia Virtual was still an option for parents who still had concerns about the health and safety of their child returning to a traditional school campus. In closing, Mr. Fetsko said his reason for initiating this discussion was only for the purpose of considering the individual health and safety of children and employees and not pushing for any type of mandate.

- ECSD Website – Hightower
Mr. Tom Ingram, Director-Information Technology (IT), responded to concerns from Mrs. Hightower regarding recent changes to the home page of the ECSD website. There was mention of possibly establishing a committee to assess the effectiveness of the ECSD website and to offer suggestions for improvement. Mr. Ingram was to pull analytics for the ECSD website and share those with the School Board in the near future.
- Warrington MS Progress Reports – Hightower
Mrs. Hightower requested that the School Board receive periodic progress reports on Warrington Middle School throughout the 2021-2022 school year. Reports should include information from the school, the school’s External Operator (EO), the Superintendent, and the Superintendent’s staff. Reports should not be limited to just student grades, but should also provide the “whole picture” in terms of what is working for the school and what is not. The Superintendent suggested this could be a standing report under “Comments from the Superintendent” on the regular monthly workshop agenda.
- Legislative Update – Adams
Vice Chair Adams, as the School Board’s representative to the Florida School Boards Association (FSBA), gave a brief update on recent and upcoming legislative matters.
- Interlocal Agreement/Concurrency – Adams
[Previously addressed at the April 16, 2021 Regular Workshop]. Mr. Shawn Dennis, Assistant Superintendent-Operations, advised that the School District’s Facilities Planning staff would have their first meeting with the County’s Planning & Zoning staff on May 18, 2021, to review the School District’s proposed revisions to the [Interlocal Agreement](#).
- Update from the Legal Office
Child Custody Disputes – Mrs. Odom had identified child custody disputes as the issue her office had dealt with the most on a daily basis for the past month. She was working with the Superintendent’s staff to develop a standard operating procedure (SOP) whereby school-based personnel could redirect all matters related to child custody disputes to a central location, such as the School Choice office. *Hearing Officers* - Mrs. Odom would be placing an advertisement to recruit additional hearing officers to preside over student disciplinary matters (Chapter 120 Hearings). *Quarterly Report* – Mrs. Odom was contacting attorneys working on behalf of the School Board, to get a compilation of all pending matters to which the School Board was a party.
- Lakeview Program Relocation Update – Superintendent
Mr. Shawn Dennis, Assistant Superintendent-Operations, and Ms. Terri Szafran, Director-Exceptional Student Education (ESE), provided an update on the relocation of the Lakeview Program.
- Virtual Desktop Software at GSTC (VMWare) Update – Superintendent
Mr. Tom Ingram, Director-Information Technology (IT), provided a brief update on the Horizon virtual desktop software (manufactured by VMWare).

III. [PUBLIC FORUM](#)

The following individuals registered to address the School Board:

- Ellison Bennett, representing National Movement for Human and Civil Rights
*Public Records Request** (Disciplinary Reassignments & Expulsions at Pine Forest High School)
For Board Information: Passing of Mrs. Frankie Macintosh, Escambia County teacher
- David Elzbeck, representing Union of Escambia ESP
Upcoming Retirement, Governor’s proposed \$1,000 bonuses for Florida teachers and principals
- Darzell Warren, representing Escambia Education Association
Governor’s proposed \$1,000 bonuses for Florida teachers and principals

**Mr. Bennett was advised that his public records request would be forwarded to Deputy Superintendent, Ms. Shenna Payne who serves as the School District's official records custodian.*

IV. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Special Workshop adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

PENDING BOARD APPROVAL