

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF  
ESCAMBIA COUNTY, FLORIDA

MINUTES, OCTOBER 15, 2009

The School Board of Escambia County, Florida, convened in Special Workshop at 3:00 p.m., in the Board Room, at the Dr. Vernon McDaniel Building, 215 West Garden Street, Pensacola, Florida, with the following present:

Chair: Mrs. Patricia Hightower Vice Chair: Mr. Gerald Boone

Board Members: Mr. Jeff Bergosh  
Mrs. Linda Moultrie (*not present*)  
Mr. Bill Slayton (*not present*)

School Board General Counsel: Mrs. Donna Sessions Waters

Superintendent of Schools: Mr. Malcolm Thomas

*Meeting was advertised in the Pensacola News Journal on October 7, 2009 – Legal No. 1428212*

[General discussion took place among Board Members, the Superintendent, and staff throughout this meeting.]

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mrs. Hightower called the Special Workshop to order at 3:00 p.m.

II. OPEN DISCUSSION

Habitat for Humanity – topic submitted by the Superintendent  
(*Brochure provided to Board Members*)

Ms. Dorothy Reed, Outreach Coordinator/Development Assistant for Pensacola Habitat for Humanity (HFH), reported that Pensacola HFH would provide an orientation meeting for School District employees and other community members on October 29, 2009, from 3:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., in Room 160, at the J.E. Hall Educational Services Center. *Habitat for Humanity is a non-profit, ecumenical, Christian ministry whose purpose is to build homes and improve communities in partnership with low and very low income families in Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties. Through the use of donations, in-kind gifts and volunteer labor Habitat builds simple decent homes and sells the homes at cost with a no-interest mortgage to deserving families. Habitat houses are built in collaboration with partner families who contribute 300 hours of their own labor known as “sweat equity”. The organization makes home ownership possible for people who would not otherwise qualify for a conventional mortgage or afford safe, decent shelter.*

Update on Move to New District Administrative Offices – topic submitted by the Superintendent

Mr. Shawn Dennis, Assistant Superintendent for Operations, displayed the revised architectural drawings of the new District administrative offices (renovations to the former Gulf Power building). He noted that completion of the Information Technology (IT) infrastructure was tentatively scheduled for March 2010 (Spring Break) and relocation of District administrative offices would begin shortly thereafter and continue through late summer. The Superintendent offered to arrange for a facility “walk-through” with Board Members, possibly just prior to the November 12, 2009 Special Workshop.

H1N1 Update – topic submitted by the Superintendent

Ms. Karen Thoennes, Coordinator of Health Services, gave a brief update on the School District’s ongoing efforts to monitor the occurrence of influenza-like illnesses among students and employees. She noted that the School District would continue its communication with local and state health officials, as to stay apprised of the most current information regarding the H1N1 flu virus.

Strategic Plan – topic submitted by the Superintendent  
(Handout provided to Board Members)

Ms. Sandra Edwards, Director of Comprehensive Planning, provided Board Members with a draft version of the School District’s Strategic Plan for 2009-2010. The final version would be presented for Board approval at the November 17, 2009 Regular Meeting.

Merit Pay Award Plan – topic submitted by Jeff Bergosh

Mr. Bergosh asked the Board to consider whether they felt that the School District should participate in the Merit Award Program (MAP) for the upcoming 2010-2011 school year. If so, he noted that the deadline to commit to the program was January 31, 2010. Mr. Bergosh expressed his strong support of the MAP plan and offered the following information for the Board’s consideration:

- The last year that the School District participated in MAP was 2007-2008. At that time, about 1,000 teachers received \$2,000 bonuses for meeting set criteria largely based on student achievement.
- The School District withdrew participation last year because former Superintendent Jim Paul said that due to the budget shortfall there was no money to administer the program.
- The School District had already missed the deadline for the current 2009-2010 school year. This meant that School District would miss out on \$2.1 million in bonuses for teachers for the second consecutive year.
- Charter schools in Escambia County, like Pensacola Beach Elementary and Byrneville Elementary, are receiving and using that money every year to reward their teachers; in fact, charter schools in 32 of Florida’s 67 school districts are receiving those funds.
- Merit pay for teachers was being advocated by the leaders of both the Republican and Democrat parties. President Barack Obama and his Education Secretary Arne Duncan have both openly advocated for merit pay based in part on student achievement.

FSBA Legislative Platform – topic submitted by Patricia Hightower  
(Handout provided to Board Members)

Mrs. Hightower provided Board Members with a draft version of the Florida School Boards Association (FSBA) Legislative Platform for 2010. Mrs. Hightower stated that as the FSBA Legislative Liaison, she would solicit input from the Board on the proposed Legislative Platform, which she would then relay to the FSBA Legislative Committee. Mr. Bergosh expressed disagreement with the following items listed in the proposed Legislative Platform: Item B5, “*Funding for the School Recognition Program should be held in abeyance.*” and Item G6, “*The Legislature should allow the use of MAP funds for faculties and schools, recognizing the team approach.*”

Public Relations: Events of the Week – topic submitted by Patty Hightower

At the request of Mrs. Hightower, the Superintendent stated that he would explore the possibility of reinstating the weekly notification of School District events—a service that was previously provided via email, by the Public & Interagency Affairs office.

III. PRESENTATIONS

-None

IV. PUBLIC FORUM

Mrs. Hightower called for public forum; however, there were no speakers.

V. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Special Workshop adjourned at 5:12 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

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Superintendent

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Chair