

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF
ESCAMBIA COUNTY, FLORIDA

MINUTES, DECEMBER 8, 2011

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. Bill Slayton Vice Chair: Mr. Jeff Bergosh (*not present*)

Board Members: Mr. Gerald W. Boone
Mrs. Linda Moultrie
Mrs. Patricia Hightower

School Board General Counsel: Mrs. Donna Sessions Waters

Superintendent of Schools: Mr. Malcolm Thomas

Meeting was advertised in the Pensacola News Journal on November 30, 2011 – Legal No. 1546435

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

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Slayton called the Special Workshop to order at 3:00 p.m. He then called for a “moment of silence” in memory of two students who had passed away during the past week: Alonzo Dewayne Knight, a sophomore at Pine Forest High School and Kenneth Wade Jernigan, a sophomore at Northview High School.

II. OPEN DISCUSSION

- Update on Brownsville Property - Linda Moultrie

At the request of Mrs. Moultrie, the Superintendent provided a brief update on the status of the Brownsville property. The Superintendent advised that the property was still for sale and had been shown to several entities, yet no official purchase offer had been received. He said it was likely that the School District would probably reach a point where a minimum bid amount would be set and if no one came forward to buy the property at that price, then the building would be torn down and hopefully, the School District would then be able to receive at least the value of the land.

- Contract Attorneys Report per Board Request in October - Patty Hightower/Sharon Goshorn

Mrs. Hightower noted that the report compiled by Ms. Sharon Goshorn, Paralegal, had been provided to School Board Members prior to this meeting. NOTE: *At the October 14, 2011 Regular Workshop there was discussion regarding the large amount of expenses incurred each month for the outsourcing of legal matters. Mr. Bergosh had questioned whether it was time to consider adding an additional in-house attorney and whether the School District would save a significant amount of money by doing so. At that time, Ms. Sharon Goshorn, Paralegal, offered to compile a break-down of the amounts that the School District had spent on legal expenses for each area of expertise (i.e., real estate matters, human resource matters) over the past year. Mrs. Hightower asked Mrs. Waters to comment on her observation of the information outlined in the report. Mrs. Waters said the report revealed that there was no single area where the School District was spending enough money to pay for another in-house attorney’s salary and benefits, rather the costs were pretty much evenly spread across the various subject matter areas. Also from the report, Mrs. Waters said it was apparent that the School District was “not spending money on*

suings people, but rather we are spending money on being on suits that other people bring against us and there's a limit to how much control we have over that although we will continue to monitor the spending." On a related issue, Mrs. Waters remarked that occasionally she had seen where a staff member had apparently contacted an outside attorney rather than her office; therefore, she suggested that in future, any referral of a matter to an outside attorney would need to be approved by the appropriate personnel and she and the Superintendent would need to be made aware of such referral. Also, as suggested by Mrs. Hightower in the past, Mrs. Waters said she would begin to keep track of the time that her office was spending on various matters and once enough data was collected to make an appropriate analysis, she would prepare such a report for the School Board.

- Procedures for Invocation and Pledge at School Board Meetings - *Bill Slayton*

As the suggestion of Mr. Slayton, the School Board Members who were present decided to continue the current procedure whereby each School Board Member would rotate monthly, the responsibility of securing individuals to give the invocation and to lead the pledge at the regular monthly School Board meeting.

- Follow-up on Health Clinics - *Patty Hightower*

Mrs. Hightower commented that she did not feel like School Board Members had sufficient time during the November 22, 2011 Organizational Meeting to discuss the issue of an on-site employee health clinic for the School District. She questioned whether any other Board Member felt "rushed" during that session and therefore believed that additional opportunity for conversation on this topic was needed. In talking with several school board members from around the state whose school districts had or were contemplating a health clinic, Mrs. Hightower was told that one of the most beneficial things they had done was to invite those individuals who were involved in the formation of the clinic in their county to share with them what they had learned in that process. The Superintendent believed that the very first step was to get an employee benefit consultant on-board so they could assist School District staff with the development of a Request for Proposals (RFP) regarding the establishment of a on-site employee health clinic. He said that an evaluation committee would evaluate all proposals submitted by companies in response to the RFP for employee benefit consulting services, then submit their award recommendation to the Superintendent, who would then recommend the award to the School Board on the January 17, 2012 Regular Meeting agenda. Much of the discussion focused on the need for "buy-in" to the idea of a health clinic from the Superintendent, School Board, union representatives and members, and School District employees. The Superintendent said that without everyone's support, it was certain that a health clinic would fail.

- State of Division Reports - *Superintendent*

[*Handouts provided to School Board Members*]

Staff briefly reviewed "highlights" from the 2011-2012 State of Division Reports.

III. PUBLIC FORUM

Mr. Slayton called for public hearing; however, there were no speakers.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Regular Workshop adjourned at 5:03 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Superintendent

Chair