

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF  
ESCAMBIA COUNTY, FLORIDA

MINUTES, MARCH 13, 2013

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. Jeff Bergosh Vice Chair: Mrs. Linda Moultrie

Board Members: Mr. Gerald W. Boone  
Mrs. Patricia Hightower  
Mr. Bill Slayton

School Board General Counsel: Mrs. Donna Sessions Waters

Superintendent of Schools: Mr. Malcolm Thomas

Meeting was advertised in the *Pensacola News Journal* on February 25, 2013 - Legal No. 1591635

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

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Bergosh called the Special Workshop to order at 3:00 p.m.

II. OPEN DISCUSSION

- April through August 2013 Calendar - Bergosh

*April 2013* – No changes were made to the School Board’s meeting schedule for April.

*May 2013* – No changes were made to the School Board’s meeting schedule for May.

*June 2013* – The following changes were made to the School Board’s meeting schedule for June:

-A Special Workshop re: 2013-2014 Budget was scheduled for June 6<sup>th</sup>, beginning at 3:30 p.m., in Room 160, at the Hall Center

-The June Special “Open Discussion” Workshop originally scheduled for June 13<sup>th</sup> was canceled; however, the agenda for the June Regular Workshop would include an “open discussion” segment

-The June 14<sup>th</sup> Regular Workshop was rescheduled to June 17<sup>th</sup>, beginning at 10:00 a.m.

-A Special Workshop re: 2013-2014 Budget was tentatively scheduled for June 25<sup>th</sup>, beginning at 3:00 p.m., in the Superintendent’s Conference Room, at the Vernon McDaniel Building

*July 2013* – The following changes were made to the School Board’s meeting schedule for July:

-The July Special “Open Discussion” Workshop originally scheduled for July 11<sup>th</sup> was canceled; however, the agenda for the July Regular Workshop would include an “open discussion” segment

-The July 12<sup>th</sup> Regular Workshop was rescheduled to July 11<sup>th</sup>, beginning at 2:00 p.m.

-A Special Meeting was scheduled for July 23<sup>rd</sup>, beginning at 5:00 p.m., in Room 160, at the Hall Center. (Purpose: Permission to Advertise 2013-2014 Tentative Millage and Tentative Budget)

-A Special Meeting was scheduled for July 30<sup>th</sup>, beginning at 5:30 p.m., in Room 160, at the Hall Center. (Purpose: Adoption of 2013-2014 Tentative Millage and Tentative Budget)

August 2013 – No changes were made to the School Board’s meeting schedule for August.

- Facilitating the “1 Credit Earned Online” Graduation Requirement During the School Day on District Computers - Bergosh

Mr. Bergosh said he wanted to speak to everyone about the seniors (currently sophomores) who would be graduating in 2015. He knew there was a requirement that those students take at least one (1) of their credits online and he wondered if the high schools were proactively allowing those students to use school computers to take one of their courses if the student’s schedule permitted. The Superintendent said that was permitted; as a matter of fact, he pointed out that a senior level course is all online and was the only way to take a course. He said that because the School District now has Compass, Florida Virtual School, and Escambia Virtual Academy, the majority of students will take the online requirement during the school day. He said that the District does make it available for a student to take after hours or take during the summer if they choose to do so. He said students can take an extra course that they could not otherwise fit into their schedule during the school year after hours but most of the students would be taking it during the school day. At the request of Mr. Bergosh, the Superintendent confirmed that there would be no resistance from the school counselors, if a student wanted to take a course at school during the school day on a school computer. Mrs. Carolyn Spooner, Director of High School Education, said that students were encouraged to use Compass to make-up courses or to take courses that they could not otherwise fit into their schedule. She noted that the District has students scheduled for the Compass lab all day at every high school. She believed there were ample opportunities for students through Compass, Escambia Virtual Academy, and Florida Virtual School. Mrs. Spooner said that high school counselors do make students aware of the requirements for graduation including the online course requirement. In answer to Mr. Bergosh’s question, Mrs. Spooner said there would be no resistance from any of the high school counselors if a student wanted to take an online course at school during the school day using a school computer. Mr. Bergosh thanked the Superintendent and Mrs. Spooner for the information they had just provided. The Superintendent said that a list of online courses offered under Florida Virtual or Escambia Virtual was published on the School Choice website and staff would soon be adding a list of courses offered under Compass. He noted that any required class at high school was offered through Compass. Mrs. Hightower wanted to know how that list of courses was communicated to parents; in other words, how would a parent know what the opportunities were for virtual school classes. The Superintendent said that the School Choice website and registration cards would list that information. Mrs. Spooner said the list was available in the guidance offices at the high schools and also available via the School Choice website. In answer to Mrs. Hightower’s question about how a parent would know what opportunities were available, she noted that schools actually communicate with high school students directly and that students were responsible for communicating with their parents. Mrs. Spooner suggested that if a parent had a question about their child’s education then the parent should take that responsibility to talk with a high school guidance counselor. At the request of the Superintendent, Mr. Chris McFarland, Coordinator of School Choice, explained that beginning with this school year’s final report card, the District would be adding an item to the final report cards that would notice parents of virtual options in the District and would also provide the link to the School Choice website which would also list those virtual options.

- Board’s Evaluation of General Counsel and Coordinator of Board Affairs; Instrument Hand-out and Scheduling of Workshop to Complete – Bergosh

Mr. Bergosh noted that once per year in May, per Mrs. Water’s contract with the School Board, the School Board Members were to evaluate her. He said that over the past couple of months he and Mrs. Waters have had a series of meetings and she had put together an evaluation instrument which was very similar to the one that was used in Hillsborough County. Mr. Bergosh said it was his intention to briefly discuss the matter during this session, but he would then like for the School Board to schedule a workshop for one hour in length, so that School Board Members could submit their evaluations for Mrs. Waters and also for Mrs. Linda West, Coordinator of Board Affairs. Mr. Bergosh said that he had reviewed a copy of Mrs. West’s last evaluation which was conducted three years prior. After looking at the evaluation

instrument that Mrs. Waters had put together, he believed that the School Board could do a better and more thorough evaluation of the Coordinator of Board Affairs; therefore, he had built an evaluation for that position based loosely on what Mrs. Waters had provided to him by removing the legal information and adding secretarial type information instead. He thought that it would be a “good thing” if the School Board standardized the evaluation instruments and conducted both evaluations in May each year. Mrs. Hightower said that she appreciated the evaluation instruments that Mr. Bergosh had put together. She noted that when she was School Board Chair, the instrument that she had to evaluate the Coordinator of Board Affairs did not really relate well to the duties of that position’s job description. Later in the discussion, Mrs. West pointed out that the evaluation form that had been used in the past to evaluate her performance was the same document that was used by the District to evaluate all administrative and professional employees. Mrs. Hightower said that another piece of the evaluation for both the General Counsel and the Coordinator position should relate to not only their interaction with the School Board Members, but also their interaction with other District employees. Mr. Bergosh said that was covered on “page 3” of both evaluation instruments under the section entitled Communications for the Coordinator of Board Affairs and the section entitled Communication and In-Service Training for the General Counsel. (Communications: *This standard measures the Coordinator of Board Affairs’ effectiveness in communicating with and reporting to Board Members, communicating with district staff, the press and others.* Communication and In-Service Training: *This standard measures the General Counsel’s effectiveness in communicating with and reporting to Board Members, communicating with district staff, the press and others, as well as his/her ability to provide useful training to Board Members and staff.*) Mrs. Hightower said she could evaluate her interaction with the General Counsel, but she could not evaluate the Superintendent’s interaction or staff’s interaction with the General Counsel. Mr. Bergosh noted that School Board Members could evaluate the General Counsel’s interaction with the Superintendent and staff based upon their knowledge of such. Mrs. Hightower said that in the past, she and the Superintendent had talked about putting a survey out so that data could be collected from other personnel with regard to their perception of the General Counsel’s office. Mrs. Hightower believed it would be helpful to know how other personnel perceived the School Board’s General Counsel. Mr. Bergosh understood why perception was a concern; however, he had discussed the matter of a survey with Mrs. Waters and noted that while the survey might provide helpful information, he believed that School Board Members had to keep in mind that in Mrs. Water’s position, the School Board was her client and oftentimes that “puts her at odds” with other personnel. Mrs. Waters said she did not mind having a survey done because feedback was always helpful; however, her concern was that a certain amount of her position as the School Board’s General Counsel was to protect their interest and that very often brought her into conflict with other individuals (i.e., staff, parents). Mrs. Waters said that ethically, she had an issue with anyone other than her client (School Board) evaluating her performance; however, she did not have any problem with her client (School Board) talking to other individuals to see how she was perceived and then making that a part of their evaluation. She pointed out that part of an attorney’s job was to zealously represent a client’s interests and that was not always going to make an attorney popular. With regard to the issue of a survey, Mr. Bergosh noted that the School Board alone was the General Counsel’s client and therefore, the only survey that mattered was the opinion and perception of each individual School Board Member. He noted that Mrs. Waters was in a difficult position as the School Board’s General Counsel, and so was Mr. David Bryant, as the School Board’s Internal Auditor. The Superintendent said he could speak to how the survey is used by each of the departments. Mrs. Waters interrupted to point out that her position was not like any other department as all the department work for the Superintendent, whereas, her position worked for the School Board alone. The Superintendent clarified that he was not suggesting that Mrs. Waters worked for him; rather he was suggesting that all the other departments have a way to gather information. He noted however, that the information gathered from the department surveys was not used to directly evaluate those departments; rather it was a system to help those departments become better. The Superintendent said the departmental surveys included the following questions which could be rated on a scale of 1 to 5: (1) *Can we reach a live person or use an electronic tool to reach someone?* (2) *Did we receive the right product or service or was a variation communicated?* (3) *Was it a nice experience? Did you receive service with a smile?* (4) *Did day-to-day operations run efficiently and effectively?* (5) *Was a response or solution delivered when promised?* Mr. Slayton suggested that the School Board Members would be better off delaying any additional discussion on the survey matter until the Special Workshop for conducting the evaluations. Mr. Bergosh pointed out that per Mrs. Water’s contract, the School Board would

need to perform their evaluation prior to May 1, 2013. He said if School Board Members had any revisions that they would like incorporated into the evaluation instruments, to give them to Mrs. Linda West, Coordinator of Board Affairs by March 22, 2013. The Board would then need to schedule a date and time for the Special Workshop.

- District Health Clinic Presentation – *Superintendent*  
[[Handout](#) provided to School Board Members]

The Superintendent said that the District’s new health clinic was scheduled to open on June 5, 2013. At the request of the Superintendent, Mr. Patrick Palmer, Benefits Analyst, gave a brief [update](#) on the implementation and communication plans for the new District Health Clinic located at 915 East Fairfield Drive. Upon inquiry by Mr. Bergosh, Mr. Palmer confirmed that information regarding the new health clinic would be posted to the Risk Management section of the School District’s website.

- Update on Fingerprinting – *Superintendent*

The Superintendent said that he had spoken to each School Board Member over the last couple of months about some of the challenges that the District had experienced in trying to take on the entire task of fingerprinting. He said the primary challenge was the overload that the District experiences during busy hire times in that it was simply taking too long; in fact, there were actually some potential employees last year that were lost because the District could not get them scheduled to be fingerprinted in a timely manner. He said staff had been working over the last four to five months on finding a way to make the District better with regard to the fingerprinting process. Dr. Alan Scott, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, said that staff’s vision was to have a “one-stop” fingerprinting operation in the Human Resources department (1<sup>st</sup> Floor-McDaniel Building, 75 North Pace Boulevard). Mr. Bill Threadgill, Coordinator VI – Human Resource Services, reviewed information regarding the Morpho Trust project including timeline and implementation schedule as outlined in a [handout](#) provided to School Board Members.

### III. PUBLIC FORUM

Mr. Bergosh called for public forum; however, there were no speakers.

### IV. ADJOURNMENT

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

Attest:

Approved:

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Superintendent

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Chair