

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF  
ESCAMBIA COUNTY, FLORIDA

MINUTES, JANUARY 16, 2014

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: Mrs. Linda Moultrie Vice Chair: Mrs. Patricia Hightower

Board Members: Mr. Jeff Bergosh  
Mr. Gerald W. Boone  
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 January 3, 2014 - [Legal No. 1615672](#)

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

II. OPEN DISCUSSION

- Woodham Middle School's Robotics Team – *Superintendent*

It was noted that students from Woodham Middle School's Robotics Team had recently competed in the BEST (Boosting Engineering Science, and Technology) Robotics Competition, which was held on November 2, 2013 at the University of West Florida. The Robotics Team received the following awards: 3<sup>rd</sup> Place BEST award (overall), 2<sup>nd</sup> Place Best Spirit and Sportsmanship, 2<sup>nd</sup> Place Best Team Exhibit and Interview, 3<sup>rd</sup> Place Best Project Notebook, and 2<sup>nd</sup> Place Best Marketing Presentation. The Team then advanced to the next level in the competition, the South's BEST Regional Championship, at Auburn University on December 6-8, 2013. Students from the Woodham Middle iSharks Team #287 were given an opportunity to showcase their work on a remote controlled robot ("Squeaky") for the School Board. Robotics Team: *Elizabeth Teets, Tyler Kintz, Cortasia Weaver, Stephanie Jones, and Trinity Dixon*. Robotics Club Sponsor: *Carl Shouppe*.

- Update of Professional Development Center – *Superintendent*

At the request of the Superintendent, Mr. Steve Jernigan with Bay Design Associates, Architects, P.L., narrated a brief PowerPoint [presentation](#) that outlined the various renovations that were being made to the former Spencer Bibbs Elementary School in order to create a new state-of-the-art "Professional Development Center" for the School District. It was noted that the project objectives were to:

- Provide well-equipped staff training facility, especially for mid-to-large size groups (75-200)
- Provide technology in training rooms to accommodate present and future needs
- Utilize an existing physical plant suitable for this function due to condition and location

Following the presentation, Mr. Jernigan and Mr. Shawn Dennis, Assistant Superintendent for Operations, responded to various questions posed and concerns expressed by School Board Members regarding the limited parking at that site.

- January 2014 and February 2014 Calendar – Moultrie

*January 2014* - There were no changes to the School Board's schedule of workshops/meetings for January 2014.

*February 2014* - At the request of the Superintendent, the School Board agreed to schedule a Special Meeting for February 6, 2014, beginning 8:00 a.m., in the Superintendent's Conference Room, at the Dr. Vernon McDaniel Building, 75 North Pace Boulevard; the purpose of the meeting was to consider the approval of out-of-field teachers. There were no other changes to the current schedule of workshops/meetings for February 2014.

*March 2014* – It was the consensus of the School Board to change the date and time of the March Regular Meeting to March 25, 2014, beginning at 4:30 p.m., in Room 160, at the J.E. Hall Educational Services Center, 30 East Texar Drive; the change was made because the meeting was previously scheduled for March 18<sup>th</sup> which occurred during the Spring Break holidays.

- Update on Concern Expressed by Citizen at December 17, 2013 Board Meeting/Public Forum Regarding Baseball Facility/Handicapped Access at Pine Forest High School – Moultrie

Mrs. Moultrie said she had discussed with the Superintendent that anytime a citizen came forward at a School Board workshop and/or meeting to address a concern, she would expect that the Superintendent and/or his staff would provide an update on how they were handling the matter at the following School Board Special "open discussion" Workshop. With regard to the concern expressed about the baseball facility/handicapped access at Pine Forest High School (PFHS), the Superintendent advised that staff was in the process of evaluating the entire situation and expected to resolve any issues related to ADA compliance prior to the start of baseball season. Mr. Bergosh noted that he had advised the School Board and the Superintendent about the issue at PFHS at a previous School Board workshop. Mr. Boone wanted to know if there was something in place to ensure that each school had the necessary accommodations for handicapped individuals. The Superintendent advised that the School District was required to conduct an evaluation every five (5) years however, as so often was the case, the School District's needs were far greater than its resources and therefore, unless the need for accessibility was considered to be of high priority, that need would often go unmet until such time as there were sufficient resources or it became of high priority. Ms. Terri Szafran, Director of Exceptional Student Education (ESE), explained the process by which her department conducted the evaluation of each school's campus to ensure that the minimum ADA a matter of requirements were met. She noted that with regard to the situation at the PFHS, the issue appeared to be inadequate wheelchair accessibility from the parking area to the baseball field. Ms. Szafran said that staff from her department, along with staff from the Facilities department, was in the process of determining the best solution to that situation.

- Facility Utilization/Under Utilization at District Middle Schools – Bergosh  
[[Handout provided](#)]

Mr. Bergosh provided his fellow School Board Members with a spreadsheet he had created that outlined each middle school's capacity, total satisfactory stations, current membership, the difference between total satisfactory stations and current membership, and the difference between school capacity and current membership. Based on the information outlined in the spreadsheet, Mr. Bergosh said he was concerned with the underutilization of both Warrington and Woodham middle schools. (NOTE: *The topic of low enrollment at Woodham Middle School was previously discussed at the October 10, 2013 Special Workshop.*) He wondered if it was time to reconvene the School Attendance Zone Advisory Committee (SAZAC) and charge them with finding solutions to the underutilization of these facilities. The Superintendent reminded the School Board that during the October 10, 2013 Special Workshop, he had said that staff would need ample time to look into the matter before bringing forth a recommendation to the School Board. The Superintendent was hopeful that staff would be ready to present a comprehensive facilities plan to the School Board sometime in February.

- Changes to Dual Enrollment Rules-Impacts on Current Students – *Bergosh*

Mr. Bergosh said that at the beginning of January, he was contacted by a “frustrated” student who had tried calling the School District on December 19, 2013 but could not make contact without anyone as the School District was closed for the Christmas holidays. Mr. Bergosh said the student’s reason for calling was that he had been impacted by a recent “midstream” change to the dual enrollment rules. It was Mr. Bergosh’s understanding that prior to the recent change, a student taking dual enrollment courses would be allowed to carry on even if they earned a “D” in the dual enrolled course; however, the recent change would now cause a student to be withdrawn by the college if a student earned a “D” in the dual enrolled course regardless of the student’s grade point average. The Superintendent gave a brief history on this matter. He began by noting that the articulation agreement was not submitted to the School Board until mid-school year for two reasons: (1) the School District was “struggling” with PSC over the financial impact that had to be included in the agreement; and (2) the School District was working with PSC and Santa Rosa County School District to ensure that both school district’s agreements were identical. He noted that one of the items that was specifically requested by Santa Rosa County was the rule that if a student earned a “D” in a dual enrollment course they could not continue to be dual enrolled. The Superintendent said that because students currently enrolled in dual enrollment courses had not received adequate notice of that change, Mrs. Carolyn Spooner, Director of High School Education, had requested and eventually PSC agreed to give current senior students an opportunity to continue in dual enrollment in the second semester. In the future however, the Superintendent said that students would have had adequate notice of this change so the rule would stand.

- Legislative Issue-Raising Dropout Age from 16 to 18 – *Bergosh*  
[[Handout provided](#)]

Mr. Bergosh said that as the School Board’s legislative liaison, he wanted to make sure his fellow School Board Members were aware there was a movement afoot in the legislature to raise the dropout age from 16 to 18. He wanted to hear from School Board Members if they had any thoughts on that change. Mr. Slayton said he was aware of the movement but was unsure as to why someone in the legislature thought this to be an important issue; as a former principal, he did not recall having many students who dropped out of school just because they had turned 16. His said the only situation in which this change might protect a student was in the very rare instance that a parent and/or guardian wanted to withdraw a student at the age of 16 for the benefit of putting the student to work. Mr. Slayton did not believe that the movement would get any “traction” in the legislature. Mrs. Hightower believed such a decision should be left to the local school board rather than the State legislature; Mrs. Moultrie agreed. Mrs. Hightower noted that there were already several ways by which a student could leave high school at the age of 16 with a high school diploma. She believed that the push to increase the dropout age could be because on average, high school graduates earn more than high school dropouts. Mr. Boone noted that there was much to be considered on this matter; but as a former classroom teacher he recalled several students who decided to drop-out of high school simply “because it just wasn’t working for them” yet they did continue their education at the local junior college instead. The Superintendent believed the legislature’s approach was “backwards” in that they were “looking at a symptom instead of the cause.” He suggested that perhaps the legislature should examine all of the barriers that they had placed in the way of struggling at-risk students to graduate from high school; perhaps allowing for more vocational training as part of their high school diploma would help put those students to work in their communities. He also clarified that the official dropout age in Florida was already 18; and the only way a student could dropout at 16 was with a parent’s (or guardian’s) permission and their acknowledgement that the student would not be able to obtain a Florida driver’s license until they turned 18. He said he would rather see the discussion focused on changing the compulsory age from age 6 to age 5. He noted that it was a common misconception that kindergarten was compulsory but actually it was not and therefore, when a kindergarten student had chronic attendance issues, there was nothing that a truancy court judge could do because the student was not actually required to attend school until the age of 6. He suggested that instead of raising the dropout age from 16 to 18, the legislature should “take a look at the other end of the stick” and change the compulsory age from 6 to 5. He also believed the legislature should focus more on the cause of drop-outs and consider alternatives for students that might help keep them in school.

- Update on Fingerprint Process for District Employees – *Superintendent*

Dr. Alan Scott, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resource Services, reported that the implementation of the Morpho Trust Fingerprint System had been postponed after developers discovered technical problems with the pre-release review. As a result, of the delayed implementation, School District staff had set up the old fingerprinting system in order to process new hires. Dr. Scott said the revised “go live” date for on-line registration was January 17<sup>th</sup> and fingerprinting appointments would begin on January 20<sup>th</sup>. He pointed out that the School District would be closed on January 20<sup>th</sup> in observance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day; however, individuals needing to be fingerprinted could do so at any of the fingerprinting service centers throughout the community. Upon inquiry by Mrs. Hightower, Dr. Scott said the location and hours of each service center were available via the School District’s website. Mr. Bergosh wanted to know how this delay would affect the volunteer and mentoring programs as it was his understanding there were a number of potential volunteers and mentors that had already scheduled appointments for fingerprinting. Dr. Scott said his office was working with the staff from the Office of Volunteer and Business Partnerships to “catch up” on the fingerprinting of those individuals; however, the first priority had been to process those individuals who were recently hired as classroom teachers.

- Discussion of Budget Calendar – *Superintendent*  
[Handout provided]

Mr. Terry St. Cyr, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Business Services, provided School Board Members with a spreadsheet outlining the proposed budget and TRIM calendar for the 2014-2015 fiscal year. At the request of Mr. St. Cyr, the School Board reviewed the proposed calendar and agreed to schedule the following meetings:

-Special Meeting (re: advertisement of the 2014-2015 tentative millage and tentative budget), on July 22, 2014, beginning at 5:30 p.m., in Room 160, at the J.E. Hall Educational Services Center, 30 East Texar Drive

-Special Meeting (re: adoption of the 2014-2015 tentative millage and tentative budget), on July 29, 2014, beginning at 5:01 p.m., in Room 160, at the J.E. Hall Educational Services Center, 30 East Texar Drive

-Special Meeting (re: approval of the Annual Financial Report and Cost Report), on September 10, 2014, beginning at 4:00 p.m., in Room 160, at the J.E. Hall Educational Services Center, 30 East Texar Drive

-Special Meeting (re: final adoption of the 2014-2015 millage rates and budget), on September 16, 2014, beginning at 5:01 p.m., in Room 160, at the J.E. Hall Educational Services Center, 30 East Texar Drive

III. PUBLIC FORUM

Mrs. Moultrie called for public hearing; however, there were no speakers.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Special Workshop adjourned at 4:35 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

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Superintendent

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Chair