

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF ALACHUA COUNTY, FLORIDA
APPROVED MINUTES OF REGULAR BOARD MEETING
October 2, 2001

The School Board of Alachua County, Florida, met in regular session duly called at 7 p.m. in the Boardroom, 620 East University Avenue, Gainesville, Florida. Present were: Chester Leathers, chairman; Bill Cake, vice-chairman; Bev Carroll, Jeannine Cawthon and Barbara Sharpe, members; Mary L. Chambers, superintendent; and James F. Lang, attorney for the Board.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Leathers, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

APPROVAL OF
MINUTES

Motion by Mrs. Sharpe

Seconded by Mrs. Carroll

Moved to approve the minutes of September 18, 2001, as presented.

The question was called.

Upon Vote: Motion passed 5-0

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Motion by Mr. Cake

Seconded by Mrs. Sharpe

Moved to adopt the agenda for the meeting of October 2, 2001.

Delete H.1.b., Student Case No. 01-52-X.

The question was called on the agenda as amended.

Upon Vote: Motion passed 5-0

BOARD MEMBER/
SUPERINTENDENT
ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mrs. Sharpe attended a workshop sponsored by the Marion County School Board entitled "Closing the Achievement Gap for all Students," which focused on high expectations for all students, learning what makes effective schools, and purging excessive excuses for why children do not learn.

Mrs. Carroll made the following announcements:

- Attended the award recognition ceremony at Newberry Elementary for being named a Five Star school and commended the business partners for their support.
- Represented the Board at the WUFT televised program on the September 11 tragedy and thanked staff for their efforts.
- The School Readiness Coalition is also dealing with budget cuts coming from the state, but in this year's budget the Alachua County School Board received the needed dollars to run the program at the same level it ran last year.

Condolences were extended to the family and friends of Bobby Foster, Sr., a teacher aide at the Horizon/New Pathways Center.

Superintendent Chambers announced October's Character Trait, which

is “Responsibility” and recognized the many drawings by students depicting that particular trait.

RECOGNITION/PRESENTATION/REPORT

School Improvement Highlights—Alachua Elementary

Mr. Jim Brandenburg, principal, Alachua Elementary School, announced that Alachua Elementary students have organized the “We Can Make a Change” project. The project deals with the September 11 tragedy in a positive and civic-minded manner. The project raises money for the cause and he noted that it has been very successful.

He introduced Kevin Berry, teacher, to provide an inside perspective on school improvement from the view of staff and faculty. Mr. Berry pointed out that Alachua’s number one goal is to improve student achievement, and, with assistance from the faculty and community, they are committed to helping students succeed.

Westwood Middle School

Mr. Jim TenBieg, principal, Westwood Middle School, introduced Mr. John Bennett, SAC Chair and teacher, to share what makes Westwood Middle School a very special place. Mr. Bennett pointed out that Westwood has a tradition of academic excellence and presented a video montage of the people that comprise Westwood. He informed the Board that one out of every ten students is from a foreign country, and due to the infusion of these special students into the curriculum, it has created an exceptional school environment. Academics is not the only thing Westwood prides itself in, but also civility, cooperation and trust among the family. Business partners also assist in providing gifts for students as a positive reinforcement. The SAC is very instrumental in developing and assisting with changes in the academic structure. He noted that last year the SAC was kept completely informed and was a guiding tool in changing to a block system. Teacher training is also a priority and is geared to reading in the content area.

Gainesville High School

Dr. Charles Hall, principal, Gainesville High School, introduced Dr. Jay Block, SAC chair, to provide information on the efforts taking place at GHS to enhance student learning. Dr. Block reported that last year mini-grants provided funds for necessary instructional materials, including software to enhance learning related to the FCAT and tutoring for advance placement courses. Plans are being made to allocate monies for after-school tutoring for all students in all subjects related to the FCAT. He reported that an in-school detention program has been initiated, which allows students to stay in school with supervision rather than going home to get in trouble. To improve security, 16 cameras have been purchased and installed around campus. The images from these cameras can be viewed and recorded at the front administration desk. They will allow the identification of trespassers on campus, tracking of delinquent students on school grounds and prevent fights from getting out of hand. In addition, 16 additional cameras will be purchased this year to be installed in areas around the

campus. He introduced student-body president, Kyle Jacobs to speak on the security measures that have been implemented.

Mr. Jacobs stated that the additional security measures will enhance student safety and learning. The nametag ID system is especially necessary to protect students at GHS since the campus is totally open and accessible to anyone. He noted that student government has been very supportive of the new security measures.

BUDGET AND FINANCE
UPDATE

Mr. Keith Birkett, Deputy Superintendent, reported that for the past several months there has been discussion on issues related to this year's budget. A few of the issues include:

- Money was received primarily in the form of categoricals
- Resources were limited
- Many of the dollars went directly to the schools for bonuses and school recognition programs

He pointed out that the initial downturn occurred about three years ago when the district was creative in trying to reduce the reserves in order to put every dollar possible into educational programs and into salaries and increases for employees. That coupled with the limited resources the district received this year has had a major impact on the current budget. As the Board is aware, the 2001-02 flexible dollars that were received were not enough to cover the inflationary increases the district was realizing.

He stated that one month ago, the district requested a representative from the Department of Education to review the district's budget and process. Dr. David Morris visited and spent time with staff and has written a letter and a report. Mr. Birkett referred to the letter and read portions into the record:

The conclusion drawn from this review is that this budget relies heavily on realization of the projected "lapse" to achieve the forecasted unreserved and undesignated fund balance of \$697,469 which is significantly lower than the district's proposed policy for a fund balance reserve.

Mr. Birkett pointed out that the "lapse" figure used to balance this year's budget was \$2.5 million. He continued reading the letter:

Since the board adopted its budget, the Revenue Estimating Conference has concluded that there will be a shortfall in state revenue which will be further impacted by the tragic events of September 11. How this circumstance will impact school budgets is unknown at this time.

Initial indications are that there may be some growth in the statewide FTE over the amount used to project the FEFP appropriation.

In summary, it would appear prudent to take the necessary steps to assure realization of the lapse amount and to consider other budget restraints.

Mr. Birkett stated that prior to September 11, the consensus was that the state of Florida could be faced with a \$300 million shortfall. In addition, during that time the economy was also in a decline and that is why that number was as high as it was. Now with the tragic events of September 11, indications are that the shortfall revenue could exceed \$1 billion in the state of Florida.

He noted that the Board recently received a letter from the Executive Director of the Florida School Boards Association (FSBA) indicating a potential 4% reduction in revenue would mean about a \$5.6 million reduction in revenue. Coupled with \$2.5 million budget lapse included in this year's budget, plus appropriating \$697,000 balance means over \$3 million added, which indicates an \$8.7 to \$8.8 million budgetary impact to this year's budget. He noted that FSBA has recommended that districts implement hiring freezes and cease bargaining until the special session is over.

Actions the district has taken to date in order to balance this year's budget include:

- Cut central office administrative positions
- Hold vacancies in abeyance
- Cut district-level departmental budgets, with the exception of maintenance and transportation, by 10%
- Implemented a hiring freeze
- Dr. Cliett is working with schools on the reassignment of personnel to the classroom and into grant-funded positions
- Looking at all positions and moving people around if necessary to cover classes and make sure instruction is not severely impacted.
- Working with schools/departments gathering information for input on potential program and budget reductions

The Board is also considering all options, which include a four-year pay as you go operating millage increase.

Critical dates to remember:

- October 8-12 FTE Week
- October 23 -- Estimated start date for the special session
- October 23 -- Budget Workshop to discuss budget reduction options
- Early November – the estimating conference will meet to revise the state revenue projections at that time.

He requested Mr. Richard Trainor provide an update and comparison to last year.

Mr. Trainor provided a financial update for the first quarter of the fiscal

year. He reported that the district spent approximately \$440,000 more than was taken in through September 30, 2001. However, this is typical for the first part of the fiscal year because tax collections, which represent about \$40 million dollars, do not start coming in until November and December. During those months, there will be an influx of revenues that far exceed expenditures, which will make up for any shortfall in the first quarter and carry us through the rest of the year.

Expenditures exceeded revenues by about \$800,000 at the same point last year compared to the \$440,000 this year (September 30) approximately \$360,000 better off than at the same time last year.

The regular Board meeting was recessed.

PUBLIC HEARING—
RESOLUTION NO. 01-12,
ESTABLISHING
SCHOOL BOARD
RESIDENCY AREAS

Dr. Jim Scaggs, staff attorney, reported that the Board previously adopted Resolution No. 01-12 in August, establishing new School Board member residency areas. He noted that there were minor changes made to the resolution and it has been recorded and in an abundance of caution, the Board scheduled a public hearing.

He informed the Board that he has not received any comments and the residency areas have been reviewed by the Supervisor of Elections and are contiguous and roughly balanced between each Board member residency area.

There was no public input.

The regular Board meeting was reconvened.

FLORIDA BLUE KEY—
UF 2001 HOMECOMING
AND GATOR GROWL

Mr. Shaun Goldfarb, general chairman, and Ms. Kellie Carmichael, Kid’s Day Director, Homecoming 2001, provided the Board with the Homecoming 2001 calendar and discussed the activities and events to benefit the students of Alachua County.

Ms. Carmichael announced that as part of the 2001 Homecoming celebration, the Kid’s Day event will be held Saturday, October 13, 2001, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. at Westside Park and is a free family event open to the public.

CITIZEN INPUT

The following concerns/suggestions/requests were presented to the Board for consideration:

- A citizen referred to the Dean’s Monthly Misconduct report and provided statistical data related to school code violations, which

indicates a reduction of 8.5% as compared to last school year, but there were increases in crimes with a victim and other serious crime categories. Urged the Board to concentrate efforts to reduce and eliminate school crime.

- Dr. Gunnar Paulson, president, ACEA, addressed the Board on the serious funding shortfall and the special legislative session He urged the Board to face the problem and spend money wisely.
- A citizen urged the Board to allow students to learn and sing patriotic songs in order to bring everyone together.
- A vendor requested a status report on the unfair and unjust system for equal business opportunity in construction for sub-consultants and subcontractors.
- Several citizens addressed the need for infusion of African-American history into the curriculum and noted that members of the new committee comprised to develop a resource guide are not very encouraged. Urged the Board to ensure that African-American history is included in both the curriculum resource guide and comprehensive curriculum plan.
- An employee presented the Board with a petition signed by school board employees urging the board to make school employee compensation a budgetary priority and proceed in improving the career service personnel salary schedule and honor the agreement with employees.

RESOLUTION NO. 01-12—REDISTRICTING BOARD MEMBER RESIDENCY AREAS

Motion by Mrs. Sharpe

Seconded by Mrs. Carroll

Moved the administration’s recommendation to adopt the Resolution for Redistricting Board Member Residency Areas.

The question was called.

Upon Vote: Motion passed 5-0

STUDENT CASE NO. 01-51-NP

Dr. Scaggs reported that based on the student’s return from an out-of-state court-adjudicated commitment program, the student was assigned to the alternative center, effective August 20, 2001. A hearing was held on August 28, 2001, and no exceptions were filed.

Motion by Mrs. Carroll

Seconded by Mrs. Sharpe

Moved the superintendent’s recommendation to enter a final order adopting the Hearing Agent’s Recommended Order.

The question was called.

Upon Vote: Motion passed 5-0

RESOLUTION NO. 01-13—EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EDUCATION WEEK OCTOBER 7-13, 2001

Dr. Renee Speisman, director, ESE, stated that the Governor and Cabinet have declared the week of October 7-13, 2001, as Exceptional Student Education Week.

Motion by Mrs. Carroll

Seconded by Mrs. Sharpe

Moved the administration's recommendation to approve the Resolution supporting the declaration of the week of October 7-13, 2001, as Exceptional Student Education Week.

The question was called.

Upon Vote: Motion passed 5-0

CANCEL BOARD MEETING/SCHEDULE WORKSHOP(S)

Motion by Mr. Cake

Seconded by Mrs. Sharpe

Moved to cancel the Board meeting of November 6, 2001, and schedule a workshop 9 a.m., November 6, 2001, to discuss policy amendments, including construction management, choice and fund balance goals.

The question was called.

Upon Vote: Motion passed 5-0

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion by Mr. Cake

Seconded by Mrs. Sharpe

Moved to approve the Consent Agenda as described in items 1-9. (See Supplementary Minutes Book.)

The question was called.

Upon Vote: Motion passed 5-0

BOARD MEMBERS/SUPERINTENDENT REQUESTS

There were no requests.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned 8:30 p.m.