

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF ALACHUA COUNTY, FLORIDA
MINUTES OF INFORMAL SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
April 15, 2008

The School Board of Alachua County, Florida, met in informal session duly called at 9 a.m. in the Boardroom, 620 East University Avenue, Gainesville, Florida. Present were: Janie S. Williams, Chairman; Virginia S. Childs, F. Wesley Eubank, and Eileen Roy, members; and W. Daniel Boyd, Jr., Superintendent. Vice-Chairman Tina Pinkoson was absent.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Williams.

Mr. Eubank:

- He and Mrs. Pinkoson recently attended the Florida School Boards Association Day in the Legislature. Neither House nor Senate leadership was encouraging about budgets, saying that the March revenue forecast was overly optimistic and that 2008-09 and the following year will be worse. He explained that discrepancies between House and Senate numbers result in varying predictions of revenue loss, the higher being \$199.82 per student, a 5 to 5 ½ million dollar reduction. Alachua County is number one in the state in revenue loss.
- The Florida School Boards Association to drop its affiliation with the National School Boards Association, because of budget cuts.
- In addition to Budget Workgroup meetings, the Board should begin separate dialogue, in particular to inform the public of the budget situation. Serious decisions will have to be made that will have a significant impact in the community. Among measures that he feels must be considered are:
 - reassignment of students
 - innovative ways of running schools, such as sharing principals and/or staff (e.g., perhaps a one-principal campus at Hawthorne)
 - moving employees to different positions
 - freezing all hiring
 - removing unfilled positions from the budget.
 - Reevaluating how DROP is being implemented.
- Suggestion that Mr. Keith Birkett, Assistant Superintendent for Business Services, provide the present budget, changes that are in process/being considered, and start the budget development process with a target number based on legislative information.

Mrs. Childs suggested beginning discussion on some of these items at the Budget Workgroup meeting scheduled for this afternoon.

Discussion was held on DES and DROP, with Mr. Eubank pointing out that the original purpose was to retain only outstanding employees. Mrs. Roy suggested that establishing an official Policy might solve the problem. Mrs. Childs stated that implementation of the programs are within the purview of the Superintendent rather than the Board. Mr. Eubank believes that budget responsibility gives the Board some latitude with these decisions.

Mrs. Childs expressed interest in Mr. Eubank's suggestion of considering 'consolidation' of schools, stating that she has previously mentioned changing the use of Prairie View to a Pre-K site and combining Metcalfe and Rawlings. Board members all expressed interest. Mrs. Roy noted that studies indicate students perform better at smaller schools and requested information on potential

school/classroom enrollment before pursuing the matter of consolidation. Discussion was held on possible options for various sites.

Superintendent Boyd stated that staff will present some cost-savings items that they've been working on at this afternoon's budget workgroup meeting. He noted that the greatest expense is in personnel. Allocations and transportation are being worked on at this time. Data will be composed on options for the reassignment of students and consolidation, and the information will be presented to the Board.

Mr. Eubank (continued):

- Pleased with the increase in attendance rates at the elementary and middle levels. He commented on the especially poor rate at Horizon and the 98% rate at the Wilderness Institute.

There was brief discussion on possible changes to student requirements handed down by the Hearing Officer. Mrs. Childs also questioned the effectiveness of taking parents to court for student non-attendance and wondered if direction could be sought from the judge. Discussion was held on designating Horizon as a secondary school, so that Wednesday early release would no longer apply.

Mrs. Roy:

- Commented on the difficult circumstances that most Horizon Center students are in. With many of the students being 17+ years of age and only 2-3 credits, she stated that they desperately need job skills, not academic programs that they have failed at for years. She suggested implementing some hands-on, job-skill programs that would interest them.
- Many Horizon students need anger-management programs.
- All Horizon staff should be provided walkie-talkies.
- More ESE personnel are needed.
- Teachers would like a lounge with a copy machine, since the front office is presently the only place they have to conduct their planning periods.
- Covered walkways to the cafeteria are needed.
- A media center is needed.

Mrs. Childs sees a need to separate middle and high school students at Horizon and also favors its designation as a secondary school. She believes there has not yet been adequate time to see results of Mr. Speer's efforts to change the culture of the school.

Mrs. Roy (continued):

- Would like the Board to discuss the ACEA request to survey employees for an incentive program and to work with them on the budget crisis.
- Would like the District to implement some New York charter school practices, as described in a recent article in *The Economist*.
- At Mrs. Roy's request, Mrs. Childs explained that a recent report she requested was to analyze numbers of ESE students by school, since larger ESE populations require more support staff.
- Would like to implement some of the techniques of New York single-gender charter schools, as written about in *The Economist* magazine.
- She is not opposed to a resolution by the School Board, similar to one Mr. Eubank has distributed from Flagler County. She would also consider a similar suit as Duval County has filed against the state.
- Concerned about capacity of the Cambridge program at Westwood.

- Has an interest in leasing-out rooftops to businesses for installation of solar panels, since businesses are able to obtain tax deductions.

Discussion was held on the whether/how to pursue CHOICES funding for school nurse program continuation.

Mrs. Williams:

- Regarding a single-gender classroom pilot, she suggested the possibility of an incentive to appeal to a male teacher.
- Mr. James Speer, Horizon principal, is working with faculty to emphasize the education of Horizon students. It will take some time to change past practices.
- She supports changes to DES, and possible school consolidation, as mentioned by Mr. Eubank.

Superintendent Boyd:

- Requested that the Board review the proposed resolution that was developed from the Flagler County example.
- Distributed a draft of an employee incentive program that the Board may discuss at this afternoon's budget workgroup meeting.

Mr. Eubank cited Florida statute that he believes limits public input to meetings were Board action take place.

The Informal School Board meeting adjourned at 11 a.m.