

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF ALACHUA COUNTY, FLORIDA
APPROVED MINUTES OF REGULAR BOARD MEETING
March 21, 2000

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: Barbara Sharpe, chairman; Judy Brashear, vice-chairman; Bill Cake, Bev Carroll, and Chester Leathers, members; Lawrence Marazza, superintendent; and James F. Lang, attorney for the Board.

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

APPROVAL OF
MINUTES

Motion by Mrs. Carroll

Seconded by Mrs. Brashear

Moved to approve the minutes of March 7, 2000, as presented.

Dr. Leathers requested the word "independent" be added prior to investigator on page 8, Engagement of Investigator for Complaint Against Employee.

Board attorney Lang reported that he has met with several possible investigators and that he will discuss with Chairman Sharpe the possibility of interviewing four or five investigators. Chairman Sharpe can then select an investigator to proceed with the investigation.

The question was called on the minutes as amended.

Upon Vote: Motion passed 5-0

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Motion by Mrs. Carroll

Seconded by Dr. Leathers

Moved to adopt the agenda for the meeting of March 21, 2000, as presented.

Add as D.1.a., Discussion on Citizen Input.

The question was called on the agenda as amended.

Upon Vote: Motion passed 5-0

BOARD MEMBERS/
SUPERINTENDENT
ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mrs. Brashear made the following announcements:

- A music teacher expressed appreciation to the Board and community for support during the recent death of fellow music teacher Marjorie Douglas.

- Attended a Word training class provided by Word Processing and encouraged other Board members to take advantage of this technical training opportunity.
- Attended a very informative session on personality types to make better school boards and provided a handout for each board member.
- Participated in the Altrusa Read-in at Archer Community School and thanked Altrusa for this wonderful service project.

Mrs. Carroll made the following announcements:

- Informed the community that Glen Springs and Rawlings Elementary Schools have begun their master planning process and encouraged teachers and parents to attend meetings on Wednesday afternoons.
- Buchholz High School will present the production of *Grease* all next week.
- During the next Board meeting the honor band will be performing downtown.
- Participated in the Altrusa Read-in at Newberry Elementary School. Commended teachers and students on their behavior.

Mr. Cake announced that he also participated in the Altrusa Read-in at Metcalfe Elementary School.

Dr. Leathers attended the funeral of Gainesville High School senior Justin St. John.

Chairman Sharpe made the following announcements:

- Participated in the Altrusa Read-in at Sidney Lanier and read to the profound students.
- She extended the Board's condolences and sympathy to the family of Jennifer Crew, a mentor at Hidden Oak and UF CHAMP volunteer, who was killed in an auto accident in Merritt Island. Condolences were extended to the family of Justin St. John, a senior at Gainesville High School, who was in an auto accident. The Board wished for the speedy recovery of Rachel Cohen and Joshua Hyden, who were injured in the same auto accident. Condolences were also extended to the family of employee Sherry Gemma, an aide and school volunteer coordinator at Stephen Foster.
- A school board member from Marion County has expressed a desire for the district's purchasing division and Marion county's purchasing division to devise a method of cooperative purchasing. She noted that back in 1997 she brought cooperative purchasing to

the attention of the Board and staff, but it did not proceed. She requested Superintendent Marazza research Marion county's request to participate in cooperative purchasing and also include the city of Gainesville.

RECOGNITION—
ALACHUA
ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL—THINKING
CAP QUIZ BOWL

Mr. Jim Brandenburg, principal, Alachua Elementary School, recognized Alachua Elementary School's fifth grade 2000 Thinking Cap Quiz Bowl state champions as follows: Keely Duff, Elizabeth Keller, Tyler Mikell, Katey Sands, and Sara Wooding.

The Board commended the students and thanked the parents and teachers for their efforts.

AMERICORPS—
AMERICA READS

Ms. Donna Omer, director, Project Development, recognized seven participants from the AmeriCorps—America Reads Program: Rose Brown, Rosemary Jones, Noreen Lopez, Rosalind Marundi, Megan Spillane, and Diane Stephens.

The America Reads program provides tutoring to targeted students with the goal of having them read on grade level at the end of the year.

The Board extended heartfelt thanks to the volunteers.

SCHEDULED
AGENCIES—
MARCH OF DIMES

The president of the Chain Reaction Youth Leadership Program, presented information to the Board on the March of Dimes program, which works to improve the health of babies and educate youth of healthier lifestyle choices. The goal is to raise \$80,000 by student volunteers.

Chairman Sharpe commended the youth leadership council as a premiere youth organization in the community and nation and challenged them to raise \$100,000. Ms. Lynda Knight, executive director, March of Dimes and Ms. Linda Kallman were recognized by the Board for their efforts.

She reviewed the number of national research grants awarded to Shands Hospital totaling over 1.75 million dollars in March of Dimes grants.

I, TOO, LIVED ROSE-
WOOD FOUNDATION

Ms. Liz Jenkins, I, Too, Lived Rosewood Foundation, requested that Archer Community School be renamed after her aunt, Mahulda Gussie Brown Carrier. Ms. Carrier was born and educated in Archer, Alachua County. She taught from 1910-1923. Ms. Jenkins informed the Board that Ms. Carrier's father and others purchased the ten acres of property where the current Archer Community School is located.

Chairman Sharpe reported that staff has also conducted research on the deeds for the Archer Community School property and suggested Ms. Jenkins meet with district staff to review the research information.

CITIZEN INPUT

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

- A citizen expressed concern with the district's hiring of consultants at the rate of \$2000/day, specifically related to the strategic planning process and a report presented by Action Team 9, which requested implementation of the Baldrige Criteria.
- A consultant with Save our Schools (SOS) expressed concern that the district's legislative lobbyist has not focused priority on charter school legislation and also urged the district to spend funds in the classroom, not on district renovations.
- An Alachua resident requested information related to Chance Charter School and the expenditures incurred for attorney fees and responsibility of the deficit incurred.
- The president of ACEA expressed concern with not having an alternative center for elementary students. The Board was urged to pay close attention to proposed bills HB 1673 and SB 1472 related to workforce development, adult basic education, which can affect teachers.

Chairman Sharpe requested that Ms. Joy Frank, the Board's legislative lobbyist, be notified to track the bills referred by ACEA.

ALACHUA COUNTY
VALUE ADJUSTMENT
BOARD, 2000

As provided for in Chapter 194, Florida Statutes, the Value Adjustment Board is comprised of three County Commissioners and two School Board Members. The Clerk of the Circuit Court, Mr. J. K. Irby, is requesting the election of two members and an alternate to serve on the 2000 Alachua County Value Adjustment Board.

Motion by Mrs. Brashear

Seconded by Dr. Leathers

Moved that Mrs. Carroll and Mrs. Sharpe to continue to serve on the 2000 Alachua County Value Adjustment Board, with Mrs. Brashear to serve as the alternate.

The question was called.

Upon Vote: Motion passed 5-0

STUDENT CASE
NO. 00-05-X

Mr. Tom Wittmer, staff attorney, reported that the student is charged with violence against school personnel and possession of an electronic telephone pager while on campus. A hearing is scheduled for March 21, 2000.

Motion by Dr. Leathers

Seconded by Mrs. Brashear

Moved the superintendent's recommendation to extend the student's suspension through April 4, 2000.

The question was called. Upon Vote: Motion passed 5-0

STUDENT CASE
NO. 00-14-X

Mr. Wittmer reported that the student is charged with fighting while at school.

Motion by Mrs. Brashear Seconded by Dr. Leathers

Moved the superintendent's recommendation to extend the student's suspension through April 4, 2000.

The question was called. Upon Vote: Motion passed 5-0

STUDENT CASE
NO. 00-15-X

Mr. Wittmer reported that the student is charged with fighting while at school.

Motion by Mrs. Carroll Seconded by Mrs. Brashear

Moved the superintendent's recommendation to extend the student's suspension through April 4, 2000.

The question was called. Upon Vote: Motion passed 5-0

STUDENT CASE
NO. 00-17-SB

Mr. Wittmer reported that the student is charged with persistent misconduct while riding the school bus. A hearing is scheduled for March 21, 2000.

Motion by Mrs. Carroll Seconded by Dr. Leathers

Moved the superintendent's recommendation to extend the student's bus suspension through April 4, 2000.

The question was called. Upon Vote: Motion passed 5-0

STUDENT CASE
NO. 00-00-18-SB

Mr. Wittmer reported that the student is charged with persistent misconduct while riding the school bus.

Motion by Mrs. Carroll Seconded by Dr. Leathers

Moved the superintendent's recommendation to extend the student's bus suspension through April 4, 2000.

The question was called. Upon Vote: Motion passed 5-0

STUDENT CASE
NO. 00-19-SB

Mr. Wittmer reported that the student is charged with persistent misconduct while riding the school bus.

Motion by Mrs. Carroll

Seconded by Dr. Leathers

Moved the superintendent’s recommendation to extend the student’s bus suspension through April 4, 2000.

The question was called.

Upon Vote: Motion passed 5-0

ENDORSEMENT TO
DESIGNATE THE
STADIUM AT CITIZEN’S
FIELD AS THE MILTON
LEWIS STADIUM

Motion by Mr. Cake

Seconded by Mrs. Carroll

Moved to endorse the designation of the stadium at Citizen’s Field as the Milton Lewis Stadium.

Chairman Sharpe read the Board’s letter of endorsement addressed to the Mayor of Gainesville expressing the willingness to support the effort to honor Milton Lewis, a veteran of WWII.

Mr. Terry Tougaw, assistant superintendent, Facilities/Transportation, informed the Board that staff is working in conjunction with the city of Gainesville to ensure that Shands also receives recognition for their donation of the new scoreboard.

Mr. Kirby Stewart, former SBAC director of athletics, thanked the school board for the endorsement to designate the stadium at Citizen’s Field as the Milton Lewis Stadium.

Mr. Jim Lynch, Veteran Services Officer, thanked the Board and invited them to attend and participate in the Memorial Day Ceremony, May 29 at Citizen’s Field.

The question was called.

Upon Vote: Motion passed 5-0

CHARTER
CONTRACT—CHANCE
CHARTER SCHOOL
PROJECT, INC.

Superintendent Marazza reported that due to the failure of Chance Charter School to meet standards of fiscal management, it is necessary that the Board comply with state law and cancel the contract effective 5 p.m., June 20, 2000, and noted that notice has been sent to Chance Charter School.

Mrs. Brashear presented a representative from Davis, Monk & Company, CPA, to share information related to the audit of Chance Charter School. The representative reported that based on the audits conducted, Chance Charter School is operating in the “red.”

Responding to a question from Mrs. Brashear, the representative stated that no other charter school has made any short-term loans to balance

the books.

Dr. Leathers felt it important to point out that 814 hours of staff time has been provided in assisting the Chance Charter School staff.

Responding to Mr. Cake, Mr. Wittmer stated that Chance Charter School is responsible for the debt of \$110,394, which must be repaid by June.

Dr. Mary Chambers, assistant superintendent, Business Services, informed the Board that the school will be given the opportunity to provide additional numbers and improve their records reporting and find alternative funding sources. She provided the Board with an overview of the general fund balances from fiscal year 1997-98 through February 29, 2000. She noted that there is a concern if Chance Charter can still provide the appropriate services to students and pay the bills. She pointed out that the numbers included in the analysis are provided by the school.

Mrs. Brashear referred to the request during Citizen Input related to the legalities of expenditures for an attorney and who is responsible for the deficit at the end of the year.

Dr. Chambers responded that legal fees are a legislative expenditure, but the school is responsible for the school's liability.

Mr. Wittmer addressed the legality of a charter school deficit and reported that the charter school is responsible for the debts of the school, which is in the contract.

Mr. Cake stated for the record that based on feedback for the past three years he has never been concerned about their program or services, but the issue has always been a funding problem. He noted that ESE funding has always been a problem for the district and he understand the problem Chance is having based on the fact that they have a predominantly large ESE population.

In response to Mr. Cake, Dr. Chambers stated that district staff is working with Chance Charter on a daily basis and will continue to work with them for the next three months.

Mr. Cake requested a monthly update on the status of Chance Charter school's financial progress.

Mrs. Carroll stated that for the past three years the Board has been very supportive of all district charter schools and the programs and students

in those schools. The Board is aware that parents are happy with the program and pointed out that the Board is in a difficult position. The school cannot be allowed to continue on the same course due to the funding deficit.

She expressed hope that the situation will improve so that this action of nonrenewal will not have to go through. She noted that the ESE matrix has been very difficult for everyone involved

Mrs. Brashear stated that based on the Auditor General's report, it required the school and district to do things differently. She pointed out that these are joint problems, which are tied very closely and the Board is responsible for the governance of charter schools. She noted that there is nothing that would prohibit the Board from undoing this action.

Chairman Sharpe stated she has never had a problem with the programs, curriculum or instruction administered to the students by Chance, but the concerns have always been fiscal management and financial issues that have plagued Chance Charter School almost since the very beginning. She pointed out that the school's charter contract ends on June 30, 2000, and charter school law, F.S. 228.056(10)(c), requires the Board to give at least 90 days notice of intended action--renewing or terminating--which is no later than March 31, 2000. The Board is following the letter of the law.

Mr. Cake urged more involvement by the private sector in requesting assistance from Tallahassee in resolving the ESE matrix funding issue.

Motion by Mrs. Brashear

Seconded by Mrs. Carroll

Moved that based on the financial data supplied by the Chance Charter School through its accountant, it appears that the school would not be able to continue to operate. Before the end of the fiscal year its expenditures will exceed available funds. Among the statutory grounds for termination or non-renewal of a charter contract, F.S. 228.056(10)(a), is failure to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management. On March 10, a courtesy notice was delivered to the school of Dr. Marazza's intention to recommend that the Board terminate the charter effective 5 p.m. on June 20, 2000.

Mr. Kurt Larsen, chair, Chance Charter School, stated that the problems Chance Charter School has been having are related to funding and source of funding for charter schools. He feels the Superintendent's recommendation represents a lack of understanding of the financial aspects of the school and various actions of the school

district. He pointed out that there continues to be disagreements related to the ESE matrix. He strongly recommended the Board renew the contract with Chance Charter School and review the expenditure funding issues. (See Supplementary Minutes Book)

Chairman Sharpe stated that Dr. Marazza would have been negligent in his duty, in light of the financial problems as revealed by numerous audits. He is bound by his responsibilities to present the financial status of any charter school in trouble, and the Board is acting according to Florida Statutes.

A parent representative from Chance Charter School provided information to the Board on the quality of education being provided at Chance Charter School. The Board was urged to not close the school until both sides can sit down and address the issues and discrepancies due to funding and the ESE funding matrix.

Mrs. Brashear stated that the Board members do not take this duty lightly, but it would be derelict of their duties as constitutional officers. She noted that nothing prevents the Board from continuing to sit down and work with all parties involved.

Mr. Cake reiterated his request to see a monthly budget update and a summary of Chance's concerns. He requested those concerns be addressed in a satisfactory way by June and a June date for certain when the Board could readdress this issue.

Chairman Sharpe stated that based on information received, there is nothing to prohibit this Board, after carefully monitoring the Chance Charter financial status, from taking a second look within the next three months. However, the Florida Statute dictates that the Board has three months to put Chance Charter on notice that this is going to happen.

Chairman Sharpe responded that the effective date of termination of the charter is effective on 5 p.m., June 20, 2000. With monitoring every month, the Board will be apprised of what is going on and if the school should become financial solvent within those three months.

Mr. Cake noted this issue needs to be addressed at the last Board meeting in May if the Board wants to renew it.

Superintendent Marazza requested the Board define standards for the administration if the Board's intent is to renew. His standard would be solvency.

Superintendent Marazza stated that Chance Charter school cannot

continue to operate in the red and this recommendation is based on this point. Staff has assisted Chance Charter with more time and energy than all the other charter schools combined and other staff has been added. We will continue to assist with remediation, but will not debate what the statute requires, which requires schools to operate in the black, not in the red.

Mrs. Brashear stated that she would be happy to look at this again if there is a substantial change in the status of Chance Charter School's financial condition.

The question was called. Upon Vote: Motion passed 5-0

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion by Mrs. Carroll Seconded by Mr. Cake

Moved to approve the Consent Agenda as described in item 1-4. (See Supplementary Minutes Book.)

The question was called. Upon Vote: Motion passed 5-0

INFORMATION ITEM—
SCHOOL UNIFORMS

Superintendent Marazza reported that a workshop was held on February 3, 2000, on the issue of school uniforms and after discussions with Chairman Sharpe a list of options was developed:

1. Since there is no current, specific Board policy on this subject, the School Board could choose to support the adoption of a mandatory school uniform policy by any school where the majority of stakeholders at such school are in agreement that uniforms will improve the achievement and conduct of students.
2. The School Board, through the Superintendent, could require a more rigorous enforcement of the current dress code as outlined in the 1999-2000 Code of Student conduct for Elementary and Secondary Schools.
3. The School Board could decide, through the office of Research and Evaluation, to seek and collect the names and grade levels of students whose parent/guardian would choose to have them enrolled in a school requiring uniforms.
4. The School Board could decide to require all elementary schools to require school uniforms beginning next school year. Each elementary school could work with parents to establish the details of such a requirement.
5. The School Board could decide to select a limited number of

elementary schools which would require school uniforms on a pilot basis for one school year.

Mr. Cake supports options 1 and 2 and 3 with the following addition: Allow students to choose a uniform school and allow students to go to a school without the uniform requirement if zoned to a uniform school.

Dr. Leathers agrees with Mr. Cake but also feels that a stronger commitment to a majority is necessary--75-80% commitment.

Mr. Cake felt that the faculty, administration, PTA and the SAC need to agree, but how they determine the majority within each of those groups is for those stakeholders to decide.

Mrs. Carroll stated that she is not hearing a great outcry for uniforms countywide. She supports number 1 and if we cannot go countywide, that the Board legally back schools and encourage them to do this at the school level. She fully supports enforcement of the district's dress code. Her concern with number three is a student can leave. Could not support number 4, has not heard the public outcry.

Mrs. Brashear supports number two, which enforces a common sense dress code, but would be perfectly happy to leave the issue alone. If the Board wishes to pursue this issue, she suggested looking at an under enrolled school and see if there is a 90% buy-in, create a uniform magnet and for one year see how many students participate.

Chairman Sharpe stated that she respects each member's opinion; however, she received many telephone calls and emails. She has received 56 emails stating they do not want uniforms, 102 emails for uniforms and five are sitting on the fence. There was a countywide survey sent out by Representative Chestnut in 1999, which asked for support requiring school uniforms--64.3 % said yes, 28.1% said no, 7.6% said no opinion--Elementary 86.3%, Middle 91.3%, High 64.3%.

Mrs. Sharpe stated that public school uniform policy dates back to the 1980s when schools in Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Miami, Dade County, Bridgeport, CT, and Detroit began requiring them. In 1994, the Long Beach, CA, Unified School District was the first in the nation to require uniforms in all elementary and middle schools. Long Beach's policy was intended to curve gang problems and school officials not only credit it with having accomplished that goal, but also say uniforms have brought about a substantial drop in school crime, a drop in school suspensions and disciplinary problems and improved attendance rates and academics. Dick Vanderlone, a school spokesman, said last month, February 2000, "We have seen significant

improvements in student behavior and student achievement. The district's test scores are up across the board and absenteeism and suspensions are the lowest they have been for more than a decade. School uniforms have helped us set and achieve high standards and helped to create a setting that says you are here to learn."

After hearing about Long Beach's much touted success, President Clinton endorsed the idea of uniforms in a March 1996 speech, saying, "If it means that the school rooms will be more orderly and more disciplined, and that our young people will learn to evaluate themselves by what they are on the inside, instead of what they are wearing on the outside, then our public schools should be able to require their students to wear school uniforms."

Chairman Sharpe noted that soon after the president's endorsement, the United States Department of Education sent a school uniform manual to every school district in the country. The guide, *School Uniforms, Where They are and Why They Work*, listed the potential benefits of school uniforms, including a decrease in violence and theft, less peer pressure and better discipline.

Chairman Sharpe continued with, "We can remove some of the stigma associated with clothes. Kids have to know that school is a place to be about business of learning and not a place for Who's Who's In Fashions. Some people say they want more scientific evidence. What do they want? A molecule to walk up and hit them over the head. What better evidence do you need than that of the testimonial I gave you earlier. Level the playing field for kids, take away the competition among students regarding dress, improve student discipline. Children act how they dress, better attendance, children are not ashamed of their clothes, promote school pride and self-esteem, for kids and for safety reasons. Children cannot hide weapons in their clothing, easier to identify our students on campus and on field trips and enable students and staff to very quickly identify trespassers and bring order, structure and respect for teachers and other students in the classroom.

"How do we know that FCAT scores will not improve if the children wear uniforms and it brings more structure and order to class. What harm would it do? What do we have to lose by doing it? Just to see. We will never know for ourselves unless we actually try it.

"I'm reminded of something that Frederick Douglas once said, 'The history of human liberties shows that all concessions have been born of earnest struggle. Power concedes nothing without demand. It never did, and it never will.'"

Mr. Cake stated that in those schools with 100% support it will spread like wildfire and he is not opposed to uniforms, but for helping to start uniforms.

Chairman Sharpe requested Superintendent Marazza present an action item with a recommendation as soon as possible.

CITIZEN INPUT

Chairman Sharpe provided Board members with a revised document entitled "The Community Speaks" related to Board meeting procedures. She requested a statement be added requesting cell phones and pagers be turned off during Board meetings.

The Board agreed to replace the existing citizen input form with the revised document.

BOARD MEMBERS/
SUPERINTENDENT
REQUESTS

Mrs. Carroll urged the Board to ensure that school and community events are attended by at least one Board member.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:50p.m.