

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF
ESCAMBIA COUNTY, FLORIDA

MINUTES, DECEMBER 11, 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. Patricia Hightower Vice Chair: Mr. Bill Slayton

Board Members: Mr. Jeff Bergosh
Mr. Gerald Boone
Mrs. Linda Moultrie

School Board General Counsel: Mrs. Donna Sessions Waters

Superintendent of Schools: Mr. Malcolm Thomas

Meeting was advertised in the *Pensacola News Journal* on November 24, 2014 - Legal No. 1633898

NOTE: The minutes from this session have been prepared according to *Roberts Rules of Order, Newly Revised*. The video from this session is available at <http://escambiacountysdfl.swagit.com/play/12112014-762>

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

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

II. OPEN DISCUSSION

- Booker T. Washington High School's Culinary Arts Academy – Superintendent

The following students who were enrolled in the Booker T. Washington High School's Culinary Arts Academy commented on the knowledge and experience they had gained through this culinary program: Ashley Rice, La'ketra Bland, and Jazmyne Henderson.

- January 2015 Calendar – Hightower

There were no changes to the School Board's schedule of workshops/meetings for January:

- Special Workshop, January 15, 2015, beginning at 3:00 p.m.
- Regular Workshop, January 16, 2015, beginning at 9:00 a.m.
- Regular Meeting, January 20, 2015, beginning at 5:30 p.m.

All January sessions were to be held in Room 160 at the J.E. Hall Educational Services Center

- District Driven Assessments – Hightower

(NOTE: This matter was previously discussed during the [October 17, 2014 Regular Workshop](#).) Upon suggestion by Mrs. Hightower, the Superintendent said staff could certainly indicate on the School District's annual testing calendar (which was accessible via the [Evaluation Services webpage](#) on the School District's website) whether an assessment was mandated by federal or state law, or locally mandated (by the School District). Mrs. Hightower felt it was important to inform the public, especially parents, about the amount of testing that is occurring and who was mandating that testing. The remaining discussion under this topic centered primarily on the need for the School District's/School Board's leadership team to lobby the local legislative delegation for some relief from the excessive amount of testing that was required by the state, whether driven by the requirement for teacher evaluation or assessments required for monitoring student progress in different subject areas.

- Contract Renewal Process for General Counsel – Hightower

Mrs. Hightower initiated a discussion regarding the process for renewing the School Board's contract with Mrs. Donna Waters as its General Counsel. It was suggested that a special session should be scheduled in February to conduct an evaluation of Mrs. Waters. There was brief mention of following possibilities with regard to the contract for the General Counsel: changing from a multi-year to a single-year term and an increase in compensation due to Mrs. Water's recently acquired certification designation as an expert in education law. Mrs. Hightower noted that it had been the School Board's practice that the Chair and the General Counsel would work together to develop the contract and then present it to the entire School Board for consideration.

- Conversation Regarding African American History Required Instruction Resolution - Hightower

(NOTE: A copy of the proposed [resolution](#) was sent to each School Board Member prior to this workshop.) The resolution, in recognition of the 1994 Passage of the African American History Required Instruction, was passed by the Florida School Boards Association (FSBA) Board of Directors in June. The FSBA was requesting that individual Florida school districts endorse the mission and goals of the African American History Task Force by adoption of a similar resolution. It was noted that the intent and purpose of the suggested resolution was to simply affirm that Florida school districts were in fact, teaching African American History in its schools. Ms. Cherie Arnette, Director of Social Studies, confirmed that the School District did in fact comply with Florida Statutes with regard to teaching the required elements of history; she clarified that African American history, like other facets of history including the Holocaust Education and Women's Education, was incorporated as appropriate, as part of the overall story of America. There being no objection from any School Board Member, Mrs. Hightower said she would present the resolution for consideration on the January Regular Meeting agenda.

- Legislative Update from FSBA – Moultrie

Mrs. Moultrie provided a brief update from the recent Florida School Boards Association.

- Presentation of Items of Interest from the 2014 Foundation for Excellence in Education National Summit, held Nov. 20-21 in Washington D.C. – *Bergosh*

Mr. Bergosh narrated a brief PowerPoint [presentation](#) that highlighted “items of interest” from the recent 2014 Foundation for Excellence in Education National Summit that was held November 20th and 21st in Washington, D.C.

- Discussion of School-Wide Behavior Management Plans (Implementation and Compliance) – *Bergosh*

Mr. Bergosh said he appreciated receiving the following link to the School-Wide Behavior Management Plans for 2014-2015: <http://superintendent.escambia.k12.fl.us/behavior%20plans%202014-15.htm> He noted that for the remaining time that he served on the School Board he would really be focusing on student discipline and as such, he had taken a special interest in these behavior management plans. The Superintendent provided the following responses to inquiries made by Mr. Bergosh:

- Since the implementation of behavior management plans in 2008, the School District had transitioned to a standard template/format simply to ensure that every school answered the same questions and provided the same types of information with regard to each element/component of the plan.
- A team from each school is responsible for compilation and implementation of the plan.
- Level directors were responsible for ensuring that each school was following its plan; schools not adhering to the plan would be subject to interim monitoring through the school year.
- Each year, a copy of every school’s plan is posted to the Superintendent’s page of the School District website

The remaining discussion under this topic centered on Mr. Bergosh’s concerns and/or questions regarding certain elements of the behavior management plan for specific schools; the Superintendent however, said he was not prepared to response to concerns and/or questions specific to certain schools but would be happy to discuss those off-line with Mr. Bergosh at a later time. The Superintendent commented that the School District had seen tremendous improvement in student behavior over the last several years. He noted the importance of ensuring that the school’s behavior management plan was fair to both students and teachers.

- Cameras in Classrooms to Improve School Climate – *Bergosh*

(NOTE: *This topic was previously addressed at the October 16, 2014 Special Workshop.*) Mr. Bergosh initiated a follow-up discussion regarding the use of cameras in classrooms for the purpose of enhancing the security of the learning environment and possibly improving student behavior, particularly in those schools with historically high discipline rates. He asked that his fellow School Board Members, consider as other school districts had done, the addition, particularly in the new schools under-going construction in the near future. It was his belief that cameras in the classrooms would provide a level of protection for students, faculty, and even School District assets, would be helpful particularly in situations when a teacher had been accused of inappropriate behavior/actions, and would put students on notice that their classroom behavior was being monitored. The Superintendent reiterated his previous comments regarding the importance of first ensuring that all schools in the District had basic surveillance systems and alarm systems before considering cameras for individual classrooms district-wide.

- Graduation Rate – *Superintendent*

Ms. Lesa Morgan, Director of High School Education, narrated a brief PowerPoint [presentation](#) regarding graduate rate.

- Designated Hazardous Walking Areas – *Superintendent*

Due to time constraints, the [presentation](#) for this topic of discussion was postponed to the December 12, 2014 Regular Workshop.

III. PUBLIC FORUM

Mrs. Hightower called for public forum; however, there were no speakers.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Special Workshop adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Superintendent

Chair