

WORKSHOP MEETING - FEBRUARY 10, 2000

The School Board of Okaloosa County met in Workshop Session on 10 February 2000, in the Fort Walton Beach Administration Building, 120 Lowery Place, SE.

PRESENT: Cindy Frakes, Vice-Chairman
Don Gaetz
Howard Hill

Walter Gordon, Superintendent
C. Jeffrey McInnis, Esq., Attorney to the Board

ABSENT: Rodney Walker, Chairman
Lloyd Taylor

In the absence of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman Frakes called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m., the purpose of the meeting being to review Agenda items, thereby expediting the Regular Meeting. Items may be considered in random order to accommodate visitors or presenters. Routine items not discussed during the Workshop were reviewed prior to the meeting with no further questions or comments from the Board.

Mr. Hill asked if an inventory of facility needs would be done this year. Bill Smith responded that facility needs were assessed last year in preparation of the Five-year Capital Outlay Plan. However, an inventory of maintenance needs is conducted annually to develop a priority list for budget preparation.

Bill Smith submitted a letter of response from Dr. John Watson, Director of Facilities Budgeting for the Department of Education, addressing the questions and concerns expressed by the Board at the previous meeting regarding the request to apply for class size reduction funding for Northwood Elementary.

Mrs. Frakes asked if funds could apply to more than one school. Dr. Smith responded that it was necessary to apply site specific and to select a site that would best fit the funding criteria. Northwood was chosen because it is in the growth area of the district and because the 1:20 ratio can be accomplished with only one additional teaching unit. As to the length of the commitment for the reduced teacher-student ratio, it is not spoken to directly by the legislature so it is assumed to be indefinite or until addressed by the legislature.

Emmett Windham added that Northwood was also considered because the additional classrooms will increase the school's capacity making it possible to reduce the small school supplement. Also, the funding from this grant can be used to renovate the old media center, which the district currently does not have the funds to do.

Dr. Smith stated that the District's application for the funding has been sent to DOE. Based on the response from Dr. Watson, direction is now needed from the Board on whether to proceed with the application process or to withdraw the application. Mr. Gaetz requested this item be moved to the Discussion Agenda for final action. Mrs. Frakes approved the request.

Mrs. Frakes noted that the reference to the Safety Task Force of the Alliance in the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of January 24 should be corrected to state the Superintendent's Task Force on Safety.

Mr. Hill clarified that his statement in the January 24 Regular Meeting Minutes regarding notification to employees of toxic substances in the workplace was his interpretation of the statutes and not intended to be a definitive statement.

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Mr. Gaetz requested that the Minutes of the January 24 meeting reflecting the discussion of the budget include his question to Gary Scott regarding the use of non-recurring revenue for recurring expenses and Mr. Scott's response.

Mr. Gaetz requested, the Monthly Financial Report for January 2000 be moved to the Discussion Agenda until additional information was received regarding the financial status of the District. The request was approved by Vice-Chairman Frakes.

Mr. Gordon distributed a packet of financial information for the Board's review.

Mr. Scott responded to questions from Mrs. Frakes regarding FTE Reserve funds.

Mr. Gaetz asked if the school budget reductions addressed at the last meeting had been made. Mr. Scott responded that the reductions have been made and the funds placed in the Fund Balance. Mr. Gaetz asked Mr. McInnis to opine at the meeting on Monday as to whether this kind of budget adjustment can be done administratively by the Superintendent or was Board action required. He stated that as a Board Member, he would like to have the opportunity to vote on the issue.

Referencing the request to write off worthless checks, Mrs. Frakes asked if the District has a policy of not accepting checks from individuals who are on the list for writing worthless checks. Mr. McInnis responded that there is not a policy and that such a policy would be difficult to enforce because a number of the checks come in as collections from fund raisers and other activities.

Mr. Gaetz stated that the previous child care program offered at Southside Elementary operated with a budget deficit. He asked what changes have been made to ensure that the program will not have the same problem. Mr. Gordon responded that the previous program was operated under poor management and there was unnecessary spending. Mrs. Erdman now has an individual to manage the program who has successfully managed a child care program in the past. Additionally, the program will be supported by an increased student enrollment at the school and it will be a before and after school program.

Mr. Gaetz asked if slots would be available to families who cannot afford to pay for child care. Mr. Gordon responded that financial assistance would be made available.

Mrs. Frakes presented a proposed new policy setting forth the guidelines and procedures for obtaining Board approval of a grant application. The grant summary/questionnaire is an attempt to ascertain specific information about the terms of the grant and the financial and instructional impact of the grant. The policy establishes a time line for submission of the grant to the Superintendent for review and submission to the Board prior to the date in which action is requested. Because of the short turn around time on some grant applications, section (A) of the policy provides an exception to the requirements of the policy upon the recommendation of the Superintendent and approval of the School Board Chairman.

Mr. Gaetz stated that if the materials provided today by the Superintendent and the CFO do not sufficiently address his concerns regarding the financial condition of the District, he will be requesting the Board consider a financial review by an independent CPA. He emphasized that he does not feel there has been any misappropriation, malfeasants, theft, illegalities, or anything like that; but rather that there has been difficulty in getting an accurate account of the financial condition of the District. He added that it is a common practice to have an independent CPA verify fund balances when the CFO leaves in the middle of the budget year.

Mr. Gordon stated that he has already made a written request to the Auditor General for an audit since Mr. Scott will be leaving. Mr. Gaetz stated that the Superintendent's

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request for an audit would be sufficient and that he would provide a list of his concerns to the Superintendent. He added that he was not looking for a complete audit only a review of key points. However, if the Superintendent feels a full audit is needed, then that would be a prudent action.

Mr. Gaetz presented his request for the development of a policy establishing review criteria for school-within-a-school proposals. He reviewed the proposed policy which requires both the proposing school and the Superintendent to provide an impact analysis to the Board addressing specific areas listed within the policy. The policy establishes a time frame of at least 30 days for consideration by the Board and the public and requires endorsement by the School Advisory Council at a meeting at which a majority of teachers, parents, and community members are present and voting.

OCEA President Beverly Barefield requested the policy require that information on a school-within-a-school proposal be provided to all teachers at the school prior to being voted on by the School Advisory Council and being submitted to the Superintendent and Board. Mr. Gaetz agreed to amend his proposed policy to include this request.

Discussion of the specified voting requirements of the School Advisory Council concluded with consensus that the proposal should have the endorsement of the SAC by a majority vote of the school district employees, including students where appropriate, and a majority vote of the parents and community members.

Mr. Hill expressed concern that the FCAT results will not be received until June this year. Mary Gunter stated that the delay is due to a contract issue but the state has indicated that the results will be received earlier next year.

Mr. Gaetz stated that at the time the current Task Order with Sverdrup/Delta was being arranged there was some confusion on the fee portion of the agreement resulting in some inaccurate billing. All portions of the Task Order were approved with the exception of the fees and there was a mutual agreement to correct the fee portion. The Board requested Mr. McInnis get a written undertaking from Sverdrup/Delta as to the correction of the fees. He asked Mr. McInnis if he has received a written agreement from Sverdrup/Delta to amend the fee portion of the Task Order.

Mr. McInnis responded that he has given Sverdrup/Delta an outline of the corrected documents that need to be prepared to clarify the fees that they will receive to match our understanding from the overall Program Management Contract of what the Board agreed to pay. As of date, those documents have not yet been received. However, to protect the Board and to not delay the process, when the Chairman executed Task Orders No. 2 and No. 3, an Addendum was prepared to clarify that the Task Orders were being approved for the Cost of Work only and no fee provisions were being approved.

By consensus of the Board members present, Mr. McInnis was asked to raise the issue again with the Program Manager in order to get the documents consistent with the Program Management Contract as soon as possible.

Mr. Gaetz announced that a tentative date of February 23 has been set for a meeting of the Task Force on Technical Education. The Task Force will try to conclude its work at this meeting and prepare a final report.

Mrs. Frakes asked that the Superintendent submit his information on how a technical high school would impact the curriculum and finances of other schools.

On behalf of the Board, Mrs. Frakes wished Gary Scott good luck and much success in his new business endeavor. She further stated that Mr. Scott has been a valuable employee to the District and his service is appreciated.

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There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:40 a.m.

Teresa Epperson, Recorder

WALTER C. GORDON
SUPERINTENDENT AND
EX-OFFICIO SECRETARY

CINDY FRAKES
VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD