

WORKSHOP MEETING - 24 JANUARY 2000

The School Board of Okaloosa County met in Workshop Session on January 24, 2000, in the Fort Walton Beach Administration Building.

PRESENT: Rodney Walker, Chairman
Cindy Frakes, Vice-Chairman
Don Gaetz
Howard Hill
Lloyd Taylor

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

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.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.

The Chairman reviewed the advertised Addendums to the Agenda. At the request of the Superintendent, the Chairman approved an addition to the Agenda to consider the Superintendent's recommendation to establish School-Within-A-School Programs at three elementary schools.

Gary Scott distributed information outlining specific increases and decreases in the Fund Balance from July 1999 to the present. After receiving the FEFP 3rd calculation, there was a significant loss in funding. Reductions were made to the schools' budgets to cover the loss in funding with the exception of \$240,670 in uncollectible FTE losses at six schools, which has been taken from the Fund Balance.

Mr. Walker stated that these schools need to live within their budgets and that he cannot support covering the uncollectible FTE losses from the Fund Balance. If the District chooses to continue to have small schools, then alternative methods of running the schools may be necessary, such as sharing administrators or guidance counselors, or the funding formula may need to be adjusted.

Mr. Scott responded to questions from Mr. Hill regarding summer school funds taken from the Fund Balance and funding for programs in the summer of 2000. Mr. Scott stated that the Allocation Committee is addressing funds for Summer 2000 programs since there will be no Summer School Funds as was available in the past.

Mr. Gaetz stated that at a previous meeting the Superintendent assured the Board that non-recurring revenue was not being used to pay recurring expenses. He asked Mr. Scott if the opposite was now true based on the information being presented which indicates otherwise. Mr. Scott responded that with the FTE losses, recurring expenses are now being paid with non-recurring revenue.

Mr. Gaetz stated that previously Mr. Scott had estimated the Fund Balance to be less than \$1 million and asked why there was a much higher balance. Mr. Scott responded that the loss in funding was taken from the schools and returned to the Fund Balance and the FEFP adjustments for the charter school and DJJ were less than expected.

Mr. Gaetz asked for clarification of a memo from Mr. Gordon to the principals regarding the budget cuts. Mr. Gordon and Mr. Scott explained the method of calculating the adjustments as stated in the memorandum.

Mr. Gaetz asked if consideration was given to making cuts at the district level rather than cutting the schools. Mr. Gordon responded that the district office has already taken

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significant budget cuts and is now operating at the minimum level to operate and provide the required services.

Mr. Gaetz then asked if efforts were made to find out what implications the budget reductions would have on staff and programs at the schools. Mr. Gordon responded that budget cuts are a tough decision to make but when the third calculation was received, it was necessary to make the cuts.

Mr. Gaetz requested the Chairman move this item to the Discussion Agenda. He stated that he would have at least one motion on this matter and would like to have the opportunity to cast a vote about the prudence and wisdom of these transactions.

Mr. Walker stated that he would not place it on the Agenda for this meeting but would place it on the next Agenda if necessary. He further stated that these budget cuts are no different than what has taken place in years past. Although there have been different ways through the years of allocating funds to the schools, the FTE rich schools have supplemented the FTE poor schools in order to have a proportionate distribution of funds to run all the schools.

Mr. Gaetz stated that he would like to hear from some of the principals regarding the implications of the cuts and asked that the Chairman schedule some workshop time before the next meeting. He also requested the Chairman suspend these cuts until such time as it can be debated. Mr. Walker stated that the money is not going anywhere, that it has been restored to the Fund Balance and this matter can be taken up at the next meeting.

Dr. James Richburg introduced OWCC representatives present for the charter proposal: Dr. Jill White, Charla Cotton, Larry Anchors, and William Buzzett. Dr. Richburg gave a brief presentation on the charter proposal covering the mission of school and the multiple benefits it offers students.

Ray Sansom, Chairman of the Community Charter Review Committee, stated that the committee recommends approval of the OWCC Charter High School proposal. In the future, the committee believes the best proposal for the students would be a single cooperative agreement between the Okaloosa County School District and OWCC to provide this educational program on the campus of all high schools in Okaloosa County.

The Chairman asked Mr. McInnis to explain the appropriate procedures regarding the proposal. Mr. McInnis stated that if the Board approves the charter application, then it would move to the charter contract negotiation phase. Approval tonight would say that based on the parameters of the application and the program that has been described the District is willing to enter into a charter contract with OWCC. There is a set period of time under the law to negotiate the contract to allow them sufficient time to get started with the school if the terms of the contract can be reached. At that time the charter contract would come to the Board for approval.

Mrs. Frakes asked if summer school would be voluntary and if transportation would be provided to students outside the five-mile area mentioned in the proposal. Dr. Richburg responded that summer school would be voluntary and that transportation would be provided to all students throughout the county.

Each of the board members stated their approval to enter into contract negotiations.

The Chairman recessed the Workshop at 5:15 p.m. and reconvened at 5:20 p.m.; all members present as before.

Mr. Gaetz asked that the Chairman move to the Discussion Agenda the request to utilize free Internet and computer products that contain advertising based on the previous

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position taken by the Board and the Superintendent regarding advertising in the schools. The Chairman approved the request.

Mr. McInnis explained that the Contract Amendment with David M. Griffith & Associates was before the Board for approval of changes that would be consistent with statutory changes which state that firms can no longer contract on a contingency fee basis but must establish a flat fee for services. He requested the Board reserve time for his recommendation on this contract until later in the meeting after he has the opportunity to review the changes with Ms. Cavanah and the company representatives.

Becky Spence requested Consent #16 be corrected to state Out-of-Field Report for Second Semester of 1999-2000 School Year rather than Cleared Certification Requirements and Issuance of Contract for 1999-2000 School Year. The Chairman approved the change.

Referencing the revision of administrative job descriptions, Mr. Gaetz stated that the Board previously took action combining the position of District Director of Vocational Education with the position of Director of Okaloosa Applied Technology Center. In the package of job descriptions being presented there is a job description for both position. He stated that he would be more comfortable if there was one job description. Mrs. Spence responded that Dr. Jo Sisson has advised her that there must be two separate job descriptions due to some legal technicality. The Chairman asked Mrs. Spence to verify this information prior to taking a final vote on the job descriptions.

Mr. Gaetz asked for explanation of the job description for Specialist in Charter Schools/Research. Mr. Walker stated that, based on the current movement towards more charter schools, he felt it was imperative to have someone knowledgeable in charter schools, not only in the district but throughout the state. This person would coordinate charter school activities such as overseeing the current charter schools and managing new applications. With 2000 students projected to exit Okaloosa County Schools in the next two year, it is important that this process be carefully monitored. He added that he would also recommend this position be upgraded to a Program Director in order to get a qualified person in the position.

Mr. Gaetz stated that he agreed that the district needs someone who is knowledgeable in charter school processes. Also, if the four high schools who have proposed developing a University School Consortium in cooperation with a state university come forward, there will be some extensive coordination needs. He suggested that this position, if approved, also provide coordination of services in this area. He further stated agreement to upgrading the position to a Program Director.

Mrs. Spence presented revisions to School Board Policy 6-35 RETIREMENT as it relates to payment of terminal pay benefits to the School Board approved 401(a) Pension/FICA Alternative Plan. She stated that the proposed revision of section (8)(a) of the policy will also effect teachers and support personnel. After meeting with the bargaining units to determine the effect to contract language, a recommendation on this section will be made.

Mr. Gaetz asked for a definitive statement, for the record, that if the Board approves these revisions, administrative employees who do not wish to participate in the BENCOR Plan will not be required to do so. Mrs. Spence responded that participation is not mandatory.

Bill Smith requested the Board's approval to apply for State K-3 Class Size Reduction Funding for Northwood Elementary School. This program will fund \$2,380,521 for capital improvements (student stations) at the school with a commitment from the Board to fund and maintain a maximum 1:20 student-teacher ratio in one grade level (K-3) at Northwood.

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Dr. Smith, responding to board members' concerns regarding the District's obligation to commit to the 1:20 student-teacher ratio, stated that the information he presented is based on conversation with the DOE Office of Educational Facilities and their explanation of the guidelines for approval and administration of the program.

Mr. Gaetz asked why Northwood was chosen for this program. Emmett Windham stated that Crestview is the largest growth area in the county. As a result of the last changes in the attendance zones, several new housing developments are now included in the Northwood zone. The addition of the new classrooms will bring Northwood's capacity up to approximately 600 student stations, which should adequately accommodate the anticipated student growth in that particular attendance zone.

Mr. Walker and Mr. Gaetz asked that binding representation of the obligations and cost to the District to participate in this program be provided.

Mr. McInnis stated that previously the Board approved a contract with David M. Griffith and Associates to file Medicaid Reimbursement Claims for the District because staff was not available in the ESE Department to do so. Florida law now states that the company cannot contract on a contingency fee basis. The company is proposing an amendment to the contract to establish a flat fee and the District will be billed quarterly. The quarterly flat fee will be approximately \$11,200 based on 37 cents per student, which is the formula used across the state. Since the District has never filed claims, there is no history of annual revenues. Based on the experiences of districts of comparable size, with the proposed fee there should never be a deficit, but no representation can be made in actual numbers for our district. The Board's choice is to approve the amendment or to not get into the collections business with an outside firm. The current contract will expire in June at which time it can be re-negotiated or terminated. The firm has stated that if the amendment is approved, they still have time to do a billing for the first quarter of this year. And, with the second quarter billing, it will give a little history on what they can collect. The Chairman moved this item to the Discussion Agenda.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Teresa Epperson, Recorder

WALTER C. GORDON
SUPERINTENDENT AND
EX-OFFICIO SECRETARY

RODNEY WALKER
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD