

SPECIAL MEETING/PUBLIC HEARING - JULY 31, 2000

The School Board of Okaloosa County met in Special Session and held a Public Hearing on July 31, 2000, in the Fort Walton Beach Administration Building, 120 Lowery Place, SE.

PRESENT: Rodney Walker, Chairman
Cindy Frakes, Vice-Chairman
Don Gaetz (arrived at 6:50 p.m.)
Howard Hill
Lloyd Taylor (arrived at 6:50 p.m.)

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

The Chairman called the Public Hearing to order at 6:05 p.m. and welcomed visitors and presenters. He then recessed the Public Hearing and called to order the Special Meeting for the purpose of considering approval of the Code of Student Conduct for 2000-2001 and to receive a report on the school construction projects.

J. J. Steele presented the Code of Student Conduct in its revised format and with some content revision. Board members stated that they liked and preferred the new brochure format.

Motion to approve the Code of Student Conduct as presented was made by Mrs. Frakes, seconded by Mr. Hill and carried 3-0, the Chairman noting Mr. Gaetz' and Mr. Taylor's absence (Exhibit 00-481).

As requested by the Chairman, Ray Gabriel, Program Manager for the District Construction Management Program, gave an update on the school construction projects. Mr. Gabriel reviewed each project informing the Board of the remaining work to be done and the date on which it will be completed.

Bill Smith reviewed those construction projects being done under the direction of the Facilities Department. He outlined the scope of the projects and the completion dates of the projects.

Mr. Gabriel and Dr. Smith stated that all classrooms will be ready when the students return to school on August 14. With few exceptions, the classrooms will be ready when the teachers return on August 7. Some work within the schools will be completed after the students return but it will not effect the classrooms. They assured the Board that plans are in place to provide additional support to any school needing assistance with the after construction clean-up in order to have the classrooms ready.

Dr. Smith stated that he and the Superintendent will be visiting the schools again on Wednesday (August 2) to verify that all schools will be ready for the beginning of school.

The Chairman adjourned the Special Meeting at 6:40 p.m. and called a short recess before reconvening the Public Hearing. He reconvened the Public Hearing at 6:50 p.m. Members were present as before and Mr. Gaetz and Mr. Taylor joined the meeting at this time.

Mr. McInnis announced that the Board was in Public Hearing session as advertised for the purpose of receiving public comment on the tentative budget and millage rate for the Okaloosa County School District. Anyone desiring to address the Board should complete a "blue card" and submit the card to the recording secretary. The Chairman will recognize individuals for a maximum of three (3) minutes and a spokesperson for a group for a maximum of five (5) minutes.

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The Chairman asked the recording secretary for cards submitted by the public. She responded that no cards had been submitted. He then called for any public comment from the audience; there was none.

The Chairman explained that this is the first public hearing on the budget and millage rate recommended by the Superintendent. Between now and the final public hearing in September the Board has the opportunity to make amendments or deletions to the proposed budget. The Board has the authority to amend the budget after final approval with the exception of personnel and other select areas, which may only be amended if funds are not available to support them. Board members may at this time ask questions regarding the budget or offer changes or deletions to the budget. He announced that a workshop will be held prior to the final hearing for board members to make their recommended changes and to have discussion regarding the recommendations prior to final approval.

Mr. Hill offered an amendment to allocate \$175,000 and two teacher on special assignment positions to establish a middle school reading support program in an effort to enhance reading skills among middle school students. He provided additional information to explain the proposed middle school reading support program.

Mr. Walker asked the board members to be prepared to recommend the funding source for any amendments to the budget they will be proposing at the workshop. If necessary, they should ask for assistance from the Superintendent and the Finance Department to find a funding source.

Mr. Hill offered an amendment to delete the administrative position shared by Kenwood Elementary and Destin Elementary; to allocate a dean position at Lewis Middle School; that the incumbent of the deleted position be transferred to the dean position at his current salary until December 31, 2000; that Kenwood and Destin contribute \$17,000 each to fund the dean position; and that the Board add \$24,000 to Lewis Middle School's budget to help fund the dean position.

Discussion of the amendment concluded that it is a site-based decision by the school principal to have these positions. If the Board believes a school has too many administrative positions, they should reduce the school's budget and not make the decision as to which position the principal will cut. Additionally, the Board does not have the authority to re-assign an employee; that is within the purview of the Superintendent.

Mr. Hill proposed an amendment to allocate and fund an ESE aide position at Lewis Middle School. Mr. Walker suggested Mr. Hill discuss this matter with Jeff Roser, Director of ESE.

Mr. Hill proposed a \$9000 increase to the budget of both Destin Middle School and Lewis Middle School to fund a partial chorus program.

(Amendments submitted by Mr. Hill are on file as Exhibit 00-480.)

Discussion again concluded that this is a site-based decision based on the amount of revenue the school receives.

Mr. Taylor stated that he was not prepared to offer amendments at this time but he would be looking at ways to reduce out-of-county travel and to eliminate split grade level classes.

Mrs. Frakes stated that she would be proposing amendments at the workshop.

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Mr. Gaetz stated that he was pleased that the proposed budget included maintaining the elementary reading program and funding the ESE software program to reduce paperwork.

Mr. Gaetz requested the Board be provided an educational impact statement providing an educational analysis or justification for the split classes where they are being proposed. He stated that if split classes cannot be justified educationally and is strictly a financial matter, then it can be debated on a financial basis.

Mr. Gaetz expressed concern with the loss of music programs at Destin Middle and Edwins Elementary and stated that he was likely to offer an amendment to remedy the problem.

Upon request by Mr. Gaetz for direction regarding funding sources, the Chairman stated that board members should recommend the funding source for any amendments they offer to the budget even if the recommendation is to amend the funding formula. He emphasized that any additional dollars taken from operational revenue will leave that much less to negotiate salary increases.

Mr. Gaetz commented that he would have difficulty supporting the proposed budget which recommends that district office spending continue at the current level and that we have split classes and that we lose music programs and that we have circumstances of real need that we are not meeting at the student level. He stated that he would support amendments to reduce spending or that would be budget neutral.

The Chairman acknowledged the presence of Ray Sansom and Jerry Melvin at the meeting.

Mr. McInnis stated that the final public hearing on the budget has been advertised for September 11, 2000, at 6:30 p.m. in the Okaloosa County Courthouse, Crestview. The Chairman may schedule workshops to discuss the budget and recommended amendments prior to the final hearing.

Motion was made by Mr. Hill to adopt the tentative millage rate of 8.218 (RLE at 6.211; Discretionary at 0.510; Additional Discretionary at 0.208; and Capital Outlay of 1.289) as recommended by the Superintendent. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Frakes and carried unanimously (Exhibit 00-449).

Mr. Gaetz commented, for the record, that the \$6.3 million increase in revenue comes from local property taxes mandated by the legislature. If the increase in the Required Local Effort is not adopted, the revenue received from the state will be drastically reduced.

Motion to adopt the tentative budget as recommended by the Superintendent was made by Mr. Hill, seconded by Mrs. Frakes and carried 4-1, Mr. Gaetz dissenting (Exhibit 00-449).

There being no further business to come before the Board, and upon motion being duly made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Teresa Epperson, Recorder

WALTER C. GORDON
SUPERINTENDENT AND
EX-OFFICIO SECRETARY

RODNEY L. WALKER
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD