

MUSCOGEE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
COLUMBUS, GEORGIA

CALLED BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
BRADLEY LIBRARY CONFERENCE ROOM
MONDAY, JUNE 5, 2000, 12:00 NOON

MINUTES

A called meeting of the Board of Education of the Muscogee County School District was held on Monday, June 5, 2000 in the conference room at the Bradley Library.

The following Board members were present: Mary Sue Polleys, Chairman, James Walker, Vice Chairman, David E. Ebron, Barbara Pierce, Brenda Storey, John Wells, and Fife M. Whiteside.

Others present: James E. Humes, II, Legal Counsel, Fred M. Jones, Treasurer, Tom Walters, Assistant Superintendent for Personnel, Brenda F. Dozier, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services, Myles Caggins, Assistant Superintendent for Business Affairs, Gordon Stallings, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, Billy Kendall, Administrative Assistant, Bill Hortman, Associate Superintendent, and representatives from the media.

After the invocation and pledge of allegiance to the flag, Mrs. Polleys stated that the purpose of the called meeting was to conduct a public hearing on increase in property tax digest as required by law, vote on a resolution setting the millage rate, adopt a tentative budget for FY2001 and discuss the Lake Bottom Park issue as it relates to use by Columbus High School.

Mrs. Polleys asked if there was anyone who wanted to speak regarding the increase in the property tax digest. Mrs. Polleys said that this is the third such hearing as required. There was no one in attendance that wanted to speak on the issue.

Upon motion of Mr. Ebron, seconded by Mr. Walker, Board members in attendance voted unanimously to approve a resolution setting the millage rate at 23.37 for the support, maintenance, and operation of schools, libraries and other operations and functions within the jurisdiction of the Muscogee County School District, of which 1.5 mills will be allocated for capital outlay for fiscal year ending June 30, 2001. Mr. Whiteside commented that this is the tenth straight year with no millage increase.

Mrs. Polleys called for a motion regarding the adoption of a tentative budget for FY2001 and any comments.

Mr. Whiteside commented that this is a real unusual budget year in that the school district is having to budget without the benefit of some firm assumptions as a result of HB 1187. The rules keep shifting so fast so it should be noted that this is a preliminary budget adoption and it could change up until the time that a final budget is adopted.

Mr. Wells asked how much of the \$135,000 being funded for Elementary Alternative, Saturday and Conduct Summer Schools is for Saturday and Conduct Summer Schools. Mr. Wells said he understood that there would be a charge to parents for these programs and there would be no expense to the school district. Mrs. Dozier commented that there is a charge for summer school but for the Saturday School there is no charge during the school year. Mrs. Dozier said that the Board had asked that there be a charge for Conduct Summer School and that is being done but not Saturday School. Mrs. Dozier said that Saturday School is an extension of the regular school year. Mrs. Dozier commented that in H.B. 1187 under alternative education there may be funds to be used to fund elementary alternative school but she has not received an answer from the State but, we are mandated to have alternative schools. Mr. Wells said that Saturday School is for disciplinary reasons and there should be some consideration for a charge and he would like to make this in the form of a motion. Mrs. Polleys said that the Board would have to deal with the motion on the floor and then come back to Mr. Wells motion. Mrs. Greyor commented that Saturday school is extended day funding for the extended learning of children after school as well as Saturday School and Summer School so it is not all earmarked for disciplinary. Mr. Wells said he would like for the Administration to give him a cost of Saturday School so that the Board can consider implementing a charge. Mrs. Pierce asked if the \$135,000 could be used to implement a middle magnet school? Mr. Sims commented that this would only be a drop in the bucket as far as funding a middle school magnet.

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Mr. Ebron commented that he wanted to remind the Board that the reason for Saturday School was to improve student achievement not just discipline. Mr. Ebron said the Board needs to look back at the numbers as far as disruptive students in the classroom, number of suspensions of those students who attend Saturday School and its effectiveness, there is a marked improvement. Mr. Ebron said that it is a tough budget year but the Board needs to think about student achievement and anything we can do to get disruptive students out of the classroom.

Mr. Wells questioned the increase for new buses. Mr. Caggins said the increase is because the estimates from last year were a mistake by the manufacturer. Mr. Wells asked the Administration to look into the possibility of cutting back on the number of buses. Mr. Wells asked what is the reason for the increase of \$133,000 for school security. Mr. Caggins commented that the Administration is looking to add more uniformed policeman in the schools and also increase the number of cameras and other equipment to be used in the schools for security. Mr. Wells asked Mr. Sims to present a plan for future school security. Mr. Lollar commented that another reason for the increase was because the hourly rate of police officers was raised by three dollars. Mr. Wells asked why there is an increase of 3.3% for Cooperative Extension Service. Mr. Jones commented that the school district has an agreement with the University of Georgia who provides 4-H Club activities in which part of the salaries of employees is being paid. Mr. Wells asked if the Administration would look at this program also in terms of future participation. Mr. Sims said that he has looked at the Cooperative Extension Program and he has spoken with the elementary principals and they feel this is a very important part of their instructional program and if it is eliminated they would be hurt because this person actually comes into the classroom and teaches

Upon motion of Mr. Whiteside, seconded by Mr. Walker, Board members in attendance voted unanimously to adopt the tentative budget for FY2001.

Mrs. Polleys asked Mr. Wells if he wanted to pursue or had any additional comments on his motion regarding Saturday School. Mr. Wells said he would withdraw his motion but asked the Administration for information regarding Saturday School, the achievements and benefits of the program.

Mrs. Polleys asked for comments regarding the Lake Bottom Park issue in regards to the use by Columbus High School. Mr. Whiteside commented that City Council met last week and approved the continued renovation of Lake Bottom Park and the plans have not been made available to the Board or the Superintendent. Mr. Wells commented that the school district has used the park facilities now for about seventy-five years and the Board has not had any input regarding the changes. Mr. Wells asked if anyone has seen the plans. A citizen and concerned parent, Gail Franz added that she has seen the plans. Mrs. Franz commented that she has spoken with the Mayor, and two city councilmen and she has no answers regarding the plans but Councilman Allen did send her a copy of the plans. Mrs. Polleys commented that the plan should call for a design so that all the children can use the park as public property with little league using the park in the evenings and weekends and the school using the park during the school day. Mrs. Polleys said that there needs to be cooperation between both entities in order to benefit all of the children reminding the Board that Parks and Recreation uses school district facilities for their after school programs without charge.

Mr. Whiteside said that he asked some of the faculty from Columbus High to come to the meeting today. The athletic director, Jim Wamble, Randy Whitt and Tom Perry. Mr. Whiteside asked that a copy of the safety concerns drafted by Tom Perry be appended to the minutes of this meeting. Mr. Wells said that the Board has not seen the plans or asked for any input and it's not the intention of the Board to tell the City what to do with the park but, the changes could jeopardize the school's accreditation status with SACS. Mr. Whiteside said that the Board needs to consider calling for written contracts with the City on future projects and appoint a permanent liaison to monitor such projects. Mrs. Storey commented that it is extremely disappointing when the two parties cannot have the same interest and that "we need a written, signed agreement before we show up, go or do.

Mr. Walker gave a report of his trip to Washington with the Chief of Staff of the Army. The meeting focused on the transitioning of military children into the public schools when their active military parents are transferred from one military base to another. Mr. Walker presented Mr. Sims with a plaque of recognition for the Muscogee County School District's efforts in accommodating and responding to the needs of these military children. Mr. Sims commented that the procedures used with the military families will assist in making a smoother transition for those children of families moving into the area from other states where grading and graduation requirements may be different.

Upon motion of Mr. Ebron, seconded by Mr. Walker, Board members present unanimously voted to excuse Mrs. Parker and Dr. Schley from the called meeting.

Upon motion of Mrs. Storey, seconded by Mr. Walker, the Board adjourned the called June 5, 2000 meeting of the Board.

James E. Humes, II
Legal Counsel

Safety Concerns for the Proposed Practice Field at the South End of Weracoba

1. The field's proximity to the road is hazardous as balls will bounce into the road, causing students to run into the street chasing after them. Even if they do not, there is also the risk of having a \$40 ball destroyed, an occurrence I've already experienced.
2. Likewise, the field's proximity to the creek is hazardous and a nuisance, as balls will routinely roll into the stream, but more importantly, any practicing along that edge of the field can result in injury from slide tackling, tripping, or falling near the edge.
3. Holes in the proposed field are large and numerous. As players run in soccer, they have to be looking at their teammates or opponents; this can cause ankle and knee injuries as they step into these holes at full speed.
4. A power line crosses the field 14' overhead. It will be continually struck by lofted kicks. In time, the protective guards around the wire will become loose and fall. Over the course of the next 75 years, the wire itself will probably become damaged as well.
5. The proposed field's south end has a drop in grade rendering it unplayable unless it is leveled.
6. Small trees at the north and south ends of the field limit the length of the playing field.
7. Two stations of the Park's circuit training apparatus along the edge closest to the walking trail further restrict the dimensions of the playing area and pose a hazard to teams trying to practice across the entire length and width of the field.

Is it possible to convince city council to pursue an alternative option: turning two of the three "old" Peach Little League fields into one, large multipurpose field? Situating the field in this location would allow for practices by CHS' band and soccer teams as well as a lighted place for Clubview football teams to practice while games are being held on the field inside the track. Beyond that, Peach Little League could still practice on those fields.

Putting the field down in this area would eliminate the need for a fence to stop bouncing balls, as it is situated in a depression with hills rising up on two sides. Other safety concerns will be dismissed, as the field could be developed with safety in mind.

For those council members who are concerned about cost, the money that would have been spent to renovate the existing Little League fields could, instead, be spent on the earth moving and reorienting of lights to create this multipurpose field, something that affords a more universal use to the public. (Seven Little League fields are too many for a program whose ranks are diminishing, not increasing, especially considering the fact that all other parks that received "super-plexes" only have those four ball fields.)

Finally, according to Tim Chitwood, this situation would be preferable for the Friends of Weracoba, who were promised no further development on the south end of the park. No unsightly breakaway fences need to be erected at the south end of the park. No trees will have to be cut. Likewise, the noises of the band, harmonious though they be, and the ricocheting balls of the soccer team will seem to be more out of sight down where the ball fields already exist. What would it take to convince the council of the logic in this?