

MUSCOGEE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
COLUMBUS, GEORGIA

CALLED BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
BRADLEY LIBRARY CONFERENCE ROOM
MONDAY, MAY 22, 2000, 6:00 P.M.

MINUTES

A called meeting of the Board of Education of the Muscogee County School District was held on Monday, May 22, 2000 in the conference room at the Bradley Library.

The following Board members were present: Mary Sue Polleys, Chairman, David E. Ebron, Fife M. Whiteside, Linda Parker, Philip T. Schley, and Barbara Pierce.

Others present: James E. Humes, II, Legal Counsel, Fred M. Jones, Treasurer, Tom Walters, Assistant Superintendent for Personnel, Gordon Stallings, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, Myles B. Caggins, Jr., Assistant Superintendent for Business Affairs, Billy Kendall, Administrative Assistant 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 the tax increase and the FY2001 budget. Prior to opening the floor for comments from the public, Mr. Whiteside asked Mr. Humes if it would be appropriate to treat the statutory hearing on the increase in property tax digest as consolidated with the public hearing on the budget? Mr. Humes stated that there are no guidelines to prohibit such.

Mrs. Polleys invited any citizens who would like to speak regarding the budget and increase in property tax digest. Mrs. Polleys asked Mr. Jones to clarify that the millage rate is not rising from the 23.37 which is reflected in last years budget. Mr. Whiteside commented that this has been such for the last ten budgets. Mr. Jones said that the new law that is now effective defines that the reasons that the property tax digest might increase is because of construction of new property, the renovation or modification of existing property; and growth in the digest through reassessment or re-evaluation of existing property. A citizen, Jim Evans spoke regarding the school district, "benefiting from a tax increase, the digest goes up every year and the school board gets the lions' share of the tax increase. The State report card shows a decrease in enrollment and isn't it time for the school board to do something as a good gesture to the people of Columbus and roll back the millage since there are fewer students to educate. The pressure has been taken off of the operating budget since the school district is benefiting from the one-cent sales tax to build new schools where the student population has yet to materialize to fill them up. I visited Our Lady of Lourdes school and found out it costs \$3,100 to educate a student versus the school district's \$5,000 per student cost". Mrs. Polleys commented that she has taught both in public school and Catholic school and Catholic schools do not bear the costs that a public school system has to bear such as special education costs, and other programs. Mr. Whiteside commented that he wanted to remind Mr. Evans that the school system did give a one-mill roll back when the sales tax passed and that the operating budget could have been increased by that same amount of money to absorb the mill cut. Mr. Whiteside said that many school systems in the state are looking at property tax increases in efforts to implement H.B. 1187. Mr. Jones commented that the school system also has to bear the costs of transportation in which a parochial school would not, therefore this would account for some of the difference in the per student cost. Mr. Ebron commented that the requirements of IDEA have changed tremendously over the last few years and with the number of unfunded mandates, the costs of special education in its entirety, and other costs the system is behind and hasn't caught up so it would be a mistake to just look at one portion of the budget. Mr. Ebron further added that the goal of the school district is to increase student achievement.

For the record, Mr. Whiteside asked if the notice of the hearings was published in accordance with the law. Mr. Jones and Mr. Humes confirmed that advertisements were published in accordance with the law with the information available.

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Upon motion of Mr. Whiteside, seconded by Mr. Ebron, the Board unanimously voted to excuse Board Members, Storey, Wells and Walker.

Upon motion of Mr. Whiteside, seconded by Mr. Ebron, the Board unanimously approved the releasing of the resolution authorizing individual board members to enroll in the State Health Benefit Plan as offered by Georgia School Boards Association.

Mrs. Polleys called on the Administration to present information concerning the construction project at Marshall Middle School as it relates to vocational labs. Mr. Caggins informed the Board that the numbers are not available and that information would be ready in a few days and would be presented in the form of a change order. Mrs. Pierce said she needed an explanation as to what she is to say when parents ask her why are there differences between the north and south sides, why is Arnold getting an industrial room and Marshall is not because the plan was to put them in all the middle schools. Mr. Sims commented that the Board had not approved an industrial arts class at all of the middle schools only at three schools, Baker Marshall and Arnold. Mr. Sims commented that this has been accomplished at Baker and Arnold, and at this point there is one in the north and one in the south. Mr. Sims said that his recommendation to the Board would be not to fund the position for any of the schools because positions in the middle school budget need to be cut and adding these labs would mean adding positions. Mr. Sims confirmed that these positions are not funded by the State that they are locally funded. Mrs. Polleys said that this item would be held until the called meeting scheduled for Wednesday, May 24 2000.

Upon motion of Mr. Ebron, seconded by Dr. Schley, the Board unanimously voted to go into executive session to discuss a personnel matter.

Upon motion of Mr. Ebron, seconded by Mr. Whiteside, the Board unanimously voted to come out of executive session.

Upon motion of Mr. Ebron, seconded by Mr. Whiteside, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn the called May 22nd Board meeting.

James E. Humes, II
Legal Counsel