

MUSCOGEE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
COLUMBUS, GEORGIA

CALLED BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
BRADLEY LIBRARY CONFERENCE ROOM
WEDNESDAY, MAY 29, 2002, 5:30 P.M.

MINUTES

A called meeting of the Board of Education of the Muscogee County School District was held on Wednesday, May 29, 2002, 5:30 p.m. 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, Linda Parker, Fife Whiteside, Philip Schley, John Wells, Brenda Storey, and Owen Ditchfield.

Others present: Guy W. Sims, Superintendent of Education, Robert L. Bushong, Interim Superintendent of Education, James E. Humes, II, Legal Counsel, Fred M. Jones, Treasurer, Del Parker, Incoming Treasurer, Brenda Dozier, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services, Gordon Stallings, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, Shirley Jaeger, Assistant Superintendent for Personnel, Myles Caggins, Assistant Superintendent for Business Affairs, and representatives from the media.

Dr. Polleys stated that the purpose of the called meeting was to take action on a plan presented by the administration regarding construction issues to include plans for the remaining construction projects, and a contract for construction needs at Spencer High School. Dr. Polleys stated that there were visitors in attendance who wish to speak concerning construction issues and asked if they would wait until the Board could hear what construction needs the administration was prepared to present to them and then the Board would hear from the visitors.

Dr. Polleys called on Mr. Sims who asked Fred Jones to speak to the Board regarding the financing of the last (16) construction projects. Dr. Bushong asked if the Board would listen to Mr. Jones regarding obligations and resources and the unencumbered balance followed up with Mr. Caggins who will go over the remaining (16) projects and then the Administration will be ready to make a recommendation regarding immediate concerns involving the FY03 budget as regards the capital projects. Mr. Jones gave a summary to the Board along with a handout that as of April 30th the information presented is accurate as far as actual resources and reasonable anticipated resources that would be available until the end of the sales tax construction program having (16) projects to go with a shortfall of \$8,792,000. Dr. Bushong called on Mr. Caggins who spoke regarding the actual projects at Wynnton and J. D. Davis. Mr. Caggins said that money has been spent on roofing at J. D. Davis as well as at other schools. Dr. Schley asked what money had been spent on the two new schools at this point? Mr. Caggins said "in the case of items #15 and #16, the money that has been spent was for the development of the sites." Mr. Caggins informed the Board that "the work at Spencer could be done without a capital expense but, the projects at J. D. Davis and Wynnton cannot because both have kitchen improvements and increases which first requires work on the waste water lines and the storm water lines that takes discharge from the kitchens. Those lines would have to be upgraded and none of the expense to do that is included in the base plan. Before we could get started at Wynnton to put in the new additions we have to do the waste water line and the storm water line. That means we would have to have this to go with this project before we could even do the basic work. We are finding this in (7) of the projects that remain. There are also inside lines that are corroded or closed and we have had to close some of the water fountains, also there is asbestos in some of the floors that has not been addressed. These are the older buildings in the systems. Our plan now is to take what is left in the SPLOST go back check all of these jobs and see what we must have to get done before we can start the projects." Mr. Ebron asked, "What schools are you saying other than Davis and Wynnton where additional funds will be needed before the SPLOST project can start?" Mr. Caggins said, "J. D. Davis, Wynnton, Benning Hills, Cusseta Road, Muscogee and Rigdon Road. Those are the ones that have kitchen work and old pipes." Mr. Ebron said we need the census information and

how much this is going to cost before a decision can be made.” Mr. Whiteside said, “the State capital outlay funding amount is also needed which is a very significant part because if it comes in at the numbers mentioned two and one-half percent. That will free of a very large amount of cash.” Fred Jones said, “Cautionary, looking at this it should be fairly clear that the sales tax is now completed committed. It’s no longer available for much of anything but paying off the debt. That means that going forward, we will not be allowed the luxury of forward funding projects by allocating a future year of the capital set aside. The principal and law is that general you have to have funds on hand sufficient to pay a construction contract at the time you sign it. If it’s \$5 million dollars, you have to have \$5 million on hand. There’s some leeway in anticipating sales tax collections and some leeway in our own local legislation that allow us to anticipate until the end of a calendar year rather than a fiscal. The fact is we’re at a point now to where we would have to budget in the year that the construction is going to take place and not any year forward. We’ll be faced with the prospect of trying to accumulate funds in the regular capital projects fund to make any additional scope changes to these sales tax projects.” Mr. Whiteside said, “this means we can’t anticipate beyond 2003 on capital outlay.” Dr. Bushong said, “our recommendation would be to include in the capital funds portion of the general fund budget, \$1,730,541.00 to the amount of money already committed. Secondly, \$600,000 to the sinking fund which would be for roofs and heating and air conditioning which you made as a high priority in the past. \$157,000.00 to the TAPP Center which will be offset by recent information that we are going to receive the \$100,000 over a three year period. Thirdly, the upgrade of the Muscogee County School District telephone system in the amount of \$189,000. Based upon that we would recommend to you some \$2,592,000 be set aside in terms of the general fund budget for the capital outlay portion of it.” Mrs. Storey said, “so this would not be a full mill set aside?” Dr. Bushong said, “this is correct and this would still leave a deficit in our planning that we have to straighten out being about \$6 million short in trying to balance the total general fund budget. The Administration is not asking the Board to make a decision regarding the (16) projects because more research is needed. We are ready to make a recommendation to you in regard to construction at Spencer and in this figure we would not be including a \$1,050,000 for the Wynnton and J. D. Davis projects and we’re ready to make a recommendation on those two projects tonight.” Mr. Wells, said, “my goal is to give the public what we have promised. We have to be fair to the public and we need to give them what is on the list.”

Dr. Polleys informed the Board again that there are teachers and parents from J. D. Davis including the principal Mrs. Talley that would like to speak to the Board regarding the construction work.

Upon motion of Mr. Whiteside, seconded by Mrs. Storey, the Board unanimously approved the written agenda since it was received the day of the meeting.

Mr. Caggins informed the Board that the recommendation of the Administration to the Board is a contract to Holley Construction Company, low bidder in the amount of \$1,520,000.00 for construction at Spencer High and approve the budget in the amount of \$3,099,526.00. Mr. Walker asked if there “is anything being done to complete all of the construction work at Spencer because it has been known all along that this work needs to be done. These extra add on’s are things that have always been done.” Mrs. Storey asked if in the “base bid we are replacing flooring and painting. Adding four science labs and converting the Home-Ec to Home and Family management technology, converting science classroom to the science lab?” Mr. Caggins said yes. Mr. Ditchfield said he shares Mr. Walker’s concerns. Mr. Whiteside commented that he, “has concerns with the alternates being re-configured. Don’t you think the project should just be re-bid? Mr. Caggins commented, “no the project does not need to be re-bid. We will find other ways to address this, not by change orders but a maintenance team or another kind of service. I want to direct this to the Superintendent. Is what Mr. Caggins said, is that the Administration’s recommendation?” Mr. Sims said, “yes.” Dr. Polleys asked is this, “not to let the people at the site re-configure what the needs are?” Mr. Walker, “I want us to think about one other thing. At Spencer we have an image problem. The word had gotten out that people in Europe were told, don’t send your child to Spencer High School. I don’t want to treat Spencer any different from any other school in the school district.”

Mr. Caggins informed the Board that the “Administration recommends because of the budget that the summer construction for J. D. Davis and Wynnton be suspended. We will take it back and re-look at the scope of work beyond the basics in here and see what must be done. So those two projects as well as the other elementary school projects will not come up again until next year.” Mr. Whiteside asked, “is that the Superintendent’s recommendation?” Mr. Sims said, “yes.” Mr. Ditchfield asked, “so you are saying that no construction will be done at those two schools this summer. You’re saying everybody must unpack and move everything back in.” Mr. Caggins, “yes, everybody must move everything back.”

Dr. Polleys called on Marion Bohannon who had asked to speak to the Board regarding construction at Spencer High School. Dr. Polleys called on others in attendance that would like to speak to the Board, the remaining majority speaking regarding construction at J. D. Davis, to include teachers, parents and the principal. After everyone spoke, Dr. Polleys asked if it was the pleasure of the Board to vote on these two items.

Mr. Whiteside commented, “I was upset enough about this in April to chew nails and I should have made an issue out of it and I didn’t and for that ladies I apologize. Where we are now is if we were to come up with some goofy way to go on and let the project, it’s going to cost somebody else something further on down the line. So what we keep doing is putting off being strong and doing the right thing. We’ve got a problem and we have deferred dealing with it and we shouldn’t have deferred dealing with it but tonight is the night we’ve got to deal with it.”

Mr. Whiteside said, “how many know alcoholics, always going to stop drinking, next week I’m going to stop drinking. The reason these ladies packed up their classrooms in anticipation of a project that we really don’t have the money to do is because we just didn’t take a position on it in April when we should have. If we do this here today what are we going to say to the next group of ladies who come in and say you figured it out for them why can’t you figure a way to do for our school? There is a day that comes when we will just have to stand up and say we didn’t do as well as we had in the past, we weren’t strong when we should have been and we’re going to change that and tonight’s the night to do it.” Mr. Ebron said, “this problem didn’t just start in April. We need to look in terms of the projects and we might have to make some decisions that would change part of the base bid.”


Mr. Whiteside said, “with great reluctance, I move that we accept the recommendation of the Superintendent to award a contract in the amount of \$1,520,000.00 to Holley Construction Company, low bidder for construction at Spencer High School and approve the budget in the amount of \$3,099,526.00, seconded by Mrs. Storey. The vote was (6) affirming and (2) opposing (Ebron, Walker).

Mr. Whiteside made a motion, seconded by Dr. Schley, to adopt the recommendation of the Administration to suspend the construction work at Wynnton and J. D. Davis Elementary Schools. Mr. Ebron offered a substitute motion, seconded by Mr. Ditchfield to allocate money from the fund balance to cover the construction work at J. D. Davis allowing construction to continue during the summer. The vote on the substitute motion was (3) affirming, (Ebron, Walker, Ditchfield), (5) opposing, (Polleys, Schley, Storey, Wells, Whiteside). The original motion passed with the vote being (5) affirming, (Polleys, Schley, Storey, Wells, Whiteside) and (3) opposing, (Ebron, Walker, Ditchfield).

It was the consensus of the Board to take action on the local facilities plan at a called meeting on June 3, 2002.

Upon motion of Mrs. Storey, seconded by Mr. Whiteside, the Board unanimously excused Mrs. Parker due to personal business.

Upon motion of Mrs. Storey, seconded by Mr. Ebron, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn the called meeting of the Board.


James E. Humes, II
Legal Counsel