

MUSCOGEE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
COLUMBUS, GEORGIA

CALLED BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
COLUMBUS MUSEUM
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2002, 5:00 P.M.

MINUTES

A called meeting of the Board of Education of the Muscogee County School District was held on Tuesday, October 1, 2002, 5:00 p.m. at the Columbus Museum.

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: Charles T. Staples, Leal Counsel, Robert L. Bushong, Interim Superintendent of Education, Karen P. Jones, Executive Assistant to the Board, Del Parker, Treasurer, Brenda F. Dozier, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services, Gordon Stallings, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, Billy Kendall, Administrative Assistant, Bill Hortman, Associate Superintendent and representatives from the media.

Dr. Polleys called the meeting to order with the invocation and pledge of allegiance to the flag. Dr. Polleys stated that the purpose of the meeting was to announce and introduce the finalist for Superintendent of Education. Dr. Polleys then called on Mr. Walker to welcome guests and give a summary of the search process. Mr. Walker recognized elected officials, Danac Roberts and Peggy Nielson. Mr. Walker said, "after contracting with the search firm, we met with them to outline the parameters of how the search would be done. We agreed to their methods and authorized the search to begin. The Firm solicited comments from the community, advertised the position in the local newspaper and Education Weekly. The firm received (48) applications from (27) states and (1) Canadian province. The applicants were matched from comments of Board members and the Community. The Board interviewed (3) candidates in Atlanta. After the interviews the Board agreed on the one candidate."

Dr. Polleys introduced Mr. Glenn Brock who represents the search firm of Brock and Associates. Dr. Polleys commented, "Dr. John A. Phillips, Jr. is the Superintendent of Schools in Bartow County. He was a stand-out candidate because of his depth of experience in public education and his breadth of experience. He has been a principal at elementary, middle and high school levels. He's been a superintendent since his 30's and he served 20 years as a superintendent in three different locations. He has been a superintendent in Rockdale County, Georgia, Eanes Independent School System, in Austin, Texas for about seven years and now he is beginning his 5th year in Bartow County. We believe that his depth of experience and that breadth of experience in working with a wide variety of kinds of children. Children from many different backgrounds, from a very wealthy district in Texas to a district that is economically challenged, economically disadvantaged. He is a native of Savannah, Georgia. A city that he feels is a lot like Columbus and a district a lot like Muscogee County. Not only that level of experience but also, we came to experience him as a person of vision and of real passion for student achievement. He is a person driven by results, uses a lot of data to make decisions and he is a person that we believe will help us move the Muscogee County District forward. I want to explain briefly the process at this point. According to the law, we present the finalist to you. There were three finalists, the other two withdrew their names and Dr. Phillips is the only finalist that we have to present to the Community. We have been very busy doing that today. He has met with the Administrators, Principals, Teacher Advisory Group, PTA Representatives, lunch with business leaders, spending time with the newspaper as well. The law requires now that we have at least two weeks before a final vote is taken."

Dr. Polleys introduced Dr. Phillips. Dr. Phillips introduced his wife, Suzanne Phillips. “Suzanne and I will have been married 33 years this coming February. We have three children, three boys and they all live in the state of Georgia, various places Conyers, St. Mary’s area, Cairo, Georgia. We met each other teaching. She taught next door to me. I was a little slow in learning, it took me about a year just to be friends with her and after that we speeded things up and in three weeks she had a ring. It’s very important to me to make sure that we balance our family life, religious life and our professional life. She has been the support in my moving from one school district to another. Obviously being the CEO of a school is demanding...whatever legacy we have over time, the most important thing is to be able to say that we prepared the future generation for success. If we can focus on student performance and make that the hallmark of education in Muscogee County and across this nation that will save public education as we know it today. Without that we will lose public education and people will go to the private sector and other means of educating their students. What public education will end up with is a continental divide of those who have choices and those who don’t. This country was founded on democracy and it came through public education. It came from people of color for people with different religious perspectives, different philosophical perspectives joining hand and glove in public education. That’s what has made this country great. As a superintendent or CEO that is my passion to make sure that we pass this legacy on to other generations and that we make public education the hallmark of America. We can do it. I’ve seen it done, I’ve been a part of it. We can do it. As I come to this district, first of all, I will listen, second of all, I will observe and then we will develop a blueprint for the future and you may have most of it already there. We will change those things that need to be changed, we will not change things for change sake but we will have a strong orientation to leadership and being on the cutting edge of what our children deserve. We will be on the cutting edge in making sure equity is provided for all students. When I talk about equity that doesn’t mean equal. That means providing the resources based on the needs and some students need more and we need to be there to support that. I look forward and I’m very enthusiastic about coming here and working with this Board and working with the Community. I think that the chemistry is there that people are interested in moving forward. This school system has had a tradition of supporting public education. We will continue that and we will enhance that.”

Dr. Phillips then answered questions from the audience.

Upon motion of Mr. Ditchfield, seconded by Dr. Schley, the Board unanimously adjourned the called meeting.

Mr. Charles T. Staples
Hatcher, Stubbs, Land, Hollis, and Rothschild
Legal Counsel