

MUSCOGEE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
COLUMBUS, GEORGIA

CALLED BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING  
BRADLEY LIBRARY CONFERENCE ROOM  
MONDAY, JUNE 30, 2003, 12:30 P.M.

MINUTES

A called meeting of the Board of Education of the Muscogee County School District was held on Monday, June 30, 2003, 12:30 p.m. in the conference room at the Bradley Library.

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

Others present: John A Phillips, Jr., Superintendent of Education, James E. Humes, II, Legal and Charles T. Staples, Legal Counsel, Del Parker, Treasurer, Myles Caggins, Assistant Superintendent for Business Affairs, Bill Hortman, Associate Superintendent, and Shirley Jaeger, Assistant Superintendent for Personnel.

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 take action on a recommendation.

Upon motion of Mrs. Storey, seconded by Mr. Ebron, the Board unanimously voted to excuse Dr. Schley and Mr. Ditchfield

Dr. Phillips recommended that the Board approve the adoption of a resolution authorizing a Special Local Option Sales Tax Referendum to be held on September 16, 2003 for a five-year period or \$148,720,000 whichever comes first.

Mr. Wells made the motion, seconded by Mrs. Storey, to approve the adoption of the resolution authorizing a Special Local Options Sales Tax Referendum to be held on September 16, 2003 for a five-year period or \$148,720,000 whichever comes first.

Mr. Walker commented that, "people have called him as to why the Board is coming back so soon after the last SPLOST because we said that we would not be coming back to the citizens. I told them that the money came up short. That's still not satisfied some of the people who have called me. I just want us to be aware that we have not done all that we should have done."

Dr. Phillips commented, "This is something that we need to educate the public on. When you look at the total SPLOST from the previous period of time, it did come in about \$7 million dollars less than what was expected due to the economy. There were also some issues in where the scope of the work had to change because of the age of our facilities. The average age is about 40 years old as most of you know. When you began to do renovations in such old facilities quite often you run into difficulty. The only prudent thing to do is change the scope which would mean spending more money. I've been in all fifty-two schools and there are some significant needs. Obviously, I think the last SPLOST was very aggressive and took care of a lot of needs that we had at the same time we were not able to build two new schools that are greatly needed on the north side. A middle school and an elementary school which we already have the property for. Site development work has already been done and the children are certainly here. We're having to order right now (30) portable classrooms just to get us through next year because of the reduction of pupil teacher ratio under H.B. 1148. We still have significant needs roofing needs, heating and air needs, situations in our kitchens where our employees are having to work in unbearable conditions, physical education facilities are not air conditioned. There are a lot of needs and those needs are not going to go away. I have been in every one of these schools. We have erosion problems, playground problems, athletic fields that need to be brought up to standards, parking situations where they are badly eroded. Those needs cannot be done out of the operational budget of the school district and the only way that it can be done is through State funds as we earn them and the Local Option Sales Tax."

Mr. Walker commented, "I certainly do agree with Dr. Phillips but I think we need to do a little better job on educating the public."

Mr. Wells commented, "We've handled the money from the last SPLOST appropriately. We've spent it on what we said we were going to spend it on. I'm real pleased with what happened with the sales tax money on the last go round. I'm excited, and just really anticipating doing more things for the school children, technology and other things that Dr. Phillips has mentioned. I think it's appropriate to do this from sales tax or otherwise it will be on the backs of the property owners. I think that taxing property owners specifically for the capital expenditures that we have in our district is an inappropriate additional tax. Whenever we can get 35 to 40% of our construction needs done by people who live outside of this county, I think it's really a win situation for the Muscogee County tax payers."

Ms. Buckner commented, "I think that we do have a need for this tax and I've talked to the Superintendent. But a lot of the people in my district are concerned with whether the monies will be spent equitably and fairly on the entire community. They were concerned with a lot of projects that were not finished but they have been. We've pledged to finish those projects. They are concerned with money being spent equitably, fairly. The Superintendent has talked to me about this and I wondered if he can make some kind of statement about that."

Dr. Phillips, "I think that obviously one of the things that we have a responsibility to do is to find the needs, wherever those needs are and then to make sure that we bring all of our facilities up to standard. The integrity and the intent of this SPLOST and I'm sure as with the last SPLOST is to make sure that we provide an even playing field for all of our students. Our teachers in those classrooms work diligently everyday but, it's difficult to work if the air conditioning is not working, it's difficult to work if the roof is leaking, it's difficult to work in overcrowded situations or even portable classrooms that are detached from the school and are only a temporary alternative. The best way is to have the appropriate facilities that are congruent with the learning that we want to take place. We're well behind in the ratio of computers to children. Much of our equipment is obsolete. We know that in this age children who have good technology skills, teachers that integrate learning with the use of technology as a tool are going to be far better prepared for this workforce that they are going to face."

Dr. Polleys called for a vote on the motion. The Board unanimously voted to approve the adoption of the resolution authorizing a Special Local Option Sales Tax Referendum to be held September 16, 2003 for a five-year period or \$148,720,000 whichever comes first.

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

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James E. Humes, Legal Counsel  
Charles T. Staples, Legal Counsel