

MUSCOGEE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
COLUMBUS, GEORGIA

REGULAR BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
TUESDAY, JANUARY 24, 2006, 6:30 P.M.
BRADLEY LIBRARY CONFERENCE ROOM

MINUTES

The regular meeting of the Board of Education of the Muscogee County School District was held on Tuesday, January 24, 2006, 6:30 p.m. in the conference room at the old Bradley Library.

The following Board members were present: Mary Sue Polleys, James Walker, Philip T. Schley, Pat Hugley Green, Fife M. Whiteside, John Wells, Naomi Buckner and Joseph Roberson.

Others present: John A. Phillips, Jr., Superintendent of Education, Greg S. Ellington, Legal Counsel, Del Parker, CFO, Robin Pennock, Deputy Superintendent of Education, Peggy Connell, CAO, Myles Caggins, COFO, Billy Kendall, Administrative Assistant to Superintendent of Education, Don Cooper, CHRO, Eddie Obleton, CSSO, Harry Franklin from the Ledger-Enquirer and other representatives from the media.

Dr. Polleys called the meeting to order with an invocation. The pledge to the flag was led by students from Britt David Magnet Academy and the character education word was resourcefulness.

Dr. Polleys recognized visitors in the audience; Mr. & Mrs. Halouska representing the League of Women Voters and Friends of the Libraries and Owen Ditchfield representing Southeast Columbus Concerned Citizens.

Dr. Polleys called on Mr. Ellington who conducted the annual election of Board officers.

Mr. Ellington asked for nominations for Board officers.

Upon motion of Mrs. Storey, seconded by Dr. Schley, the Board unanimously approved the nominations of Dr. Mary Sue Polleys as Board Chairman for the 2006 calendar year; Mr. James Walker as Board Vice Chairman; Dr. John A. Phillips, Jr., Board Secretary; Mr. Del Parker, Treasurer; and School Board Attorney as Parliamentarian.

Mrs. Storey made a motion, seconded by Mr. Walker, to re-engage the Law Firm of Hatcher, Stubbs, Land, Hollis, and Rothschild as legal counsel to the Board under the terms that existed for the previous year. The vote was unanimous.

Dr. Polleys recognized visitors in the audience; Mr. and Mrs. Halouska representing the League of Women Voters and Friends of the Libraries and Mr. Owen Ditchfield representing Concerned Citizens for South Columbus.

Dr. Polleys recognized Dr. Phillips for being named President-Elect for the Large Systems Superintendent Group for the nation. The Board also recognized; National Board of Certified Teachers; Georgia National Troops to Teachers; State Cheerleading Champions; MIT InventTeam from Columbus High.

There was no one to speak on the Public Forum.

Dr. Phillips noted that there was an addendum item. Mr. Walker made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Storey to modify the agenda to include the addendum requesting approval of a purchase order for Eastway Elementary School repairs. The vote was unanimous.

Upon motion of Mrs. Storey, seconded by Ms. Buckner, the Board unanimously approved official actions taken at the regular Board of Education meeting held on Monday, December 12, 2005 and a called meeting held on Monday, January 9, 2006.

Upon motion of Mrs. Storey, seconded by Dr. Schley, the Board unanimously approved the appointment of Susan Willard to the position of Coordinator for the Early College High School Program at Kendrick High.

Upon motion of Mrs. Storey, seconded by Mr. Wells, the Board unanimously approved the appointment of K. Jeanette Braski, to the position of payroll supervisor for Muscogee County School District.

Upon motion of Ms. Buckner, seconded by Mrs. Storey, the Board unanimously approved the appointment of Silvia Bunn to the position of Branch Manager at the Mildred L. Terry Library.

Upon motion of Mr. Walker, seconded by Mrs. Storey, the Board unanimously approved the revision of Policy DJED – Pre-Qualification of Bidders by including an exhibit as a part of the existing policy.

Upon motion of Mrs. Storey, seconded by Mr. Walker, the Board unanimously approved Financial Statements for five months ending November 30, 2005.

The item regarding Consulting Services for Employee Benefits was discussed at the work session and was inadvertently included on the Board agenda. The Board took no action on this item.

Upon motion of Ms. Buckner, seconded by Mr. Roberson, the Board unanimously awarded a contract to Creative Fence Designs, Inc., low bidder, \$18,805.00 for a fence and installation at Marshall Middle School.

Upon motion of Mrs. Storey, seconded by Mr. Walker, the Board unanimously approved a tentative budget preparation calendar for FY07. Mr. Whiteside commented, “There’s an entry on the calendar for the adoption of a millage rate that has to go to Council. Is the timeliness of this resolved on this calendar?” Mr. Parker stated, “The tax Commissioners office said that this would not be a problem.”

Dr. Phillips recommended that the item regarding the Wide Area Network Provider be removed from the agenda at this time based on several reasons. (Dr. Phillips comments attached as Appendix A) Mr. Whiteside stated, "If the administration is not recommending that any of the proposal's that were given to the RFP that was made previously, the responses to those RFP's will never be voted up or down, correct?" Dr. Phillips, "That's correct. They would expire anyway because, there's a time limit within the RFP for accepting them. The issue is that we would not be accepting any of those RFP's and they would be re-issued in the future." Mr. Whiteside, "I wanted to make sure that those responses are no longer under consideration. There were several issues that came out of the process that was used to evaluate those RFP's. One of those things was the bandwidth issue and the other one was the financial stability issue. Are those going to be dealt with when the RFP is re-issued." Dr. Phillips, "Yes, they will be addressed." Mr. Whiteside, "I am proud to live in a community like Columbus to have the kind of caliber of people who served on the Technology Committee who would devote that much time. What crossed my desk, I would guess that each member tied up 10-12 hours of time. One thing that I'd like to ask is, if we would write them a letter of appreciation. Just as a point of clarification, I attended the evaluation meeting but, I exited myself from the discussion of the specific vendor proposals because of confidentiality issues. I did attend the second meeting of the committee and it was a good discussion. The specific action that I recall the committee took is that they just could not endorse the proposal that was before them. I do recall that the chief of their concerns, the ability of the company to perform the contract and the need to have a blueprint before we spend that kind of money. I believe some \$6 million at issue here. There are several other things that are interesting. One thing that they did say is that we should consider beefing up our IT Department. There were legitimate complaints about the inability of our IT people to service what we already have. There was also a point might be able to use as stop gap measures additional T1 connections at some of the schools and we might qualify for E-rate. I assume an appropriate examination of that will be made since the E-rate deadline, I believe in about three weeks now. They also suggested that we consider piloting whatever it is that we decide to do before we fully invest in it." Mrs. Green, "I was going to ask for an update of some of the committee findings but, my comment is along the line of appreciation as well. This Board and Administration are open to collaborating with experts in our community because, what we do affects the community. We are fortunate to have these headquarters here and we need to work with them so that we can give them the product that they can use. I am appreciative that the Administration was even open to collaborating." It was the consensus of the Board that a letter of appreciation be sent to the Community Technology Committee.

Upon motion of Mr. Wells, seconded by Mrs. Storey, the Board approved the naming of New Elementary School No. 5 to that of North Columbus Elementary School. Mr. Roberson, "I wanted to raise the issue of how that name was chosen." Mr. Wells, "Other people had mentioned it. A lot of things come up about naming it after people and I believe this name will satisfy a lot of folks." Mr. Roberson, "I'm very sensitive to this in that names represent particular things, heritage, image and it also represents where we're going in terms of the name of the school. I'm at the point where we need to be careful and even more creative in naming our schools. We need to move away from the regionalism as I call it that has gripped Columbus of south and north to a more inclusive, integrated, and futuristic paradigm of naming that will suggest that. Some of our citizens are polarized by north and south, let's admit that. Although, people in all neighborhoods have certain prides about their neighborhood be it north or south. I think when we have an opportunity as a school board to really produce a name. We need to not just perpetuate those paradigms but, create new ways of saying that we are thinking inclusive, that we want our city to be inclusive." Mr. Wells, "The administration and the architect have been waiting for a name. It's on the agenda tonight, let's just move on." The vote was (5) affirming and (4) opposing, (Polleys, Buckner, Green, Roberson).

Upon motion of Mrs. Storey, seconded by Mr. Wells, the Board unanimously approved the following consent agenda items with the exception of Item I-1:

- Human Resources Report/Professional and Classified. (Appendix B)
- March of Dimes to use Kinnett Stadium on April 22, 2006.
- Library Board appointments, Ms. Lisa Goodwin and Mr. Jason Alexander.
- Workers' Compensation Settlement, \$17,500.00.
- New budget for Clubview Elementary Charter Grant, \$5,000.00
- Continuation of America's Choice Program at Baker Middle School.
- Career and Technical Education Funding.
- FY06 VI-B IDEA Flow Through; FY06 State Pre-school; FY06 Federal Pre-school; FY06 Capacity Building.
- Audit of Financial Statement of 1997 SPLOST Capital Projects.
- Sales Tax Construction Program Report.
- Report on Transfer from FY03 SPLOST Critical Needs.
- FY97 Sales Tax Construction Program Report.
- Report on Transfers from Capital Projects and Debt to SPLOST Fund to cover Scope Changes.
- Report of Change Orders/Changes in Project Contingencies.
- Status Report for Projects under Construction.
- Report on System-wide Technology Plan.
- Report on Forecasted Revenue Collections.

The Board took action on item I-1, a budget adjustment for Maintenance and Operations audit in the amount of \$26,000. Mrs. Green commented, "I had to go back and get the original agenda item. My first concern is there's a committee and I chair that maintenance and property committee and we haven't had any items on that committee. Looking at the original, the scope has changed. The funding had all of these different account numbers but, originally it was coming from a consultant so I'm trying to understand, if we're not going to get the money from this consulting. Is this coming out a particular budget for plant services? I'm sure they need that funding. If we're going to take away from plant services, is the resources going to be a part of their evaluation for this audit? Where are we on the status of this audit?" Dr. Phillips, "Let me address the status. I think we agreed to have a consultant come in and do this analysis for us prior to having the committees appointed." Dr. Pennock, "Dr. Polleys and I on Friday were reviewing the Strategic Plan which we're going to try and get to you in March. I think that we noted at the last meeting in August, one of the items listed was that the Board wanted an audit of Plant Services." Dr. Phillips, "Right now they have just done their first draft and they have more meetings with Plant Services and then they hope to bring their completed report back to the Board. They are going to give a report directly back to the Board at the appropriate meeting. They will share the findings with you, give you a copy of the results, etc., and that's where we are with it right now. The actual issue dealing with the financing of it, well that had to be put in the budget." Mr. Parker, "Basically, we're moving money around in Plant Services accounts, mechanical and maintenance supplies. Mrs. Green, "If you're taking it away, how are you going to put it back? That's some of the complaints, if you're going to take away funding, resources from Plant Services. How are we going to put it back? Is the consulting budget broke?" Mr. Parker, "This is next year's budget." Dr. Phillips, "The bottom line is, if we can get a good audit, we understand where we have problems and where we need to go to be more efficient and more effective, then we will save a lot of money over a period of time and have better service and better preventive maintenance. It may require re-organizing. It may require a lot of different things." Mrs. Green, "I'm counting on that considering the cost." Dr. Polleys asked for a motion on this item and discussions could continue. Mr. Wells, "This is strictly the Administrations prerogative to make a recommendation to pay a consultant. I believe that it is appropriately in order, that's the reason, I move to approve the motion." Mrs. Storey, "I hope that out of the audit will come ideas for improvement and better operations, more efficient operations. One of the reasons that I supported the audit in the first place was not monies that were expended but it was the amount of time that I'm aware of that was spent in getting things done. My primary concern came from, do we not have enough people, do we have the right people or can people be shifted and used somewhere else. I think that we are going to find some strengths but I think we'll also find some areas of improvement. I know as a manager in anything, show me where I can improve, tell me where I can improve and tell me how and I'll get us there and that's all that this audit is. If anyone perceives it differently, I think they're looking at it in a way that it wasn't intended." Ms. Buckner, "I wanted to speak to Mrs. Green's concern about the \$26,000 coming from the Plant Services budget. The concern about some of the problems with Plant Services in my opinion of what I've been hearing also was that there are financial concerns. These can be linked also financially because if you do not have enough people and the right time these can be linked to financial concerns. I know that it is the Superintendent's prerogative to move money as he pleases. As always, I'm asking the same question then, is that what's done all the time. When there's a department that's being quote audited or being discussed or what have you.

Is that budget taken from that department? Are we doing things consistently? Does the administration do that all the time? If you were doing another department do you take from that department?" Dr. Phillips, "Yes, we do. The annual audit comes out of the finances. If it were curriculum it would come out of their budget. It comes out of the area where it is defined." Mr. Roberson, "I would feel better before I voted if Dr. Phillips would answer is the \$26,000 going to affect plant operations?" Dr. Phillips, "No, it will not affect operations. We would not have taken it out if that were the case." Mr. Wells made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Storey, to approve the budget adjustment for maintenance and operations, \$26,000.00 for an audit. The vote was (5) affirming and (3) opposing, (Buckner, Whiteside, Green) and (1) abstaining, (Roberson).

Mr. Walker noted that at he visited with State legislators today and later received a call from GSBA a copy of H.B. 969. Dr. Phillips noted, "This is a bill that is being considered across the nation. It uses a 65% solution which means that 65% of the budget would be mandated by State law to be used in the classroom. That doesn't sound typically bad but when you analyze what in the classroom means you find out that counselors are not included in the 65% as if they have no direct impact on students in the school; media specialists are not included in the 65% and there are a number of things that are not included in the 65% that is just extraordinarily confusing to me about the support in the schools; social workers, psychologists, all these people are not included in this and yet, such things as field trips and athletics is considered to be in the definition of in the classroom, 65%. If you look at Muscogee County and you look at FY03 and that's the latest figures anybody has because this is national statistics being used. We're at 63%, a little over. It means that we would have to put in an additional 2% if everything stays even. Now what bothers me is that the State is dictating how much we spend in the classroom and they don't send us that much money, number 1, in terms of supporting public education. It really further erodes public control because, now they are saying you must use your local tax dollars to fulfill the 65% requirement and yet they're not providing the funding at that level. It looks good, it sounds good but, when you start looking at the details of the legislation, it is not good. It does erode our ability to put money where we think is best in programs or other areas that may not be considered. For instance if we thought adding counselors to our school system was better, in fact one of the Governor's recommendations is to add a completion counselor at every high school which I can applaud that. I don't understand what a completion counselor is because, I thought all counselors had been providing that opportunity for students for years. This is a completion counselor and yet that's being recommended which is an expenditure out of the state level and another local expenditure on our side and yet that's not included in the 65% and it just does not make good sense frankly from my perspective. Other people may have other opinions. This is not just happening in Georgia, it's a national push and it is not a good solution." Dr. Pennock, "In a legislative update, I've just learned that this bill left the senate education committee late today with a 'do pass' recommendation." Dr. Polleys, "Would it be appropriate for us to go on record to notify our legislators that we oppose it." Dr. Phillips, "I think so." Mr. Whiteside, "Is GSBA asking us to go on record or with a formal resolution opposing this." Dr. Phillips, "Yes, but, they do not need a resolution. They did ask us to contact our legislators." Mr. Whiteside, "I'd like for us to go on record. I'm a republican and I don't know where republicans get off with not understanding this issue of local control. I would have thought they would have learned that lesson in 2002 that communities want to be in charge of their school systems."

Upon motion of Dr. Schley, seconded by Mr. Whiteside, the Board unanimously voted to amend the agenda to consider this item. Upon motion of Mr. Whiteside, seconded by Mrs. Storey, the Board went on record to notify legislators that this Board opposes H.B. 969. The vote was (8) affirming and (1) opposing, (Wells). Mr. Wells noted, "I'm not going on record to oppose something that has not been properly debated. At that time, I can make a recommendation to my legislator." Dr. Phillips, "For clarity, we can say that we are opposed to the bill as it is now." Dr. Polleys noted, "We are not going on record saying that we oppose 65% of the resources being in the classroom. I'm sure that if we check our 63%, I'm sure it is way above 65%, I believe it is like 80%."

Upon motion of Mrs. Storey, seconded by Mr. Walker, the Board unanimously voted to go into executive session to hear (4) discipline appeals.

Upon motion of Mr. Wells, seconded by Mrs. Storey, the Board unanimously voted to come out of executive session.

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

Greg S. Ellington,
Legal Counsel