



Board of Education

Minutes of The Board of Education

A Regular School Board Meeting of the Board of Education of Fort Smith Public Schools was held Monday, February 24, 2025, beginning at 5:30 PM in the Service Center, Bldg. B, Auditorium, 3205 Jenny Lind, P.O. Box 1948, Fort Smith, AR 72901.

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Dalton Person, president, called the meeting to order noting five board members were present in person. Other board members present were: Mr. Phil Whiteaker, Mr. Matt Blaylock, Mr. Davin Chitwood, and Ms. Susan Krafft. District administrators present included: Dr. Terry Morawski, Superintendent; Mr. Martin Mahan, Deputy Superintendent; Dr. Chris Davis, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources and Campus Support; Dr. Tiffany Bone, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction; Mr. Charles Warren, Chief Financial Officer; Dr. Michael Farrell, Executive Director of Student Services; Mr. Shawn Shaffer, Executive Director of Facility Operations; Mr. Vance Gregory, Director of Technology; Mr. Allan Marshall, Chief Communications & Engagement Officer; and Ms. Leslie Phelps, Office Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent. Mr. Marshall Ney, of Friday, Eldridge, and Clark, District Attorney was also in attendance via Zoom.

RECOGNITIONS

Mr. Mahan presented the following recognitions:

Beard Elementary and Morrison Elementary achieved High Reliability Schools Level 2 accreditation.

Ms. Nicole Franklin and Kristel Knubley, teachers at Orr Elementary, achieved High Reliability Teacher Level 3 Certification.

The Woods Elementary Robotics team received first place at state in the Core Values Award and earned a bid to the national competition. Ms. Autumn Minnick received Overall Coach and Mentor of the Year.

Southside High School Maverick cheer team won back-to-back championships at the National High School Cheerleading Championship. The Maverick cheer team is coached by Heather Graham.

Southside High School boys bowling team placed first in the 6A State Championship. The Southside bowling team is coached by Tadd Stewart.

Mr. Davin Chitwood earned the Arkansas School Board Association Master Board Member award. This award is earned by completing at least 50 hours of in-service credit.

Note: Ms. Lynnett Lott joined the meeting at 5:34 PM.

EXECUTIVE SESSION – LEGAL

At 5:39 PM the Board and Dr. Morawski went into executive session to discuss a legal matter.

Board members and Dr. Morawski returned to open session at 6:11 PM.

CITIZEN'S PARTICIPATION

Mr. Captilles Vick and Mr. Aaron Borengasser spoke on the special education program at Euper Lane Elementary and district communication.

Mr. Daniel Williams spoke on district communication.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Morawski stated in order to make up instructional time due to inclement weather seven minutes will be added to the school days. This option is available due to our school calendar being minutes based.

Dr. Morawski informed the board virtual school will be transitioning to the Virtual Arkansas model for secondary students.

Dr. Morawski informed the board of several key events: the next regularly scheduled meeting will be March 31, 2025; the April regularly scheduled meeting will be held on April 28, 2025; the filling period for school board candidates is February 24, 2025 – March 3, 2025; Spring break will be March 24 - March 28, 2025; a reception to celebrate Howard Elementary being in their current building for 75 years and 150 years as a school will be held on February 27, 2025; Northside High School is hosting a Black History Month program on Friday, February 28, 2025; Southside High School will observe graduation on May 15, 2025 and Northside High School will observe graduation on May 16, 2025.

Dr. Morawski's Good Things Going on in the District included: Northside High School and Southside High School both earned Gold Level certification for DECA; Southside High School students Rajaa Kaddoura, Mackenzie Settlege, and Jiya Shah were named 2025 National Merit Finalists; Northside Lady Bears Coach Rickey Smith reached a milestone with surpassing 800 career wins; Southside's Freshman Quiz Bowl team won the 7A River Valley Junior High Quiz Bowl tournament; Students and staff at Bonneville Elementary hosted a donation drive for Fort Smith Animal Haven; and Amina and Jayden from Beard Elementary won first place at the State Hoop Shoot competition. They are invited to regionals in Kentucky in March.

CONSENT AGENDA

The consent agenda included the January Financial Report, January 27 Minutes, February 3 Minutes, February Professional Staff Recommendations, and the Student Services Report.

Mr. Whiteaker made a motion, seconded by Ms. Krafft, to approve the consent agenda as presented. The vote passed 6-0.

BOARD VACANCY

Mr. Person stated that there were a total of eight submissions for the Zone IV vacant seat. Two of the submissions did not reside in Zone IV, leaving a total of six eligible candidates. Mr. Person read the submissions as they were received by the district: Ashante Arnaud, Gregory Carthon, Daniel Williams, Yuri Richardson, Maria Martinez, and Eric Toran.

Mr. Person reiterated that due to policy the person appointed to the vacant seat would be required to run for the seat in the next school board election which will be in May.

Mr. Whiteaker, made a motion seconded by Mr. Chitwood, to appoint Gregory Carthon to fulfill Ms. Richardson's vacant seat until the May election. The vote passed 5-1 with Mr. Blaylock opposing.

PRESENTATION – ARKANSAS SCHOOL SAFETY GRANT

Chief Eric Huber presented to the Board a summary of expenditures related to the Arkansas School Safety Grant for 2025. Chief Huber stated the funding calculation was \$25,000 per LEA plus \$19 per student based on October 1, 2024 enrollment. The District was awarded \$909,977 for purchases or enhancements to radio communications, school resource officer equipment, policy and compliance software, body armor, police vehicles, access control systems, cameras, window coverings, emergency response equipment, and weapons detection software.

This is an information item. No recommendation is required.

RAYMOND F. ORR LEARNING ACADEMY AND ALE CONVERSION CHARTER APPLICATION

Dr. Bone informed the Board that currently alternative education programs that serve students in grades K-12 are located on multiple campuses. Administration desires to house all alternative education programs at one campus, Raymond F. Orr Learning Academy, beginning in the fall of 2025. In partnership with ChanceLight Behavioral Health Therapy and Education, Positive Behavior Support (PBS), will be offered at Raymond F. Orr Learning Academy for students in grades K-5.

Dr. Jones presented to the Board information regarding operating a District Conversion Charter School for grades 6-12 at Raymond F. Orr Learning Academy. The charter will be the Academic Center of Excellence and will provide a non-traditional style of learning with flexible times to allow students with varying needs to continue to earn credits and graduate on time. The conversion charter will open in the fall of 2026-2027.

Ms. Krafft made a motion, seconded by Mr. Chitwood, to approve the resolution to submit the ALE Conversion Charter School intent to apply to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The vote passed 6-0.

PRESENTATION – ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT – SNAPSHOT DATA REVIEW

Dr. Bone reported the findings of the Curriculum Management Solutions Incorporated (CMSI) audit and compared the differences of last year's results to this year's results. Areas of focus were on grade level instruction, high student engagement, and a safe learning environment.

This is a presentation item only. No action is required.

SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH UPDATE

Mr. Person communicated that the application window closed on Friday, February 21, 2025. A total of 20 applications were received. McPherson Jacobson search firm will be reviewing the candidates and candidate backgrounds over the next two weeks. There will be several called meetings in March to discuss the interview process, compensation package and superintendent finalists. Interviews with the candidates are scheduled for the first of April. Mr. Person stated the goal is to finalize the process by mid-April.

BOARD MEMBERS FORUM

The next regularly scheduled board meeting will be Monday, March 31, 2025.

Mr. Whiteaker thanked those that spoke during Citizens Participation.

Mr. Chitwood requested that the board meetings and agendas be more easily accessible on the District website.

Mr. Blaylock inquired what would the annual cost be to have a school resource officer at every campus.

ADJOURN

There was no further business and the meeting was adjourned at 7:36 PM.

Dalton Person, President

Davin Chitwood, Secretary