



Board of Education

Minutes

The Board of Education

A Regular School Board Meeting of the Board of Education of Fort Smith Public Schools was held Monday, June 27, 2022, 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

Ms. Blackwell, president, called the meeting to order noting all seven board members were present. Other board members present were: Mr. Dalton Person, Ms. Talicia Richardson, Mr. Matt Blaylock, Mr. Davin Chitwood, Ms. Sandy Dixon and Mr. Phil Whiteaker. District administrators present included: Dr. Terry Morawski, Superintendent; Mr. Martin Mahan, Deputy Superintendent; Dr. Chris Davis, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources and Campus Support; Mr. Charles Warren, Chief Financial Officer; Mr. Darian Layes, Executive Director of Student Services; Dr. Michael Farrell, Supervisor of Student Services; Mr. Vance Gregory, Executive Director of Technology; Ms. Nadine Brooks, Office Manager to the Superintendent; and Ms. Leslie Phelps, Office Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent.

A moment of silence was followed by the pledge of allegiance and mission statement.

RECOGNITIONS

Mr. Mahan presented the following recognitions.

Mr. Troy Eckelhoff served on the Fort Smith Public Schools Board of Education this past year. Mr. Eckelhoff also volunteers at events in the District and is active in the community as well. We very much appreciate your service to the district and its students.

Sydney Klein, a 2022 graduate of Northside High School won first place in the School Point of Sale Marketing Contest for her project 'Grizzly Gear Spring Cleaning Sale'. Sydney's project cleared out most of the winter and spring apparel to make room for the Grizzly Gear summer apparel. Her project saw gross sales for the store significantly exceed prior year's sales. Sydney's presentation not only earned her first place in the national competition but also a \$1,000.00 check.

Dr. Michael Farrell, Supervisor of Student Services, along with Cherri Byford, Jane Stewart and several other FSPS counselors developed a comprehensive school counseling program for the district. Fort Smith Public Schools' program received a grade of 'well developed'. Only 2% of the state's school counseling programs received this ranking.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Morawski stated the items for review will include current proposals, bids, and renewals as well as the authorization of electronic transfer funds. These are information items for the board and no action was required.

Dr. Morawski noted that Ms. Katherine Campbell, Attorney; Friday, Eldredge, and Clark law firm joined the meeting by zoom and available for any questions.

Dr. Morawski recognized Fort Smith Public School's police chief, Bill Hollenbeck. Governor Asa Hutchinson has appointed Chief Hollenbeck to the Arkansas School Safety Commission. The commission is tasked to consider ways for schools to improve safety. Dr. Morawski commended the work of Chief Hollenbeck.

Dr. Morawski stated at the July board meeting a recommendation regarding an increase to meal prices will be discussed. This is due to the price of goods increasing. Mr. Warren will be presenting that information. Dr. Morawski reminded everyone that in the next school year the practice of COVID universal free lunch will be ending.

Dr. Morawski reported that the new school board members will be attending the Arkansas School Board Association new member institute June 30, 2022, either virtually or in person in Hot Springs. These members will be receiving training in school governance, school finance, school law, and school safety.

The next board meeting will be July 18, 2022 at 5:30 pm. There will be a board training session held on August 9, 2022. The August board meeting will be held on August 22, 2022 which is also the first day of school for the 2022-23 school year.

Dr. Morawski recognized two employees that will be retiring effective June 30, 2022. Nadine Brooks, Office Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent and Darian Layes, Executive Director of Student Services.

CONSENT AGENDA

The consent agenda included the May Financial Statement, May 23 Minutes, June 20 Minutes, June Professional Staff Recommendations, and the June Student Services Report.

Ms. Blackwell asked the board members if there were any items that they wanted to pull from the consent agenda.

Mr. Person stated that he wanted to pull item three, Professional Staff Recommendations.

Mr. Person made a motion, seconded by Talicia Richardson, to approve the consent agenda with the exception of item number three.

The consent agenda, with the exception of item number three, was approved by a vote of 7/0.

Mr. Person stated that he will be voting against this item and that is why he wanted to pull it.

Ms. Richardson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Whiteaker, to approve item number three of the consent agenda, professional recommendations. The vote passed 6/1 with Mr. Person opposing.

Ms. Richardson asked about the balance reflected on the financial report in capital projects and what will that balance be used for. Mr. Warren stated the financial report is as of May 31, 2022 and additional purchases are to be made on other projects. This balance will be used to pay down projects at Northside, Southside, and other campuses. Mr. Warren reasonably estimates all expenditures, excluding the Peak Center, should be accounted for after the June 30, 2022 closing.

Ms. Richardson requested when the determination is made it be brought outside of the consent agenda, specifically capital projects.

Ms. Richardson requested clarification on the positions listed on the professional staff recommendations and the lack of a specific subject matter on the report. Dr. Davis explained

when a position is posted and the content area is unknown at the time it is used as a placeholder with a content area to be determined by the principal.

Ms. Dixon questioned if exit interviews were performed when an employee leaves employment. Dr. Davis explained in the past exit surveys were mailed out but little feedback was received. Human Resources is currently testing an electronic version and Dr. Davis hopes to have this fully implemented at the close of the current hiring cycle.

Ms. Richardson followed up that the board requested the practice of exit interviews several years ago and was unaware that this practice had stopped. Dr. Davis will find out when the exit interviews ceased and for what reason.

CONSIDER ADOPTING RESOLUTION TO MANAGE THE DISTRICT'S CENTENNIAL BANK ACCOUNTS

Mr. Warren stated the administration's desire to create three new bank accounts with Centennial Bank to serve as targeted bank accounts for the collection of credit card and online revenue for district-wide athletic and activity events. Most notably, Northside's Grizzly Gear store, Southside's Southern Grounds program; and Ticket Spicket.

Mr. Person made a motion, seconded by Ms. Richardson, to adopt the resolution to manage the District's Centennial bank accounts. The vote passed 7/0.

CONSIDER APPROVING THE CHANGES TO SECTION 7.5 OF THE BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES

In following a recently released Commissioner's memo, the administration is requesting an update to the purchasing threshold for 2022-23 to \$23,100. This is an increase from the current threshold of \$20,910. Mr. Warren reminded the board that internal controls remain where additional bids and proposals are received for anything over \$10,000.

Ms. Richardson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Blaylock, to approve the changes to section 7.5 of the business and financial management policies. The vote passed 7/0.

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF STUDENT HANDBOOK CHANGES FOR 2022-23

Mr. Layes reported that the student handbook is reviewed annually to make sure the handbook is in alignment with federal and state law as well as board policies. A committee of students, parents, counselors, and administrators met on June 3, 2022 to discuss recommended changes to the handbook.

The changes included updating the word for the military education coordinator to military education liaison. The second update changed the grades for requesting placement of same birth siblings to Kindergarten – fifth grade from Kindergarten to sixth grade. This change is simply to reflect the new alignment of our elementary schools. The third change was moving the location of a paragraph. The final change was concerning homework guidelines.

Ms. Dixon made a motion, seconded by Ms. Richardson, to approve the changes to the student handbook for 2022-23. The vote was approved 7/0.

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF THE APPLICATION FOR DIGITAL LEARNING PROGRAMS

Dr. Bone introduced Dr. Samantha Hall to present the digital learning programs. This application was approved last year but this is a new program developed by the state for all the virtual programs to have a more uniform policy in place. The previous application included grades Kindergarten – eighth grade. The revised plan will include grades ninth – twelfth.

Ms. Richardson asked for clarification on the truancy policy for the virtual learners. Dr. Hall stated the

attendance policy does address truancy and unexcused absences. Dr. Bone reviewed steps in contacting students and parents regarding attendance issues include: the Pearson instructors reaching out to students, the District sends out correspondence to the student and parent, and/or a conference with the student and parents will be set up, if needed.

Dr. Morawski stated this program was good for students that need this type of environment. In looking ahead at our next strategic planning process and goals this program needs to mature and find what it will look like for the long term. Dr. Morawski stated he looks forward to future conversations about these programs, what is needed, and what is best for our students.

Mr. Person made a motion, seconded by Mr. Whiteaker, to approve the submission of the application for digital learning programs to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The vote was approved 6/1 with Mr. Blaylock opposing.

PRESENTATION PEAK FLOODING UPDATE

Dr. Morawski stated administrators were looking for guidance and feedback from the board so that more information to any questions or cost estimates to any solutions can be discussed at a future date.

Dr. Morawski introduced Mr. Shaffer to present the timeline of events, the remediation process, and possible solutions for the future. Also available to assist with any questions was a representative with ServPro and representatives with the engineering firm of Halff Engineering.

Due to three days of record breaking rainfall and a blocked drain pipe, flooding took place in the east parking lot. Water had also entered the building on the north, south, and east entrances. ServPro and the District's insurance were contacted immediately to begin the remediation process. ServPro marked this a Category 3 water intrusion which is a result of possible groundwater contaminates. Halff Engineering is working on possible solutions for the future, including a 100 year flood plan. These solutions could include a detention pond, a bypass system, and/or rerouting the roof drains.

Ms. Dixon asked the difference between a Category 2 and Category 3 intrusion. The ServPro representative explained a category 3 intrusion is considered grossly contaminated event due to rising waters that intrudes the building from the exterior. A category 3 event requires all porous items such as drywall, insulation, or anything that could absorb water to be removed.

Mr. Person expressed that anyone on the board that has a direct interest in the outcome of this discussion should not be involved in the discussion as it is a conflict of interest.

Ms. Richardson requested additional information regarding the data supplied in regards to the 25 year flood plan versus the 100 year plan.

Ms. Richardson also requested the cost associated with developing a 100 year flood plan as well as the cost of the remaining remediation that will need to take place.

Ms. Blackwell stated the board would like feedback at a future meeting regarding damage costs and total cost of remediation.

Mr. Person would like more information on the cause of the flood and long term solutions. As well as the cost of the 100 year flood plan.

Ms. Blackwell would also like to address any safety concerns to students.

BOARD MEMBERS FORUM

Ms. Blackwell stated the next regular board meeting will be Monday, July 18, 2022.

Ms. Blackwell recapped several items for future feedback: changes regarding meal prices, remaining monies in capital projects, exit surveys for staff that has resigned, and additional details on Peak and the recent flooding.

Ms. Dixon asked if the board would benefit from having scheduled work sessions to help with making better, more informed decisions.

Mr. Person stated he would prefer scheduling a work session only as needed.

Ms. Richardson stated that she also appreciates the one meeting format. But encourages board members to meet with staff members to be better informed.

Ms. Dixon stated she would prefer a work session for transparency and to ensure each member is receiving the same information.

Ms. Blackwell communicated that if anyone has a specific question each member is then contacted and given that information so that the same details are shared with everyone. There are also individual staff members to help with any specific area questions. However, a called work session can be called at any time if further discussion is needed.

Ms. Blackwell stated she would like to change the zoom view from individual view to a group view. None of the board members expressed a concern with this change.

Ms. Richardson recognized Ms. Jane Stewart with Howard Elementary and her work in the mental health field.

ADJOURN

There was no further business and the meeting was adjourned at 6:58 pm.

Dee Blackwell, President

Dalton Person, Secretary