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## Board of Education

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### Minutes of The Board of Education

A Regular School Board Meeting of the Board of Education of Fort Smith Public Schools was held Monday, July 22, 2024, 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 six board members were present. Other board members present were: Mr. Phil Whiteaker, Mr. Davin Chitwood, Mr. Matt Blaylock, Ms. Lynnett Lott, and Ms. Talicia Richardson. Ms. Susan Krafft was not present. 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; 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:

The Transportation Department was awarded the 2024 Safety Award for our region at the Arkansas Association of Pupil Transportation Conference.

Darby Middle School counselor Cherri Byford earned Arkansas Counselor of the Year from the Arkansas School Counselor Association. She will now go on to represent Arkansas for National Counselor of the Year.

#### **CITIZEN'S PARTICIPATION**

None.

#### **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

Dr. Morawski informed the board of several key events. The Partners in Education Conference will be held on August 1, 2024 at Southside High School. The new teacher orientation will be August 2, 2024 at the Peak Innovation Center Community Room. The Launch for Learning event will be held August 8, 2024 at Southside High School Arena. The next regularly scheduled school board meeting will be Monday, August 26, 2024.

Dr. Davis introduced the following new administrators:

Chief Eric Huber, Chief of Police; Mr. Joe Love, Lieutenant Police Department; Ms. Grace George, Director, Child Nutrition; Mr. Hondo Smith, Supervisor, Maintenance; Dr. Chantel Edwards, Director, Belle Point Alternative Center; Ms. Cedra Flake, Principal Howard Elementary; Ms. Taylor Smith, Assistant Principal Carnell and Orr Elementary; Mr. Diego Olivarez, Assistant Principal Northside High School; Ms. Alicia Henry, Assistant Principal Ramsey Middle School; Ms. Hannah Sandifer, Assistant

Principal Cook Elementary; Ms. Ashley Williamson, Assistant Principal Fairview Elementary; Mr. Todd Weinsberg, Assistant Principal Beard Elementary; Ms. Kaitlyn Alwin, Assistant Principal Spradling Elementary.

Dr. Morawski informed the board he and other staff members attended a meeting at the Guy Fenter Co-op to hear a new proposed finance model for Arkansas Public Schools. This was presented by Arkansas Representative Bruce Cozart. The proposed model assigns funds to the district based on individual student characteristics versus counting students as part of a composite number.

Dr. Morawski stated a presentation regarding the status of the District tracks as well as comparable tracks in neighboring districts will be given in August.

Dr. Morawski informed the board the demolition of the properties on B Street and Belle Avenue will consist of abatement at each of those properties and relocating utilities. The completion of these projects is scheduled for this fall. The future plans for each of these properties is still in discussion but early plans are to sod those properties and close it to parking.

Dr. Morawski stated the District is in final evaluation of a contract with ChanceLight Behavioral Health Therapy and Education Company. This contract would help better serve and support students with emotional, behavioral, and related disabilities. The contract is \$792,000. The expense will be funded by Title 4 and Enhanced Student Achievement Funds. The contract would be evaluated on an annual basis.

Dr. Morawski reported that feedback from the staff of Orr Elementary preferred to have the transfer and rezoning of students done in one year instead of over a two year period. Mr. Person recommended asking for stakeholder feedback and take a vote at a later meeting for a one or two year closure process.

Dr. Morawski's Good Things Going on in the District included: the Peak Innovation Center has hosted a variety of summer learning opportunities for Fort Smith Public School students; the Latinos en Medicina health science campers received their white coats; thirty-three Fort Smith Public School students attended the mercy MASH program this summer; Southside High School was recognized as a 2024 School of Innovation Renewal School by the Arkansas Office of Education Innovation; and Northside High School Kari Carter was named the River Valley Democrat-Gazette Girls Soccer Player of the Year.

Dr. Morawski informed the board a job posting is listed on the district website for an in-house legal counsel. This position would handle litigation, specialty areas, contracts, and be available on a real-time, daily basis. Mr. Marshall Ney of Friday, Eldridge, and Clark will continue to be the contract counsel.

### **CONSENT AGENDA**

The consent agenda included the May Financial Report, May 20 Minutes, July Professional Staff Recommendations, Student Services Report, the Community Service Learning Partner Site Applications, Approving the 2024-2025 Staff Contract Renewals, Approving the Teacher/Administrator Recruitment Plan, Approving a revision to Classified Personnel Policy 8.7, Adopting the Artificial Intelligence Policy, and Approving the Student Handbook Changes for 2024-2025.

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

**PRESENTATION – DEMOGRAPHIC UPDATE**

Mr. Bob Templeton with Zonda Education presented the board with a report regarding new housing and business demographics for the Fort Smith region. Mr. Templeton reported that employment growth in the region expects to continue through 2025. The highlights of this job growth is seen in the manufacturing sector as well as the addition of the training facility at Ebbing Air Force Base and support facilities like Lockheed Martin. Mr. Templeton highlighted the housing market and residential activity happening within Fort Smith.

Zonda Education forecasts enrollment numbers will decline over the next few years due to lower Kindergarten numbers entering the school system and larger groups graduating out. The lowest enrollment is anticipated in the 2028-2029 school year but will rebound by 2033-2034 with approximately 14,074 students.

This is a presentation item. No action is required.

**PRESENTATION – PHONE FREE ENVIRONMENT PILOT**

Dr. Morawski reported that he attended a meeting with Governor Sanders, Education Commissioner Oliva, and state superintendents to discuss student mental health challenges. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the impact of young people and the exposure of cell phones and social media. Dr. Morawski stated Fort Smith Public Schools was approved for a \$52,000 grant to purchase Yondr pouches.

Mr. Mahan presented the proposed pilot program for a phone free environment. This initiative will use Yondr pouches to store student devices securely during school hours. These devices include cell phones, ear pods, and smart watches. The pouch will lock and will need a special magnet to open it. The pilot will include Kimmons Middle School and Ramsey Middle School.

Mr. Chitwood stated he would be interested in feedback during this pilot session from students, teachers, faculty, and parents before moving this initiative district wide.

Ms. Richardson stated she would like to see a phone free environment in the elementary schools as well.

Mr. Person asked if the available grant would cover the entire purchase of the Yondr pouches. Mr. Mahan answered that the total cost of the pouches is approximately \$60,000, so approximately \$8,000 will be from the district.

Mr. Blaylock made a motion, seconded by Ms. Richardson, to approve participating in the pilot program as presented at Kimmons Middle School and Ramsey Middle School. The vote passed 6-0.

**PRESENTATION – ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT – CAREER EDUCATION**

Dr. Gary Udouj, Director of Career Education and District Innovation, reported to the board that there are twenty-eight different career and technical education (CTE) pathways in the areas of Information Technology, Advanced Manufacturing, Human Services, Health Sciences, Business Management, and Arts and Communication.

Dr. Udouj shared this year's numbers of CTE completers and industry recognized certifications showed continued, steady growth. Dr. Udouj stated the goal is to increase the number of students who are

completing programs by adding new CTE programs like construction at Southside High School and construction, patient care technician and art at the Peak Innovation Center. Dr. Udouj continued that the top five certifications received are First Aid/CPR, Stop the Bleed, HIPPA Certification, OSHA 10, and career readiness.

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

**PRESENTATION - ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT – ADULT EDUCATION CENTER**

Mr. Matthew Hominick, Director of Adult Education Center, presented to the board each of the programs offered at the Adult Education Center. Mr. Hominick reported for the 2023-2024 school year, the Adult Education Center had an enrollment of 1,447 students with a GED pass rate of 87% which surpasses both the state and national averages.

Mr. Hominick stated the measurement for how much funding the center receives is the Federal Benchmark for Effective and Efficient Rate and is set at 92.00%. The Fort Smith Adult Education Center received a 98.21% rating.

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

**BOARD MEMBERS FORUM**

The next regular scheduled board meeting is Monday, August 26, 2024.

Ms. Richardson recognized transportation for their work over the summer for getting students to the programs at Peak Innovation Center safely.

Mr. Whiteaker thanked the staff that continue work during the summer months.

Mr. Chitwood thanked the administration for the work on the phone free environment pilot and for focusing on improving student mental health.

Mr. Person thanked the board for agreeing to cancel the June board meeting and requested that the board consider continuing that practice.

**ADJOURN**

There was no further business and the meeting was adjourned at 7:16 PM.

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Dalton Person, President

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Davin Chitwood, Secretary