



Board of Education

Minutes

The Board of Education

A Called School Board Meeting of the Board of Education of Fort Smith Public Schools was held Monday, October 11, 2021, beginning at 5:30 PM in the Service Center, Bldg. B, Auditorium, 3205 Jenny Lind, P.O. Box 1948, Fort Smith, AR 72901.

Ms. McFerran, president, called the meeting to order. Other board members present were: Ms. Talicia Richardson, Mr. Dalton Person, Ms. Dee Blackwell, Mr. Matt Blaylock and Mr. Troy Eckelhoff and Ms. Yvonne Keaton-Martin. District administration 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. Darian Layes, Executive Director of Student Services; Mr. Vance Gregory, Executive Director of Technology; Ms. Zena Featherston Marshall, Executive Director of Communication and Community Partnerships; and Ms. Nadine Brooks, Office Manager to the Superintendent. Mr. Marshall Ney, of Friday, Eldridge and Clark, District Attorney was also in attendance.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Morawski reminded board members of the following upcoming events: Professional Learning Community (PLC) Training on October 13, the Annual Chamber Luncheon on October 27, Board Policies Review on October 27, Leadership Fort Smith on October 28, Board Policies Review on November 2, Vision 2023 Capital Improvement Projects Celebration on November 14,

Dr. Morawski reported that he had attended Darby Health Science Academy earlier in the day for a medical sponsored event.

PRESENTATION – VISION 2023 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT UPDATE

Mr. Shaffer provided an update on the following capital improvement projects.

Mr. Shaffer reported that bleachers arrived last week at Northside High School and Nabholz Construction provided extra resources to begin installation.

Mr. Shaffer reported that Southside High School was nearing completion with the Fire Marshall to give a final look at the Freshman Academy.

After discussion about delays with installing the seats and scoreboards at the high school arenas, Mr. Mahan stated that he would ask Mr. Beaumont to attend the October 25 School Board Meeting to provide an update on how it will affect game schedules and tournaments.

Mr. Shaffer reported that a 50 foot gas easement was delaying installation of parking lot lights at the Peak Innovation Center. Architects were working with the city to meet requirements to get this completed. The fasteners for the roof will not arrive until April. This could require patches to the roof the roof due to insurance coverage. Mr. Shaffer indicated that he was looking into it.

This was a presentation and no action was required.

PRESENTATION - CENSUS, ZONING AND NEXT STEPS

Dr. Morawski, Mr. Mahan and Mr Ney provided an update on census, zoning and next steps. Dr. Morawski reported that the District had hired Western Arkansas Planning and Development to develop maps for rezoning. The previous demographer was not able to meet the timeline. Dr. Morawski reported that a resolution will be brought to the Oct. 25 meeting with zones to reviewed. Dr. Morawski and Mr. Mahan have met with the Sebastian County Election Commission regarding new zoning and the upcoming school board election in the spring.

Ms. Richardson asked about the process for reviewing the maps. Mr. Ney reported that the maps will be reviewed by the School Board and Sebastian County Election Commission.

This was a presentation and no action was required at this meeting.

CONSIDER FACE COVERINGS

Dr. Morawski reviewed the timeline of events, large and regional districts procedures and a recent staff face covering survey. He noted that the comparison of COVID data between Springdale and Fort Smith school districts were very similar in numbers at this time.

Dr. Morawski reported that the administration had been asked to present a recommendation to the board. He added that options to consider were removal of current mask requirement, resolution tied to AHI Data for the school district, take no action (next decision point 10/25/21) or other action as defined by the Board.

Dr. Morawski stated that the administration's recommendation was to remove the current mask requirement based on cases dropping significantly in the District, region and state, staff support via survey and PPC feedback and new quarantine rules and new options available soon. He added that Mr. Ney had been notified of a lawsuit to be fined against the District.

Mr. Person stated that he was in favor of the ACHI Model a few weeks ago but has since been contacted by parents and teachers not in favor of continuing to wear masks. He was also taking into consideration the Administration's recommendation to remove the mask mandate and numbers were trending down. He added that he does believe masks work but does not like making the decision for parents and students as a school board member.

Mr. Blaylock asked Mr. Ney to report on the Bentonville School District's existing lawsuit. Mr. Ney updated the Board on the Bentonville Judge's ruling. Mr. Ney recommended that board members not be influenced by Bentonville or Lonoke's rulings. He advised board members to make their decision based on what was in the best interest for Fort Smith Public School students.

Ms. Richardson was in favor of using the ACHI model. Ms. Blackwell stated she would not be able to support mask removal but would support the phasing plan.

Ms. Keaton-Martin stated that she had mixed emotions regarding voting for continuing to wear the masks but would like to extend another 30 days.

After discussion, Mr. Person made a motion, seconded by Mr. Eckelhof, to approve the Administration's recommendation to remove the current mask requirement. The vote passed 4/3 with Ms. Richardson, Ms. Keaton-Martin and Ms. Blackwell opposing.

BOARD MEMBERS FORUM

Ms. Richardson mentioned a comment made at a previous meeting about one of the District schools. Ms. Richardson reminded board members to be kind when mentioning specific schools.

ADJOURN

There was no further business and this meeting was adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

Susan McFerran, President

Dee Blackwell, Secretary