

Board of Education

Minutes of The Board of Education

A Called School Board Meeting of the Board of Education of Fort Smith Public Schools was held Monday, May 9, 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. McFerran, president, called the meeting to order. Other board members present were: Ms. Talicia Richardson, Mr. Dalton Person, Ms. Dee Blackwell, Mr. Matt Blaylock, Mr. Troy Eckelhoff and Ms. Yvonne Keaton-Martin. District administrators present included: Dr. Terry Morawski, 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; 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; Ms. Nadine Brooks, Office Manager to the Superintendent.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Morawski reported that the Board Policy Committee met regarding policy 3.3.1; the anti-nepotism policy. There was no recommendation to amend the current policy.

In the future, the ethics disclosure report will be included under the Superintendent's report on the agenda. This is a routine item that is not required to be in the Board agenda but for the interest of transparency it will be going forward.

Dr. Morawski provided an update of upcoming dates for the month of May:

Thursday, May 12 Retirement and Reception Picnic, high schools graduations for Northside on May 19 and Southside on May 20, May 23 regular Board meeting, Adult Education Graduation on May 24. Also, May 24 a Kindergarten registration event at Parrot Island from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. Thanks to Dr. Bone and her team for developing this first time event.

Dr. Morawski shared several events that happened on Friday, May 6th: high school students that have accepted internships, apprenticeships, and full time positions with local employers were celebrated at the Chamber of Commerce annual signing day. Howard Elementary hosted an event honoring the life of Mrs. Mamie Mame Stuart Josenberger, recognizing a national votes for women historic marker that will be placed nearby. OG&E awarded Northside student Zaq Qureshi a \$60,000 scholarship to the University of Arkansas. The UofA was also present and awarded Zaq an additional \$20,000 scholarship. Heather Brown, the NHS counselor who

helped Zaq with his nomination was also present. As well as Aimee Brinkley, FSPS Teacher of the Year. Administrators attended a presentation by the Southside DECA students. They shared their vision for a student ran coffee bar.

On Monday, May 9, officials from AAEA was present to congratulate Dr. Keri Rathbun as the Secondary Principal of the Year for the state.

CITIZENS PARTICIPATION

Mr. Christopher Rink spoke regarding teachers' salaries and District spending.
Ms. Heather Aguilar spoke regarding salary schedules.

CONSIDER APPROVING PROPOSED 2022-2023 CERTIFIED SALARY SCHEDULES

Mr. Warren reported that the board was presented with a restructure or market correction to certified salary schedules on April 18, 2022. From that meeting, the board found some strengths but also weaknesses in that proposal. Mr. Warren shared a revised proposal to the certified salary schedules. The structure remains the same. However, the change is due to the growth of the student population for the three quarters of FY22. This will allow additional available revenue of \$500,000 for next year. This available revenue will allow an addition of a step increase to certified and classified employees. For certified staff, this will allow a step 22 that has \$675 added. Dr. Chris Davis met with PPC. He believed the PPC decided not to vote again since they had already voted on the existing proposal and the new proposal being an improvement.

Mr. Person asked if \$4.5 million in increase was for certified pay. Mr. Warren confirmed that was correct. Mr. Warren stated upon his research he does not find an increase in the base salary in a 20 year history and that this could be the largest increase in dollar amount to certified salary schedules. Further, there has not been a step increase in the same timeframe.

The \$1,500 ESSER money is not included in the \$4.5 million salary increase. The 4.5 million was utilized only to restrict the certified salary schedule.

The new proposal will require approximately \$5.57 million of federal and operating funds for next year.

Mr. Eckelhoff asked if this proposal is not really a raise but more of a restructuring of certified salary schedule. Dr. Morawski stated it is more of a market adjustment to be more competitive and even out the pay structure top to bottom. Mr. Warren added there is an element of an increase in pay or raise associated to every employee on this salary schedule but it is more of a market correction because of the proportion of what is going on to each step.

Ms. Blackwell asked if the adjustments are applied to Step 22 and beyond. Mr. Warren confirmed that was correct. An educator that has experience beyond 22 years is included in this same step. Mr. Warren stated that as a state requirement each District is required to pay a portion of employee health insurance. In the FY22 school year, each District is required to pay

\$168.52. Fort Smith schools pays \$250.00 per month. The next state requirement will be \$300.00 per month.

Ms. Blackwell asked how FSPS District compared to other districts structure. Mr. Warren stated that some districts salary increases are determined by percentages instead of fixed amounts. Their salary structure is more similar to the proposed salary structure. Ms. Blackwell then asked Mr. Warren to explain in simplest terms, why now for this change and why would it be a bad idea to graduate this into steps over time?

Mr. Warren surmised that the inability to add money to the salary schedule base for the last two years, combined with strong growth in assessment, foundation funding rates and enrollment for next year created a unique opportunity to cover the significant costs of the restructure. Without this combination, there is no way to graduate the restructure without negatively impact some group of employees.

Ms. Richardson stated Fort Smith is ranked 49 out of 261 Districts in regard to salaries. What are the plans for the future to not stop here? What is the impact of the number of retirees that we have with new teachers coming in? Mr. Warren stated that we have not seen an increase in retirees and new hires than what we have historically seen. These movements are already factored in. Ms. Richardson stated that going forward there needs to be a plan to streamline operations to free up funds.

Dr. Morawski stated that future goals include a new compensation strategy that will be part of the strategic plan. Dr. Morawski was asked by the PPC what is next after this. He would be interested to look at adding additional steps, adding to the base which adds to the entire schedule and helps us to be competitive.

Mr. Persons noted school rankings. Fort Smith is currently 5th in the state as far as enrollment. The District ranks 10th in the state for average teacher pay. For step 21 the ranking was 6th but for new teachers Step 1 the District ranked 49th. How did the District get to 49th in state for new teacher pay? Mr. Warren's research showed that the type of system that has in place 20 years ago is a factor contributing to this.

With no further discussion, Ms. Blackwell made a motion, seconded by Ms. McFerran, to approve the proposed 2022/23 certified salary schedules as presented. The vote passed 5/2 with Mr. Blaylock and Mr. Eckelhoff opposing.

CONSIDER APPROVING PROPOSED 2022-2023 CLASSIFIED SALARY SCHEDULES

At 6:42 p.m., Mr. Person recused himself from this agenda item. Mr. Person has a family member employed by the District.

Mr. Warren reported that the classified salary schedules have an additional step 22 added as well.

Ms. Blackwell asked if this new schedule is for all classified employees with an additional step. Mr. Warren confirmed that all classified employees will receive another step regardless of years under the new salary schedule changes.

Mr. Warren targeted certain employees to get them to \$15/hr. These employees were child nutrition, bus aids, and maintenance and utility workers. In future years, look at an equitable approach to look at both schedules and all bases are increased by same percentage and/or dollar amount. Increase bases for \$15 restructuring to steps 12 - 22.

With no further discussion, Ms. Keaton-Martin made a motion, seconded by Susan McFerran, to approve the proposed 2022/23 classified salary schedules as presented. The vote passed 5/1 with Mr. Eckhelhoff opposing.

Note: Mr. Dalton returned to the meeting at 6:48 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS FORUM

Ms. Blackwell commented that these decisions are not easy but what the Board is called upon to make. This opportunity allows us to move forward to add steps and equitable raises. She stated that her hope is to show the teachers their value as they move forward.

Ms. Blackwell asked Dr. Morawski to bring the rental procedure polity to the next Board meeting.

Ms. McFerran commented that early voting started on May 9th and will run through the 24th.

Mr. Person stated that he would be interested in bringing in a consultant to help look for opportunities and areas where the Board could be more efficient with District money.

Ms. Richardson stated she would be interested in involving classroom teachers and administrative staff to find those efficiencies. She appreciated the comments and feedback that was given in the survey.

Mr. Eckelhoff challenged all to look at ways to save money in places that might not have been looked at in the past 20 to 30 years.

ADJOURN

There was no further business and the meeting was adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

Susan McFerran, President

Dee Blackwell, Secretary