

**Minutes  
State Board of Education  
Thursday, March 12, 2020**

The Arkansas State Board of Education (State Board) met Thursday, March 12, 2020, in the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (Division) Auditorium. Chair Ms. Diane Zook called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m. Ms. Zook led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Ms. Diane Zook, Chair; Charisse Dean, Vice Chair, Dr. Sarah Moore; Mr. Brett Williamson (on phone); Ms. Kathy McFetridge (on phone) Dr. Fitz Hill; Ms. Ouida Newton; Ms. Susan Chambers; Ms. Stacey McAdoo, 2019 Arkansas Teacher of the Year; and Mr. Johnny Key, Secretary

**Changes to the Agenda**

There were no changes.

**Consent Agenda**

Ms. Chambers moved, seconded by Dr. Hill, to approve the consent agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

1. Minutes
2. Newly Employed, Promotions and Separations
3. Consideration of Report on Waivers to School Districts for Teachers Teaching Out of Area for Longer than Thirty (30) Days, Ark. Code Ann § 6-17-309
4. Consideration of the Recommendation of the Professional Licensure Standards Board for Case # 19-132 Troy Gittings
5. Consideration of the Recommendation of the Professional Licensure Standards Board for Case # 19-174 Tina McGrew
6. Consideration of the Recommendation of the Professional Licensure Standards Board for Case # 20-008 Judith Rook
7. Consideration of the Recommendation of the Professional Licensure Standards Board for Case #20-010 Brandi Moody
8. Consideration of the Recommendation of the Professional Licensure Standards Board for Case #20-046 Christine Stracener
9. 2020 Open-Enrollment Charter School Application
10. 2020 District Conversion Charter School Application
11. Junction City School District Act 1240 Annual Progress Report
12. Nemo Vista School District Act 1240 Annual Progress Report
13. Piggott School District Act 1240 Annual Progress Report
14. Salem School District Act 1240 Annual Progress Report
15. Shirley School District Act 1240 Annual Progress Report
16. Star City School District Act 1240 Annual Progress Report
17. Trumann School District Act 1240 Annual Progress Report
18. Vilonia School District Act 1240 Annual Progress Report
19. West Side Greers Ferry School District Act 1240 Annual Progress Report
20. Westside Consolidated School District Act 1240 Annual Progress Report
21. White County Central School District Act 1240 Annual Progress Report
22. Wonderview School District Act 1240 Annual Progress Report
23. Woodlawn School District Act 1240 Annual Progress Report

## **Action Agenda A**

### **A-1 Consideration of Request for Approval of Nominated Members for the Professional Licensure Standards Board to Replace Members Whose Terms are Vacant or Expiring June 30, 2020.**

Ms. Karli Saracini, assistant commissioner for Educator Effectiveness, discussed this agenda item.

Ms. Newton asked for more information regarding training provided to new PLSB members. Ms. Saracini stated that a possible joint training with State Board members is being considered.

Ms. Newton moved, seconded by Ms. Chambers, to approve the item. The motion passed unanimously.

### **A-2 Consideration of Suspension of Teaching License for Nonpayment of Fines – LA Case No. 20-02**

Jennifer Link, with ADE Licensure, provided information about this agenda item.

Dr. Moore moved, seconded by Ms. Dean, to approve the item. The motion carried unanimously.

### **A-3 Petition for Closure of Isolated School -- Harmony Grove School District**

Ms. Newton moved, seconded by Dr. Fitz Hill, to hear public comment on this item. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Lori Freno provided background about this agenda item and provided an overview of board procedures regarding this item.

Dr. Albert Snow, superintendent of the Harmony Grove School District, petitioned the State Board to close the Sparkman K-12 campus at the end of the 2019-2020 school year. Because the Harmony Grove Board of Directors' vote to close the campus was not unanimous, Arkansas law requires a majority vote of the State Board to close the campus.

Several members from the public, as well as state legislators, spoke in opposition of closing the school.

Dr. Moore had several questions for the district. Questions included when the high school switched to virtual classes, how the district provides Career and Technical Education classes, and when extracurricular classes were removed, and transition plan for staff. Dr. Snow and district staff provided answers.

Other members had questions about finances, enrollment, and isolated funding.

Ms. Dean asked a question about transportation and concern of long bus rides for students. She stated some personal challenges of having long bus rides to/from home. She asked if there are

some ways adjustments can be made to the bus ride schedule. She also expressed concern about the bus ride and students who may be vulnerable to bullying by other students.

Dr. Moore had a question of DESE Legal Counsel, Lori Freno, Dr. Moore wanted to know if Harmony Grove participates in school choice. Ms. Freno said students from Harmony Grove can transfer or “choice into” surrounding school districts.

Ms. Newton, asked what decision can the Board make - stay open or not stay open? Mrs. Freno agreed they can either accept or reject the petition.

Dr. Moore had a few more questions for Dr. Snow. She asked how does gaining or losing students affect boundary lines due to transportation. How many students can “choice into the district”? Dr. Snow said about 20 districts. He said school choice in rural areas is due to “people getting mad at the administration.” Dr. Moore asked if there had been any discussion about changes to boundary lines. Dr. Snow said most discussions have been about keeping Sparkman open.

Mr. Jeff Askew, attorney representing some community members answers Dr. Moore’s question about boundary lines.

Ms. McFetridge and Ms. Newton expressed concern about how high school students will be educated. They both mentioned the need for those kids to be given the opportunity to learn and succeed.

Ms. Zook read procedures for public comment, which began at 11:42 a.m.

Ms. Zook asked questions about adequate facilities. Dr. Snow answered that all facilities are warm, safe, and dry.

Then, Ms. Zook asked for a motion.

Ms. Chambers moved, seconded by Ms. Dean, to deny closing the Sparkman Campus. The motion passed by roll call vote for 4 - Yeas and 3 - Nays.

#### **A-4 District Request for an Extension of Waivers Granted to Open-Enrollment Charter Schools: Western Yell County School District**

Kelley McLaughlin, Systems and Support - Charter School Unit. Ms. McLaughlin stated the districts and charters have made extension requests, and they have 20 minutes to explain their request - for and against. The charter and/or district is asking for 2 year waivers.

Mr. Herschel Cleveland, Western Yell County Superintendent, made the request for the waiver due to having less than 350 students. He asked to discuss three areas: financial viability, ability to get good education in Western Yell County, and transportation. He said he needed to discuss “how we got there.” Mr. Cleveland said the school board recently voted to go to a 4-day school week. He said ESSA school grades were C grade for the HS and D grade for the elementary.

He stated upon being granted a waiver request to be superintendent, Mr. Cleveland said he made an appointment with each teacher and principal to figure out what is needed in the classroom. He said the district has 47 dyslexia students and grade K-2 teachers have received training in literacy programs. Mr. Cleveland said he has also scheduled professional

development. He stated there will be a need to do away with departmentalization of grades 3-6 due to dwindling class size.

Due to funding, he said it is very important to stop losing students. He said the reasons for parents leaving the district have differed. He went on to discuss the district's finances (end of July 2019) \$156,000 had to be transferred to the operating fund. The district submitted its budget with a \$69,000 deficit. He said they will have to make cuts in staff this year. He said they are trying to make an effort in district finances. They have an 8 man football team and use the bus Wi-Fi for students to do homework. He said the 4-day school week will use Fridays as an enrichment time. He stated he would like to get a piano playing teacher and someone who wants to teach other classes on Friday.

Ms. Zook stated there was a one year waiver for superintendent requirements, but there was no effort to look for a superintendent during that time. The school board member, Mr. Fink, said Mr. Cleveland has support from both the community and board.

Ms. Newton asked Mr. Fink, why the school board did not look for a superintendent, and if the vote not to look was a unanimous decision by the school board? Mr. Fink said the vote was (4 Yes; 1-Against). Ms. Newton wanted to know what Mr. Cleveland had done to improve his skills as a superintendent. Mr. Cleveland said he has received training from AAEE and superintendent training from Co-ops and getting input from consultants.

Ms. Newton said the district has not attempted to find another superintendent. Dr. Moore said school board voted 4 to 1 to approve the contract for Mr. Cleveland. Ms. Newton said Mr. Cleveland doesn't have credentials or training to be superintendent. Mr. Cleveland said there are staffers who are training to be administrative personnel. He said it is difficult to get someone to stay in the position. He said he wants to hire from within, if at all possible, and he would like to mentor a possible internal candidate.

Ms. Dean asked how long it will take for the person interested in the job to be ready to take the job. Mr. Cleveland said he is taking some classes. Ms. Dean also asked how long will it take for the person to be certified? Mr. Cleveland said the candidate will have his administrative credentials by next year.

Ms. Newton asked to modify the district's petition. She said instead of extending the 1240 waiver for two years. She asked for the waiver to only be extended for one year to give time for the internal candidate who is working on their superintendent credentials time to finish the program.

Ms. Zook asked Mr. Cleveland if he accepted the modified petition of his 1240 waiver and he agreed.

Ms. Dean moved, seconded by Ms. McFetridge to extend the 1240 waiver for one year instead of two years. The motion passed unanimously.

## **A-5 Consideration of Charter Authorizing Panel Decisions**

### **a. Consideration of Charter Authorizing Panel Decision on District Conversion Charter Amendment: Hot Springs Junior Academy**

Ms. McLaughlin stated the Hot Springs Junior Academy appeared before the Charter Authorizing Panel on February 18, 2020 to amend their charter. The Charter Authorizing Panel unanimously approved the request. According to Ms. McLaughlin, there has been no review requested of the Charter Authorizing Panel's decision. The superintendent was on the line to answer any questions. There were no questions asked by the Board members.

Ms. Zook asked for a motion.

Dr. Moore moved, seconded by Ms. Newton, not to review. The motion passed unanimously.

**b. Consideration of Charter Authorizing Panel Decision on District Conversion Charter Amendment: Hot Springs World Class High School**

Ms. McLaughlin stated the Hot Springs World Class High School appeared before the Charter Authorizing Panel on February 18, 2020 to amend their charter. The Charter Authorizing Panel unanimously approved the request. According to Ms. McLaughlin, there has been no review requested of the Charter Authorizing Panel's decision. The superintendent was on the line to answer any questions. There were no questions asked by the Board members.

Ms. Zook asked for a motion.

Ms. Newton moved, seconded by Ms. Dean, not to review. The motion passed unanimously.

**A-6 Consideration of a One-Year Standards for Accreditation Waiver Request: Izard County Consolidated School District**

Deb Coffman, Assistant Commissioner, Public School Accountability. She said the district is requesting a 1-year standards waiver, because they have an extra student in their kindergarten class and need the waiver to get through the end of May.

The superintendent was on the line to answer any questions. There were no questions asked by the Board members.

Ms. Zook asked for a motion.

Ms. Chambers moved, seconded by Ms. Dean, to approve their request for the 1-year standards waiver. The motion was approved unanimously.

**A-7 Consideration of One-Year Standards for Accreditation Waiver Request: Flippin School District**

Deb Coffman, Assistant Commissioner, Public School Accountability. She said the district is requesting a 1-year standards waiver from the 178 days of student interaction time.

The superintendent was present to answer questions. There were no questions asked. Ms. Zook asked for a motion.

Ms. Dean moved, seconded by Ms. Chambers, to approve their request for the 1-year standards waiver. The motion was approved unanimously.

#### **A-8 Review of Southeast Arkansas Preparatory High School**

Deb Coffman, Assistant Commissioner, Public School Accountability. She stated at the January 24, 2020 State Board meeting, the Southeast Arkansas Preparatory High School was allowed to remain open. Based on the State Board's decision, the school agreed to address a number of issues.

The school has returned to update the State Board on the progress they have made. According to school personnel there have been immediate improvements in the areas of: finance, nutrition, student success, and budgetary adjustments.

School personnel noted that all seniors now have a path to graduation. Upon a closer examination of school finances, their projected year-end balance will be approximately \$70,000. Representatives from the Arkansas Public School Resource Center (APSRC) were on hand to present information about Southeast Arkansas Preparatory High School finances, academics, Dyslexia support, Special Education resources, and other community involvement.

The staff attorney for APSRC also discussed the transition plan to merge Southeast Preparatory High School with Friendship Aspire. In addition, Southeast Arkansas Preparatory High School also requested State Board approval for three waivers.

There were also comments given in support from school stakeholders and legislators Representatives Flowers and Ferguson in support of the school.

The APSRC mentioned the plan to not "backfill" grades 9-12. Mr. Scott Smith, Director, APSRC, explained students in high school will be given a path toward graduation, but won't backfill those grades and will only allow students who are currently enrolled in elementary and middle school to begin attending those grades moving forward.

Dr. Moore had questions about new facilities. Mr. Harris stated that they will use existing facilities.

Mary Claire Hyatt, Staff Attorney, DESE, also had additional concerns about the desegregation report and the enrollment cap. She suggested those items be tabled until sufficient notice has been given to the Pine Bluff School District.

Ms. Zook asked additional questions about Dyslexia screening, SPED resources, literacy curriculum, and food service availability. Those questions were answered by Mr. Phong Tran, Superintendent of Friendship Aspire.

There were three requests that required action. Ms. Zook asked DESE staff attorney, Ms. Hyatt to outline all three motions. Ms. Hyatt stated the three motions were as follows: 1) vote to approve transfer to Friendship Education Foundation, effective as of July 1st; 2) vote to approve name change (Southeast Pine Bluff) and three waivers - I) teacher fair dismissal, II) public school employee fair hearing act, and 120 clock hours provision; 3) vote on how to handle

increase in enrollment cap of Southeast Preparatory High School and Friendship Aspire - Ms. Hyatt recommended handling all of three of these items in separate motions.

The outcome of each motion is as follows:

1) Vote to approve transfer to Friendship Education Foundation, effective as of July 1st - *moved by Ms. Dean and seconded by Ms. Chambers. Motion approved unanimously.*

2) Vote to approve name change and three waivers - *moved by Ms. Dean and seconded by Ms. Chambers. Motion Approved unanimously.*

3) Motion to table grade additions and enrollment cap until April State Board meeting - *moved by Ms. Newton and seconded by Ms. Chambers. Motion approved unanimously.*

At the end of Action Agenda A, Ms. Zook recessed the meeting at 3:50 pm. It resumed to take up Action Agenda B at 4:00 pm.

### **Action Agenda B**

#### **B-1 Consideration of Legislative Report: Earle School District**

Dr. Mike Hernandez, State Superintendent, Office of Coordinated Support and Service. He presented information on the status of the Earle School District. Ms. Tish Knowles, Earle Superintendent also provided information on the district's progress.

Ms. Zook asked for a motion.

Ms. Chambers moved, seconded by Ms. Dean, to accept the Earle School District Legislative Report. The motion was passed unanimously.

#### **B-2 Consideration of Legislative Report: Lee County School District**

Dr. Mike Hernandez, State Superintendent, Office of Coordinated Support and Service. He presented information on the status of the Lee County School District.

Ms. Zook asked for a motion.

Ms. Dean moved, seconded by Ms. Chambers, to accept the Lee County School District Legislative Report. The motion was passed unanimously.

#### **B-3 Consideration of Legislative Report: Pine Bluff School District**

Due to COVID-19 outbreak, the district decided not to present. Ms. Zook asked for a motion to postpone reporting until the April State Board meeting.

Ms. Newton moved, seconded by Ms. Chambers, to postpone presentations until April State Board meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **B-4 Consideration of Legislative Report: Dollarway School District**

Due to COVID-19 outbreak, the district decided not to present. Ms. Zook asked for a motion to postpone reporting until the April State Board meeting.

Ms. Newton moved, seconded by Ms. Chambers, to postpone presentations until April State Board meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **B-5 Consideration of Legislative Report: Little Rock School District**

Due to COVID-19 outbreak, the district decided not to present. Ms. Zook asked for a motion to postpone reporting until the April State Board meeting.

Ms. Newton moved, seconded by Ms. Chambers, to postpone presentations until April State Board meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **New Business**

Ms. Zook asked if there is any new business. There was no new business.

#### **Public Comments**

There were no public comments.

#### **Adjournment**

Ms. Zook asked for a motion to adjourn. Ms. Dean moved, seconded by Ms. Newton, to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 4:54 p.m.

**X**

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Ms. Diane Zook  
Chair

**X**

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Mr. Johnny Key  
Secretary Of Education