

MUSCOGEE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
COLUMBUS, GEORGIA

REGULAR BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2005, 6:30 P.M.
BRADLEY LIBRARY CONFERENCE ROOM

MINUTES

The regular meeting of the Board of Education of the Muscogee County School District was held on Monday, September 19, 2005, 6:30 p.m. in the conference room at the former Bradley Library.

The following Board members were present: Mary Sue Polleys, Chairman, James Walker, Vice Chairman, Naomi Buckner, Pat Hugley Green, Joseph Roberson, Philip T. Schley, Brenda. P. Storey, John Wells, and Fife M. Whiteside.

Others present: John A. Phillips, Jr., Superintendent of Education, Greg S. Ellington, Legal Counsel, Robin Pennock, Deputy Superintendent, Del Parker, CFO, Eddie Obleton, Chief Student Services Officer, Billy Kendall, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent, Myles Caggins, Chief Operations & Facilities Officer, Peggy Connell, Chief Academic Officer and representatives from the media.

Dr. Polleys called the meeting to order with an invocation. The pledge to the flag was led by students from River Road Elementary School and the Character Education word courtesy.

Dr. Polleys recognized the first visit to a Board meeting of Mrs. Green's two-month old son Kevin Michael Green who was at the Board table.

Dr. Polleys recognized visitors in the audience; Mr. and Mrs. Halouska representing the League of Women Voters and Friends of the Libraries; Mr. Lincoln representing the Gifted Education Program at St. Elmo, Mr. Ditchfield, representing the South Columbus Concerned Citizens, the Shaw High School Cadets, and Judge Kenneth Followill, Chief Judge of Muscogee County Superior Court.

Mr. Obleton recognized Hardaway High School for All-State Cheerleader award; and Dr. Robert Smith for the Georgia Association of School Psychologists Lifetime Achievement award.

Dr. Polleys called on The Honorable Judge Kenneth B. Followill who serves on the Attendance Protocol Committee presented a Resolution to the Board pertaining to a law signed by the Governor addressing the problems of unsatisfactory school attendance in Georgia. Upon motion of Mr. Wells, seconded by Ms. Buckner, the Board unanimously approved the acceptance of the resolution. (Appendix A)

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Upon motion of Mr. Walker, seconded by Ms. Buckner, the Board unanimously approved official actions taken at the August 15, 2005 board meeting.

Upon motion of Mr. Wells, seconded by Mr. Roberson, the Board unanimously approved the appointment of Marty Richburg to the position of Assistant Principal at Hardaway High School.

Upon motion of Mr. Walker, seconded by Mrs. Storey, the Board unanimously approved the appointment of Ms. Ramona Vinnie to the position of Assistant Principal at Rothschild Middle School.

Upon motion of Mr. Wells, seconded by Ms. Buckner, the Board unanimously approved the appointment of Ms. Shiann Williamson to the position of Assistant Principal at Waddell Elementary School.

Mrs. Storey made as one motion, seconded by Dr. Schley, to approve the appointment of Laurie Stein to the position of Instructional Specialist in the Special Education Department. Mr. Walker commented, "I am not going to vote for this recommendation because, I was not satisfied with the information I received at the work session about the process of arriving at this candidate and I'll have the same comments about the other two. I'm not trying to deny these people a promotion. I certainly want them to get the promotion but, I want this delayed so that we can find out what the real problem is with what happened in the interview process because, I didn't appreciate the answer that we didn't get all the folks that we were looking for to apply for the job. I'm going to make a motion to delay this process." Mr. Walker made a motion to amend the motion to delay any action on items D, E, and F pertaining to appointments in the Special Education Department, seconded by Mr. Whiteside. Dr. Polleys asked for any discussion on the motion. Dr. Phillips commented, "We think that we had a good process. We had Mr. Obleton, Mr. Cooper to serve on the committee, we had good applicants for the job, we had a thorough interview and selection process as we always do and these are the people that were selected." Mr. Wells asked, "Since I was not here and privy to this discussion. Is there someone here that can answer Mr. Walkers' questions so that we won't have to delay." Ms. Buckner asked, "How many original positions were to be hired with this position. I'm a little concerned about the process for these positions because, we have been trying to hire people for these positions for several months now and I think we've had several applications. I'm not sure why all over Columbus, Georgia if we're trying to go outside of the system to get applications. Is there anyone not in Columbus good enough or not qualified for these positions.

Several people in my district have called me about these positions too and I'm not sure, particularly the instructional specialist position. Can anyone answer this?" Mr. Cooper commented, "There were two instructional specialist positions that were posted. The interview committee was Mr. Obleton, Peggy West, Harriett Steed, and Margaret Ingersoll. In the process, I believe we considered 10 or 11 people. The decision was to recommend the person before us this evening with the delay on the other position. The concern was that out of the individuals interviewed there was something still lacking to fill that particular position." Mr. Obleton commented, "After three long days, past 7:30 p.m. one day, interviewing all the applicants before us. The procedure went in that all were given the same opportunity to interview for positions. Some interviewed for both positions. The persons chosen that are on the agenda today were those who stood out that the committee felt would be good in the department." Mr. Walker, commented, "Hearing this today, I don't understand why the Board was told that we don't have the persons that we wanted to apply to apply. I may not be quoting exactly. I didn't appreciate that statement. It appears that we are trying to groom somebody or waiting for somebody to come that we want to give a job to." Mrs. Storey commented, "At the committee meeting the other night when that was said, I asked the question, did you feel that all the applicants were qualified to meet the needs that you had laid out for the job. The answer I got, was that sometimes we may have people apply for a position, but that doesn't mean that they're the person we are looking for. We need to go back and let the candidates know what they may need to do additional to bring themselves up to what they need for the position. They need to know what they need to work on. So, if we have candidates that have applied and do not meet the requirements then we need to offer our employees the opportunity to grow. You cannot fix something unless you are told how." Mr. Roberson commented, "Rather than allowing the Board to be embroiled in controversy or even hiring persons and questioning that. I would urge delay and allow us to have further dialog then come back as a cohesive team." Dr. Schley commented, "I'm going to vote to delay not because of the candidates and I am satisfied that the Administration has done what they should do. I'm voting for the delay mainly because of Mr. Walkers' concern and I want him to be satisfied before we decide to do something." The vote to delay action on the (3) appointments at an October 3, 2005 called board meeting was (8) affirming and (1) opposing (Dr. Polleys).

Upon motion of Mr. Roberson, seconded by Mr. Whiteside, the Board unanimously approved a revision to policy BBC Board Committees as it relates to re-instituting the committee system.

Upon motion of Mr. Whiteside, seconded by Mr. Roberson, the Board unanimously approved a revision to policy BCAC Special Board meetings. Dr. Phillips noted that this deals specifically with the issue of providing an agenda to the Board two days prior to the date of the meeting and at the request of five (5) Board members a called meeting shall be televised.

Upon motion of Mr. Wells, seconded by Mr. Walker, the Board unanimously approved the revision to policy GCA Classified Personnel Compensation Guides and Contracts in order to meet compliance with State Law.

Mr. Wells made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Storey, to approve the Adams Group of Atlanta to perform an independent, vendor-neutral audit of the Plant Services Department to determine progress toward recognized industry benchmarks. Mrs. Green commented, "I would like to amend the motion for us not to hire an external vendor but to have an internal audit first. I believe that our CEO and we have professionals here who are quite capable of identifying their needs in their departments articulating those needs and creating a plan to execute those needs. We need to first start there to do that internally. If we have not met the needs or whatever requests these department heads have made or if they haven't made any, we need to ask. For that to be done, to do our own internal audit before we go and pay a vendor. If there are any monetary resources, I think those resources should be put back in the classroom, should be put back to professional development and not pay a vendor to do something where we already have these professionals already in place to manage our school system." Dr. Polleys called for a second to the amended motion. Mr. Roberson seconded Mrs. Green's motion. Dr. Polleys called for discussion. Ms. Buckner asked, "Why did we go with an outside auditor?" Dr. Phillips commented, "It is not unusual to call in an external group who has the expertise in working in this area who does audits throughout the country, who can bring the experience. It's not uncommon to have someone come in who can look at it in an objective perspective, knows about best practices, knows about the industry benchmarks. This is not a problem that has developed overnight. This is a problem that has been inherent in the school district for years. We have tried to deal with it internally, we have tried to look at ways to improve and there have been areas of improvement. But, it does appear that there is a good bit of dissatisfaction by the customers that is building principals. In terms of the services provided, about the expertise that is there, the competency that is there, the level of skills that are being provided, the expeditious way in which services are being provided, the customer satisfactory perspective of how people are being treated. I see the concerns, I want to bring help, I want to help identify those areas by bringing in an expert. These just didn't happen over night. This is not pointing a finger at any particular person. It has been a problem for a number of years. We need to bring someone in to help us and show us how to provide and implement strategies for change and accountability measures in terms of what is acceptable in the industry. We just need help, frankly. We don't have all the expertise in the school district. We end up saving money for the most part when we bring in outside people who have the expertise."

Mr. Whiteside commented, “It’s been about two years ago now when lighting struck the hot water heater at Clubview, they quit having hot water and I did the background work on this and they turned in a prompt work order on this. I asked for a copy of the work order so as not to get anybody in trouble, it wasn’t volunteered, I got it because I asked for it. What happened after that immediately was nothing. The work order went unsatisfied for almost 8 weeks. I tried to figure out how that happened and the best I can tell is a dispute erupted because somebody thought that the lighting strike should have been covered by the school district insurance policy but somebody else didn’t think so rather than for that to brought to conclusion, children at Clubview ate off of dirty plates, washed with cold water for 8 weeks, that’s not acceptable. I want to promptly say that it’s no reflection on anybody who works in Plant Services. I have said this before Plant Services has gotten better in demonstrable ways over the last 2 years. I can give book and page examples of that. The problem is that’s not good enough. Dr. Phillips and I have talked about this on a number of occasions and frankly, I would like for us to have been where we are now a year and a half or two years ago. I’ve heard Mrs. Green’s concern and they’re valid too. That is, people who work in Plant Services ought to have a shot at making their case for what they think should be done and that should be presented to the Board, that’s reasonable to do. What’s on the table now is an amended motion which will just be that we don’t do anything about bringing in an outside consulting service. We will have a self-criticism done. If that becomes a proposal in that we will allow 60 days for a self examination, I would support that. I think that is fair to Mr. Caggins and the department under him.” Mrs. Storey commented, “I think it’s time to bring someone in to look at this process. I think that what we have is a process that is not working well. Often times, I believe with the dedication that is out at Plant Services, they know it doesn’t work well. There’s no way they couldn’t know it doesn’t work well. When we did the community groups, Carl Vinson, throughout this community north, south, east, west one of the biggest concerns and one of the biggest complaints was the maintenance and upkeep of the buildings. When we did our workshop one of the (7) concerns was Plant Services and the maintenance and upkeep of the buildings. I think that we couldn’t have the dedicated employees out there that if they knew how to fix it, they would. Dr. Phillips, contrary to some popular opinions at times, he has a full time job. Quite, frankly if you have ever sat up in that area, you have to wonder how he gets it done. I don’t think we can say we need him to do it. We can be at the same road we’re at 60 days from now or we can take the giant leap that we have been talking about since I’ve been on this board. We’re not going to know what we need until we find out and I don’t think we can do that ourselves. I do not believe that we would have the same situation now that we do now. I know of many incidents where work orders are not worked. They are cancelled. That is the honest truth and that’s not right. Our principals should be concerned about the education of their students in that building not whether they have put in 10 work orders and the plumbing still isn’t fixed in the bathroom.

Right now they are chasing work orders. I think if we could get the answers internally we would have had them. We don't have a functional process. We have new buildings that have problems. If we don't have the man power then this audit will tell us." Ms. Buckner commented, "At Kendrick now and I do know that work orders have been turned in for the audio system still does not work properly. I want to know if the Administration is going to call for an audit of the Construction Department." Mr. Roberson asked for clarification on the motion that is on the table. Mr. Wells commented, "It seems simple to me. The Superintendent wants to deliver quality services to the people that we represent. He is asking for help from an outside auditor to come in and get this done. Everybody will get their opportunity at the table to tell the auditor what their doing and why it's being done. The consultant will bring it back to the Superintendent who may or may not make a recommendation from the auditor. In order for him to do his job since we have badgered him about since he has come here and that is poor service. We can keep delaying it but I'm going to vote to help the Superintendent get the help that he needs so that we can deliver sufficient services to the people that we represent in this school district." Dr. Schley asked what the cost is. Dr. Phillips said, "It is \$27,000.00."

Dr. Polleys called for a vote on the amended motion to have an internal audit first. The vote was (4) affirming, (Walker, Buckner, Green, Roberson) and (5) opposing, (Wells, Polleys, Storey, Whiteside, Schley). Dr. Polleys called the vote on the main motion. The vote on the main motion was (5) affirming, (Wells, Polleys, Storey, Whiteside, Schley) and (4) opposing, (Walker, Roberson, Green, Buckner). The audit by the Adams Group of Atlanta to perform an independent vendor-neutral audit of the Plant Services Department was approved by this majority vote.

Upon motion of Ms. Buckner, seconded by Mr. Walker, the Board unanimously approved the resolution that opposes the idea from the State of Georgia about imposing the 3% sales tax for alternate funding for public education. (Appendix B)

Upon motion of Mr. Wells, seconded by Ms. Buckner, the Board unanimously approved financial statements for one month ending July 31, 2005.

Upon motion of Ms. Buckner, seconded by Mr. Roberson, the Board unanimously approved a training workshop for teachers offered by Ruby Payne at a cost of \$10,000.00.

Upon motion of Mr. Walker, seconded by Mr. Wells, the Board approved a purchase order to ALC Controls, Inc., sole source contractor, in the amount of \$47,766.00 to furnish and install necessary ALC Controls at Carver High School. The vote was (7) affirming and (2) opposing, (Whiteside, Storey). (Appendix C – Sole Source Letter from Law Firm.)

Upon motion of Mr. Wells, seconded by Mr. Walker, the Board unanimously approved (6) purchase orders to selected vendors for annual payments of maintenance, support, and licensing for various hardware and software within the school district.

Upon motion of Mrs. Storey, seconded by Mr. Walker, the Board unanimously approved the extension to use electronic sealed bidding to buy goods and services.

Upon motion of Mr. Wells, seconded by Dr. Schley, the Board unanimously approved the assignment of 2WR/Andras Architects to prepare plans and specifications for the construction of the new Rigdon Road Elementary School.

Upon motion of Dr. Schley, seconded by Mrs. Storey, the Board approved the assignment of Kersey and Luttrell Architects to prepare plans and specifications for the re-roofing of the former Bradley Library. The vote was (5) affirming and (4) opposing, (Walker, Buckner, Green, Roberson).

Mr. Wells made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Storey, to approve new policy EBL – Environmental Programs (Tree Preservation). Mr. Wells commented, “This is just economically feasible.” Mrs. Storey commented, “I spent some time and found out that the part that I asked be omitted should be included. I would like to put this back instead of saying, will be conducted by representatives of Trees Columbus, I’d like it to read, may be conducted, because those representatives may not be available and we certainly don’t want the project delayed.” Mrs. Storey made a motion to amend the motion to put back the statement to read ‘may be conducted’. It was seconded by Mr. Whiteside. The vote was (5) affirming and (4) opposing, (Wells, Schley, Roberson, Buckner).

Upon motion of Mrs. Storey, seconded by Mrs. Buckner, the Board unanimously approved as one motion items T and U:

- Change Order No. 4 in the amount of \$9,814.89 for construction at Mathews Elementary.
- Additional funds of \$50,000.00 to be re-directed from SPLOST NPR added to the Mathews Elementary School construction project and revise the budget.

Upon motion of Mr. Walker, seconded by Ms. Buckner, the Board unanimously approved the following consent agenda items:

- Human Resources Report/Professional and Classified. (Appendix D)
- Columbus High School Trip to Fofar Station on Andros Island.
- American Heart Association to use Kinnett Stadium.
- Contract to Penske Truck Leasing for a refrigerated delivery truck, \$20,751.00 in Warehouse.
- Contract to Garick Corporation for Mulch at various schools, \$15,840.00.
- Guidelines for IRS Code Sections 403(b) and 457 providers.
- New budget, GLRS, \$271,340.00, Title VI-B Federal Discretionary funds.
- New budget, GLRS, \$45,000.00, Capacity Improvement Project funds.
- New budget, donation, \$15,000.00, Turner Foundation for Character Education.
- Grant, WIA, Adult Ed., \$62,780.00 from Columbus Consolidated Government.
- Grant, GDOE, Learn & Serve, \$4,000.00 for Carver High classroom teacher.
- Grant, GDOE, Learn & Serve, \$8,159.00 for joint projects at Shaw and Hardaway High Schools.
- Grant, 21st Century, \$1,092,286.00 for after-school tutoring at selected schools.
- Knight Foundation, Marshall Middle Movers Program, \$724.34.
- Financial Assistance, \$1,450.00.
- Audit of Financial Statement of 1997 SPLOST Capital Projects.
- Sales Tax Construction Program Report.
- Report on Transfer from FY03 SPLOST Critical Needs.
- FY97 Sales Tax Construction Program Report.
- Report on Transfers from Capital Projects and Debt to SPLOST Fund to cover scope changes.
- Report of change orders/changes in project contingencies.
- Status report for projects under construction.
- Report on system-wide technology plan.
- Report on forecasted revenue collections.
- Report on transfers from Capital Projects Fund.

Upon motion of Mr. Wells, seconded by Ms. Buckner, the Board unanimously voted to go into executive session for two student discipline appeals, a property and personnel matter.

Upon motion of Mr. Walker, seconded by Mr. Roberson, the Board unanimously voted to come out of executive session.

Upon motion of Mrs. Storey, seconded by Mr. Walker, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn the regular meeting of the Board.

Greg S. Ellington, Legal Counsel