

04 25 2017 Work Session 12 30 PM

NEW BUSINESS

1. [12:30 - 12:45 PM School Board Comments](#)

Minutes:

Mrs. Sellers provided information from the Florida School Boards Association (FSBA) regarding pending legislation. The most prevalent issue is the budget and its anticipated shortfall. The Senate's proposed budget is more favorable to public education but there is a significant rift between the House and Senate proposals. There is also a pending bill that would limit legal fees associated with public records requests.

Mr. Townsend discussed proposed charter school legislation. He commented on a letter from a parent of a Horizons Elementary School student who is frustrated with the rezoning plans. He is not in support of the rezoning and moving students around.

Mr. Wilson discussed similar concerns from his constituents regarding opportunities that will be available to their students. He asked for other alternatives that may be available to the current rezoning proposal.

2. [12:45 - 1:15 PM McLaughlin Discussion](#)

Minutes:

Melissa Brady, Director of Charter Schools, shared the results of the McLaughlin Middle School questions submitted by School Board Members.

Mr. Harris commented this discussion seems premature when school grades have not been released yet; he inquired about McLaughlin's current grade. Mrs. Brady commented the grade is an "F". Mr. Harris asked if the school is on the state's list to be taken over next school year. Superintendent Byrd commented they are not and school grades may be released at the end of June or July. Mr. Harris stated that without this information there is no need for this discussion.

Mrs. Cunningham explained she was informed by the Lake Wales Charter Board of Directors about nine months ago of their intent to open a second middle school. They have a potential donation of \$1 million on July 1st and other donors have pledged as much as \$5 million to support the building of BOK Academy North. She commented that allowing McLaughlin to remain open would mean Lake Wales would have three competing middle schools and, as it is now, it has only divided the community. She commented this is an opportunity to move this school, which is struggling with their academic performance, to the Lake Wales Charter System. The proposal is for the coming school year to be a transition year. She commented the District has not been able to turn McLaughlin around and this would bring all students together in the Lake Wales community.

Mrs. Fields stated she does not support this proposal. She feels information should be received from the stakeholders, i.e. teachers and parents. Until then, she is not willing to relinquish the responsibility for the school. She commented that the school was progressing in a positive direction when the previous principal was transferred.

Mrs. Sellers stated she wants to do what is best for the students. She commented everyone must work together to create a seamless environment and not divide the town. BOK Academy currently does not accept all students from the community. Level 1 and 2 students are turned away and one third of the high school students don't attend Lake Wales High School. She feels the school does not want to become a charter. She doesn't see any proof that the charter school system can provide better services than our public schools.

Mr. Wilson discussed the importance of motivating the communities to engage in the school district and commented no other community has done so as much as Lake Wales. He sees this as an opportunity for the community to become involved and commented a cap should be placed on the number of students that can be accepted from outside of Lake Wales. He stated the evidence shows parents place more importance on the safety of their children in the classroom than on the quality of their education. This is a discipline issue and a classroom disruption issue which sometimes results in students being sent to opportunity schools. He commented that opportunity schools do not provide them with the academic services they need. The key is to provide services at the opportunity schools when the students are sent there. The Lake Wales Charter Schools have discussed providing resources for the students that need help. He suggested a meeting with the Superintendent and her leadership staff, leadership from Lake Wales Charter Schools, someone from Mr. Gibson's office, School Board Members, and McLaughlin's principal Eileen Killebrew.

Ms. Reynolds discussed the current charter application process, specifically the Family Educational Rights and Protection Act (FERPA) letter that has been used in the past to access Florida Standards Assessment (FSA) scores or is it new this year. Mrs. Brady commented it is a new FERPA form. Ms. Reynolds asked if that information had been given out in the past. Mrs. Brady reported that the school had received the information in the past but they are unsure who provided it. Last year was the first time her office was called for the information. That's when the FERMA form came into the process. Ms. Reynolds asked why the school would request this information if it was a true lottery system. This type of data would be available once the student was enrolled. Mrs. Brady stated there are specific instances where student performance data and FSA test scores can be used according to the law, but they can not use it to select students for enrollment. Ms. Brady stated she had discussed the process with the Lake Wales Charter office and they indicated they planned to amend the parent contract. Ms. Reynolds said that the scores reflect that they are sending students at level 1, 2, and 3 to McLaughlin.

Mr. Townsend said he has not received any feedback from parents showing interest in McLaughlin becoming a charter school. He said this is not a performance issue; it is a community issue. He commented a great deal of work needs to be done. He proposed a committee be formed to work through this process.

Mr. Bridges commented that the original idea that was pitched was to contract with the School District to run McLaughlin, but what is currently being suggested is closing the school and reopening it as a charter school: deeding the school over to Lake Wales Charter.

Mr. Townsend said when you deed the school over all leverage is gone. He would like to investigate the zoning proposal and hold a public meeting. He feels all schools must be taken into consideration and will not channel students into schools where they will be segregated by performance. He commented on the additional challenges that are being experienced because of what is happening in the legislature. He is not prepared to turn the school over in the next month because it must be discussed. He said he would rather identify the problems and work on them cooperatively.

Mrs. Cunningham commented she does not feel there is consensus to move forward on this issue.

Mr. Townsend asked if there was consensus to continue discussing this matter. He also asked if there can be consensus to establish a standing committee. Mr. Harris added this would be after school grades are known.

Mrs. Sellers agrees with a committee being established that would work to the benefit of all the children. She commented that working together to unify the community would better serve the students. She said the community of McLaughlin wants to remain a public school and if they (parents, teachers, and staff) came forward there would be no fight. She said she is not in favor of forcing this change on them. She wants to know why 500 students are leaving Lake Wales and being bussed elsewhere to school. She would also like to know

if ESE students are being served.

Mrs. Fields asked what the end goal would be of a Standing Committee. She has spoken to Mrs. Killebrew and she feels that the school thinks there will be academic gains when school grades are released. Mrs. Fields commented on the positive atmosphere she experienced when she visited McLaughlin recently.

Ms. Reynolds said she also agrees with the Standing Committee. She said anytime the School District and Lake Wales Charter Schools can come together and talk about Lake Wales as a community as opposed to public versus charters, it is positive. She stated there should be a seamless transition for all students.

Mrs. Cunningham stated that everyone in the Lake Wales Community has always tried to work together and it is not an atmosphere of public vs. charters. She commented that BOK Academy requires an application and parental process that must be signed and because of this over the years McLaughlin has ended up with the lowest level students. She supports the creation of a Standing Committee.

Mr. Harris commented that Mr. Wilson should be the point person for the aforementioned committee since McLaughlin is in his district. He also reflected on a past experience he had with a parent (an attorney in Lake Wales) who was concerned that the FERPA information had not been provided to BOK Academy for his child. Mr. Harris asked the parent if he had ever made an appointment with the principals of McLaughlin and BOK to determine what school best fit the needs of his child. The father had not. Mr. Harris encouraged any parent living in the Lake Wales area to decide which would provide the best educational opportunity for their child. He stated it is unconscionable for someone to suggest such a dramatic change without ever visiting the school.

Mr. Wilson said he would like the Board to reach out to the leadership of the Lake Wales community to see if they are willing to engage in the committee that is being established. He clarified that this it is no reflection of the teaching staff or leadership at McLaughlin.

Mr. Townsend suggested among the topics for the committee would be how students roll up to high school. He said he feels that Lake Wales High School should be the default high school for the area. He would like to identify a mechanism for schools in Lake Wales to communicate with each other.

Mr. Wilson stated the goal should be a district that is a shared governance with the School Board.

Superintendent Byrd said that before a committee is established the teachers should be informed about what is happening and be a part of the conversation. Mrs. Fields stated the parents should be involved as well.

Mr. Townsend asked if she intends to give veto power over the committee. The Superintendent said she will not.

3. [1:15 - 1:45 PM Superintendent's Evaluation](#)

Minutes:

Dr. Tom Freijo, Consultant, distributed the Superintendent's evaluation which has a color coded rating for each of the seven different areas: Blue (above 3.5) and Orange (below 3). The majority of the areas are rated above 3.5 (Blue); all were above 3.0. Overall the results and comments were quite positive. The lowest ratings were in fiscal responsibility and staff leadership. He believes the School Board should chronologically align the Superintendent's evaluation, budgeting, and the strategic planning process. Dr. Freijo explained there is no reason why the Superintendent's contract couldn't end later in the year.

4. [1:45 - 2:15 PM Superintendent Byrd's Contract Renewal](#)

Minutes:

Wes Bridges distributed the Superintendent's current contract and a draft revised contract. The current contract requires the Board review it by May 1, 2017 to determine if it is to be extended. He noted that while it is a three-year contract, it is not an evergreen contract; it is to be reviewed in two and a half years to determine if it

is to be extended. Thereafter you can renew it annually for another 3 years.

A discussion followed on termination with cause and termination without cause. Mr. Bridges stated that the language has been in previous contracts and can be negotiated. Mr. Wilson stated if the termination with cause was implemented incorrectly, the superintendent would be re-instated. Mr. Harris clarified that if the superintendent is terminated with cause, there is no payout. If the cause is found to be insufficient, it will be a termination of convenience with a severance payout.

Mrs. Byrd was commended by several board members for agreeing to forego the automobile expense and use a district-issued vehicle. Mrs. Fields commended Mr. Bridges for his weekend work. The final revision will be brought to the School Board for vote on May 16.

BOARD AGENDA REVIEW

5. [2:15 - 2:30 PM Review the April 25, 2017 School Board Agenda](#)

Attachment: [04 25 2017 School Board Meeting Agenda.pdf](#)

Minutes:

C -62 Purchasing 30 portables. These will be placed at Bartow High School during the Phase I and II construction. Mrs. Cunningham asked if there will be portables made available to schools in her District. Mr. Davis responded portables will be available to place as needed.

Item C-63 Recommendations for Administrative and Instructional Personnel

Attorney Wes Bridges explained that the Board will be voting tonight to suspend without pay an employee who was to be terminated but has now requested a hearing. The Board will be voting to approve the Superintendent's recommendation to suspend without pay pending the outcome of the hearing.

Item R-79: Charter School Projected Enrollment

Mr. Wilson announced that he will recuse himself from voting on Polk State College's charter enrollments.

6. [2:30 - 2:40 PM BREAK](#)

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Item 7

7. [2:40 - 3:00 PM Budget Discussion for FY 2017-2018](#)

Minutes:

Mike Perrone, CFO, provided updates on legislative budget discussions. He requested authority to make a journal entry from capital fund to general fund if the district falls below the 5% in fund balance (approximately \$2-3 million is needed). The funds would be coming from the Maintenance \$8 million capital fund.

Mr. Harris questioned the use of lapse money (employees not being hired in vacant positions). Mr. Perrone responded that in the past we haven't budgeted lapse dollars but took a chance this year to bring the fund balance to 5.4%. Mr. Wilson commented that while the district didn't budget lapse in the past it was always a part of the fund balance.

Mrs. Sellers stated that anything below 5% is not being fiscally responsible for the district. Mr. Wilson and Mrs. Cunningham noted that the state requires school districts to not fall below 3% and we shouldn't get close to that level or the State will step in.

Mr. Perrone stated that he would meet with Rob Davis to see what projects could be delayed to provide the \$2-3 million needed to support the fund balance.

Mrs. Fields commented that she has heard from other districts that it is illegal to use lapse dollars. Mr. Bridges will look into this situation.

Consensus was to allow Mr. Perrone to make a journal entry as needed to meet the Board's policy of 5%. Mr. Perrone reported that he has asked that each department reduce their operating budget by 3% (savings of \$780,000.00).

Item 8

8. [3:00 - 3:10 PM Polk Charter Academy Request for Application Reconsideration](#)

Attachment: [POLK -- Polk Charter Academy BACF application cover.pdf](#)

Attachment: [WS Summary - Polk Charter Academy Request for Reconsideration 4.25.17.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Polk Charter Application -- Request for Reconsideration Email.pdf](#)

Minutes:

Mrs. Sellers commented that the District's policy does not allow amendments or new applications. She recommends denial.

Mrs. Cunningham inquired about staff's recommendation. Drew Crawford, Counsel for the School Board in this appeal, stated that the Board's policy would have to be waived in order to approve this request for reconsideration.

Mr. Bridges explained the timelessness of this application; it would be an out of cycle application and too late to amend original application. Mr. Wilson believes a precedent has been set when the District denied Our Children's Academy's request to clarify their application.

Board consensus is to deny request.

Item 9

9. [3:10 - 3:25 PM COLTS Program Update](#)

Attachment: [CC COLTS Powerpoint 4-5-17.pdf](#)

Minutes:

Tom Phillips, Executive Director of Citrus Connection, provided an update their COLTS program which provides free rides to all 25,000 high school students in Polk County. A service gap exists, particularly in the Haines City area. In 2013, approximately 60,000 rides were by high school students. There has been a significant decrease in the number of students taking advantage of the program. It has become an underutilized program. In Polk County, paying children as young as 8 can ride the public transportation without an adult.

He would like to see middle school aged students allowed to participate but believes the district's requirement to have parents sign a release form might be hindering student access. He would like the District to eliminate the form and stated that the Citrus Connection will assume all liabilities.

Mrs. Cunningham suggested the permission form be distributed at the beginning of the year with the annual packet of information sent to parents. Mrs. Byrd suggested the form be signed every year such as the photo and media release forms.

Mr. Phillips commented that the weekend costs were picked up by local law enforcement agencies.
School Board Attorney Wes Bridges will review the liability issues and parental release form.

Item 10

10. [3:25 - 3:30 PM Revised Job Description: Senior Director, Public Relations](#)

Attachment: [Communications Sr. Director4-25-17WS.pdf](#)

Minutes:

INFORMATION ITEMS

Item 11

11. [FLDOE FSSAT Report 2016-2017](#)

Item 12

12. [Polk State Chain of Lakes Collegiate High School Request for Contract Modification \(15-Year Contract Term\)](#)

Attachment: [PSC Chain of Lakes Collegiate High School Request for Contract Extension.pdf](#)

Attachment: [COL High Performance Letter \(53-8113\).pdf](#)

Attachment: [WS Summary - COL 15 Yr Contract Modification 4.25.17.pdf](#)

Minutes:

Item 13

13. [Change Professional technical positions to TRST position, MSAP grant](#)

Attachment: [0.Work Session Summary 4.25.17.pdf](#)

Item 14

14. [February 2017 Financial Packet](#)

Attachment: [Final February 2017 Board packet.pdf](#)

Meeting adjourned at 4:31 PM. Minutes were approved and attested this 13th day of June, 2017.

Kay Fields, Board Chair

Jacqueline M. Byrd, Superintendent