

SCHOOL BOARD WORKSHOP

GADSDEN COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD
MAX D. WALKER ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
35 MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. BLVD.
QUINCY, FLORIDA

October 15, 2025

3:00 P.M.

This workshop was open to the public and electronically recorded.

The following Board members were present: Mr. Leroy McMillan, Chairman; Ms. Cathy S. Johnson; Ms. Stacey S. Hannigon; and Mr. Steve Scott. Also present were Mr. Elijah Key, Superintendent and Secretary to the Board; Mrs. Deborah Minnis, Attorney for the Board; and others. Mr. Charlie D. Frost was absent.

1. CALL TO ORDER

The workshop was called to order by the Chairman, Mr. Leroy McMillan, at 3:03 p.m.

2. OPENING PRAYER

The opening prayer was led by Ms. Stacey S. Hannigon.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Recited in unison.

4. ROSTAN – FEMA Project Update

Mrs. Bruner (Finance Director) introduced the Rostan Company to give the Board an update regarding the FEMA dollars. Mr. Joshua Bennett and Director Jeremy Landry shared with the Board a summary review of the FEMA projects. Dr. Landry stated that there are 12 projects. He stated that all of the projects are obligated, which means that FEMA has allocated and validated federal funds for the district to utilize for repairs to a multitude of emergency protective measures, as well as the campuses and schools. He stated that work has begun on most if not all of the projects. He stated that there were some funds that were allocated and obligated for temporary facilities under the emergency protective measures that were utilized and reimbursed. He stated that the last quarter for grants management services, FEMA allocated 5% of the district's total obligation allocation for our services. He stated that on the project management side, it is almost like a sky sliding scale that the district would see with architect and engineers. He stated that it is a percentage that they allocate depending on the cost of the project. He stated that it fluctuates anywhere from 7% to 3.4%. He stated that some of these projects were written and allocated and obligated without project management fees. He stated that the time extension requests could be written and submitted. He stated that requests can be made on all projects, except for two, are considered large projects to where they are considered for the additional costs. He stated that the allocation is 5% for the district's grants management, and that dollar figure is currently sitting at \$496,459.82 based on the task order allocation. He stated that another hurdle that we have had to get over on some of the delays is the insurance allocation and the insurance payout from the insurance provider that was in effect at the time of the event, and trying to determine the exact dollar on how much the insurance paid out on the projects. He stated that FEMA could take anticipated reductions for insurance if the final statement has not been received. He stated that FEMA has taken a much higher anticipated insurance reduction than the actual insurance reductions. He stated that he was not sure if the insurance allocation has been completed. He stated that Mrs. Bruner had a forensic audit done to try to determine some of the costs and allocations. He stated that there are projects that are being held up right now, as they just need a small project closeout document signed and submitted. He stated that those documents are something very quick that we could put together and submit. He stated that he could pull the data to share with any Board member. He stated

that Rostan has a SharePoint folder that has all of the project details to include worksheets, drawdown invoices and the data that has been compiled over the last five years for the county.

Mr. Scott ask how much was the total amount that Rostan is working towards to be released to the district? Dr. Landry stated that currently right now, that he did not have that information in front of him and apologized. He stated that he would get that information to the Board. He stated that there were a couple of \$1,000,000 that are still being allocated for reimbursement that have not been submitted. Ms. Hannigon asked how we got to the point of time extensions. Dr. Landry stated that there were conflicting interests inside of the district of what to do with some of the facilities. He stated that Rostan received multiple different variations of spreadsheets for demolition of properties, doing repair to properties, updating and renovating properties. Ms. Hannigon asked how long of an extension is FEMA allowing? Dr. Landry stated that FEMA could only allow up to a 12-month extension. He stated that Rostan would have to work very closely with the State to make sure there are not any issues with FEMA to get the extension. He stated that if there were no issues, then we would go ahead and draft another extension on a year-by-year basis to get current. Ms. Hannigon questioned if Rostan was working with other school districts to do the same and are you running into the same or similar problems as you are for Gadsden County. Dr. Landry responded yes, we have had some delays because there are different disasters, different staff, different protocols, different purchasing agents, and different standards that have to be follow between states. He stated that Rostan want to help Gadsden County and get the ball rolling again so that we can take care of everything. He stated that time extensions have been drafted and are ready to go. He stated that we have to see what work has been started and what work has been completed. He stated that if we can show that work has at least started, it is a guarantee those projects would be approved immediately. He stated that once received by the State, they are going to wonder why it has been so long since one has been submitted, but once they see that work has started and we have invoices to backup, and the work has been completed. He stated that we will start approving and executing those time extensions and then the secondary ones that we follow up with would be much more in-depth detail for each location stating that we have hired or the district has hired an architect and an engineering firm that has a professional record. They're starting to do designs on whether it's renovation, or reconstruction putting in the specific details for each project that is put together at a period of performance time and extension schedule that will go a long way. He stated that the secondary time extensions are put together by Rostan. He stated that the time extension drafted has to be turned over to the district for review and signed to share with the State. Mrs. Bruner asked Mr. Bennett who would sign the time extension form. Mr. Bennett stated that in the past it has been finance. Ms. Hannigon asked what the deadline to get those to the State is. Mr. Bennett stated that he would not want to say there is necessarily a timeline, but would say ASAP. Mrs. Bruner stated that their partners in Jackson County stated that FEMA just came back to them with all of their projects that they had submitted and they are now asking for funds back, because they said that their insurance claim payout included some things that were not included in the calculations. She asked Mr. Bennett if they were seeing that in the district's Hurricane Michael projects. Mr. Bennett stated that would ultimately happen. He stated that there would be a reduction on the project, but that will not happen, until it closes out. He stated that all of these projects except for two are still in print project formulation or an obligation that there are only two that are pending. He stated that the project closeout is your emergency protective measures. He stated that from October 7th, 9th and November 25th beyond that is you are 100% cost for your emergency protective measures, and then the next one is your Walker Administration electrical building, which I believe has already been completed. He stated that FEMA would not reduce any funds on your projects unless we can show them that your actual insurance proceeds with your final statement of loss on the allocation plan. Mr. McMillan asked when they would be able to get somebody to come out here to work with us on the projects that he is talking about. We would like to get these things submitted to start signing. Mr. Bennett stated that as soon as next week he could be at the district. Ms. Hannigon stated that she had mentioned that the master service agreement and task orders are expired. She stated that the Board needed to address that. She stated that she understands working in good faith, but doesn't the Board need to address that before we get too far down the road? Dr. Sylvia Jackson stated that would have to be brought back to the Board at the November Board meeting for approval of the property. She stated that if the Board is going to move forward, her thinking is to first get with Mr. Bennett, do the extensions, and then have him produce a master service agreement to be reviewed by the Board attorney. Mr. McMillan questioned if the response was to Mr. Bennett's paperwork that is holding things up and we are not able to move forward because we cannot produce the proper documentation. Mr. Bennett stated that some of

it is the time extensions and in those extensions, some of the reimbursements are being held up by proof of payment needing to be presented. He stated that we have requested those multiple times. He stated that the main thing right now is the time extension scenario and the obligations. He stated that the funding is there and he believe that Rostan could communicate and coordinate to get the district the time extensions written, and not delay these and worry about the financials at least to put something in front of the State and federal partners to say here's what's going on with the processes, and the steps that we're taking to be able to try and move these projects forward as accurately as we possibly can. Mr. McMillan asked Mr. Bennett how he would take care of this. Mr. Bennett stated that we'd take our time. He stated that we would knock the dust of the extensions that we have available and try to acquire as much information on our end, and then communicate with the administration to try to put in the details to get a project schedule. Mr. McMillan stated that as Board chair, he was asking for Rostan to go ahead and get these projects, this paperwork, things that are needed so that we can go ahead and get this done. He stated that the Board has been working with Rostan for some time and we do not want to drag our feet anymore. Mr. Bennett stated that we would do everything we can and continue to give the Board updates. Mrs. Bruner stated that she was contacted by the State on one of the first projects. She stated that once the final documents were signed, the district had an overrun on that project, but they approved it. She stated that the district would be receiving an additional \$8,705.35 on that project. Mr. Scott stated that we have been dealing with this since 2020. He stated that he remembers the pep talk, and is not encouraged at this point. Ms. Johnson asked how much funding has Rostan received from the district since they began work on the project? Mr. Bennett stated that Rostan has received \$1,356,194.99. He stated that the district pay Rostan and then the State reimburse the district to draw down monies to pay the invoices for each project. Mr. Key stated that there was a contract that was signed back in 2019. He stated that the district is spending money, but nothing has been done since that time. He stated that money was spent on the maintenance building and we were told we did something wrong. He stated that you must spend the money first and wait for reimbursement. He stated that the district does not have the money to do that. He stated that work has been done but no reimbursement. Mr. Bennett agreed and understand the concerns. He stated that he would like to put together a plan of action and timelines for the Board and keep everyone updated. Mr. McMillan asked Mr. Bennett when he could have that done. Mr. Bennett stated that he would have something prepared to present at the October 28th meeting. Mr. Key stated that a meeting could be scheduled with Dr. Landry next week since he is in the area.

Ms. Hannigon stated that she had some recognitions. She thanked the audience for their patience as the Board went through that first agenda item. She stated that as she mentioned in the previous Board meeting that as part of the district's strategic plan the establishment of an employee of the month program where we recognize those individuals at our Board meetings. She stated that through a partnership with Direct Auto Exchange and its primary owner, Mr. Tyrone Davis, we did start our Teacher of the Month recognition last year towards the end of the school year, we added to that a Student of the Month. She stated that because of all the feedback that we received last year, we have now added a non-instructional staff person of the month. She stated that this year through partnership with herself as School Board member and the Ivy Shop Florist we are recognizing a non-instructional staff person. She invited Principal Simmons-Russ to the podium. She stated that they visited Carter Parramore Academy last week for the first recognition of the school year. She stated that the following three individuals were recognize: Mr. William Brinson – Teacher of the Month; Ms. Frances Harrell – Non-instructional Staff of the Month; and Mr. Zion Bell – Student of the Month. The Superintendent and Board members congratulated all three individuals.

5. REVIEW OF THE FINANCIAL AND FEDERAL SINGLE AUDIT FOR FISCAL YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2024

Mrs. Bruner stated that the audit reviews our financial records and identify material weaknesses or significant deficiencies. She stated that the district had only one item that was material weakness and was actually a carryover from the prior year. She stated that the item still has not been resolved and it was regarding the reporting of deficiencies in getting our audits turned in late, etc. She stated that the finance department has been working hard to try to reconcile and bring things in line, even with the 24-25 AFR. She stated that we know we are going to be late signing that just because of how much work it took to clean up and get to this audit done. Mr. McMillan asked if there was an outside contractor working on the AFR? Mrs. Bruner stated yes, Ms. Kathy Snead was contracted to only work on the AFR, but to help with all of the other day-to-day

activities on how things should be done. She stated that there are many steps to general accounting and acceptable accounting principles. She stated that she is trying to complete the report, but she is trying to get the data to complete the report. Mr. McMillan stated that we are paying Ms. Kathy up to \$75,000 for a year of service and we are paying her to do the AFR. Mrs. Bruner stated that the AFR is included in the \$75,000. She stated that we paid a separate vendor to do the cost report last year because Ms. Kathy did not have the bandwidth with everything that we were cleaning up to do that as well as the bandwidth. Mr. McMillan asked what bandwidth was. Mrs. Bruner stated that bandwidth is enough hours in a day. Ms. Johnson asked what date the AFR would be ready. Mrs. Bruner stated that she was hoping to have it ready next year by the August 2026 Board meeting, so we can make the September 11th deadline. She stated that we are hoping to have the 23-24 by the end of October 2025. She stated that there are items that need attention and need to be addressed but obviously did not have a significant enough impact that it was material like. She stated that finding 003 was related to technology access and we have already worked with MIS to restrict those where needed and sometimes the way that Skyward is set up. She stated that there's a lot of little, tiny check boxes and sometimes we must make sure that if we don't need somebody to edit one section, but they still need to view it or look things up, we're not restricting anyone from being able to do the functions of their role, but we're also not giving out too much accessibility. She stated that most of what that was related to was we had people who had retired or had separated from the district, but they still had an active login. She stated that we had to make sure that those logins were deactivated. She stated that we had to make sure that when individuals move from one position to another position that we deactivated the permissions for the previous role. She stated that is something that we are going to start trying to do on a routine basis as we receive the HR report for hires and separations. Ms. Hannigon asked if that process managed all boarding or transfers. Is it strictly paper? Is it strictly a paper process or is it computer based? She stated that she wondered if it is a paper process just how easy it will be to ensure that it is done consistently. Mrs. Bruner stated that Dr. Sonya Jackson would have to walk you through that process. She stated that the finance department work via email. Mrs. Buckhalt stated that speaking for HR; she is part of a google share drive. She stated that she has things listed in the shared drive and lets us know when a person is hired and deactivated.

Mrs. Bruner - Finding number 004 was bank reconciliations. She stated that the bank reconciliation has been caught up to the point so that we can do the AFR. She stated that we are still not at the point where we are doing that, as it needs to occur on a timely basis because we have had a vacancy in that position. She stated that the new candidate will be here tomorrow to do fingerprints and background checks. She stated that the food service bank accounts was a finding that we had from a previous audit. She stated that we want to make sure that we are getting that information reconciled. Mr. McMillan asked if it was a different person for food service. Mrs. Bruner stated that a different person, Mrs. Lisa Chavers. She stated that we are working on figuring out how it needs to occur so that we can put that in writing and then get that over to her. She stated that it will be decided which piece that the food service managers at each school site need to be responsible for. She stated that district has the Mosaic software that each school site uses to track the meals between a student, an adult meal and an ala carte. She stated that the meals are coded three different ways.

Mrs. Bruner stated that Federal Awards 005 is regarding the Davis-Bacon Act, which again was just ensuring that the way the projects were procured that used federal funding met the Davis-Bacon Act guidelines. She stated that making sure people are properly paid a fair labor wage. She stated that we were able to go back and figure it out. She stated that the vendors, and contractors did pay the common prevailing wage or, in one case when they did not, they went back and adjusted that person's salary and made-up for it. She stated that once we prove that then that finding is checked off as completed. She stated that although this one has already been handled, there is another one that will be in 24-25 because they were doing both of them concurrently, and so that finding may come up again.

Mrs. Bruner stated that finding 006 is a duplicate payment that is being researched. She stated that we could speak with the vendor about being reimbursed for that duplicate payment. She stated that we have had several projects with that particular vendor so we are going to have to go back and pull the paper records and go line by line to make sure that just because it was the same dollar amount; it was not for two different projects or what the vendor was. She stated that it was for the HVAC at Stewart Street Elementary School.

Mrs. Bruner stated that finding 007 is the time and effort logs. She stated that she was unaware that the food service staff need to do time and effort logs because their money comes from the federal government through the school food service funding. She stated that we would try to work with MIS to get it entered into Skyward instead of the paper that we have people sign and get back in. She stated that the federal program departments, depending on the grant, may have done their own time and effort logs, but it was not being consistently done across the district. She stated that the food service staff was not provided because we were unaware that we needed to. She stated that we know that it has to be done twice a year, and the auditor gave us a template to follow. Mr. McMillian stated that after speaking with the auditors, he has heard very positive things about what is going on right now. He appreciated Mrs. Bruner for her hard work.

5. EDUCATIONAL ITEMS BY THE SUPERINTENDENT

Mr. Key reminded the Board that this audit was from the 23-24 school year. He stated that Mrs. Bruner was not in place, but she had to do the job of cleaning it up. He stated that the high school football team got their first victory on Friday night. He stated that unofficially that we are really and can claim ourselves to be district champions. He stated that we could not play in the playoffs. He stated that it was exciting to finally get over that hump. He shared with the Board a list of vacant properties owned by the district. He stated that although Quincy High School is not vacant, he included it on the list. He stated that at some point in time we have to get an appraisal on the properties to get the true value. The vacant properties list included the following:

- Telogia Creek Road Quincy– Parcel ID 3-28-2N-5W-000-00213-0000
- Washington Ave, Havana – Parcel ID 2-26-3N-2W-0210-0000K-0310 (Lot in the Havana Northside)
- Carter Road, Quincy – Parcel ID 5-OL-OR-0S-0000-27400-10000 (Shiloh Area)
- 402 W Washington St, Quincy – Parcel ID 3-12-2N-4W-0000-00114-0600 (Ward Lot)
- 500 W King St, Quincy – Parcel ID – 3-12-2N-4W-0000-00111-0300 (Old Quincy School)
- Cooper Street, Quincy – Parcel ID – 3-12-2N-4W-0000-00423-0100 (St James AME Old Stevens Little Peace)
- Mine Road, Midway – Parcel ID – 4-08-1N-2W-0000-00300-0300 (Next to the Church)

6. SCHOOL BOARD REQUESTS AND CONCERNS

In response to Mr. Scott's concern regarding whether or not federal contracts and grants will still be available during the government shutdown, Mrs. Bruner stated yes, the funds are still available.

Ms. Johnson stated that she got an opportunity to visit the JROTC program at the high school. She stated that Colonel Michael Spencer from West Pointe visited the school and spoke to the students in the JROTC program. She stated that Colonel Spencer shared with the student's resources and tools to let them know that if they work hard and if they are interested in attending West Pointe, they could have a full ride furthering their education. She stated that she also met with Lieutenant Colonel Hicks to find out about the program. She stated that when she was in school in the JROTC program they dressed in uniform at least once a week. She stated that the students are not dressing in uniform right now, but hopefully that will change soon. She gave kudos to the JROTC Department.

Ms. Hannigon asked if staff were able to develop a timeline for the Board regarding the half-cent sales tax referendum. She stated that she wanted to stay on track. She asked if staff reached out to PAEC regarding any policies that we as a Board need to update because of the legislative session. She stated that she has reached out to the Superintendent regarding social media. She stated that she has learned that some school districts review their entire policy manual every four or five years to make sure there is nothing outdated. She stated that she did not know when the last Gadsden has reviewed its policy manual. She stated that some districts contract the service because they do not have the workforce to do it. Dr. Sylvia Jackson stated that the Superintendent has given the okay to speak with Neola, a company that works with school districts that help them update and modernize their district policies. She stated that the district did work with Neola some time ago. She stated that staff would be meeting with Neola next week to have a better understanding of the services that they can provide to the district. Ms. Hannigon requested the Superintendent have Ms. Brown share with the Board an update on the ESE department program services they provide.

Mr. McMillan stated to the Superintendent in reference to the Pepsi Company. He stated that the Pepsi Company have vending machines everywhere and throughout the district. He asked what Pepsi was doing for the district. Mr. Key stated that Pepsi give back to the school. He stated that the district reached out to Coke but got no response. Mr. McMillan stated that he would contact Coke. He asked if Pepsi paid for the scoreboard at the high school. Mr. Key stated no, Pepsi is giving discounts on the products and things that we sell during concessions.

Ms. Hannigon asked if there were any dates in mind to discuss the budget. She stated that the Board spoke about scheduling a workshop to discuss the budget but did not get any dates. Mr. Key stated that is up to the Board to get dates and we can get it scheduled through Ms. Davis.

Mr. McMillan stated that some School Board members have concerns in reference to making decisions about the financial budget. He requested Mrs. Minnis look into whether or not they will be able to discuss and make changes to the budget.

7. The workshop adjourned at 5:25 p.m.