

## SCHOOL BOARD WORKSHOP

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

February 9, 2021

6:00 P.M.

This workshop was open to the public and electronically recorded.

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

1. Call To Order

The workshop was called to order by the Chairman, Mr. Leroy McMillan, at 6:00 p.m.

Mr. McMillan stated that the workshop was open for comments. He stated that individuals wishing to address the Board should sign in, or if anyone on the conference call wished to speak should identify themselves.

2. Discussion Items

a. Chattahoochee Southside Property – 852 Lincoln Drive

Mr. Frost stated that the Chattahoochee Southside property located at 852 Lincoln Drive has been up for discussion for a long time. He stated that the Board needs to make the best decision for the students and the community.

Ms. Johnson stated that she is all about investing and keeping property. She stated that property may become valuable one day.

Mr. Scott stated that at the last meeting there were four people interested in the Southside property, along with the City of Chattahoochee. He stated that all the offers seem to be community related. He stated that the property is just sitting there and not being utilized. He stated that the district is not using it and it is not bringing any revenue. He stated that Mr. Hunter's plan is great and the district has all kind of vacant properties. He stated that the previous administration identified all vacant properties, this property is vacant, and we are in need of revenue. He stated that he was in favor of getting rid of the property with the purpose being for community benefit. He stated that the Property Appraiser has valued the property at \$8,000. He stated that the Board is responsible for properties at the old Greensboro Elementary School, old Chattahoochee High School, and have had Gretna Elementary School, St. John Elementary School, and Havana Northside High School. He stated that there are properties that have been vacant, have been leased, even mortgaged and none of those options are productive to the School Board.

Ms. Dudley stated that she agrees with Mr. Scott to sell the Southside property.

Ms. Johnson stated that previously she was speaking about property that will be discussed later, and not the 852 Lincoln property.

Mr. Hunter stated that the City of Chattahoochee would meet tomorrow to evaluate the Southside property to see if they want to make an offer.

Mr. McMillan stated that he had spoken with the City Manager of Chattahoochee. He stated that the property is old and dilapidated. He stated that he wants the City of Chattahoochee to get the property because he does not think any of the others have resources to do anything with it. He stated that the City of Chattahoochee has applied for a grant to totally remodel the property. He stated that it is currently an eyesore. He asked if the Board could find mercy to give him more time to work with the City of Chattahoochee. He stated the Board's best offer is \$10,000 and that cannot be used for anything except Capital Outlay. He stated that he does not think it will hurt to hang on to the property, but he wants the Board to work with him and hold off on a final decision to allow him more time to work with the City of Chattahoochee. He stated that the City Manager said they like the property. He stated that he would have no problem with giving the City of Chattahoochee the Southside property.

Mr. Scott stated that the funds must go back into capital outlay, and technology also falls into that category where the funds could be used. He stated that if in the future, with all facilities, the Board could wind up having to take money out of the general fund to take care of facilities. He stated that the money can be replaced with the sale of the property which can be placed in the general fund for salaries.

Mr. Frost stated that the Board had the same idea about Gretna and St. John. He stated that he would love to see the City of Chattahoochee get the property because of the location to the park. He stated that he agrees with waiting on the City of Chattahoochee to see if they are going to purchase the property.

Mr. Scott stated that he is not opposed to the City of Chattahoochee owning the property.

Mrs. Minnis stated that the School Board could dispose of property in whatever way they wish.

Mr. Scott asked if the property was put up for sale, would they have to take the highest offer.

Ms. Minnis stated that the Board could disregard any bid offer and have the right to accept whatever offer they believe is in the best interest of the Board and community.

Mr. McMillan stated that he believes it is the best interest of the City of Chattahoochee to have the property.

b. Facilities Plan / Vacant Property

Mr. Hunter discussed a facilities plan and provided an example of what a yearly plan would look like. He stressed the need for a facilities plan. He stated the bottom portion of the handout was capital projects. He stated that he can give recommendations but he needs to know the priorities of Board. He stated that planning meetings were needed in order to know what areas to focus on. He stated that all bids needed to be known in advance. He stated that knowing how much money the Board has to operate with is important in order to fit into the plan. He stated that he wanted to point out the need for facilities planning meetings. He stated that the meetings could be held once a month to discuss facility needs with everyone's input. He stated that a committee needed to be set up for the facilities meetings.

In response to Mr. McMillan's request regarding the makeup of the committee, Mr. Hunter stated that the committee members should consist of representatives from facilities, finance, IT, safety/security, education, administrative, Superintendent, and a Board member. He stated that the members usually stay on the committee about a year and then change. He stated that different school level personnel could be added to the committee once the Board gets in the direction they choose. He stated that the goal is to have regular planning meetings in order to be on track.

Mr. McMillan asked if the facilities plan could be a plan for the future to include renovating/building.

Mr. Frost stated that the Board needs to figure out what their future plans are for the district. He stated that it all started as reconfiguration. He asked if the Board was going to continue the reconfiguration plan that was already in place. He stated that he does not want to put money in old buildings. He stated that he thinks this Board and the Superintendent need to get a grand scheme of what they want to do, or if they are going to continue with the past administration's facilities plan.

Mr. McMillan stated that the Board cannot go back and look at the reconfiguration plan because of the hurricane damage. He stated that he thinks the Board needs to get with the Superintendent and either support or give him direction as to what they want for the district. He stated that the committee definitely needs to be created with input from the community.

Mr. Key stated that if the district goes with a different configuration on all its buildings, all of the students will have to be moved. He asked if the option would be to build a K-8, K-5, or middle school facility. He stated that this would not change the configuration in Greensboro. He stated that he definitely will need communication from the Board. He stated that many of the configurations of the school settings will change.

Mr. Frost stated that the Board needs information from the Superintendent. He stated that the district needs to know what they want and then how to get there. He stated that for example, he does not want 5<sup>th</sup> graders at the middle schools.

In response to Mr. Scott's question whether the plans were mandated by the state, Mr. Hunter responded yes.

Mr. Scott stated that some decisions must be made because of the damage from the hurricane and the FTE count. He stated that there is data that shows the district must make changes. He stated that legislative priorities are not going to be in favor of new schools right now. He stated that the first thing to look at is money, and secondly where is the greatest need to put money and start from there to begin to look at possibilities. He stated that the site priorities must be looked at, justified with communities, and then looked to see if in 5-10 years will there be enough students to keep the school running. He stated that the committee also needs to look at vacant properties to see what can be done with them. He stated that the location, funding, and planning must also be taken into consideration. He stated that the Superintendent has a vision. He stated that everyone will not always buy in, but the Board needs to do what will be best for the students in the next 5-10 years. He stated that there has been planning committees in the past and one of the variables of this is that we have plans but not funding. He stated that the Board members and Superintendent change and so does their vision. He stated that what does not change is that we have students and we are obligated to have the best education.

Mr. Frost stated that he does not want to go to the community for input because, we are the people that know what needs to be done, and we need to have the Superintendent's vision. He stated that we know we need new schools, and that we have property to place schools on.

Mr. Key stated that we need to do what we can afford financially. He stated that when he visits schools on a weekly basis, the schools with the greatest needs are in the Quincy area and on the west side (Chattahoochee Elementary School). He stated that we need to get kids out of those schools. He stated that he has no issue with a K-8 school because parents remove their children and take them to other districts/private schools with same configuration. He stated that it is all about the staff that is in place. He stated that he realizes something has to be done with the building at Chattahoochee Elementary School. He stated that some of the locations of newly built schools are sitting in the least populated areas. He stated that we are having to transport students to these schools. He stated that the Quincy schools are in need the most. He stated that we need to correct the problem so enrollment will increase. He stated that he has no problem with a K-8 school as long as the proper people are in place. He stated that his leadership

team discussed how to change the culture and the answer is customer service. He stated that people realize we need new schools. He stated that forming a committee would definitely help, along with getting parents involved, finding a location, and coming to an agreement to move forward for the betterment of all Gadsden County students, and not just students in Quincy.

Mr. McMillan stated that enrollment is going down but babies are still being born, they just are not coming to our schools. He stated that we must find out why our kids are leaving. He stated that we must make changes and do what is needed and best for children. He stated that he wants GTI filled to capacity and our students to get a quality education. He stated that he agrees that the Quincy schools are deplorable. He stated that we must give children a safe, comfortable environment to learn in that they can be proud of instead of bussing students from Chattahoochee to Gadsden County High School. He stated that the first thing for the Superintendent is to get the committee up and running. He asked Mr. Hunter to get with Mr. Key to get a committee together to be able to compile information and bring to Board. He suggested going to Bainbridge and look at their state of the art high school. He said he does not want anyone to say we do not have the money.

Mrs. Wood stated that this is the same thing that was said 4 years ago and nothing has been done. She stated that FEMA is waiting on the Board to decide where to put the money. She stated that this committee must be created so the work can start immediately.

In response to Ms. Johnson's question regarding when the community would be involved, Mr. Key responded after the committee is formed. He stated that this was just to get the Board's representative to serve on the facilities committee.

Mr. Hunter stated that after the Board meets then he will come up with basics to take to the community.

Mr. McMillan stated that the Board needs to continue having these (facilities) meetings.

Mr. Scott stated that he thinks there needs to be one person from a community to serve on the facilities committee.

Ms. Dudley stated that she will be the Board's representative on the facilities committee.

Mr. Key asked the Board members to give names of community members who they think would be willing to serve on the facilities committee. He stated that the Board also needs to work on maintaining the current facilities.

3. The workshop adjourned at 6:57 p.m.