

SCHOOL BOARD WORKSHOP

ST. JOHN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CAFETERIA
4463 BAINBRIDGE HIGHWAY
QUINCY, FLORIDA

February 16, 2017

6:00 P.M.

The workshop was open to the public and electronically recorded.

The following Board members were present: Mr. Isaac Simmons, Chairman; Mr. Steve Scott; and Mr. Charlie D. Frost. Also present were Mr. Roger P. Milton, Superintendent and Secretary to the Board; and others. Mrs. Audrey D. Lewis; Mr. Tyrone D. Smith; and Mrs. Deborah Minnis, Attorney for the Board, were absent.

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. DISCUSSION OF RECONFIGURATION OF SCHOOLS

Mr. Simmons stated that the community meeting was being held to share information with the community regarding the Superintendent's school reconfiguration proposal. He turned the meeting over to Mr. Milton.

Mr. Milton shared a power-point presentation with the community outlining his school reconfiguration proposal. He stated that there was a need to make changes to the schools in the district. He stated that the district currently has thirteen (13) schools. He stated that there are fewer than 6,000 students and 860+ employees in the district. He stated that the district has aging facilities that are in dire need of major repairs. He stated that there is a need to reduce the number of facilities and staff. He stated that the district needs additional funds in order to provide better wages for its employees. He stated that most schools in the school district are not positioned to offer a wider variety of courses to meet the needs of students. He stated that schools slated for closing are very old and do not meet modern day standards for schools. He stated that classrooms are too small to provide for active learning environments. He stated that in essence, the district must have recurring revenue streams, improved academic opportunities for our students, more up-to-date school facilities to provide wholesome environments that are conducive to teaching and learning, and the opportunity to "Move Gadsden County Public Schools from Good to Great". He stated that the historical student enrollment for St. John Elementary School and the district are as follows: St. John Elementary School student enrolment for year 2012 – 2013 was 298, and the district student enrollment for year 2012 – 2013 was 6,077; St. John Elementary School

student enrollment for year 2013 – 2014 was 286, and the district student enrollment for year 2013 – 2014 was 6,006; St. John Elementary School student enrollment for year 2014 – 2015 was 266, and the district student enrollment for year 2014 – 2015 was 5,942; St. John Elementary School student enrollment for year 2015 – 2016 was 225, district student enrollment for year 2015 – 2016 was 5,808; St. John Elementary School student enrollment for year 2016 – 2017 was 216, and the district student enrollment was 5,620. He stated that the Third Grade FSA Reading and Math Scores for St. John Elementary School compared to the district for the 2014-2015 year in Reading was 43% and 38% for the district; the 2015 – 2016 year St. John Elementary School Reading scores was 41% and the district was 33%. He stated that the majority of the district schools are old with failing equipment and infrastructure, which provides a less than desirable learning environment for students and working environment for staff. He stated that eight of the district schools are years behind current code requirements with St. John Elementary School being one of those schools. He stated that there is no way to solve these issues without major renovation or replacement with new construction. He stated that the longer these issues remain unaddressed, the greater the likelihood of HVAC system failures. He stated that with so many schools in the same shape, the likelihood of multiple failures challenges the district to reconfigure schools and relocate before such failures occur. He stated that being proactive by reconfiguring and/or replacing the old schools puts the best interest of the students and staff in the forefront of planning. He stated that the proposed action for the 2017 – 2018 year includes the movement of grades 4 and 5 from George Munroe Elementary School to James A. Shanks Middle School; movement of grades 4 and 5 from St. John Elementary School to James A. Shanks Middle School; and movement of grades PK thru 3 from the St. John Elementary School to George Munroe Elementary School. He stated that as a result of the schools reconfiguration proposal, there will be no earlier school starting times than the district currently have; no loss of certified teachers as they will be reassigned to other schools which will in turn afford the district to a more highly qualified staff, and no loss of non-instructional staff that received satisfactory evaluations and who were recommended back for employment. He stated that other proposed actions for the school year 2017 – 2018 include discontinuing operations at St. John Elementary School by moving grades PK thru 3 to George W. Munroe Elementary and grades 4 and 5 to West Gadsden Middle School; the School Board applying for Special Facilities Funding from Florida Department of Education. He stated that other proposed actions for school 2018 – 2019 include reconfiguring Chattahoochee Elementary School by moving grades 1 thru 3 to Greensboro Elementary School and grades 4 and 5 to West Gadsden Middle School. He stated that other proposed actions for the school year 2020 – 2021 include discontinuing operations at Gadsden Elementary Magnet School and move all grade levels to the newly constructed K-8 facility.

Mr. Simmons thanked Mr. Milton for his presentation on the proposed school reconfiguration.

Mr. Frost thanked everyone for coming out and showing interest in St. John Elementary School. He shared his comments regarding the closure of St. John Elementary School. He stated that he was not in support of closing the school. He stated that the St. John Elementary School needs to remain open. He stated that he will vote “no” when the time comes.

The following individuals from the audience participated in the discussion and shared their concerns and expressed their dismay in the closure of St. John Elementary School: Mr. Jimmy Collins, Mayor Derrick Elias, Mrs. Queen Thomas, Pastor Charles Colson, Ms. Shenetra Roundtree, Ms. Nakeisha Lane, Ms. Sandra Joseph, Mrs. Dora Cannon, Ms. Rhonda Gray, Ms. Natasha Britt, Ms. Esmeraldo Velasco, Ms. Christine Goldwire, Mrs. LaTonya Peters Robinson, Ms. Ernestine Coster, Mrs. Angela Canty, and Mr. JaKari Wilcoxson.

3. EDUCATIONAL ITEMS BY THE SUPERINTENDENT

None.

4. SCHOOL BOARD REQUESTS AND CONCERNS

Mr. Scott thanked everyone for coming out and showing their support for St. John Elementary School. He stated that it is not an easy task to close schools. He stated that the schools need more parental involvement.

Mr. Frost made a pledge to the parents to make sure students are in school. He stated that parents need to check student book bags and increase parental involvement.

Mr. Simmons thanked everyone for attending the meeting. He stated that everyone loves their school. He stated that he submitted a proposal to the Superintendent that includes building a new school to accommodate Gretna Elementary School and St. John Elementary School. He stated that he wants red carpet schools with increased parental involvement. He again thanked everyone for coming out to the meeting.

5. The workshop adjourned at 7:24 p.m.