

SCHOOL BOARD WORKSHOP

GRETNA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CAFETERIA
706 MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. BLVD.
GRETNA, FLORIDA

February 13, 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; Mr. Charlie D. Frost; Mrs. Audrey D. Lewis; and Mr. Tyrone D. Smith. Also present were Mr. Roger P. Milton, Superintendent and Secretary to the Board; and others. Mrs. Deborah Minnis, Attorney for the Board, was absent.

1. CALL TO ORDER

The workshop was called to order by the Chairman, Mr. Isaac Simmons, at 6:05 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 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 school capacities and current enrollment are as follows: Gretna Elementary School capacity 433, current enrollment 272, and 62% capacity used; St. John Elementary School capacity 469, current enrollment 220, and 47% capacity used; Chattahoochee Elementary School capacity 485,

current enrollment 177, and 35% capacity used; Gadsden Elementary Magnet School capacity 246, current enrollment 155, 63% capacity used; Greensboro Elementary School capacity 563, current enrollment 327, and 58% capacity used; James A. Shanks Middle School capacity 938, current enrollment 450, and 48% capacity used; East Gadsden High School capacity 1,464, current enrollment 790, and 54% capacity used; and West Gadsden High School capacity 681, current enrollment 519, and 76% capacity used. He stated that the Third Grade FSA Reading and Math Scores for Gretna Elementary School compared to the district for the 2014-2015 year in Reading was 36% and 38% for the district; the 2015 – 2016 year Gretna Elementary School Reading scores was 35% and the district 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 Gretna 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 9 thru 12 from West Gadsden High School to East Gadsden High School; movement of grades 4 and 5 from Greensboro Elementary School to what will become West Gadsden Middle School. He stated that Greensboro Elementary School will become a primary school; movement of grades 4 and 5 from Gretna Elementary School to what will become West Gadsden Middle School; movement of grades PK thru 3 from Gretna Elementary School to Greensboro Elementary School; and rezoning Mt. Pleasant and Gretna Middle School students to West Gadsden Middle School zone. 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 James A. Shanks 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 Gretna Elementary School. He shared his comments regarding the closure of Gretna Elementary School. He stated that he was not in support of closing the school. He stated that the City of Gretna needs the school 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 comments and expressed their concerns regarding the closure of Gretna Elementary School: Pastor Eddie Allen, Mr. Antonio Jefferson, Mr. Jewel Jerome Dixon, Ms. Brenda Favors, Ms. Commissioner Helen Franks Reed, Mr. Solomon Williams, Mr. Anthony Baker, Mayor Pro-Tem, Ms. Porsche Dasher, Elder Harry Cloud, Mr. Leroy McMillan, Mayor James Payne, Mrs. Rosetta Blake, Mrs. Rosa Williams, Ms. LaCarra Brown, Ms. Barbara Brown, and Mr. Alvin Bush.

3. EDUCATIONAL ITEMS BY THE SUPERINTENDENT

None.

4. SCHOOL BOARD REQUESTS AND CONCERNS

Mr. Smith stated that he was excited to hear comments from the community regarding the Superintendent's proposal on school reconfiguration. He thanked everyone for their support.

Mrs. Lewis stated that she was pleased that everyone came out in support of Gretna Elementary School. She stated that she is very passionate about parent involvement and community engagement.

Mr. Scott thanked everyone for coming out and showing support for Gretna Elementary School. He stated that he took an oath to provide a quality educational system for all students.

Mr. Simmons thanked everyone for coming to the meeting. He stated that this community meeting was one of eight series of meetings for the community to share their concerns regarding school closures. He stated that the Board will take in consideration all issues and concerns regarding the school reconfiguration proposal and come up with a plan that is best for all students.

5. The workshop adjourned at 7:55 p.m.