MINUTES

REGULAR SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

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

June 23, 2026

6:00 P.M.

The meeting was open to the public and electronically recorded.

The following Board members were present: Ms. Cathy S. Johnson, Vice Chairperson; Ms. Stacey S. Hannigon; Mr. Steve Scott; Mr. Charlie D. Frost; and Mr. Leroy McMillan, Chairman (via phone). 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 meeting was called to order by the Vice Chairperson, Ms. Cathy S. Johnson, at 6:02 P.M.

2. OPENING PRAYER

   The opening prayer was led by Reverend Tony Hannah, Pastor of Bethelonia African Methodist Episcopal Church.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

   Recited in unison.

4. RECOGNITIONS

   Mr. Key stated that he would like to thank all of our staff and the District Office. He stated that he won't call out any individual departments because he got in trouble the last time he did that. He stated that however, he wants to recognize every department that assisted us in closing out James A. Shanks Middle School. He stated that it truly took a collective effort from everyone. He stated that without everyone pitching in, that job would have been extremely difficult. He stated that everyone contributed in whatever way they could, helping us move everything out so that the abatement process, which is currently underway, could begin. He stated that the actual demolition of those buildings is scheduled to begin on July 1. He stated that he appreciates every staff member who played a role in moving this project forward. He stated that many of you received calls asking, "Where are you?" because we needed all hands on deck, and everyone responded. He stated that thank you for your dedication and willingness to help. He stated that he also wants to recognize the staff currently working on student placement. He stated that he will call those departments out individually—our Management Information Systems (MIS) Department and our Transportation Department. He stated that they have done an outstanding job ensuring that students are assigned to the correct schools. He stated that without accurate student assignments, we cannot determine actual enrollment numbers, and without reliable enrollment estimates, we cannot properly staff our schools. He thanked them for their hard work, we are making great progress toward where we need to be. He stated that those are all the recognitions he had this evening. He stated that the only other item he has for the Board is that he will need a brief Executive Session immediately following tonight's meeting to discuss one matter.

   Ms. Hannigan stated that she would like to take this opportunity to recognize a young lady whom she once had the privilege of supervising at the Gadsden County Health Department. She stated that the young lady is approaching retirement and will officially retire at the end of July. She recognized Mrs. Cannella Muchinson Jeffries. She stated that would like to take a brief walk down memory lane regarding her remarkable service to both Gadsden County and the Gadsden County School District. She stated that Mrs. Jefferies has dedicated 38 years of committed public service to the Florida Department of Health. She began her career on March 11, 1988, and will conclude her service upon her retirement on July 31, 2026. She stated that having previously supervised Mrs. Jeffries, she can confidently say that her career has been defined by leadership, excellence in community health nursing, and meaningful contributions to nearly every major program area at the Gadsden County Health Department. She will retire with a total of 460 months of credited service to the State of Florida and the citizens of Gadsden County. She stated that she wanted to publicly recognize her because so much of the work she has done has directly benefited the Gadsden County School District. She has supervised our School Health staff on numerous occasions and served as a Senior Community Health Nurse from 1990 to 1996, supporting school health services and other population-based programs. She stated that she also wanted to acknowledge something that applies not only to Mrs. Jeffries but to all those who serve in our county health departments. She stated that they care for individuals from the youngest to the oldest members of our communities, often serving populations that many others would not. She stated that was another reason she wanted to recognize Mrs. Jeffries this evening. She stated that throughout her career, she has made significant contributions to School Health, the Breast and Cervical Cancer Program, Epidemiology, the Heart Health Program, the Wise Woman Program, Tuberculosis Surveillance and Case Management, Population-Based Services, and Community Health Outreach. She has also faithfully served our community during hurricanes. As many of you know, the Health Department manages our Special Needs Shelter for medically and electrically dependent residents. Mrs. Jeffries has coordinated nursing staff, worked overnight shifts, and gone above and beyond to ensure that our most vulnerable citizens received the care they needed. She stated that during the final three years of her career, she volunteered to restore our School Health Program to what Dr. Cooksey has described as its "glory days," revitalizing services, strengthening partnerships, and improving student health outcomes. Her legacy includes stronger public health programs, improved chronic disease and women's health services, enhanced infectious disease response, revitalized school health services, stronger community trust, and nearly four decades of unwavering dedication to Gadsden County. She stated that when she first began working at the Health Department, one of the first projects she witnessed Mrs. Jeffries leading was a community cleanup at Flint Garden Apartments in Chattahoochee. She stated that she later learned this was something she coordinated regularly with her staff because she believed in connecting with residents and serving them where they lived. She stated that is simply the kind of person she is. She stated that people often say, "Before you ask anything of me, let me know that you truly care about me." Mrs. Jeffries has lived that principle throughout her entire career. She stated that it was an honor for her to present her with a plaque, which reads: *"Presented to Mrs. Cannella Jeffries in appreciation for your 38 years of dedicated service to Gadsden County and the Gadsden County School District. Presented by Stacey Hannigan, School Board Member, District 5, this 23rd day of June, 2026."* She also her with some Delta red and white flowers. Mrs. Jeffries came forward, along with the Board members for a photograph.

Mrs. Cannella Jeffries stated that she was truly honored to be here at this moment. She stated that she has thoroughly enjoyed her work here in Gadsden County and have always felt welcomed. She stated that she really doesn't know what to say. She stated that she can say that she started her career at James A. Shanks when it was still a high school, and now she is ending her career as it has become a middle school. She stated that she has truly come full circle. She stated that everything Mrs. Hannigan mentioned is true, and it has been an absolute joy serving this community. She stated that she may not live here, but she works here. She stated that her children attended school here, and she shop here, so she guesses she can consider myself an honorary Gadsden County resident. She stated that it has truly been a wonderful journey. She stated that one of the accomplishments she is especially proud of began while she was working with the Breast Cancer Program. She stated that they had a client who was diagnosed with breast cancer, and the only support group available was in Tallahassee. She stated that she thought, "We need something for our residents here." She stated that she and a group of women came together with several community organizations to establish a local breast cancer support group. She stated that although the program is still growing, we are extremely proud of what it has become. She stated that each year we host a Pink Out Walk, and she encourage everyone to continue supporting our efforts as we bring women together, strengthen our community, and serve our residents. She stated that she was also proud to have had the opportunity to work with Mrs. Hannigan. She truly exemplifies what a school board member and supervisor should be. She thanked Mrs. Hannigan for taking her under your wing and supporting her throughout her journey. She stated that she also cannot say enough about Dr. Cooksey. She stated that the list of people she could thank is so long that if she started naming names, she would surely leave someone out. So, to everyone, thank you for your support, your encouragement, and your love throughout these 38 years of service to this community. She stated that she also wanted to recognize her husband, who has stood beside her all these years. For 31 years, she commuted from Tallahassee to Gadsden County, and it has truly been a joint effort. She thanked everyone again.

Mr. Key wished Mr. Charlie Frost a happy belated birthday. He stated that Mr. Frost's birthday was yesterday.

Mr. Frost stated that there is a men's health group that has invited Dr. James Bennett from Atlanta to speak about prostate cancer. He stated that among African American men, prostate cancer rates are extremely high, including here in Gadsden County. He stated that on August 15, Dr. Bennett will be here to explain what we need to know, what steps we should take, and how we can better protect our health. He stated that it is so important that we become more aware of this disease. He encouraged everyone to bring their wives or whoever would help care for them if they were diagnosed. He stated that the statistics are alarming. He stated that they told us that, in a group of ten men, several are likely to develop prostate cancer. He asked everyone to help spread the word. He stated that we need our community to become more informed. He stated that the meeting will be held on August 15**,** from 11:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m.**,** at the Old Stevens Center**.** He stated that he hears people say a lot of things about our school system and how it operates. He stated that his question is always, "Where did you get that information?" He stated that until you attend these meetings, you won't always know exactly what was said. He encouraged people to come to the meetings. He stated that we will provide the information you need so you can better understand what is happening. He stated for example, he recently saw information about grass-cutting contracts. My first thought was, "Are we hiring contractors? I thought we didn't have any money." He stated that I he had stopped there; he might have gone around telling people the district was hiring friends or relatives. He stated that instead, he contacted our Facilities Director, and he explained that the work was being paid for through a specific program—not from district funds. He stated that from his perspective, it looked like we had hired contractors, but once I asked questions, I learned the facts. He stated that before repeating information, make sure you have it right. Then, when you speak, you will be sharing the truth about what was actually said. He wanted every to remember August 15, from 11:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m.**,** at the Old Stevens Center**.**

ITEMS FOR CONSENT

Mr. Key stated that the signature page needed to be corrected on agenda item #7b. He stated that if the Board approves item #7b, it need to be approved with correction to the chair signature page.

5. REVIEW OF MINUTES

   a. May 6, 2026, 11:00 a.m. – Head Start Focus Area Review Government Body Meeting

   b. May 12, 2026, 5:00 p.m. – Student Hearing

   c. May 12, 2026, 6:00 p.m. – Special School Board Meeting

   d. May 26, 2026, 4:30 p.m. – School Board Financial Workshop

   e. May 26, 2026, 6:00 p.m. – Regular School Board Meeting

   ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

6. PERSONNEL MATTERS (resignations, retirements, recommendations, leaves of absence, terminations of services, volunteers, and job descriptions)

   a. Personnel 2025 – 2026

   ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

   b. Personnel 2026 – 2027

   ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

7. AGREEMENTS/CONTRACT/PROJECT APPLICATIONS

   a. Panhandle Area Educational Consortium (PAEC-FL VS FRANCHISE) Contract Agreement – Virtual Franchise

   Fund Source: FEFP
   Amount: Undetermined based upon enrollment

   ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

   b. Request Approval for Contracts

Fund Source:	Spectrum Lease Compensation (T-Mobile) (Gingham)	Title I (Lamier Technical Services)
Amount:	$41,500	$55,000

   ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

   d. Vector Solutions

   Fund Source: Title II (Pending Grant Allocation)
   Amount: $17,515.10

   ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

   e. Inservice Program for Adding an Endorsement in Autism Spectrum Disorder K-12 (Gadsden County School District)

   Fund Source: N/A
   Amount: $0.00

   ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

   f. Florida ESOL Endorsement Matrix and Inservice Program for ESOL Endorsement

   Fund Source: N/A
   Amount: $0.00
   ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

g. Farm Ed Agriculture Lab

Fund Source: Industry Certification Incentive Dollars
Amount: $19,000

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

i. Gadsden County Classroom Teacher Agreement 2024 – 2027 Collective Bargaining Agreement

Fund Source: N/A
Amount: N/A

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

8. EDUCATIONAL ISSUES

a. Medical Physicals

Fund Source: 1100E
Amount: $4,000.00

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

b. Gadsden County School District 2025 – 2026 Annual School Safety Risk Assessment Report, and 2025 – 2026 Threat Management Data

Fund Source: N/A
Amount: N/A

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

<u>ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION</u>

Items preceded by an asterisk (*) were removed from the consent agenda at the beginning of the meeting and acted upon during the discussion portion of the agenda.

*7. AGREEMENTS/CONTRACT/PROJECT APPLICATIONS

c. Tallahassee State College & Gadsden County Schools Dual Enrollment Articulation Agreement

Fund Source: FEFP
Amount: Undetermined – Based upon student enrollment

Mr. Key stated that agenda item #7c is an annual agreement that allows our high school students, primarily those in grades 10 through 12, to enroll in courses at Tallahassee State College and earn college credit while still in high school. He stated that if you recall, we had several students at our most recent graduation who earned Associate of Arts (A.A.) degrees. He stated that they were able to achieve this by participating in dual enrollment programs through Tallahassee State College, Florida State University, and Florida A&M University. He stated that this is an annual agreement that state requirements mandate we renew each year. He stated that in addition, one important update that may have been overlooked is the addition of the Corrections Program**.** He stated that previously, this agreement only included the A.A. degree pathway, but now students also have the opportunity to participate in the Corrections Program through dual enrollment. Ms. Hannigon stated that she wanted to highlight that this is not simply a carryover of last year's agreement. She stated that the addition of the Corrections Program is a significant change. She stated with that in mind, she wanted to address the financial impact. She stated that during our recent financial workshop, we discussed the district's FEFP funding and the fact that we are facing a deficit this year. She stated that as we expand this program, there is the potential for additional costs depending on how many students enroll. She stated that she wanted to bring attention to that aspect and ask whether this has already been discussed with our finance staff. She stated that the Superintendent mentioned a goal of approximately 20 students participating in this program, so I simply want to make sure we are considering the financial implications as we move forward.

Dr. Sylvia Jackson stated that dual enrollment is a voluntary opportunity for our students. She stated that while we may hope or project that an additional 20 students will enroll, there is no guarantee that will happen. She stated that students who choose the law enforcement or Corrections pathway may decide not to participate in other dual enrollment courses. She stated that ultimately, enrollment depends on student interest. She stated that historically, students who participate in dual enrollment have met certain GPA requirements, and that trend has remained fairly consistent. She stated that the purpose of every dual enrollment program—whether through Tallahassee State College, Florida State University, or Florida A&M University—is to provide advanced learning opportunities comparable to those available in other school districts. She stated that regarding the financial impact on the district, it truly depends on student interest and enrollment. The number of participating students and the programs they choose will ultimately determine the overall cost. Mr. Key stated that when this Corrections Program was presented to us a couple of months ago, we learned that it provides an outstanding opportunity for our students. Graduates can leave high school and enter the workforce earning approximately $62,000 annually**.** He stated that this program benefits not only our students but also our community by preparing young people for immediate employment after graduation. He stated that while there are costs associated with the program, if I recall correctly from that presentation, Sheriff Morris Young pledged financial support to help offset those expenses. He stated that he believes the contribution was somewhere between $10,000 and $20,000, although he doesn't remember the exact amount. He stated that if memory serves him correctly, those funds were intended to help cover dual enrollment costs for participating students. He stated that overall, this is a tremendous opportunity for our students to graduate from high school with career-ready skills and move directly into the workforce. Dr. Sylvia Jackson stated that **c**ertainly is an advantage. She stated that ultimately, though, students must decide whether they want to take advantage of the opportunity. It is an excellent option for those who choose to participate. Ms. Hannigon stated that considering the discussions we've had today; she wants to state for the record that she does not oppose this opportunity. She stated that she doesn't want anyone to misunderstand her comments or assume otherwise. She stated that her concern is simply about our spending. She stated that right now, our district is facing approximately a $1.3 million FEFP funding deficit**,** and she believe we should continue having conversations about how expanding programs may affect our budget going forward. She stated that this is an excellent opportunity. Yes, participation depends entirely on student interest and enrollment. She stated however, we should remain mindful that these programs are funded through the same resources we are currently struggling to balance. She stated that she also appreciates the Superintendent sharing additional information about the program. She stated that many items appear on the consent agenda and receive blanket approval, but some of them deserve public discussion. She stated that our community should know about the positive opportunities the Gadsden County School District is providing for students. She stated that sometimes she asks for an item to be pulled from the consent agenda not because she oppose it, but because she believe the public deserves to hear about the work we are doing. She stated that these board meetings are an appropriate place to share that information.

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

h. Tiny House Sale

Fund Source: GTC - General Fund
Amount: $60,000 - $75,000

Major Willie Jackson (Director, Gadsden Technical College) stated that we are requesting the Board's approval to sell the tiny house constructed by our students. He stated that the home was showcased during the Parade of Homes with an estimated value of approximately $75,000, and feedback from attendees indicated that they believed that was a reasonable price. He stated that the actual cost of materials was a little less than $30,000, with much of the labor provided by our students. He stated that additionally, approximately $15,000 of the material costs were covered through grant funding. He stated that based on conversations with a house mover, we estimate it will cost about $15,000 to move and set up the home. He stated that would place the total investment for a buyer at approximately $65,000, which is why we are recommending a selling price between $60,000 and $75,000. He stated that our goal is to keep the total cost as close to $60,000 as possible, particularly if the home can benefit a family in need. Mr. Frost wanted to know how was the selling process determined. He stated that years ago, he submitted a bid on district property through a sealed bid process. He stated that although he was the successful bidder, people questioned whether he had received special treatment because he was on the Board. He stated that he ultimately chose not to go through with the purchase because he wanted to avoid any appearance of impropriety. He stated that if one of us were to purchase this house, he wants to make sure the process protects everyone involved. Major stated that would be the next step after receiving the Board's approval to sell. He stated that at that point, we would meet with Dr. Jackson and the attorney to determine the proper legal process—whether we advertise the home for sale, use sealed bids, or work through a realtor. Mrs. Minnis stated that once a realtor is selected, we will work through that process. She stated that we also must ensure that we comply with the ethics code so there is no appearance that anyone is receiving personal gain from the sale of Board property. Ms. Hannigon stated that she would recommend that this item be tabled. She stated that she understood this item was coming before the Board not only for approval to sell, but also for us to approve the method of sale. We have always known the intent was to build the home and eventually sell it. However, hearing tonight that the method of sale has not yet been determined raises additional questions. She stated that she mentioned to the Superintendent that since the district currently has a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) out for a realtor to market vacant district properties, perhaps this property could be included in that process. She stated that she knows the RFQ does not close until July 15, so she understands there may be a desire to move more quickly. She stated that still, she was hesitant to simply vote to approve the sale tonight without knowing how the sale will actually be conducted. Major Jackson stated that our intent is to move the process along as quickly as possible. He stated that he was under the impression that the only action needed tonight was the Board's approval to sell the house. He stated that he did not believe the sale process itself would need to come back before the Board. Mr. Frost stated that he was glad this discussion came up because people have already asked him when the house was being sold, and he didn't know what to tell them. He stated that he believes what Major Jackson is asking for tonight is simply permission to sell the house. He stated that then staff can come back with the details of how they intend to conduct the sale. He stated that he just doesn’t want people saying the Board sold the house without us understanding what was happening. Major Jackson stated correct, we are only requesting approval to sell. Mr. Key stated that once the Board grants permission to sell, we are obligated to follow whatever legal process is required. He stated that if necessary, staff would return to the Board with a recommendation to approve the sale to a specific purchaser after that legal process has been completed. He stated for example, if we use a realtor, the realtor will attempt to obtain the best price within the approved range. He stated that if we use sealed bids, we would generally be required to accept the highest qualified bid unless the Board establishes legal parameters beforehand. He stated that as an example, if the Board wished to limit eligibility to families within a certain income range, that would have to be established as part of the process and approved if legally permissible. He stated tonight, we are simply requesting permission to proceed with selling the tiny house using whatever legal option is available and within the price range Major Jackson has presented. Mrs. Minnis stated that when staff asked for my opinion, my concern was that the tiny house is Board property. She stated that Board facilities, equipment, and students were used to construct it. She stated that therefore, she believed the Board should first decide whether it even wanted to sell the home. She stated that the Board could have decided to retain it for instructional purposes or use it for another district need. She stated that staff does not have the authority to sell Board property without Board approval, which is why she recommended bringing this item before you first. Mr. Scott wanted to know if it would be legal for us to limit the sale to buyers within a certain income bracket. He wanted to know if that would restrict the competition. Mrs. Minnis stated that it would limit the pool of buyers, but if the Board's purpose is to provide affordable housing or benefit a needy family, there may be a legitimate public purpose for doing so. Mr. Scott stated that wasn't part of the original project. He stated that there were no conditions attached when the students built the house. Mrs. Minnis stated that when the project was originally approved, there was no discussion about selling the house. She stated that the Board simply approved students constructing the project. She stated that this is a separate decision. She stated that the Board could decide to sell it, retain it, or use it for another purpose. Mr. Key stated that his thinking was similar to how counties and municipalities sometimes develop affordable housing projects. He stated that he doesn’t know whether that approach would legally apply here, which is why he said we would rely on legal counsel before moving forward. Mr. Scott stated that counties operate under different statutes and regulations. He stated that they can't simply declare something affordable housing without following those requirements. Mrs. Minnis stated that was correct. She stated that municipalities and counties operate under different statutory authority than school districts. She stated that school districts have different legal flexibility. She stated that if her recommendation caused any confusion, she apologize. She stated that her intent was simply to ensure the Board authorized the sale before staff proceeded. Ms. Hannigon stated that this discussion reinforces a point she previously shared with the Superintendent. She stated that she believes our agenda item cover sheets should provide more background information. She stated that if this cover sheet had explained when the Board originally approved construction of the tiny house and summarized that action, we would not be relying on everyone's memory tonight. She stated that the cover sheet currently tells us only what action is requested, the fiscal impact, and the funding source. She stated that including a brief history on recurring items would help the Board make more informed decisions and move meetings along more efficiently. She stated that with that said, she pulled Items 7c, 7h, and 7j for separate discussion.

Following discussion, Ms. Stacey S. Hannigon made a motion to approve all the remaining consent agenda items with the exception of items 7c, 7h, and 7j. The motion was seconded by Charlie D. Frost and carried unanimously,

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

j. Board Approval of the Execution of FEMA Contract 4673-016-R to Replace Gadsden County High School Generator

Fund Source: FEMA Grant: $1,218,090.00 (75%) and General Fund: $406,030.00 (25%)
Amount: $406,030.00

Dr. Sylvia Jackson stated that this item concerns the execution of the FEMA contract to replace the generator at Gadsden County High School. She stated that approximately two years ago, the Board approved our request to apply for a FEMA grant to replace the school's generator because the existing generator has limited capacity. She stated that during hurricanes and other emergency events, there are areas of the high school—including the special needs shelter—that do not have sufficient heating or air conditioning when operating on generator power. She stated that we submitted the FEMA application in April 2023, and in February 2026 we received notification that our application had been approved. She stated that the funding will allow us to replace the current generator with a larger unit capable of providing power to the entire campus during emergency situations. She stated that this is a very expensive project, so whenever we have an opportunity to secure outside funding for the majority of the cost, it would be a significant missed opportunity not to pursue it. She stated that as with most FEMA agreements, this is a 75/25 cost reimbursement grant**.** FEMA reimburses 75% of the project cost, while the district is responsible for the remaining 25%. She stated the reimbursement process works as follows: when we receive an invoice from the vendor, we submit that invoice to FEMA. FEMA then reimburses the district for its share, and our Finance Department issues payment to the vendor. She stated that has been my experience with previous FEMA projects. Ms. Hannigon stated that her concern was whether the district would have to pay the full amount upfront before receiving reimbursement. She stated that from Dr. Jackson's explanation, it sounds like we can submit the invoices to FEMA and receive reimbursement before making payment. Dr. Jackson stated yes, that has been my experience. Ms. Hannigon stated that her second question relates to Section 9B on page 358, which states that the State of Florida's obligation to pay under this agreement is contingent upon annual legislative appropriations. She wanted Dr. Jackson to confirm that the state's 75% share—approximately $1.2 million—has already been appropriated and is available for Gadsden County. Dr. S**ylvia** Jackson stated that was her understanding. Ms. Hannigon stated that her other concern involves the district's required contribution of approximately $406,030. She stated that according to the agenda item, our share will come from the General Fund. She stated that given everything we're facing financially, she wanted to know specifically how we plan to pay our portion while also addressing the many other facility needs throughout the district. Dr. Sylvia Jackson stated that we do have funding sources that are earmarked for facilities and maintenance. She stated that additionally, part of the district's required 25% match may be satisfied through in-kind services, including administrative work performed by Finance staff and other personnel involved in managing the grant. She stated that the majority of our contribution, however, will come from the General Fund through funds designated for facilities and maintenance. She stated that while we certainly have difficult financial decisions ahead and must reduce expenditures where possible, there are certain obligations that remain unavoidable. She stated that we must continue to fund personnel, maintain facilities related to health and safety, transport students, and provide the instruction required by the State of Florida. She stated that from her perspective, this grant represents an opportunity to receive substantial federal assistance for a much-needed project. She stated that she would simply say, "Thank you, FEMA." We may not have another opportunity like this for quite some time. She stated that this generator will benefit us not only during emergency management situations but whenever reliable backup power is needed. Ms. Johnson stated that because of the work she does outside of the School Board, she has spent time at the special needs shelter during hurricanes, and I am grateful that our community has a safe place for residents to go. She stated that many people in our rural county live in homes that are not safe during severe storms. She stated that she has worked at the special needs shelter, and I know firsthand how important it is. She stated that during Hurricane Michael, many of us remember that portions of Highway 12 and Interstate 10 were almost unrecognizable because of the devastation. She stated that she was grateful that we're being proactive and planning ahead for our community. She stated that we have a responsibility to protect our residents, especially those with special needs. She stated yes, it's a significant expense, but sometimes we have to invest in projects that protect our people. She stated to Board Member Hannigon, she was glad she pulled this item because it gives us an opportunity to discuss it publicly and highlight something positive we're doing for our community. Ms. Hannigon stated that she absolutely appreciates this request. She stated that she has worked at the special needs shelter through my role with the Health Department, so she understands the need. She stated that she has been at both Gadsden County High School and East Gadsden High School during emergencies when portions of the facilities lacked air conditioning for special needs residents. She stated that she certainly appreciates this opportunity and the federal funding. She stated however, she also has a responsibility to discuss the district's required local contribution, which is nearly $406,000, while we're simultaneously discussing a $1.3 million FEFP shortfall and concerns about our fund balance. She stated that she can't evaluate this item in isolation. She stated that we have to consider it within the broader financial picture facing the district. She stated that Dr. Jackson also mentioned that part of our match may consist of in-kind services. She stated that the total project cost is approximately $1.6 million, based on the quote we submitted with our original FEMA application. She stated that her understanding is that the quote included both labor and materials. She stated that given that, she was struggling to understand how our required contribution can be offset through in-kind services if the original estimate already accounted for labor and materials. Dr. Sylvia Jackson stated that **w**hen we submitted the application, Ring Power was the only company that provided us with a quote. She stated that Ring Power has extensive experience working with FEMA and emergency management agencies on generator replacement projects. She stated that since this is my first experience overseeing a generator replacement of this magnitude, I honestly don't know whether the final cost will increase or decrease. She stated that if, before installation begins, we determine that the actual cost exceeds the amount approved by FEMA, we still have the option to decline the grant. She stated that as long as installation has not begun, we can decide that the funding is insufficient and choose not to move forward. She stated that remains an option available to the district.

Ms. Hannigon stated that **con**sidering that the original application was submitted nearly three years ago, it's certainly possible that the pricing has changed. She stated that she doesn't know whether Ring Power would still honor a three-year-old quote. Dr. Jackson stated that with the smaller generator grant for Havana Magnet School, Ring Power honored its quoted price even though more than a year had passed before we received funding. She stated that this also gives me an opportunity to remind the public how important the proposed ½-cent sales tax is. She stated that we certainly need that additional revenue source to help address major capital improvements like this. Me. Hannigon stated that she had one final question for the Superintendent or Finance. She wanted to know have we identified specifically where the district's $406,000 contribution will come from. Mrs. Bruner stated that **w**e're currently reconciling several previous FEMA projects that are being closed out. She stated that some projects were ultimately removed because of timeline issues and other circumstances. She stated that we're continuing to work with our consultant, Rostan, but we're hopeful that insurance proceeds associated with previous projects will be available to help cover this cost. Mr. Key stated that he would also point out that the Board originally asked us to pursue a larger generator for Gadsden County High School. He stated that he certainly understands Board concerns, but he also wants to remind everyone that we're entering a new fiscal year. He stated that we've had insurance funds sitting unused for several years, and he has consistently said we need to utilize those funds instead of allowing them to remain idle. He stated that had we used insurance funds for certain projects in the past rather than General Fund dollars, we might not be facing some of the financial challenges we're discussing today. He stated that those insurance funds are available to support projects like this—projects that benefit both our schools and the community. Using those funds means we won't necessarily have to rely on General Fund dollars that are needed to address our budget shortfall. Ms. Hannigon stated that since the Superintendent mentioned that, she has one clarification. She stated that the agenda states that the district's contribution will come from the General Fund. She stated that if staff later determines that the funding will instead come from insurance proceeds, will this item need to come back before the Board for approval? Mr. Key stated that technically, what we're referring to as "insurance funds" are still General Fund dollars that have been designated for facilities-related purposes. He stated that because those funds are already set aside, Board approval tonight would still allow us to utilize them for this project without bringing the item back. Dr. Sylvia Jackson stated one final point regarding the proposed **½-**cent sales tax. She stated that one of the recommendations in the OPPAGA report was that the district expand its options for financing large capital projects. She stated that historically, we've tended to pay cash for major projects—such as the addition at Havana Magnet School—rather than leveraging our financial capacity through financing over time. She stated that the report suggested that we consider a broader range of financing options rather than paying for every major capital project upfront. She stated that there are additional financial strategies available to the district, and we should continue exploring those options as we move forward.

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

9. CITIZEN COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

Mrs. Denise Hannah (Citizen) addressed the Board and stated that for her School Board Member representing District 5, thank you for bringing this up. She stated however, she does have a concern. She stated that when we're trying to increase opportunities for exceptional students in Gadsden County, she heard the Superintendent mention adding 20-plus students. She stated that she would like to see that number doubled to 40-plus. Mr. Key stated that the number he was referring to was for correctional students. Mrs. Hannah thanked Mr. Key for the correction. She wanted to know what does FEFP stand for. She stated that she wanted to address the discussion about the budget deficit. She stated that she doesn't believe we should look at this solely as a deficit issue when we're talking about expanding opportunities for students to excel. She stated that as she reviewed the financial information, she noticed we're planning to pay T-Mobile approximately $41,000. She stated that made her wonder where those funds are coming from. She stated that if we can afford technology expenditures, can we not also find funding to expand student opportunities, especially since renovations at one of our schools should reduce some future expenditures? She stated that she believes expanding the dual enrollment program is one of the best advertisements for Gadsden County Schools. She stated that she recently read in the newspaper about the number of students participating in dual enrollment. She stated that in fact, Harmony Harris, the sister of one of your employees, is one of those students. She stated that if we invited these students back to speak about their experiences and serve as ambassadors for Gadsden County's dual enrollment program, she thinks it would be well worth the investment. She stated that she knows there are funding opportunities available. She stated that we may have to look a little harder, but she would not want to limit student opportunities simply because we believe the dollars aren't there. She stated that if we can find funding for a generator, we can certainly find funding to generate more dual enrollment opportunities. She stated that one final point that is not on my agenda. She stated that regarding the tiny house, it was advertised during the Parade of Homes with a price of $75,000. She stated that it was not advertised as housing for low-income buyers. She stated that she heard someone say that if something isn't in writing, then it wasn't stated. She stated well, that information wasn't included in the published advertisement. She stated that she would simply ask that you review how the home was originally presented before making any final decisions regarding its sale.

Mr. Frost stated that he wanted to something regarding dual enrollment. He stated that we're not talking about reducing the existing dual enrollment program. He stated that we're discussing adding approximately 20 additional students through the correctional dual enrollment program. She stated that the current dual enrollment program will continue as it has. He stated that this proposal simply expands the program. Mr. Key stated that he had just received a text from Chairman McMillan. He stated that the donations committed to this program now total $24,000. He stated that earlier he mentioned $20,000, but that amount has increased to $24,000. He stated that these donations are specifically for the correctional dual enrollment program. He stated that this shows that members of our community recognize the importance of this initiative and are willing to support it financially. He stated that one of the major contributors is Sheriff Morris Young. He stated that there is funding available if we ask for community support, which helps offset the costs so the district is not responsible for covering the entire expense.

Dr. Jackson stated for the record that FEFP stands for the Florida Education Finance Program. Mrs. Bruner stated that students participating in our dual enrollment program are included in our Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) student count. Ms. Hannigon stated that she would like to add to the previous discussion. She stated that she agrees 100 percent with Mrs. Hannah about finding the money. She stated that in fact, that's the foundation of my concern. She stated that this year we're already looking at approximately a $1.3 million deficit in the fund we're discussing. She stated that as we move forward and consider expanding this program, she want to ensure we're evaluating the financial impact from every angle because, ultimately, funding one initiative may mean we can no longer fund something else. She stated that we need to understand exactly what those trade-offs will be as we finalize the budget. She stated that regarding item 7j, which she pulled from the consent agenda, she knows this motion may not pass, but she want to make it nonetheless. She stated that because of the uncertainty surrounding the district's obligation to cover approximately $406,000 from the General Fund, she moves that we table item 7J until we receive more definitive information on how that obligation will be funded. She stated that she understands, Dr. Jackson, that you mentioned June 30, but she believes we should wait until we have greater certainty before moving forward. Ms. Johnson stated that we have a motion. The motion died for lack of a second.

Mr. Steve Scott made a motion to accept the Superintendent's recommendation to approve agenda item #'s 7C, 7H, and 7J**.** The motion was seconded by Mr. Charlie D. Frost and carried with Mr. Scott, Ms. Johnson, and Mr. Frost voting "aye". Ms. Hannigon voted "nay".

10. EDUCATIONAL ITEMS BY THE SUPERINTENDENT

Mr. Key began with two important reminders: a workshop was scheduled for June 30 at 10:00 a.m.**,** and a special board meeting had already been scheduled for Tuesday, July 21. He noted that the Board's regular meeting was currently scheduled for July 28, which conflicts with the PAEC Leadership Conference, taking place July 27–29. He asked whether the Board would consider moving the regular meeting from July 28 **to** July 21, provided there were no budget or finance matters requiring action on July 28. He also informed the Board that members would need to vote on attendance at the PAEC Leadership Conference. He explained that, under Florida Statute 1001.39, travel expenses exceeding $600 require prior Board approval. He added that the district's policies would also need to be updated to reflect the statutory requirements. He then provided an update on student enrollment and staffing. He stated that district staff were contacting parents by mail and telephone to confirm whether they wanted their children to attend Havana Magnet School or West Gadsden**.** He stated that parents were also being informed that if they chose a school outside of their attendance zone, transportation would be their responsibility. He reported that Human Resources was finalizing teacher and staff assignments for the 2026–2027 school year and had begun entering personnel into the district's system. He stated that employees would be contacted directly regarding their assignments. He addressed comments made by the union president during the previous Board meeting. He expressed concern that the remarks appeared to invite Board members into the collective bargaining process and cautioned Board members against becoming involved in bargaining discussions with teachers. He explained that the union had indicated negotiations could not proceed without requested financial documents, including the Educational Funding Report (EFR). He noted that State Law establishes deadlines for completing negotiations and that districts are now expected to declare an impasse much earlier if an agreement cannot be reached. He emphasized that the State has allocated salary funds specifically for teachers and that the district is legally required to distribute those funds. He stated that the goal is to place the money in teachers' hands before October 1. He pointed out that teachers did not receive this year's salary allocation until April, even though the amount had already been identified earlier in the school year. He stated that waiting for additional financial reports, he said, would not significantly change the district's financial outlook and could unnecessarily delay teacher compensation. He stated that turning to the district's financial condition, the Superintendent discussed statewide budget shortfalls affecting school districts across Florida. He noted that neighboring Leon County Schools had responded by closing schools, reducing staff, cutting athletics, and eliminating student services. He stated that Gadsden County faces similar decisions. He stated the Board had already taken two significant cost-saving measures by voting to close James A. Shanks Middle School and Carter Parramore Academy (CPA)**.** He stated that by simply closing those facilities, he said, would generate substantial savings in utilities alone, estimating that one building costs more than $300,000 annually to operate. He also explained that personnel costs represent another significant area of savings. He stated that using a conservative example, he noted that eliminating or not filling 50 positions **w**ith an average salary of $30,000 would reduce expenditures by approximately $1.5 million. He stressed that the district's expenditures are directed toward personnel, student services, and school operations—not unnecessary spending. He stated that therefore, difficult decisions must be made regarding where reductions should occur. He stated that although school closures and staff reductions have already been implemented, he stated that he does not support cutting student services. He stated that with student enrollment already declining, he believes the district should focus on expanding educational opportunities rather than reducing them. He shared several initiatives currently under consideration, including expanding school academies, increasing robotics programs, and developing a pre-teaching program. He noted that Chairman McMillan had recently met with an individual regarding the initiative, and the district is exploring launching the program at Havana Magnet School and eventually at the new K-8 school. He stated that the long-term goal is to create a local teacher pipeline and strengthen educational opportunities for Gadsden County students. He concluded by reiterating his request to move the Board's regular meeting from July 28 to July 21, provided no mandatory finance matters required action on July 28. He also reminded Board members that attendance at the PAEC Leadership Conference required Board approval because travel expenses exceeded the statutory threshold.

Mrs. Brun**er** explained that on July 21, the Board would first convene the required hearing, adjourn it, and then reconvene for the regular Board meeting. Mr. Key asked whether there were any mandatory finance items requiring the July 28 meeting. Mrs. Bruner responded that everything could be handled on July 21.Ms. Johnson asked for clarification, confirming that the Superintendent was requesting: 1) To move the regular Board meeting from July 28 to July 21 because of the PAEC Leadership Conference; and 2) To approve Board members who wished to attend the conference. He confirmed that both requests were correct and again referenced the requirements of state statute governing Board member travel. Ms. Johnson invited discussion from Board members.

Ms. Stacey S. Hannigon made a motion to move the July 28 regular Board meeting to July 21. The motion was seconded by Mr. Charlie D. Frost and carried unanimously.

Ms. Johnson returned to the matter of Board attendance at the PAEC Leadership Conference and asked for the Board's pleasure. Ms. Hannigon stated that, to her knowledge, participation in the PAEC conference was not required to maintain Board certifications through the Florida School Boards Association (FSBA). She stated that given the district's financial challenges, she stated she had no objection to not attending but remained open to discussion. Mr. Frost stated that he would like to attend. Ms. Johnson also expressed her desire to attend. Mr. Scott stated that he would be unable to attend. He stated that while he had attended the conference in previous years, he expressed concern about spending money from the General Fund while the district was operating under a budget deficit.

Mr. Charlie D. Frost made a motion for him and Ms. Cathy S. Johnson be authorized to attend the conference. Ms. Johnson asked for a second. During discussion, the motion was amended to include Chairman McMillan, who was participating by telephone and indicated that he also wished to attend. The amended motion authorized Chairman McMillan, Vice Chair Johnson, and Mr. Frost to attend the PAEC Leadership Conference.

The motion was made by Mr. Charlie D. Frost and seconded by Vice Chair Cathy S. Johnson. Chairman McMillan confirmed by telephone that he wished to attend. The motion was approved unanimously with Ms. Johnson, Mr. Frost and Mr. McMillan voting “aye”. Ms. Hannigon and Mr. Scott voted “nay”.

Following the vote, Ms. Hannigon questioned whether Chairman McMillan's participation by telephone was sufficient to legally approve the motion and other actions taken during the meeting. It was determined that the action was legally permissible because Chairman McMillan had been present and participating by telephone throughout the Board meeting.

11. SCHOOL BOARD REQUESTS AND CONCERNS

Mr. Scott wanted to know if July 16 was the deadline for the Realtors. Dr. Jackson stated that we are anticipating that proposals are due by July 15 at 3:00 p.m. Mr. Scott wanted to know if we had anyone showing interest yet. Dr. Jackson stated that we have two interested parties, and a third individual who expressed interest in using the property for an AI-related project. Mr. Scott wanted to know if that included the entire GEMS site as well. Dr. Jackson stated yes, it will all be handled through the same Realtor. Mr. Scott thanked the Superintendent for putting up the "No Trespassing" signs, but they are not stopping people from entering the property. He stated that he also spoke with our insurance carrier, and we likely have a liability issue if someone gets injured there. He stated that he thought we were going to take offers on the gym site first and then decide from there. He stated that since the Realtor proposal deadline is July 15, and this situation started about a month ago when part of the wall collapsed, I remain concerned. Dr. Jackson stated that she understands the need to keep the public safe. She stated that since the last board meeting, we have installed the required six-foot security fencing around the section of the building that is actively collapsing. She stated that the fencing is intended to protect anyone who may come onto the property, including individuals with visual impairments or other special needs. She stated that a person would now have to intentionally climb over the six-foot fence to access the hazardous area. She stated that she also wants to note that the collapsing wall is only one section of the building. Mr. Scott stated that's only one part of the building. He stated that to his understanding, there are other areas that are also deteriorating. He wanted to know if we were doing anything to address those as well. Mr. Key stated that yesterday he reached out to Senator Corey Simon regarding this issue. He stated that we have discussed the possibility of someone taking ownership of the property, but he doubts anyone will want to assume that responsibility. He stated that we recently received a quote for the asbestos abatement at the new school site, and that cost alone is approximately $300,000. He stated that based on that, he can only imagine that the abatement costs for this property would be even higher. He stated that we also received a quote for demolishing the walls, but demolition cannot begin until the required environmental abatement is completed. He stated again, the abatement alone is estimated at approximately $300,000. He stated that as he mentioned, he contacted Senator Simon yesterday while he was in a meeting with him, and he later followed up by phone to discuss assistance from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. He stated that we are waiting to hear back so they can evaluate the property. He stated that there are environmental requirements that must be addressed, and we are hopeful there may be grant opportunities or other funding sources available to help offset these costs. He stated that at this time, the district simply does not have the funding necessary to complete this work. He stated that as he shared during our last board meeting, the estimated cost to clear the site was $1.1 million five years ago. He stated that now, five years later, those costs have undoubtedly increased, and the work still needs to be done. He stated that we are hopeful the Department of Environmental Protection will provide guidance and assistance in the near future. Mr. Scott stated that he'll continue bringing it up until he sees something done about it.

Ms. Hannigon stated that she neglected to mention the budget workshop scheduled for June 30 at 10:00 a.m. She stated that she was informed by Ms. Mary last week that a majority of the board members preferred that meeting time. She stated that she would ask the board to reconsider holding the workshop later in the day. She stated that from the standpoint of transparency and accessibility, she stated that she believes our budget workshops should be scheduled at a time when the public has a greater opportunity to attend and participate. She stated that even if no one attends in person, she believes it is our responsibility to make these meetings as accessible as possible. She stated that as we move forward with the half-cent sales tax referendum, we are asking our community to invest in our school district. She stated that she believes it is only fair that we provide residents with the opportunity to observe and participate in discussions regarding the district's budget and finances. She stated therefore, she respectfully asks her fellow board members to reconsider the 10:00 a.m. meeting time while keeping the meeting on June 30. The Board members decided to keep the budget workshop scheduled for June 30 at 10:00 a.m.

Mr. Frost stated that he wants to encourage everyone to help spread the word about the half-cent sales tax referendum. He stated that he will use trucking as an example. He stated that fuel costs continue to rise. It currently costs him around $1,300 to $1,400 a week to fuel my truck. He stated that other truck drivers are spending even more. He stated that his niece recently told him it cost nearly $2,000 to fill her truck. He stated that when those truckers travel through Gadsden County on their way to destinations like Florida's theme parks, they stop here to buy fuel and other items. He stated that the local half-cent sales tax generated from those purchases helps support our schools. He also reminded people that every time we shop outside our own county, we help fund schools somewhere else. He stated that for example, he recently bought a pair of boots in Leon County, and part of the sales tax from that purchase helped support Leon County schools. He stated that if anyone has questions about the referendum, please contact the district office. He stated that you can speak with Ms. Mary or any district staff member to get accurate information. He stated that don't rely solely on what you read on Facebook. He also wants everyone to understand that if you occasionally see him leave a meeting early, it's because his mother has dementia, and sometimes he need to check on her before returning home.

Ms. Johnson stated that sometimes we need to focus on the positive things happening in Gadsden County instead of always emphasizing the negative. She stated that we have expanded the Havana Library. She stated that we've expanded the Chattahoochee Library. She stated that the new Love's Travel Stop is another example of economic growth. She stated that there are many positive developments taking place throughout our county. She stated let's not act as though everything happening here is negative because that's simply not true. She stated that we also have outstanding programs like the SHIP housing program and many other initiatives that are helping residents throughout Gadsden County. She stated please don't call her expecting her to criticize Gadsden County, because that's not what she is going to do. She stated that she is committed to helping improve our county and building on the good work that's already happening. She stated that we are making progress, and we should recognize that. She stated that we are not the worst of the worst, and she believe we will continue moving in a positive direction.

12. The meeting adjourned at 7:47 P.M.