

## SCHOOL BOARD WORKSHOP

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

October 16, 2023

5:00 P.M.

The workshop was open to the public and electronically recorded.

The following Board members were present: Mr. Leroy McMillan, Chairman; Mrs. Karema D. Dudley; Ms. Cathy S. Johnson; Mr. Steve Scott; 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 5:09 p.m.

2. OPENING PRAYER

Mr. Elijah Key led the opening prayer.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Recited in unison.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

4. ESSER II & III FUNDING UPDATE

Mrs. Farlin shared with the Board a power-point presentation on ESSER III Funding. She stated that it is important for everyone to understand the process, including the goals and the budget. She stated that the RFP is competitive, the RFA is non-competitive and guidance is provided by the Florida Department of Education. She stated that the planning includes input from schools, participating private schools and charter schools. She stated that the grant application is submitted by the established deadline, reviews conducted by the Florida Department of Education, and revisions are made by the district staff. She stated that the Florida Department of Education Program Office give approval, the FDOE Grants Management Office gives approval, DOE 200 is issued, and the school district is notified. She stated that the Superintendent certifies the grant project application. She stated that the planned expenditures are: retrofit/upgrade elementary playgrounds; establish wellness centers to address mental health & wellness; address learning loss through before, during, after school and summer programming; expand learning environments (field trips, visits); promote high school graduation; support recruitment, retention and professional learning; secure progress monitoring licenses; provide charter school allocation; and contract for project management. She stated that the expenditures and encumbrances included retrofit/upgrade elementary playgrounds; addressed learning loss through before, during, after school and summer programming; expanded learning environments (field trips, visits); promoted high school graduation through additional SAT/ACT testing opportunities; supported recruitment, retention of instructional and non-instructional personnel; supported professional learning; secured progress monitoring software licenses; and provided charter school allocation.

Mr. McMillan stated that he was concerned about not returning any of the funding. He stated that the district needed to do what was stated in the grant. The Board wants mental health and wellness addressed at the schools.

Board members asked questions, shared their concerns and made comments during the ESSER III funding update.

Mrs. Dudley stated that Mrs. Farlin would soon be retiring. Mr. Key stated that staff is currently being trained by Mrs. Farlin.

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

a. Personnel 2023 – 2024

Mrs. Dudley stated that any questions should be addressed prior to the October 24<sup>th</sup> Regular Board Meeting.

6. AGREEMENT/CONTRACT/PROJECT APPLICATIONS

a. Request Approval of Bid/Contract

Fund Source: ESSER II  
Amount: \$65,280.00

Mr. John Thomas stated that the district was approved for ESSER funding to upgrade and enhance the current network. He stated that the district is in need of expertise and manpower to configure, install and set infrastructure by using new equipment purchased. He stated that in order for the district to achieve this in a timely manner, the district advertised for Network Engineering Services. He stated that the responses were attached and the recommendation is to approve the bid response and the attached proposed contract. He stated that the proposed contract is for 384 hours. He stated that an engineer is needed because there are only five people in their department and they need assistance with items that have been purchased in order to have the work completed by June 2024. He stated that Comcast would be installing a connection from Tallahassee to Gadsden County High School. He stated that the sign at Gadsden County High School will be updated on October 27<sup>th</sup>. He stated that there would be an update from MediaCom for Havana Magnet School.

b. Purchase of School Buses

Fund Source: Capital Outlay  
Amount: \$437,193.00

Mr. Matthew Bryant stated that the Transportation Department is seeking to purchase three Blue Bird 77 passenger buses from the Florida Transportation Systems, Inc. at a cost of \$145,731.00 per bus totaling \$437,193.00. He stated that the buses will replace buses that have exceeded service-life capacity and need to be removed from the transportation fleet. He stated that the buses are being manufactured and can be ready around February. He stated that the costs of buses are increasing which challenges the district to move as quickly as possible. He stated that these are in addition to the previously approved three buses.

In response to Mr. McMillan's concern whether Board members can be called individually in order to purchase buses when they are available, Mrs. Minnis stated no, the Board can modify its purchasing policy to allow for purchasing in an emergency situation. She stated that to call Board members individually would not be allowed. Mr. McMillan stated that he would follow up on modifying the purchasing policy.

c. Vehicle Purchase from Coggin Toyota at the Avenues and Gadsden County School Board

Fund Source: K-12 American Rescue (IDEA)

Amount: \$52,013.74

Ms. Kesandra Brown stated that the local educational agency agrees that vehicles purchased with IDEA, Part B funds will be used only for IDEA, Part B special education-related activities. This includes transporting students with disabilities to and from school if the students' IEP requires specialized transportation. Vehicles purchased with IDEA, Part B funds may also be used to transport children with disabilities during the school day if related to their special education and related services. Special education staff may also use vehicles for the purposes of IDEA, Part B special education-related activities only. She stated that these restrictions apply even if only a portion of the vehicle cost is covered with IDEA, Part B funds.

In response to Ms. Johnson's concern if the vehicle will have a wheel chair lift, Ms. Brown stated that the vehicle would not have a wheel chair lift but will continue to explore options.

7. SCHOOL FACILITY /PROPERTY

a. Discretionary One-half Cent Capital Outlay Surtax Ballot Resolution

Fund Source: N/A

Amount: N/A

Mr. Key stated that this was the same proposal in 2022. He stated that a step was missed with OPPAGA and could not go on the ballot. He stated that the half cents sales tax is estimated to generate approximately \$2.3M per year for 15 years. He stated that the estimated financial impact would be an increase in revenue for facilities improvements and modernization. He stated that these funds will be appropriated within the district's budget for the fiscal year in which the election occurs.

Mr. Scott stated that he originally objected to putting that kind of taxes on citizens but later changed his opinion when he saw what the legislature was giving to certain school districts for capital outlay. He stated that the district will have to give up capital outlay funding for 3 years with the new school. He stated that this half cent sales tax is for 15 years. He stated that he would not support a blind tax that is being placed on the citizens for 15 years.

Mr. Key stated that the only way to improve and maintain the upkeep of the facilities is to have the half cent sales tax because we cannot do it with the current funding. Mrs. Dudley stated that Gadsden County deserves better. She stated that the referendum can do a lot if written correctly. She stated that she wants to make sure the citizens, the community, and parents have the best. She stated that it is very important and is a start to tackle the facilities problems. Ms. Johnson stated that 15 years maybe too long. She stated that it should be 8 or 9 years. Mr. Scott stated that 15 years is unrealistic.

Dr. Sylvia Jackson stated that the number of years was based on recommendation of best practices and the needs of the district. She stated that there are numerous things that need to be addressed in the district. She stated that in order for OPPAGA to have enough time to do their audits, they require a minimum of 6 months. She stated that the district desperately need the funds for the schools. She stated that this is time sensitive.

Mr. McMillan asked each Board member to be prepared to give their opinion on the sales tax and any other issues at the Regular Board meeting.

Mrs. Dudley stated that the Board is responsible for the economic growth of the County as well as educating students.

## 8. EDUCATIONAL ISSUES

### a. Gadsden County High School Marching Band and Dancers Field Trip Request

Fund Source: N/A

Amount: N/A

### b. School Safety-Reunification Plan

Fund Source: No Cost to the District

Amount: N/A

Mrs. Dudley stated that she attended a professional development workshop and Mrs. Buckhalt did a great job presenting. She asked that Mrs. Buckhalt give an update on the School Safety-Reunification Plan at the next Board meeting. Mr. Key stated that ongoing training is taking place. He stated that this is an overview of the plan.

### c. 2023 – 2024 School Improvement Plans

Fund Source: N/A

Amount: N/A

Mr. McMillan stated that the schools presented to the Board a brief synopsis of their School Improvement Plans at a previous workshop. Mr. Key stated that the School Improvement Plans are UniSIG grant recipients.

## 9. EDUCATIONAL ITEMS BY THE SUPERINTENDENT

Mr. Key clarified a statement that he was concerned last week because 10 people were out at James A. Shanks Middle School, and he sent employees from the district office to assist at the school. He applauded Dr. Jarrett, principal, for finding a way to continue educating the students. He stated that some schools still need employees.

## 10. SCHOOL BOARD REQUESTS AND CONCERNS

None from the Board members.

Mrs. Judith Mandela, teacher, addressed the Board concerning ESSER II funding and amendments. She asked what was the process for teacher incentives. Mr. Key stated that ESSER II is no longer available to amend, but ESSER III can be amended. Mrs. Mandela questioned whether \$4M from ESSER II was reverted back to the State. Mr. McMillan stated that the Governor requested that the funding be returned. Mrs. Dudley stated that was a finance concern and should be addressed to Mr. Mays. Mrs. Farlin clarified that the money was not taken from the district but was applied back to the application. She stated that activities are funded through the grants. She stated that the district did not lose any money. She stated that the funding was reverted back to non-enrollment and academic excellence for every district in the State of Florida.

Mrs. Mandela asked what it would take for a teacher to get a decent chair. Mr. McMillan stated to Mrs. Mandela that she needed to go through the process and inform her principal. Mrs. Mandela stated that many things were being paid out of ESSER II and ESSER III funding. She stated that ESSER II funding was to help mitigate contamination of the environment and the facilities. She stated that it appears that the staff or students were not thought about. She stated that the district has to show that they are concerned about the students and staff. She stated that she would ask her principal for a chair.

Mrs. Dudley stated that as we move forward we needed to find a median to do what is best for the district. Mr. Key stated that the maintenance department is looking for ways to purchase furniture for all the schools.

## 11. The workshop adjourned at 6:45 p.m.