

REGULAR SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

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

September 23, 2025

6:00 P.M.

The meeting was open to the public and electronically recorded.

The following Board members were present: Mr. Leroy McMillan, Chairman; Ms. Stacey S. Hannigon; 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. Ms. Cathy S. Johnson was absent.

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by the Chairman, Mr. Leroy McMillan, at 6:03 p.m.

2. OPENING PRAYER

The opening prayer was led by Elder Andrew Williams of Antioch Missionary Baptist Church.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Recited in unison.

4. RECOGNITIONS

Mr. Key stated that the last three weeks, including this week has been difficult. He stated that the district has lost a staff member in the last three weeks. He recognized the district's student service team, social workers, and psychologists for the job that they have done going out, counseling staff, students, and wherever else may have been needed in the last three weeks. He stated that the district's student service team was called to Madison County High School to help with counseling because one of their students were gun down over the weekend.

Mr. Scott recognized the nursing students at Gadsden Technical College for their efforts in assisting the paramedics during a tragic accident the past week. He thanked the nursing staff for a job well done.

Ms. Hannigon recognized Major Willie Jackson, Gadsden Technical College staff, and Ms. Kerwin Jones for the work they are doing with the students and local residents to prepare them for the workforce, and some to become business owners. She stated that she participated in their induction ceremony for Future Builders of America. She expressed her condolences to the Wilson and Williams families who are currently in bereavement. She thanked Mr. Key for acknowledging our staff that has the difficult task of being the go-between to support our staff in moments like these. She shared with the Board - National School Lunch Week, October 13th – 17th. She encouraged those who can to visit our lunchrooms and show some appreciation to our food service staff.

Mr. Frost recognized the district's public relations person, Ms. Kynadi Harris, for her good work with the district. He also recognized Ms. Caroline McKinnon for providing the testing quarterly report and her good work with the District. He stated that he visited Havana Magnet School and watched a volleyball game the other day where some of the students were not on their best behavior. He stated that someone asked him about it, and he told them that he knew the principal and she did not play. He stated that she took care of the issue with the students. He stated that he and Mr. McMillan volunteered at Gadsden County High School on the

lunch line. He thanked Ms. Cummings for doing a great job when she was principal at West Gadsden Middle School.

Mr. McMillian thanked Ms. Cummings for a job well done at West Gadsden Middle School. He stated that he appreciates her more than she will ever know.

5. CITIZEN COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

Ms. Valerie Harris addressed the Board with her concern about an incident involving her grandson during the summer. She stated that she felt nothing was done about it. She stated that she want the students involved to receive some kind of discipline. Mr. McMillan asked Ms. Harris to contact the Superintendent to discuss the incident involving her grandson.

Ms. Hannigon stated that she wanted to make a note on record again with item #7a, personnel matters. She requested that personnel include a vacancy report to see the big picture of what staffing looks like. Mr. Key stated that the information can be given as a report, but it is not something that needs Board action.

ITEMS FOR CONSENT

Mr. McMillan added to the agenda item #10c – AG EXPO Field Trip (Moultrie, Georgia) – Gadsden Technical Institute. He entertained a motion to approve the remaining consent agenda. The motion was made by Mr. Steve Scott, seconded by Mr. Charlie D. Frost and carried unanimously.

6. REVIEW OF MINUTES

- a. July 24, 2025, 6:00 p.m. – Special School Board Meeting
- b. August 5, 2025, 5:30 p.m. – Tentative Budget Hearing
- c. August 26, 2025, 4:30 p.m. – School Board Financial Workshop
- d. August 26, 2025, 6:00 p.m. - Regular School Board Meeting

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

7. 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.

8. AGREEMENTS/CONTRACT/PROJECT APPLICATIONS

- a. Audit – Internal School Accounts

Fund Source: General Fund

Amount: \$75,000 (\$25,000 per year)

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

- b. TOP-2 Gadsden County School District (GCSD)

Fund Source: N/A

Amount: N/A

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

- c. Florida Postsecondary Comprehensive Transition Program

Fund Source: Florida Center for Students with Unique Abilities Grant

Amount: \$300,000.00

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

9. STUDENT MATTERS

- a. Student Expulsion – See back-up material

Case #006-2526-0231

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

- b. Student Expulsion – See back-up material

Case #007-2526-0231

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

10. EDUCATIONAL ITEMS

- a. District K-12 Comprehensive Evidence-Based Reading Plan

Fund Source: N/A

Amount: N/A

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

- b. Student Code of Conduct Amendment – Section VI: Extracurricular Activities

Fund Source: N/A

Amount: N/A

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

- c. AG EXPO Field Trip (Moultrie, Georgia) – Gadsden Technical College

Fund Source: Perkins, V Rural and Innovative Grant

Amount: \$840.00

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

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.

*8. AGREEMENTS/CONTRACT/PROJECT APPLICATIONS

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

Fund Source: N/A

Amount: N/A

Mr. Scott stated that he was opposed to the discretionary one-half-cent capital outlay surtax. He stated that the county just raised taxes, and the city just raised taxes as well. He stated that this would be a lot of money charging the citizens. He stated that we should not need as much money for capital outlay, especially when we have to schools closed. He stated that he objected to the acquired land on page #76. He stated that he was also concerned about the sales surtax taking effect on January 1, 2025, and shall remain in effect for the period of fifteen (15) years. He stated that the district has land. He stated that if anything, we need to get rid of land not being used. He stated that he know the district need the money to do other construction and to fix other schools as well, but the district has property. He stated that the district could sell property before raising taxes. He stated that the district has not done anything with its vacant properties. He stated that it has been over 15 years for some of the properties. He stated that he wanted to sell some of the vacant properties first, and then discuss raising taxes if needed to.

Mr. Frost stated that when Mr. Scott said raising taxes, people would think that their taxes are going to be raised. He stated that the district is talking about a one half-cent sales tax. He stated that if anybody drives in from the interstate and purchases something, it means that we are going to get some money out of it. He stated that when a truck driver driving an 18-wheeler spend \$1200 a week on fuel that means that we would get something from the purchase of the fuel. He stated that the district need help in maintaining our

schools. He stated that we are not raising anyone's taxes. He stated that we would be getting money from the sales tax, which you already pay. He stated that when we go to Leon County and spend money, they have sales tax there that helps pay for their schools. He stated that we want to be able to build up and maintain our schools just as Leon County.

Mr. McMillian asked for a better understanding on what we are going to do with the money that comes in from the sales tax. He stated that there are areas reference to borrowing money in bonds. He stated that he does not know why the district would have to do all of that because we would start getting into something different when you say something about borrowing money. He stated that he wanted to see this item tabled to allow him time to have a chance to speak to Mrs. Bruner and Dr. Jackson.

Ms. Hannigon asked the Superintendent what was the time frame? Mr. Key stated this is the same time frame that we used the last time. He stated that there are some things that Dr. Jackson may have rushed to get the document on the agenda. He stated that the dates listed are the dates from the last time the document was submitted to the Board. He stated that this is the same document that the Board approved in 2023 around the same time. He stated that there is a time frame for OPPAGA to do what they have to do in order to get the document back to us so we can get it to the citizens. He stated that he was okay with having the item tabled and brought back to the Board. Mrs. Minnis stated that OPPAGA usually takes about 6 weeks to complete their reviews and interviews in order to get approval to be given to the Supervisor of Elections for placement on the ballot. Ms. Hannigon asked if once the Board approve the resolution, is there anything else that needs to be done on the School Board side. Mrs. Minnis stated that OPPAGA does a very thorough interview with the attorney, Board members and district staff. Ms. Hannigon stated that a timeline will definitely help her, and the starting date of November 3rd was listed for tracking. She stated that on page #78 in the middle of the page starting with the paragraph to upgrade aging schools, on line #4 it talks about the surtax capital outlay plan. She wanted to know if that plan was already in existence from the last go round. Mr. Key stated that it was not. Ms. Hannigon stated that to add to the confidence of our citizens, the district should have an outline on what is covered through capital outlay and how much funding. She stated that not just for today, but for years, and dare to say for generations to come. She stated that as far as her accountability, again, she believe what will add to the confidence of our residents to vote for such an action is that the district have a plan as clearly as possible that speaks to how the dollars will be utilized to benefit our students and, how to move forward with our school system. She stated that she was open to having a workshop to further discuss and dive deeper into it and iron out whatever technicalities we need to iron out. Mr. Key stated that there is a time frame because it still must go to the County Commission before it goes any further. He stated that all of the language is standard required language. He stated that it is not saying that we are going to go out and buy land, but that land can be purchased. He stated that it is just saying what you can utilize this funding for because it is along the lines of facilities. He stated that we must put our students in the very best environment to educate them. He stated that without funding we could not do that. He stated that the district could not continue to spend general fund money on facilities. He stated that when he go to Leon County to purchase something, he has no problem with paying the cost because he is making a purchase for that cost. He stated that he does not worry about what the tax is. He stated that it is all about what we want to do and what we want to support. He stated that we are going to have to start supporting our schools in Gadsden County. He stated that Ms. Mandela is one of our biggest cheerleaders when it comes to our facilities.

Mr. McMillian stated that he do not think we give the citizens of Gadsden County the credit due. He stated that he believe with all his heart that if this plan is put together and we set it in place the way we should, make the corrections that we need to and put it to the voters, he believe the district will win.

Mr. Key stated that when the board approves the discretionary one-half-cent capital outlay surtax ballot resolution, committees would be formed in all the schools. He stated that the committees would come together and speak about the things that are needed for the schools.

Mrs. Minnis added for correction that there is a surtax capital outlay plan – Exhibit A. She stated that the plan is a much-generalized plan that was submitted and approved by OPPAGA last year. She stated that the Board has the ultimate say on whether or not this particular one will move forward.

Following discussion, Mr. Steve Scott made a motion to table agenda item #8d until a special meeting could be held on October 7th. The motion was seconded by Mr. Charlie D. Frost and carried unanimously.

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

11. EDUCATIONAL ITEMS BY THE SUPERINTENDENT

Mr. Key stated that the academic services update has information on the district's data for performance from PM1 testing compared to last year. He stated that overall; the data reflects important steps in the right direction. He stated that the district is seeing fewer students at Level 1 and more students moving toward proficiency, particularly in mathematics. He stated that however, challenges remain. He stated that Level 1 percentages are still very high across all subjects, ranging from 52% in intermediate grades ELA to 85% in Pre-K. He stated that growth into Levels 4 and 5 – true indicators of proficiency and mastery – remains minimal. He stated that persistent early learning gaps in Pre-K and primary grades also point to the need for continued focus and foundational skills.

Chattahoochee Elementary – Principal Zola Akins and Assistant Principal Sallie Murphy shared information on the state of the school. Ms. Akins stated that Chattahoochee Elementary School is Buzzing for a B, Buzzing with purpose driven by data. She shared a data overview and the 2025 – 2026 goals – ELA % Proficiency – (2022-2023) 3rd grade 13, 4th grade 19, 5th grade 34, overall 22; (2023 – 2024) 3rd grade 28, 4th grade 32, 5th grade 26, overall 28; (2024 – 2025) 3rd grade 35, 4th grade 14, 5th grade 16, overall 35; 2025 – 2026 Goal – 3rd grade 60/16, 4th grade 50/11, 5th grade 50/6, overall 50/30; Mathematics % Proficient – (2022 – 2024) 3rd grade 24, 4th grade 24, 5th grade 41 (overall 31; (2023 – 2024) 3rd grade 33, 4th grade 28, 5th grade 31, overall 30; (2024 – 2025) 3rd grade 63, 4th grade 14, 5th grade 26, Overall 42; 2025 – 2026 Goal – 3rd grade 75/21, 4th grade 60/13, 5th grade 60/7, Overall 60/36; Science % Proficient – (2022 – 2023) 5th grade 55, (2023 – 2024) 5th grade 13, (2024 – 2025) 5th grade 10; 2025 – 2026 Goal - 5th grade 60/7; Overall School Points/Predicted Grade, ELA Grade 3-60, ELA Achievement -50, ELA Learning Gains – 50, Math Achievement – 60, Math Learning Gains – 75, Science Achievement – 60 355/6=59, Predicted Grade – B; Attendance Data, 75% of students have perfect attendance. 122 students out of 161 (total enrollment); Discipline Data – 1 bus suspension, 4 minor offenses, 2 out of school suspensions, total suspensions = 7 total (first nine weeks of school); PBIS Initiative – Smarty Parties, Attend – Dance, Class Goal Setting, Student Clubs, Parent University (10/10/25) – New Worlds Reading; Goal to Increase parent and student engagement; Strategic Plan for Continued Success: Weekly Instructional Walkthroughs with weekly Look-Fors (observations, Formal and Informal classroom walkthroughs; Weekly PLC meetings with our Instructional Coaches (ELA, Math & Science); Common Planning and Collaboration; Tailored support for teachers and leaders (Leadership meetings focus on PD for leaders to improve the instruction and academic success at their school; Data Chats with Teachers and Students; Data Notebooks for all students; Data review with administrators (First one is scheduled for 09/25/2025 (Grades 3 – 5); Highlights at Chattahoochee Elementary School – 50 Book Challenge (December), iReady Highway, Student of the Month, Accelerated Reader, School-wide Field Trips, Staff check ins (Flight of the Geese), Parent Newsletter, T-shirts for CES Science Academy, and Community Partnerships. She stated that Chattahoochee Elementary School is Buzzing for a B.

Ms. Hannigon stated that she has known Ms. Akins for a very long time. She stated that her energy has never changed. She congratulated Ms. Akins and Ms. Murphy for what they are doing at Chattahoochee Elementary School.

Mr. Scott stated that he has known Ms. Akins and Ms. Murphy for a long time. He thanked both of them for their work at Chattahoochee Elementary School.

Mr. McMillian stated that Chattahoochee Elementary School is in his district. He stated that he sees the enthusiasm and the order of the school, and is greatly appreciative.

Mr. Key reminded the Board that Chattahoochee Elementary School would be presenting at the State Board Meeting tomorrow (September 24th).

12. SCHOOL BOARD REQUESTS AND CONCERNS

Mr. Scott stated that during the financial workshop he mentioned that the district need to begin the steps to get rid of the old Quincy High School property. He stated that the first step would be to get it appraised so the district would know what the property is worth. He stated that he wanted to make a motion to direct the Superintendent to have the site appraised for value.

Ms. Hannigon stated that may be facilities and land could be a part of the discussion for the upcoming budget workshop. She stated that there could be a more concentrated effort on discussing other land properties district wide.

Mr. Frost reminded the Board that there are other organizations and people who have inquired and referenced land and properties. He stated that the Board need to keep in mind that the new school will be opening soon and we need some place to house the students at James A. Shanks Middle School. He stated that we need to have an appraisal on all of our available properties instead of just one.

Following discussion, Mr. Steve Scott made a motion to have the old Quincy High School property appraised. The motion was seconded by Mr. Leroy McMillan. The motion failed with Mr. Scott and Mr. McMillan voting "aye". Ms. Hannigon and Mr. Frost voted "nay".

Ms. Hannigon stated that workshops were needed to discuss the budget, audit report, and Rostan. She stated she wanted to know if the goals that the district have in the strategic plan could be mentioned as part of an agenda item. She stated that this would help us with our tracking as a Board as well as district wide just to make sure that we are on track. She stated that the current strategic plan goes back to 2023. She stated that this month a non-instructional staff person would be recognized each month along with a teacher and student. She stated that a teacher will be recognize each month for their excellence in education, and a student will be recognized from the same school. She stated that many school districts are utilizing committees, and having their board members actually sit and lead committees. She stated that maybe this could help us get down the road with checking some of the things off our list. She thanked the Superintendent for having staff present to the Board the state of their school.

Mr. Frost stated that taking time out to visit our schools is a wonderful thing. He stated that you could learn a lot by talking with our students and learning what they want to do with their life.

Mr. McMillian stated that we need to plan what we are going to do with Head Start staff and the old Quincy High School property.

Ms. Hannigon stated that there was a proposal with the County Planning and Zoning Committee about doing away with the county ordinance. She stated that would entail a bar being a thousand feet from the door of a school, and the door of a church a thousand feet from a bar. She stated that the Planning and Zoning Committee have to make a decision on what they are going to present to the county commission. She stated that we need to be concerned citizens about this matter. She stated that the meeting would be held on October 23rd at 6:00 p.m. She stated that the district has to do something about the relocation of students for the building of our new school.

Mr. McMillan stated that he was concerned about the payment schedule for Faith Apostolic Church. Mrs. Bruner stated that their payment schedule has changed because they started making payments. She stated that she is in contact with the bank to get an amortization schedule and will provide to the Board.

Ms. Hannigon stated that she forgot to mention policy updates. She stated that she did not recall the district making any updates following the legislative session, but she was curious to know if there were any decisions made by the legislature that the district need to update its policies to reflect.

13. The meeting adjourned at 7:22 p.m.