

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

May 11, 2021

5:00 P.M.

This meeting was open to the public and electronically recorded.

The following Board members were present: Mr. Leroy McMillan, Chairman; Mr. Steve Scott; Mrs. Karema D. Dudley; Ms. Cathy S. Johnson; 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 meeting was called to order by the Chairman, Mr. Leroy McMillan, at 5:00 p.m.

2. OPENING PRAYER

The opening prayer was led by Mr. Charlie D. Frost.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Recited in unison.

4. PURCHASE ORDER REQUEST FOR SIX PORTABLE CLASSROOMS

Fund Source: To Be Determined  
Amount: \$870,030.00

Mr. Scott stated that he was concerned about the purchase of six portable classrooms, and where the portable classrooms will be placed.

Mr. Key stated that the Board requested a cost analysis to move GEMS to George W. Munroe or West Gadsden Middle.

Mr. Hunter stated that the purchase order request is for the six portable classrooms. He stated that both George W. Munroe and West Gadsden Middle School sites will work for the location of the portable classrooms. He stated that he did not have the cost for plumbing and sewer hookup. He stated that the estimate for six portable classrooms was \$870,000 plus \$100,000 for complete setup. He stated that the order needed to be placed tomorrow (May 12<sup>th</sup>) in order to receive the portable classrooms by July 20<sup>th</sup>. He stated that the price does not include raised walkways, over hangs, or ramps. He stated that there will still be some items that must be completed. He stated that the electrical usage will be close to 800 amps of power which will require hiring an electrical engineer. He stated that West Gadsden Middle has a main power feed. He stated that if that power feed is used there will still need to be a transformer. He stated that George W. Munroe will need amp panels and poles.

In response to Mr. McMillan's concern about running the electrical directly to the portables, Mr. Hunter stated that it depends on which site will be used for the portables.

Mr. Frost inquired about who will be in the portables. He stated that he wants to know about the other offices located at the GEMS building. He asked for specifications on the portable classrooms. He stated that he preferred to use GWM for the portable classrooms because of the location.

Mr. Key stated that GEMS PreK, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students will be in the portable classrooms. He stated that the current GEMS building will no longer have students. He stated that the Board needed to discuss what to do about the other offices located at the GEMS building.

Mr. Hunter stated that the portable classrooms will be 24 x 36 with bathrooms. He stated that they will butt up to each and have a raised walkway with a canopy.

Mrs. Wood stated that the investment of insurance recovery funds could be a funding source for the portable classrooms. She stated that reimbursements could be submitted to FEMA.

In response to Ms. Johnson's concern about the plans for the GEMS building, Mr. Key stated that the GEMS building is 100 years old and renovation costs are not known at this time. He stated that the Board and the community would need to decide what to do with the building.

Mr. Scott asked if the district ever planned to use GEMS again because it is currently functional.

Mr. Key stated that he was concerned about the middle building (auditorium).

Mr. Hunter stated that some of the buildings are not suitable for use and marked as unsatisfactory by the State. He stated that not all the buildings are marked unsatisfactory. He stated that there are many issues with the roofs but the round band room might be useable.

In response to Ms. Johnson's concern whether the Board was buying the portable classrooms, Mr. Hunter stated yes.

Ms. Johnson asked what would happen to the portable classrooms when they are no longer needed.

Mr. McMillan stated that the Board voted that this is the way to move forward with GEMS. He stated that the Board directed the Superintendent to bring a proposal.

Ms. Johnson questioned if the Board was voting on the purchase of the portable classrooms.

Mr. McMillan stated yes the Board was ready to vote on the purchase of the portable classrooms.

Ms. Johnson stated that she thinks the Board needs to be more strategic before spending taxpayer's money. She stated that the Board needs to know prior to voting on the portable classrooms what to do with the GEMS building. She stated that if the students are moved GEMS is closed. She stated that she felt it would be best to have a meeting with the city in order to allow all stakeholders to come together.

Mr. McMillan stated that the portables will not be disposed of when no longer needed. He stated that the Board plans to build a K-8 school in the city. He stated that this issue with the portables is only for the safety of the students. He stated that buying the portables is only for that purpose. He stated that placing the portables at GWM or WGM will then be a school within a school for GEMS. He stated that the Board would need to come up with further ideas of what to do with the portables when no longer needed. He stated that GEMS will still exist but with a new location.

Ms. Johnson stated for the record that GEMS is closing if the students are moved.

Mr. Frost re-emphasized that GEMS is not closing, just relocating the students to a safe facility.

Mr. McMillan stated that the Board will address the issue of what will happen to the buildings at GEMS.

Mr. Frost stated that he would like for the buildings to be torn down.

Mrs. Dudley stated that students are top priority. She stated that a decision must be made because the safety of our children is very important as well as spending taxpayers' dollars. She stated that if the Board is talking about putting portables at GWM and building a PreK-8 school in the city, the Board needs to decide where the best location will be. She stated that the location of the portables must be determined by what strategic plan we have in place for the future of all schools.

Mrs. Minnis stated that any renovations must bring the buildings up to ADA standards.

Mr. Hunter stated that the buildings must maintain historic requirements.

Mr. Scott stated that the Board needed to make a decision on the purchase of the portable classrooms and their location. He stated that students will be moved from GEMS. He stated that GEMS is not closing, only moving for safety reasons. He stated that parents like the current location. He stated that if the portables are not used, the Board will need to move the students to a current facility, and at this time there is not one available with the amount of room that is needed. He stated that there is always use for portables when they are no longer needed for the purpose purchased.

Mr. Key stated that there are portables already set up that need to be replaced at some schools and at the district office. He stated that after the temporary situation of moving students from GEMS there will be a need for the portables.

Mr. Scott made a motion to accept the Superintendent's recommendation to purchase 6 portable classrooms for \$807,030. The motion was seconded by Mr. Charlie D. Frost, and carried with Mr. McMillan, Mrs. Dudley, Mr. Scott and Mr. Frost voting "aye". Ms. Johnson voted "nay".

**ACTION REQUESTED:** The Superintendent recommended approval.

Mr. McMillan stated that he had received an offer in the amount of \$200,000 to purchase Gretna Elementary School property. He inquired about adding the item to the agenda.

Mrs. Dudley stated that she wished not to add the Gretna Elementary School property to the agenda at this time.

Mrs. Minnis cautioned the Board about adding the Gretna Elementary School property to the agenda because of previous offers and public comment. She stated that this should be an informational item because there was a previous offer for \$260,000 even though the individual didn't follow through with the purchase.

Mr. McMillan requested Mr. Key inform the public about the City of Gretna's offer and intent to purchase the Gretna Elementary School property.

Mr. Scott stated that he wanted to be sure the commissioners were notified about the Gretna Elementary School property.

Dr. Sylvia Jackson stated that there are other groups that are interested in the Gretna Elementary School property.

Mr. Scott stated that the advertisement should include that a decision will be made at the next Board meeting.

5. EDUCATIONAL ITEMS BY THE SUPERINTENDENT

Mr. Key stated that he will continue process of having conversations with GEMS parents. He stated that a meeting is scheduled for Tuesday May 18<sup>th</sup> @ 6:00 pm at CPA cafeteria to talk with GEMS parents. He invited the Board to the Top Ten Reveal on Friday, May 14<sup>th</sup>, 1:30 pm at GCHS.

Mr. McMillan asked Mr. Hunter about the best possible location to place the portables at WGMS and GWM.

Mr. Hunter stated that a good place was by the cafeteria at WGMS. He stated that the decision is up to the Board. He stated that he will let the Board know if the location they want will work. He stated that at GWM there is an open field behind the library. He stated that work has to be done on the sewer line location. He stated that some extra concrete work will be needed at WGMS.

Mr. McMillan stated that he was concerned about students having long walks to the cafeteria. He stated that he wanted to have separation so GEMS students feel like they are GEMS (autonomy). He stated that GWM would be the ideal site.

Mr. Scott stated that regardless of the site location there will be two principals and there could be some conflict.

Mr. Key assured the Board that there will not be any conflict.

Mrs. Dudley stated that the Board has had previous conversation and it is now time to move and make a decision on GEMS.

Mrs. Wood stated that the Board should think about the jointly shared space like the cafeteria. She stated that GWM is a PreK-3 and adding GEMS will add 4-8 so the academics are different. She asked if the library would be suitable. She stated that the Board should look at the data to see how many students are currently being bussed to GEMS.

Mr. Key stated that GEMS middle school students are being under served. He stated that the district need to look at the whole child. He stated that if the location is GWM then middle school students will need to go to JASMS for special programs. He stated that WGMS opens up opportunities and options like sports for students.

Mr. McMillan asked if the Board would take into consideration what the GEMS parents want after the parent meeting on Tuesday, May 18<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Key stated that a decision on the location will probably be made in June. He stated that diagrams from Mr. Hunter will help the Board understand the best location for the portables.

6. SCHOOL BOARD REQUESTS AND CONCERNS

Ms. Johnson stated that she wanted to ensure that all options have been looked at on moving students from GEMS.

Mr. Scott stated that he wants to make sure notifications are on the website in appropriate time for public viewing.

Mrs. Dudley stated that she thinks the district is moving in the right direction. She stated that she appreciates the Superintendent for all is doing for the district.

7. The meeting adjourned at 6:16 p.m.