

## SCHOOL BOARD FINANCIAL WORKSHOP

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

September 24, 2024

4:30 P.M.

This workshop was open to the public and electronically recorded.

The following Board members were present: Mrs. Karema D. Dudley, Chairwoman, Mr. Leroy McMillan, 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 Chairwoman, Mrs. Karema D. Dudley, at 4:30 p.m.

2. Financial Information

Mrs. Bruner shared with the Board an overview of the expense summary for the district. She stated that the finance department is in the process of loading and converting information. She stated that some of the funding amounts are zero because the funding information has not been entered. She stated that there are certain fund types, especially those relating to grants. She stated that staff is currently working to get the general fund budget corrected. She stated that moving forward, the Board will receive reports showing the revenues and investments. She stated that the State granted the district an extension until Friday, November 29, 2024 to get the district's AFR (Annual Financial Report) and the Program Cost Report submitted. She stated that the software is being cleaned in order to move toward cleaning up financial records, and back reconciliation. In response to Mr. McMillan's question regarding everything being cleaned up by the next meeting, Mrs. Bruner stated that by the October meeting, the Board will have a cleaner report, and by the November meeting, the Board will receive what reports have been submitted to the State. Ms. Johnson stated for clarity to Mrs. Bruner that she stated that by November 29<sup>th</sup> all of the accounts should be reconciled, Mrs. Bruner stated yes. Mrs. Bruner stated that Friday, November 29<sup>th</sup> the AFR and program cost report is due to the State. She stated that there still may be some errors in that report because prior year adjustments may have to be made. She stated that the reports will be completed to the best of her ability. Mrs. Dudley asked if there was any way the Board would know what the errors are. Mrs. Bruner stated that the district will work with the auditors to see if there are various things such as different grants that have certain requirements. She stated that the district will work on the front end to make corrections, but may omit some things. She stated that districts usually would have some kind of finding when the audit comes through. She stated that it is very rare that there will be a perfect clean audit. She stated that there will more than likely be something from a prior year, so the focus will be on the 23-24 year because the fiscal year has not been closed out and can edit seamlessly. She stated that the 24-25 year will work to prevent and make corrections. She stated that anything prior to that will have to be corrected through an audit. In response to Mr. McMillan's question regarding the November Board meeting, Mrs. Davis responded the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday following the 1<sup>st</sup> Monday in November (November 19<sup>th</sup>).

3. Facilities Update

Mr. Hudson stated that it had been rough for a couple of weeks. He shared with the Board a picture of a huge problem at Gadsden County High School regarding the air condition system. He stated that the picture did not show the roughness in full detail, but was just a small view of the problem. He stated that the problem was 8

feet down in the chiller line pipes. He stated that it was 2 ½ feet of concrete that needed to be broken up and dug out. He stated that a line was installed to keep the pipe from moving. He stated that the school was built on pipe clay. He stated that the pipe lasted as long as it could. He stated the work was complete in one week, shorter than he thought. He stated that the ground had to be dried out for a certain number of days before the new pipe work could begin. He stated sandy clay was used and hopefully this problem will never happen again. Mr. Frost stated that he visited the work site. He stated hats off to the Superintendent, Mr. Hudson, and everyone else that was involved in making sure the work was completed in a timely manner. In response to Dr. Sylvia Jackson asking Mr. Hudson to share with the Board the process for getting the AC system back up and running. Mr. Hudson stated that there was a 1” line trying to fill a mile worth of 8” pipe. He stated that trash can get in the line. There is a step by step process to keep trash from getting in the line. He stated that one pipe has to be filled at a time to make sure it is clear of trash all around the school, then the same thing has to be done for the other pipes. He stated that the air has to be rid from one section to another. He stated that the chiller gauges have to be constantly watched to make sure they are at the proper PSI. He stated that it is not like a switch you can just turn on. He stated that someone has to be out there all night and all day until the AC system comes on properly. He stated that the AC system is working very well. Ms. Johnson stated that at one point the AC system was not working. She stated that the way the chiller line was put down, if the Board had an Owner’s Representative, would it have been put down differently. Mr. Hudson stated no, that he thinks that at that time they were trying to ensure that the line was protected. He stated that is a common method where they pour it solid. He stated that the idea is that when you pour concrete it is not going to move, which was found to be not completely true. He stated that mother-nature is something the earth shifts all the time, especially in pipe clay.

Mr. Hudson shared with the Board a couple of updates. He stated that the HVAC system was working and blowing cool air at Stewart Street Elementary School in building #4. He stated that the ceiling grids were getting ready to be installed so the new LED lighting could be put in and moved to building #7. He stated that they are ahead of schedule. He stated that the playground equipment is being installed at multiple locations simultaneously. He stated that the only thing that may slow down the process would be the weather, but everything is going pretty good. Ms. Johnson questioned if the School Board work directly with the county for shelter. Mr. Hudson stated that the School Board and the county work closely together along with the emergency management team. He stated that everything is in place to provide shelter. Ms. Johnson wanted to make sure that the generators were ready and spacing for the special needs children and adults. Mr. Frost stated that he appreciated Mr. Hudson for all of his hard work.

In response to Mrs. Dudley’s concern regarding the recruitment and retention bonus, Mr. Key stated that in the recruitment and retention plan days were listed and examples were given of how it maybe if schools are listed in certain categories. He stated that the recruitment and retention plan that the Board approved was for “D” and “F” schools, which aligns with statute. He stated that in two separate bargaining meetings, he was told that there were other schools listed in other categories that the district would try to take care of those teachers at those particular schools that met the qualifications and criteria, and that if the district went forward with providing money to those teachers, then there would be an unfair labor practice filed against the district, because the recruitment and retention plan only applied to “D” and “F” schools. He stated that the district took the stance to only take care of the “D” and “F” schools. He stated that anything else would require bargaining, or and MOU. He stated that the district stayed within the law and what was approved by the School Board because within that, it did list schools out. He stated that this is something of example and change based on the 23-24 school grades. He stated that this pretty much identifies potential schools based on district tiers. Mrs. Dudley stated that she remembered that the plan was for tier 1, tier 2 and tier 3. She stated that she remembered one school being tier 3 about \$10,000. She stated that she remembered some adjustments made and was made after the school grades came out, or test scores released. Mr. Key stated that school grades were released and it was only the “D” schools. Mr. Key stated that because of what people are saying the district have these schools listed, that they will be taken care of. He stated that when a threat is made for unfair labor practice, you go back to the letter of the law. He stated that the letter of the law gives the district authority to deal with the “D” and “F” schools. Mrs. Dudley stated that there was a threat for unfair labor practice. Mr. Key stated that the unfair labor practice was for any schools that were not a “D” or “F” school. Mrs. Dudley

stated that she knows what the statute says. She stated that she knows that the Board has to follow statute. She stated that there is a Title I section there as well. She stated that she had received some phone calls, some before anything went out on social media. She stated that she wanted clarity on what changes had been made, and why they had been made. She stated that the teachers and the public needs to get an understanding of what is happening. Mr. Key stated that actually, what the Board approved was identified for potential tier schools. He stated that it was listed or written in the plan that the Board approved that this may change based on the 23-24 school grades. Mr. Scott asked if the district had recruited any teachers to one of the schools listed with the promise that they would receive the incentive money and did not. Mr. Key stated that was a possibility. He stated that he could not totally answer that. He stated that he has to go back to collective bargaining because the district's chief negotiator brought the information to me regarding the unfair labor practice. He stated that he can only stick to what the law says. Mr. Scott stated that he understands that one of the teachers that went to one of those schools, was promised that incentive and it has not happened. He asked would the teacher have the option of transferring back to where they came from because they were recruited under a lie. Mr. Key stated that the teachers do have the option to transfer to any of the "D" or "F" schools, because the district has an obligation as the Board to ensure that the numbers at those schools are higher than the district average, and they are effective and highly effective teachers. Mrs. Dudley yield to Ms. Mandela to address the Board.

Ms. Mandela, teacher at Carter Parramore Academy, stated that based on the fact during the last year, when staff received the \$3,500 bonus, it was decided that it should be prorated. She stated that based on the fact of what was said in the bargaining meeting, there should be an agreement, and should be negotiated. She stated that what she specifically said in the meeting was that negotiation means to have a written agreement. She stated that it could mean that both parties agree to the very same thing, but it has to be in writing. She stated that everything that's statutory decided should be reduced to writing. Mrs. Dudley thanked Mrs. Mandela. In response to Mr. Frost question if Ms. Mandela was the chief negotiator, Ms. Mandela stated no she was not the chief negotiator but there was a bigger conversation. She stated that there has been no real negotiation, which is what happened in the past, so we ended up here. She stated that first of all she don't think they were presented an MOU. She stated that part of what the Superintendent said was right that there is statute obligation, and then there are some other things that has to be agreed upon. She stated that when the district sends out a flyer that says we're recruiting and we're going to pay people a certain amount of money, they should honor their word. Mr. Key stated that the district's chief negotiator and others were in that meeting. He stated that the district has no problem of honoring our word of taking care of those teachers. He stated that the district didn't put ourselves out there and say that we were not going to take care of those teachers. He stated that is what we wanted to do. Ms. Dudley stated that the Board should do due diligence and request a copy of the video and transcripts to listen for ourselves. She stated that way we would know exactly what was said. Mr. Frost stated that he wanted to receive something in writing from the chief negotiator about what was said if we do that, we are going to get filed for unfair labor practice. He stated that he did not blame the Superintendent or anybody else for saying no. Ms. Johnson stated that if it is not written, it did not happen. She stated that is why the Board has an attorney to help with this information. She questioned why the information did not get to the attorney to bring to the Board. Dr. Sylvia Jackson attempted to clarify the issue. She stated that when the recruitment and retention plan was presented to the union, the immediate feedback the district got was that, wait a minute, you can't do this for teachers that are not "D" and "F" schools, that will be a violation of negotiation, and we could an unfair labor practice. She stated that however, if you gave everyone that doesn't qualify \$2,500 across the board, then we would not file or would not result in an unfair labor practice. Dr. Sonya Jackson stated that if so, the district needed to give \$2,500 to the two schools that were left off the list, which were Greensboro Elementary School and Gadsden Elementary Magnet School. She stated that those individuals at those two schools would receive \$500 each. Dr. Sylvia Jackson stated that it was very complicated and what the district's negotiation team decided to do was to stick with the statute. She stated that the recruitment and retention plan that was Board approved was for "D" and "F" schools. She stated that when the district received the school grades for the 23 -24 year, there were three "D" schools which qualified. She stated that in the recruitment and retention plan that the Board approved, it explicitly lists those schools, but they stated it was possible or potential. She stated that the plan was to try to give as many people

an opportunity to receive at least retention funding. She stated that once the union said to the district's negotiation team, well if any individual that is not at a "D" or "F" school is offered salary, that would be a violation of negotiation, and the bargaining team could file unfair labor practice. Mrs. Dudley stated that it seemed like the teachers were hurting themselves. Dr. Sonya Jackson stated that the other schools had to be negotiated. She stated that at that point, the Superintendent was amenable to looking at the \$2,500 but then, the district's negotiating team based on the input that was received regarding ESSER funding, were not sure the district could fund the \$2,500. She stated that it was not like anyone was intentionally trying to keep from giving teachers an opportunity to earn retention and recruitment monies. Mrs. Dudley stated that she was going to request a copy of the transcript. Ms. Johnson stated that she wanted to ensure that the district was following statute and guidelines. She requested that the Board receive a copy of the recruitment and retention plan with the changes.

Mrs. Dudley asked where the district was with performance pay. Dr. Sonya Jackson stated that at this particular time all of the evaluations are lined up. She stated that the district is trying to calculate the amounts for the past three years. She stated that the performance pay plan would cover the 21-22, 22-23, and 23-24 years. She stated that based on the amount of money that the Board approved, it would be divided between all those individuals over a three year period. She stated that the amount will be calculated and submitted to the teachers by September 30<sup>th</sup>. She stated that the total amount would be added to their base salary in October.

#### 4. Educational Items by the Superintendent

Mr. Key stated that everyone received an alert regarding the hurricane. He stated that the district would be closed a ½ day tomorrow (September 25<sup>th</sup>), and closed Thursday (September 26<sup>th</sup>) and Friday (September 27<sup>th</sup>) due to the hurricane. He stated that the district facilities (Gadsden County High School and West Gadsden Middle School) would become hurricane shelters as of tomorrow (September 25<sup>th</sup>) at 4:00 p.m. He stated that the district is now at 178 days. He stated that the Board will have to adopt some weather days and will have to make up days. Mr. McMillan asked for clarity on hours versus days. Mr. Key stated for example in the past the students have gone to school 180 days. He stated that the 180 days and the number of hours with school, there are 900 hours for the 4<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> graders and 720 hours for K – 3<sup>rd</sup> graders. He stated that the primary and elementary students have different times. He stated that in the past there were 180 days. He stated that there was a little flexibility with that but when changes were made to the student calendar, getting days off went to the hour count. He stated that the hour count has to be monitored, because if the district goes below that hour, State requirements will not be met. He stated that days have to be made up. He stated that the only one that can override anything is the State Board of Education. He stated that the district would have to do an application unless this area was severely damaged after the hurricane.

#### 5. School Board Requests and Concerns

Ms. Johnson stated that she wanted to make sure the Board received schedules of the games for each school. She stated that she wanted to make plans to attend some of the games and support the students.

Mr. Scott stated that he was concerned about the retention and recruitment plan. He stated that friends and relatives inquired about the district's retention and recruitment plan. He stated that he was not talking about the threat of unfair labor practice, but the implication that if you went to any of those schools, this was the possibility depending on your years of experience. He stated that the district has misled. He stated that he doesn't think it was intentional, but it has happened. He stated that people were misled. He stated that it was concerning to him that the district makes a decision, or we think we have something and maybe changed because of statute, or because whatever variant and then we don't do a good job of explaining it to the people that are impacted. He stated that the Board members received calls and are now getting the blame. He stated that the Board is trying to do everything to keep teachers and help with this. He stated that we value teachers and desperately need teachers. He stated that the district has to do a better job of communicating. He stated that things are overlooked, but by the same token we can do better to remedy the situation than what's being done.

Mr. Key stated that the only way that we can do better is to stop pointing fingers. He stated that the president of the teacher's union was here. He stated that he had a conversation with the union president to call the chief

negotiator seeking to work things out. He stated that it is not that the district or the Board don't want to honor their words but when it comes to the point of unfair labor practice, we just cannot move forward. He stated that all of our teachers are needed at every one of these schools. Mr. Frost stated that he was glad that the Superintendent didn't do what the threat was. He stated that since he has been on the Board, there has been a gap between the union and getting things out to their members.

Mr. Devonte Knight (President of GCCTA) addressed the Board and stated that this whole thing is about retention and recruitment bonus. He stated that it was given to the union during negotiation or during bargaining. He stated that there was an understanding at the table that once, the union didn't have to negotiate "D" and "F" schools anymore, but it was given to the union against a negotiation, and this is what the union want to do for those schools. He stated that the union does not have a problem with that. He stated that he is not in the business of taking money from anyone. He stated that there wasn't a threat saying if you pay this money out we're going to file an unfair labor practice, that is not what happened. He stated that the union's chief negotiator said that he does not relinquish to file an unfair labor practice if you send this money out to people who no longer falls under the "D" and "F" status. He stated that once the issue is bargained at the table, he would have no problem with signing a MOU to get this recruitment and retention bonus out to the people. Mr. McMillan stated that once you tell me that you want to retain, maintain whatever word you want to use, you have a right to file an unfair labor practice. He stated that the Superintendent made a good call. Mr. Knight stated that nobody wants to file an unfair labor practice. He stated that the only thing the union was asking for was to sign the MOU. He asked the Board to make it right, sign an MOU, and let's be done with this. Mr. Scott stated that he did not understand the difference between saying we can file unfair labor practice, but we are not going to do it. He stated that on one hand you are not going to. Mr. Knight stated that nobody was making a threat of we're going to file an unfair labor practice. Mr. Scott stated that the statement is a threat, we're not going to relinquish our right to do this. Mr. Knight stated that nobody was at the table saying we're going to file an unfair labor practice. Mrs. Dudley stated that the transcripts are available. She stated that the Superintendent stated that the district is following statute. She requested the Board receive information on what schools received the recruitment and retention bonus. She stated that she wanted to know the name of the individuals that qualified for the recruitment and retention bonus.

In response to Mr. McMillan's concern regarding an update on the Chattahoochee High School foreclosure, Mrs. Minnis stated that her office was putting together the complaint because it has to go through the complaint process with the courts to file a complaint for foreclosure. She stated that a proposed offer was received from an independent group but that's not how this process work. She stated that the Board is not the owner of the property, so you cannot decide you are going to sell it to this group for what they are asking. Mr. McMillan asked how long the process would take. Mrs. Minnis stated that she will get with her partner at the firm to get an update. She stated that he floated the idea of moving a deed to foreclosure. She stated that she didn't know if the mortgage order would be amendable to that. She stated that there is a process where you can do move a deed in a foreclosure.

6. The workshop adjourned at 5:31 p.m.