

REGULAR SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

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

February 24, 2026

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. Cathy S. Johnson; 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.

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by the Chairman, Mr. Leroy McMillan, at 6:00 p.m.

2. OPENING PRAYER

The opening prayer was led by Sister Christagale Hunter of Neal's Temple Holiness Church in Havana.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Recited in unison.

4. RECOGNITIONS

Mr. Key reiterated the good news that the district's graduation rate has increased to 81%. He stated that is a long way from where we were, but we will continue to make the strides until we are in the 90% range as the rest of the State. He stated that Gadsden County High is performing quite well when you start looking at not just the schools that look like them. He stated that we are looking to continue to increase the graduation rate at Gadsden County High School as well as Carter Parramore Academy with some of the things that we have been putting in place. He recognized Ms. Kim Cummings who is leading one of our charges with Graduation Alliances reaching out to kids that have dropped out, or thinking about dropping out and getting them online for graduation. He stated that we are doing the things that we need to do to decrease the dropout rate to increase our graduation. He congratulated Crossroad Academy Charter School Boys Basketball Team for making it to the championship game that will be played Friday at 8:00 PM. He stated that he plan to attend the game to support our charter school. He asked Dr. Major Jackson to come forward to recognize some of the CTE staff at Gadsden Technical College.

Major Jackson announced that February was CTE (Career and Technical Education) month. He recognized three of the top nurses in the State of Florida: Ms. Doris Drake, Ms. Christina St. Charles and Ms. Rebecca Hines. He also recognized support staff: Mr. Jacary Byrd, Ms. Destiny Derico and Ms. Mildred Sheffield for their outstanding work. Each of the individuals received a bonus after their students achieved a 90% passing rate on the NCLEX exam

Mr. Key recognized Mr. Charleston Paul for his decisiveness as he evacuated students from his bus just before it engulfed in flames. He stated that last week was bus safety week. He stated that there was a bus fire. He stated that at the first sign of trouble, Mr. Paul evacuated the kids off the bus. He stated that the kids had a bus evacuation drill earlier that morning at Havana Magnet School. He stated that Mr. Paul did what he was trained to do to get all of the kids to safety. He stated that as soon as they got all of the kids off and away from the bus, the fire started and engulfed the entire bus from the front all the way to the back. He stated that the only thing that really did not burn on the bus was the rear tires. Mr. Key and the Board presented Mr. Charleston Paul with the Superhero Award. Mr. Paul stated that he was more appreciative for saving the students. He stated that when the students were able to get home to their parents, they were safe.

Mr. Frost stated that he attended a Parent Involvement Meeting the other night and was asked if he was tired. He stated that he was sleepy. He recognized the staff for being at the meeting because some of them had been on their job since 7:00 a.m. and was still on the job. He stated that at times he is home resting and our staff is here at night supporting our parents and students. He appreciated staff for their hard work. He stated that the Title I staff would continue to work hard to get information to the parents.

Mr. McMillan stated that he attended the parent meeting and felt compassion by one of the staff members Ms. Montoyia Tillman. He stated that Ms. Tillman repeatedly stated that we have to reach these parents somehow. He thanked Ms. Tillman for her compassion. He recognized Ms. Nancy Sierra in the HR department for her dedication and hard work. He stated that Ms. Sierra deserves merit pay. He also recognized Major Jackson for his hard work and compassion at Gadsden Technical College. He thanked Major Jackson for his positivity in wanting GTC to succeed.

Ms. Hannigon recognized Mr. Charleston Paul for his heroism and commitment to student safety on February 18th. She presented Mr. Paul with a Heroic Service Award. She stated that February's Excellence in Education awardees were recognized: Principal Zola Akins of Chattahoochee Elementary and Assistant Principal Ms. Sallie Murphy shared with the Board names of the three recipients from their school: Student of the Month – Ny'Asia Collins; Support Staff of the Month – Annette Baker; and Teacher-of-the-Month – Serena Akins. Each of the recipients were presented with a plaque. She stated that each of the recipients were previously presented with \$250 and flowers. The Board and Superintendent congratulated each of the recipients.

5. CITIZEN COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

Mr. Michael Brown addressed the Board regarding the 20 acres of vacant property off Telogia Creek. He stated that the property was swampland. He stated that the 20 acres of land used to belong to the Greensboro Chapter of FFA, which is the Future Farmers of America. He stated that he was interested in purchasing the property. Mr. McMillan stated that the Board was aware of the 20 acres of property located off Telogia Creek. He stated that the property was an item for discussion at the last meeting. He stated that the property will be on the next Board meeting agenda as an item to sell or whatever the Board decides to do with the property.

ITEMS FOR CONSENT

Mr. Key requested that the cover sheet from agenda item #8b be removed from the agenda and the backup information become part of agenda item #8a.

Mr. McMillan stated that the request was to remove the cover sheet of agenda item #8a and its backup information become part of agenda item #8a. He stated that item #8c would become item #8b. Ms. Johnson requested that item #8b be removed all together due to information not printed clearly.

Ms. Cathy S. Johnson made a motion to table the revised agenda item #8a to include the backup information from item #8b. The motion was seconded by Ms. Stacey S. Hannigon and carried unanimously.

Mr. McMillan stated that he had previously discussed agenda item #9a – Keiser University Partnership Agreement with Dr. Sylvia Jackson. Dr. Jackson stated to Mr. McMillan that per our discussion, if you allow us to edit the cover sheet or if you approve it with the understanding that the language speaks to the fees that there is a possibility that there will be charges. She stated that the cost would be determined based upon student enrollment, which is standard language, but in their agreement, they actually stated that there would not be any charges. She stated that the cover sheet would have to reflect the cost. Ms. Minnis stated that the motion should include that the amendment cover sheet reflect the language of the contract.

Mr. Charlie D. Frost made a motion to approve the remaining consent agenda item #'s 6a – 10a. The motion was seconded by Mr. Steve Scott and carried unanimously.

6. REVIEW OF MINUTES

- a. January 27, 2026, 4:30 p.m. – School Board Financial Workshop
- b. January 27, 2026, 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

b. Personnel 2026 – 2027

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

8. BUDGET AND FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS

a. ESE 145 & SEFA Submission

Fund Source: N/A

Amount: N/A

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

b. ESE 145 Submission

Fund Source: N/A

Amount: N/A

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

c. ESE 348 – Revised Pages

Fund Source: N/A

Amount: N/A

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

9. AGREEMENTS/CONTRACT/PROJECT APPLICATIONS

a. Keiser University & Gadsden County Schools Education Partnership Agreement

Fund Source: N/A - Per Agreement, there will be no expense to the Gadsden County School District to Participate

Amount: Undetermined – Based upon student enrollment

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

b. Comprehensive Administrative Integrity & Managed Service Agreement between the School Board of Gadsden County, Florida and Skylark Education Partners LLC

Fund Source: Medicaid Reimbursement

Amount: Determined by the amount of claimable services

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

10. SCHOOL FACILITY/PROPERTY

a. City of Quincy (COQ) – Electrical Material Invoice – New K-8 School

Fund Source: General Funds

Amount: \$262,682.65

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.

*11. CONSIDERATION, PROPOSAL, AND/OR ADOPTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE RULES AND RELATED MATTERS

a. Adoption/Approval of Board Policy Revisions

Fund Source: N/A

Amount: N/A

Ms. Hannigon stated that she wanted to make a motion to table agenda item #11a because it was a very comprehensive list of adoptions or rules to be adopted from page 100 to 254. She stated that she did notice in the advertisement that this was shared with the public back on January 14th. She stated that if the item was completed a month ago, she thought it would have been advantageous for Board members to receive this information back then so that we could review it in its entirety as well, considering how many changes are involved. She stated that these meetings are not just for us as Board members, but also for the public. She stated that these changes impact students, parents, staff, and so forth. She stated that a presentation, maybe in next month's workshop, would be helpful. She stated that she was concerned because there are many changes. She made a motion to table agenda item #11a.

Mr. McMillan stated that this information was in the December Board packet with the line items that were being removed and the additions. He stated that this was the final copy. He asked Ms. Hannigon if she still wanted the item tabled. Ms. Hannigon stated that as mentioned, these meetings are not only for the Board, but it is for the public as well. She stated that the policies not only impact us as Board members, but it impact those we serve. She stated that she wanted a presentation for the public. She stated that she understand past practices of literally dumping everything on the consent agenda, but for the benefit of the public and in the name of transparency, I see no harm in staff standing before us during these meetings to share what is being presented and what we're actually voting on.

Attorney Minnis stated that because we have a legal process that we must go through and I do not want the public to think that we have not gone through that legal process. She stated that basically, as Mr. McMillan stated, these proposed changes were presented to the Board and to the public in a prior meeting. She stated that there is at least a 21 to 28 day waiting period to give the public an opportunity to review the same information. She stated that this was the public hearing to allow the public to make comments on the rules that have been presented, and published on the website for them to review. She stated that she did not want anybody to think that we had not gone through or any auditors to think that we had not gone through the 21 day or 28-day notice period to the public. She stated that is why it appears that there was a long period between the notice and presenting it to the Board, because of the 21-day waiting period. She stated that by law the public must have the opportunity to review everything that we are proposing to do. She stated that this meeting would be the opportunity for the public if they had any concerns about these particular items to come forward to address the Board and present their concerns at that time. She stated that it is up to the Board to decide ultimately whether you wish to adopt these rules tonight or whether you wish to put it off to a different day.

Ms. Hannigon stated to Attorney Minnis, as the agenda is laid out, you made mention that this item is for public hearing. She asked if the consent agenda was the proper place for public hearing items. Attorney Minnis stated that there is no specific place. She stated that there is nothing that dictates where you put them as long as the public notices that this is a public hearing item. She stated that if that is the discussion the Board wants to have about with the Superintendent with regard to setting up the agenda that is a different matter. She stated that the actual notice itself clearly states to the public that tonight is going to be the public hearing to be held on these items and the public to come forward and voice their concerns and their opinions. Ms. Hannigon stated that maybe we can discuss that later because personally, a public hearing should not be a consent item. She stated that by no means did she insinuate that we stepped outside of any legal parameters regarding how we are supposed to proceed when we are making changes to Board policy. She stated that months ago she questioned the manner in which we even adopted our student code of conduct because she felt at that point that we did not go through the proper procedures. She stated that she has not made any mention on this evening regarding the Board not following protocol and doing this legally correct. She stated that clearly that her only concern was that the public have an opportunity to address their concerns. She stated that again that when it comes to a consent item, she gets it that the Board has a right to do certain things, but in the interests of the public that we serve, we do not always have to go with the bare minimum. She stated that there is nothing wrong with us as a school district taking it upon ourselves to just share more information.

Ms. Stacey S. Hannigon made a motion to table agenda item #11a until the next Board meeting and have a presentation from staff that summarizes the changes. Ms. Cathy S. Johnson seconded the motion. Ms. Johnson and Ms. Hannigon voted “aye”. Mr. McMillan, Mr. Frost and Mr. Scott voted “nay”.

Mr. McMillan made a motion to approve agenda item #11a as is. The motion was seconded by Mr. Steve Scott and carried with Mr. Frost, Mr. Scott, Ms. Johnson and Mr. McMillan voting “aye”. Ms. Hannigon voted “nay”.

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

12. EDUCATIONAL ITEMS BY THE SUPERINTENDENT

Mr. Key stated that the Board received updates from support services as well as academic services for the previous month. He stated that the last page of academic services showed from PM 1 to PM 2 how our students typically have been performing. He stated that there has been a decrease in the number of students performing at Level 1. He stated that there has been an increase in the number of students performing at Level 2 in reading and math. He stated that there has been an increase in Level 3 as well as in reading and math. He stated that we are currently looking at and ensuring that principals are looking at the data to ensure that instruction is going on in the classroom. He stated that these numbers would continue to go in the right direction before we get to PM 3. He stated that a principal from outside of the district came and presented at our last principals meeting. He stated that hearing it from somebody on the outside sometimes makes a difference.

13. SCHOOL BOARD REQUESTS AND CONCERNS

Mr. Scott wanted to know if there was a committee to determine student relocation for the Shanks project or how that will be determined. Mr. Key stated that the district is actually working on a second survey. He stated that a survey was actually done in the last public meeting, but currently working on another survey to actually gauge the parents that are actually at Shanks regarding the best location as well as meeting with the SAC Committee. He stated that plans are to go door to door if needed. Mr. Scott stated that some teachers would be impacted. Mr. Key stated that this would not be one person making this decision. He stated that everyone is coming together. Mr. Scott asked how the district was handling the student protest last week at the high school. Mr. Key stated that on that day he received a call from the news media asking what his statement was concerning the issue. He stated that he did not have a statement. He stated that he rather knew that the students were talking about doing a walk out, but did not know when the walk out was going to be and if it was going to be on, or within the school grounds or the premature inside the school. He stated that he made an announcement and told the students you are free to exercise your constitutional rights, but protest peacefully. He stated that he told the students that as long as you don't interfere with instructional time or disrupt this campus, you're free to do that on the inside of this campus. He stated that however, if you exit the gates and these doors, please call your parents to pick you up. He stated that he remained in the courtyard if any of the students had questions. He stated that he did not send the message by the principals but delivered the message to the students himself. He stated that as he stood in the courtyard, students with their signs walked right past him through the cafeteria and ran out the cafeteria door. He told the students to call their parents to come pick them up. He stated that those students were dealt with and all parents were contacted. Mr. Scott stated that sounded like a good way to handle the situation.

Ms. Hannigon stated that she did hear Board member Frost mentioned that he gets his agenda package seven days ahead of the meeting. She stated that she did not know who she needed to speak with to receive hers a week in advance. She stated that the district currently has a strategic plan that expires in 2027. She stated that she made mention of that before and thinks that it would be advantageous for us as the district that whenever we have agenda items come forth that are specifically related to goals in the strategic plan, maybe we can notate that to help us start thinking forward. She asked if the Board could get an update on where the district is with the strategic plan, because she has not gone through that process. She stated that she did not know how far in advance we need to start working on the next one, the goals that were set forth and where we are regarding accomplishing those goals, or any updates. She stated that we hear from facilities and from finance each month, but think that it would be advantageous if we hear from other departments regarding what is taking place, and what their needs are for the upcoming year. She stated that on the matters regarding the name of transparency and communicating information, if we can hear from some of our other departments during our 4:30 workshop. She congratulated Havana Magnet School on their win in the Black History Brain Bowl. She stated that for those who may not have tuned in during the 4:30 workshop, we as a county celebrate Black History Month. She stated that there are some events that are taking place on this Saturday starting at 11 a.m., the Black History Parade and Festival. She stated that as Board member Johnson mentioned earlier, some activities after 2:00 p.m. such as the “Soul Stroll”

would take place downtown Quincy in celebration of Black History Month. She wanted to know if there was anything that will limit us as a Board to allocate funding specifically for the teacher the year. Mrs. Minnis stated that you can do it through the foundation but as far as district funds, you cannot. She stated that any funding going to teachers from the district is a bargaining issue.

Ms. Hannigon stated that there were a couple of memos that were received last night from the attorney. She stated that she thinks that within the email it was mentioned that the memos were in response to requests made at the last Board meeting, but she was not clear on what those requests were that triggered the memos. Mrs. Minnis stated that there was a request that she mentioned on the Board involvement with the budgeting process and there was a request that she provided a memo about the rulemaking or policymaking process. She stated that these issues were noted during the Board member's issues and concerns. Ms. Hannigon stated that a few weeks ago she was going back looking through the district's Facebook page, trying to review a meeting looking for some matters that she was dealing with. She stated that as most of us may know, Facebook automatically deletes Facebook Live videos after 30 days from a public record standpoint. She stated that the district's website videos are not being maintained as a public record. She wanted to know if the district was required to maintain these meetings for public record purposes. Mr. Key stated that all meetings are recorded, it's just live stream through Facebook. He stated that all meetings are recorded and available anytime someone makes a request of a copy of the recording. Ms. Hannigon stated that they have to be requested and not just available through the website. She stated that when updates are on the agenda, she did not see where the updates were on the website agenda. She stated that she did not see the updates being reflected on whatever is posted, like the changes that were made tonight. Mr. Key stated that the changes are made in the minutes to reflect the changes to the agenda. She stated that the minutes are not being logged chronologically. She stated that she did not know what the system was for logging the minutes. She stated that when you are trying to go back and look, it has just different things are in different places. She stated that as she stated earlier that she has certain rights. She stated that we all have certain rights as Board members sitting around this diocese. She stated that she was proud of herself and being an individual who absolutely carries herself in a professional manner wherever she goes, certainly when she is sitting in the position that she was elected to serve. She stated that she prides herself on being respectful to whomever she encounters, whomever she engages. She stated that unfortunately, she did not have the pleasure of having that reciprocated to her. She stated that she was very offended by the tone that was taken around this diocese at the last Board meeting. She stated that she was very offended for executing and utilizing her right as a Board member to make a request concerning district business. She stated that she was told blatantly by the chairman that she needed to make sure that this was the last time that she brings up anything regarding having a budget workshop to discuss the finances of the Gadsden County School District. She stated that as the chair closed his comments regarding that, she stated that she echoed his comments that once we leave here, we will be the best of friends. She stated that she could not and will not move forward without saying something because she knows that she has never, ever been disrespectful. She stated that she is not here to fight with anyone on this Board. She stated that her job is to represent those whom she serve and to do so from a place of consciousness. She stated that whether she has one question or 100 questions that is what this setting is for her as a Board member. She stated that Florida law states that she cannot call Board members and discuss any matters that come before us as a Board. She stated that the only opportunity she have to do so amongst her peers is right here sitting in this seat, and that is what she will continue to do. She stated that again that she was very offended that in her utilizing her rights that she has been given that she had to be spoken to in such a manner. She stated that we have a parliamentarian in the room and at no point was there any mention that the response was out of order. She stated that she take offense to even sit here tonight, conduct the business of our school district, and hear all of the sighs repeatedly, as if we are off script and not taking care of business. She stated that she was offended because we are here to do the business of this school district. She stated that how you do it might differ from how she does it, but we are all, she thinks doing it for the right and the same reasons. She stated that one's passion might be different from somebody else's passion. She stated that since day one, she has harped on budget, and she will continue to harp on budget. She stated that as part of her campaign slogan. "I'm going to show up. I'm going to speak up". She stated that she was going to do that for those who she serve. She stated that she was hopeful that experience at the last Board meeting and quite honestly, some of what happened here tonight, will never happen again. She stated that she do not have to sit here and listen to the sighs, the moans and the groans like what is taking so long. She stated that we are here to serve whether it takes 30 minutes, an hour or two or three hours. She stated pardon me that she has questions, excuse me, pardon me that she came to this Board with certain exposure and certain experience and that's what drives all of our questions, that's what drives all of our perspectives on every item that comes before us. She humbly made a request that what happened at the last

meeting, what she experienced, if that will be the last time that she is addressed in that tone. She thanked the Lord that she held her peace, and everything else to not respond back in a negative manner because at the end of the day, her reputation is important to her. She stated that as much as she is able to, she wants to uphold her reputation.

Mr. Frost stated that he was sorry if he did anything wrong or for whatever he did, but that he will continue because that's just who he is. He stated that he do not want you to think what he feel is something towards you. He stated that he take the time to go around to meet with staff to get answers to his questions and concerns before the meeting. He stated that if you really want to know about our school system, go visit the schools, and go out in the community. He stated that he know the people in his district and what they like because he is there with them. He stated that they do not just see him during election time, they see him all the time whether under the tree or on the corner.

Mr. McMillan stated that if he said something that was out of line, he was sorry. He stated that the Board voted me in this position as Chairman. He stated that if they did not like the way things are handle, they can take him down, he has no problem with that. He apologized again, but he did not hear anybody sighing. He stated that he did not sigh. He stated that he would hold his concerns until the next Board meeting.

14. The meeting adjourned at 7:12 p.m.