

## REGULAR SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

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

March 28, 2023

6:00 P.M.

The meeting 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 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 Pastor Sheilla Mason of Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Recited in unison.

4. RECOGNITIONS

Ms. Johnson recognized Mrs. Alma West, former teacher and principal, and thanked her for attending the meeting.

Mrs. Dudley thanked everyone for attending the meeting. She asked everyone to remember the families and staff of the recent school shooting in Nashville.

ITEMS FOR CONSENT

Mr. Key pulled from the agenda item #8c – Student Expulsion – Case #79-2223-0051 and item #6a – Personnel to remove Morgan Alderman from the termination list.

Mr. McMillan entertained a motion to approve the remaining consent agenda. The motion was made by Mrs. Karema D. Dudley, seconded by Mr. Charlie D. Frost and carried unanimously.

5. REVIEW OF MINUTES

- a. February 9, 2023, 4:00 p.m. – Joint Meeting (Board of County Commissioners, School Board and City of Quincy Commissioners)
- b. February 28, 2023, 4:30 p.m. – School Board Workshop

- c. February 28, 2023, 6:00 p.m. - Regular School Board Meeting
- d. March 1, 2023, 9:00 a.m. – Master Board Training
- e. March 9, 2023, 5:00 p.m. – Student Hearing
- f. March 9, 2023, 6:00 p.m. – Student Hearing

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

7. AGREEMENT/CONTRACT/PROJECT APPLICATIONS

- a. School Board Resolution in Support of Gadsden County Board of County Commissioner’s Disaster Local Mitigation Plan (LMP)

Fund Source: N/A  
Amount: N/A

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

8. STUDENT MATTERS

- a. Student Expulsion – See back-up material

Case #74-2223-0051

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

- b. Student Expulsion – See back-up material

Case #75-2223-0051

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

9. EDUCATIONAL ISSUES

- a. West Gadsden Middle School Out-of-State Field Trip Request

Fund Source: N/A  
Amount: N/A

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

- b. Approval of the 2023 – 2024 PAEC Course Catalog

Fund Source: N/A  
Amount: N/A

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Items preceded by an (\*) asterisk were removed from the consent agenda and moved to the discussion portion of the agenda.

\*6. PERSONNEL MATTERS (resignations, retirements, recommendations, leaves of absence, terminations of services, volunteers, and job descriptions)

a. Personnel 2022 - 2023

Mr. Key requested Ms. Morgan Alderman be removed from the termination list because she has requested a hearing.

Following discussion, Mrs. Karema D. Dudley made a motion to remove Ms. Morgan Alderman from the personnel termination list. The motion was seconded by Mr. Steve Scott and carried unanimously.

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

\*8. STUDENT MATTERS

c. Student Expulsion – See back-up material

Case #79-2223-0051

Removed from the agenda.

ACTION REQUESTED: The Superintendent recommended approval.

10. EDUCATIONAL ITEMS BY THE SUPERINTENDENT

Mr. Key requested an executive session following the Board meeting to discuss collective bargaining issues. He stated that the district is moving forward with recruitment efforts to hire certified teachers. He stated that teachers have received a retention bonus that is in place for this year and next year for certain schools that meet certain criteria. He stated that the bonus was either \$5,000 or \$2,500. He stated that the \$7,500 bonus was for teachers at certain schools with effective VAM scores and \$15,000 for higher VAM scores. He mentioned a sound bite has been posted that is out of context as being posted for teachers, but it was for the non-instructional staff. He stated that teachers have received salary proposals. He stated that misinformation by the Gadsden County Classroom Association have been placed on social media. He asked people to be truthful.

11. SCHOOL BOARD REQUESTS AND CONCERNS

Mr. Frost stated that he was disappointed when the State previously said no to funding a new school in Gadsden. He stated that the district is currently #2 in the State to receive funding to build a new school. He stated that everyone need to get along with each other. He stated that this is a critical moment for the district.

Ms. Johnson stated that we (the Board) need to be good stewards of what we currently have and continue to keep the newer schools up.

Mrs. Dudley stated it is challenging to be an elected official. She stated that elected officials are divided at the local level. She mentioned the non-instructional bonus and that an employee that has not worked this year didn't receive the bonus because of medical leave. She stated that she was concerned that the employee was still paying all fees and deductions but did not receive the bonus. She stated that she thinks that all employees of the county should receive the bonus.

Ms. Johnson stated that the Board should have discussed guidelines for employees receiving the bonus. She stated that the Board want to retain and recruit all instructional and non-instructional employees. She stated that more training is needed.

Mrs. Dudley stated that there is money and plans in place for training. She asked what type of employee mental health programs were in place for employees. She stated that discipline is an issue. She stated that the district has a lot of challenges.

Mr. Scott concurred with what has already been said and would like a workshop on what is being done for employees. He stated that he was concerned about stepping over the line. He stated that for nine years he talked with the legislature about Gadsden and each time we have been told some schools might be considered. He stated that with closing schools we were still denied. He asked if we could not produce such a riff that there is a reason to reconsider if Gadsden deserves a new school.

Mr. McMillan stated that a workshop was not needed to discuss who received a bonus. He stated that there was guidance for the employees who received the bonus.

Mrs. Minnis stated that it depends on what the requirements were for the money that is being used. She stated that depending on what the criteria was to be eligible, it could require an employee to be at work for a certain number of days, but she was unsure.

Mr. McMillan stated that as a Board guidance need to be given to the Superintendent if this money is coming from the Board, then they have the right to say to give the bonus money to a person that is on FMLA. He stated that this will be checked into and if they are deserving of the bonus then give it to them.

In response to Mr. Key's question about how long some of the grant funded positions have been open, Mrs. McGriff stated since last year. Mr. Key stated that the audit required attendance records for certain employees to match they were actually coming to work.

Mr. McMillan stated that when he was elected he specifically asked when will the new school be built, and he was told there were too many student stations for a new school. He stated that the administrative team here did the leg work to get the FISH report in order to get approved for a new school with special facilities funds. He stated that the Board was originally told we would get \$34.8M for a new school. He stated that now is the time for the county to be unified. He asked employees and everyone to work with the district.

Ms. Kesandra Brown shared with the Board information about the mental health program. She stated that currently she will listen to anyone that needs to talk. She stated that she is not a licensed therapist. She stated that there is a "chat box" to listen and provide strategies for someone with mental health issues. She stated that safety checks will be done by the sheriff's department for certain issues. She stated that she is currently working on mental health to be provided to staff and students.

Mr. McMillan stated that it appears the district will be getting \$110M to build a new school. He stated that a state of the art school will be built in Gadsden County. He stated that nothing will be removed from the current design. He pleaded for everyone to support the Board. He stated that the new school design will be placed at the district office for review.

Ms. Judith Mandela, GCCTA President, addressed the Board. She stated that the minutes from agenda item #5a should be corrected with the term raze the building and not raise. She stated that there is enough money in ESSER III to recruit teachers. She discussed the MOU and the recruitment/retention bonus that has not been given this year. She stated that no one is opposed to the new school.

Elder Robert L. West, Sr. Pastor of Open Word Worship Center addressed the Board. He stated that the church was in need of the Board's help with its ministry site (old Salem school). He stated that Hurricane Michael and vandalism has left a lot of damage. He asked that the Board relieve them of their payments in order to help them restore the house of worship.

Mrs. Minnis requested the Board give her a chance to review the contract before voting.

Mr. McMillan stated that the issue will be on the April Board agenda, and he requested Mr. West come the meeting.

Mr. Jasmir Sweet, concerned constituent, addressed the Board to share his concerns about the current operation and overall functioning of the district. He stated that education is viewed as one of the empowering force and tool today. He stated that it creates avenues for ascertaining knowledge, it builds confidence, break down barriers, and it creates the most opportunistic moment for success. He stated that for many children this will be their way out. He stated that this will be their key to doors in harboring a better and prosperous life. He stated that schools that actively involve parents and the community tend to establish better reputations with the community. He stated that they experience better community support and they provide a better overall experience for the student. He stated sadly that has not been the case here.

Mrs. Dudley stated there is no need to continue writing narratives about parents not being allowed on campus. She stated that we need parents to be involved in their child's education. She stated that it is difficult for any teacher to do their job without the support of parents. She stated that the climate has changed. She stated that parents can schedule meetings with teachers. She stated that no parent is being denied.

Mr. McMillan stated that he was elected to represent the citizens of district 3, and he stated that he has helped Chattahoochee Elementary School. He stated that he supports the staff and students.

Mrs. Shaia Simmons, former teacher, addressed the Board. She stated that if all deserving non-instructional staff get a bonus, then every certified and temporary certified teacher deserves a raise too. She stated that if they teach give it to them. She stated that she was disappointed that an administrator would write up and threaten the employment of a dedicated teacher for sharing pictures, saying that if she knew about it, she would do something about it. She stated that any classroom walk-through or stepping outside of the office onto the sidewalk would have shown that. She stated that is an intimidation practice and that is not okay. She stated that recruitment means bring them in and retention means keep them, and those type of practices don't. She stated that she wanted to receive answers to questions she continue to ask – why was 3.6M removed from the maintenance budget and only 1.1M left, and the Board increased their budget by a 1/2M.

Mrs. Dudley stated that the Board does not set its salary. She stated that no monies went back to the Board's budget for anything they would benefit from. She stated that there was an increase in insurance premiums and the Board incurred the cost for employees.

Mr. Key requested that the minutes be reviewed from the July GCCTA session referencing bonuses for teachers at D and F schools.

Mr. McMillan asked the Board members to continue to work hard to take care of employees.

12. The meeting adjourned at 7:44 p.m.

The Board convened in executive session at 7:55 p.m. to discuss collective bargaining issues; and adjourned at 8:30 p.m.