



VISION
To be a world-class school system.

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF LEE COUNTY
School Board Briefing Meeting – M I N U T E S (Approval 12/11/07)
Tuesday – November 20, 2007 / 2:30 p.m.

Attendees: Mrs. Jeanne S. Dozier, Board Chairman
Mr. Robert D. Chilmonik, Board Member
Dr. James W. Browder, Secretary & District Superintendent
Mrs. Julie Nieminski, Board Auditor
Dr. Jane E. Kuckel, Board Vice Chair
Dr. Elinor C. Scricca, Board Member
Mr. Steven K. Teuber, J.D., Board Member
Mr. Keith Martin, Board Attorney
Mrs. Denise Mangus, Recording Secretary

(Dr. Kuckel called the meeting to order at 2:31 p.m.)

A. BOARD MEMBERS

1. Special Areas of Board Involvement/Reports – Mr. Chilmonik attended last night's News-Press tax reform meeting and Mrs. Dozier was there; he inquired about Mrs. Dozier's comment of looking possibly at a decrease of the District headquarters' staff, as he was taken back. Dr. Browder responded that this is on today's meeting to talk about. Dr. Scricca commented there were about 1,600 in attendance at the hugely successful Pride & Patriotism event. She and Dr. Kuckel were at the Estero Community Park Autism Walk; they were recognized but didn't speak on behalf of the Board. Dr. Scricca mentioned the successful Board Retreat and Challenger Middle/Patriot Elementary dedication as well as the Legislative Meeting last week (held in LCPEC); she attended the District Advisory Committee meeting last week where all were invited to the 12/10 Open House and Dr. Dinon provided an informative presentation on volunteerism. Dr. Scricca was also in attendance at Buckingham Exceptional Center's Thanksgiving lunch and the Uncommon Friends' Character Education Dinner on the same day last Thursday where four teachers were honored at the latter; she noted last Friday's diversity mural unveiling at East Lee County High School.

B. ACADEMIC SERVICES – none

C. ADMINISTRATIVE/SUPPORT SERVICES – none

D. BUSINESS SERVICES – none

E. HUMAN RESOURCES – none

F. EXECUTIVE SERVICES (presented in the order below)

3. Discussion/Proposed Academy at Mariner High School – There is a Mathematics, Science and Technology Academy planned for Mariner. Dr. Browder noted meetings related to putting this unbelievable program together; he plans to bring this unless the Board has an issue. There is a math and technology program in the South Zone which allows the East to tie in; Dr. Browder plans to recommend implementation of the Mariner Academy to the Student Assignment Plan Committee. He mentioned, in the District, our large Advanced Placement offerings, the IB program, and Information Technology's government-shared data on math, science, and tech centers; Dr. Browder wants to see more of them locally (as well as Lt. Gov. Kottkamp). He sees the new academy as a choice for the next generation of students (January 2008); Dr. Browder's shared information with the Board. He responded to Dr. Scricca this is the program he's talked about the last few years re Mariner, further noting Principal Cioffi is doing a good job. Mr. Chilmonik thanked Dr. Browder for bringing this forward and to do something, it takes talent—students, staff—to bring high-tech businesses. Mr. Teuber noted Dr. Browder has a fully expanded version on his desk and commended the Superintendent for a good job. Dr. Browder noted, as an FYI, that we're second to none in the U.S. to those who believe we're on the right path to world-class; Microsoft sent him a letter and they're going to provide every Dunbar High School student the opportunity to be Microsoft-certified, and they may be the only high school in America with a program for all students. It's worth about \$500,000 to the District and the school; he's thrilled/pleased, noting the work of Jana Hambruch and Principal Burnside on this. Microsoft has taken a huge step for our school system. In response to Dr. Scricca's question on the rationale, it is because Dunbar High has completed more Microsoft applications than any other high school; she noted this is wonderful. Dr. Browder will provide a copy of the Microsoft letter to the Board. Re Dr. Scricca's inquiry on a graduate's salary out in the market upon completion of school and the Microsoft certification, it could result in up to \$50,000 annually for a starting salary.

1. **Capital Outlay Plan** (see back-up info on file) – Dr. Browder noted the student growth numbers have moved back due to recent trends; a reasonable number is 2,500 additional students this school year (1,200-1,500 to date) unless we run into other unexpected circumstances. There's \$2 million revenue reduction to reflect realities of property tax roll; the growth number is being moved from 10% to 5%. Class size monies will cease if all met in 2010. The District will have 10 new schools in the next 5 years (in our 5-year window). A critical eye will be used when looking at the county and state; we're not the only district with scary trends. There were 40 students lost at this time last year compared to 350 now; shortfall will be in the February count. People are not coming into Lee as before. The dollars set aside are analyzed re shortfall. If another shortfall, the contingency fund will be discussed by the Board. We're into forecasting for the next year out. Dr. Browder noted, as a 35-year Lee County resident, he's never seen this kind of reduction and stepping away from the community as in the last several months; the capital plan is now as large/robust (going from 18 new facilities to 10; some were already in progress). We'll analyze for another 4-5 years and maybe reduce even more. East zone continues to be the one with most growth (dealing with need for seats in East; reverse trend in south). Dr. Browder noted he will talk about something Mr. Chilmonik mentioned re Mrs. Dozier and the evening prior; the Superintendent had planned today to update budget-wise, and he met with staff/division chiefs this week. There'll be another \$1 billion shortfall because of sales tax and other taxes (indication of what's going on in state); if we don't talk about 'what-ifs' inside and where dollar amounts will be given re circumstances, we won't be prepared. Dr. Browder noted district shortfalls in 1995-97, and he has those books in his office of the 4 years' budget reductions (he kept as Assistant Superintendent, Principal, and Secondary Operations Director). He feels it smart to freeze all District hiring at county office (in areas of critical need, each will be individually analyzed). Re the Transportation Zone Director, this purposely hasn't moved forward (Executive Director Shelton aware); other two directors and executive doing double duty due to potential for any revenue fallout not coming into the state. Dr. Browder pulled figures together for Mrs. Dozier; reductions we already experienced and 3.8% is amount out of contingency fund if need be. He noted good news of the legislature holding education harmless; Dr. Browder trusts them. If there's a series of terrible situations in Florida, public education will have to deal with shortfalls.

Mr. Teuber noted we've contingency fund for FTE shortfall (up to certain amount); he asked about if current conditions continue. Measures back in the 1990's were taken (we've record of). There wasn't the same type of technology then to involve taxpayers' involvement in decisions. If we could start putting dollar amounts, this is what will help us and gain downside—get in some kind of quantitative number and get information out to taxpayers (e.g., use strategic listening). These are decisions we may have to make; we can have a better informed public and Board. Mr. Chilmonik noted the list of sacrifices of several years, and he will bring in again if needed; he questioned as to thought of outside help. Dr. Browder noted we have the expertise in-house to make decisions; this Board has always said to stay away from the schoolhouse door as much as possible. Dr. Browder noted we're moving in the area of Food Service, as an example, re the number of meals per hour and we'll tighten again. There's the potential of having some out of work and to be placed; we're thinking of it in the support area (if we freeze some of those jobs but place as many as possible). The Superintendent doesn't anticipate a huge reduction in force; we'll do what we can to manage. He doesn't want panic as we've the dollars to operate within this school year and doesn't want things exacerbated at the end of school year because we're not planning now. Mr. Teuber reiterated there's no reason to panic; we've FTE shortfall 100% and the rest in contingency/put aside for this. Instructional and support personnel are needed. Mr. Chilmonik noted receiving an earlier FTE count. In the past, secondary schools balanced that gain. If the February FTE count's lower than anticipated, we may have to come back to Board for dollars out of contingency. It was re-confirmed to Mr. Chilmonik that elementary schools lost enrollment. Some Food Service workers are being moved around now as some schools gained. Dr. Browder noted what we're doing is planning for next cycle/next academic year. (Mrs. Dozier arrived shortly before this point of the meeting.)

Mrs. Dozier noted last night's tax reform panel and the three to four "fastball" education questions sent her way. When there's down-slope in economy, there's fear. The one big question posted was why education should be held harmless. Another question was why, as a senior citizen, should pay towards education since on Social Security. Mrs. Dozier noted it's a social contract she entered into the day she was born. Others pay for children not their own. Mrs. Dozier noted a competent nurse, doctor, police officer, fireman, etc. are wanted/to be educated. When it's talked through, our own way of saying it is developed. Companies judge education/the competency level of people when (businesses) are looking to relocate, as it affects bringing jobs/employees here and whether they'll want to raise families here. Mrs. Dozier was already asked by a reporter about her comments last night (e.g., possible headquarter staff reductions), and she shared her conversation with Dr. Browder. She noted what we are going to do to manage taxpayer dollars, and she commented last night about areas to cut—via attrition, retirement, hiring freeze. We'll do

everything to maintain high level of education but manage tax dollars; it's not to go through and start slashing. She noted Dr. Browder's top-level cabinet can go through and review; Mrs. Dozier has complete confidence. To hire an outside consulting firm is not where she thinks we need to go now. Mrs. Dozier's completely satisfied with upper-level management and decisions they make; she believes we have a good message to put out there. Mrs. Dozier talked about our teachers making less than other areas (Alabama, Georgia, etc); once we recruit, we have to have some kind of retention tools and have competitive salaries. Dr. Scricca feels we've a leadership team, and she has full confidence in Dr. Browder and his team; we've planned ahead, done well, and have a contingency plan.

Mr. Chilmonik noted pulling average salaries, noting Collier and Charlotte are higher; he mentioned an interesting comment by the county property appraiser last night of taking schools through a property tax equation, and this was significant to Mr. Chilmonik. Mrs. Dozier noted feeling she held her own. Mr. Chilmonik stated that sales tax may not work in a recession. There's been positive discussion of a review of exemptions and stable ways to fund education; some areas in the country have a 39% tax burden but the highest SAT scores (e.g., California ranked as #9 but 32.7% tax). He's unsure re liking the idea of property taxes not funding schools. Mrs. Dozier noted a constant level of funding needs to be identified when living in an economy/situation that's based on tourism (good times and bad); there can be less income dollars to pay for cities, counties, and schools. She doesn't know the level of funding but encourages working with legislators to identify constant funding levels (instead of when there are hurricanes or tourism rollercoasters). Mrs. Dozier noted there was a little wrap-up at last night's meeting but was sorry of not having a minute to cap-off as she was going to talk about her and Dr. Browder's appearance before the Budget & Tax Committee (who meet every 20 years) and she wanted to address class size; she truly believed there'd be a couple of minutes for summary and time to talk about the possible sunset of tax exemptions. Issues were spirited last night.

2. **Revisions to Policy 1.18, Community Involvement Opportunities (12/11/07)** – Dr. Browder presented this item and noted it being briefed to the Board prior and the one change (deletion of words in a one sentence) was being brought back to the Board today (for next month's Action agenda); the Board had no comments or suggestions re this today.

Separately, Mrs. Dozier provided her Board Member Involvement/Reports at this time during the meeting; she first apologized for being late, as another meeting ran over. She commended the Pride & Patriotism event, acknowledged Dr. Scricca, and read a very positive e-mail from a community member who attended. Mrs. Dozier attended the recent Blue Chip luncheon, acknowledged Gary Trippe and noted the guest speaker went through adverse situations (she may have latter attend a School Board conference, as his story could do a lot). She noted the Take Stock in Children Auction, commending Mr. Bower and staff for the outstanding/great job. Mrs. Dozier attended two other ceremonies re veterans at Cape Elementary and Gulf Middle, with the Lt. Governor at the latter. She had the opportunity to tour Our Mothers Home and invites all to contact Ms. Lewis for a tour, as it's amazing what is done with little resources and many girls out of our system are served. Re the 11/12 Board Retreat, Mrs. Dozier thanked the Board for input and cooperation that day; there's collaboration working with Dr. Browder to accomplish things for children. It was suggested by Mr. Teuber to change the name of Board Retreats to Off-Site Meeting (some hear Retreat/think resort and this was held in a room at Edison College); there was consensus. Mrs. Dozier noted, re the Legislative brunch meeting, that the Board input was unbelievable to legislators; two complimented the input as it made them more knowledgeable in understanding our legislative platform. Mrs. Dozier attended the Foundation's Board of Directors meeting. She learned about elementary school statistics that show increased student performance and improved behavior/demeanor. Mrs. Dozier also attended the Uncommon Friends' Character Education recognition (the 4 teachers this time make 29 who meet continually). She attended the Horizon Council and is proud the District made their priority list (5th down). Mrs. Dozier noted a Construction Advisory Committee member's resignation and she will be missed but a new recommendation will come forth. It's been a busy two weeks (two ribbon-cuttings as well).

- G. **PUBLIC COMMENT** – Sue Jacobse noted possible interest if an opening on the Construction Advisory Committee; she'll do whatever the Board wants.

- H. **BOARD ATTORNEY / BOARD INTERNAL AUDITOR / SUPERINTENDENT'S COMMENTS** – Mr. Martin did a School Law Minute on the past legislative session/S.B. 988—fingerprinting/background; implementation in these few years showed some difficulty/challenges. Past session created non-instructional contract category (no contact with students but on campus); Mr. Martin read the exceptions (e.g., under District supervision constantly; chain-link fence 6 feet in height, separate from kids) and noted subject to search re sexual predator registration.

Mrs. Nieminski's final report was distributed (copy on file; she's leaving District 11/30/07); she noted this is accumulation of data which went through her office since hire and is in response to Dr. Scricca's request for a bill of health (Board consensus given prior). The final report is 8 pages long; Mrs. Nieminski noted she gives an overall as currently effective. Some suggestions are for other processes that management may want to consider as another way to process improvement; these are a result of working with people/acquiring more information in areas and not as a result of an audit. She noted the information behind the tabs; Mrs. Nieminski noted the last piece as the report she gave 8/17. The annual report has bullet points accomplished through the audit; the final audit is kind of like her opinion versus what came out of an audit. Mrs. Nieminski doesn't want to render a fiscal opinion; external auditors do this. On the operational side, it's hard to bundle it all as an entire district; each dept has idiosyncrasies in how they operate—what's significant to them may not be operationally to another department. Mrs. Nieminski would like the Board to read, get a feel for what she's trying to accomplish/what she did in her final report, and look at departments and what they could do. To give a grade, she would use an 'A+' and reduce by exceptions; Mrs. Nieminski sees us as a 'B' or 'B+'. There are things she would've done if not relocating. Mrs. Nieminski can field questions between meetings today, tonight, or next week. Dr. Scricca would hope there's time for questions (e.g., tonight). Mrs. Dozier noted one question as to the number of hours by Mrs. Nieminski and departments (what had to be provided, what leveled off, etc.); Mrs. Nieminski would have to sit down and put this together (she can have for tonight's meeting). Mr. Chilmonik thanked Mrs. Nieminski for service—real professional under difficult conditions; he asked her about auditing construction. She noted it was a component of the procurement audit; she looked at the bidding process and contract process (bonding, insurance). Procurement touched upon several audits. Mr. Chilmonik inquired about Cuthill & Eddy audits; Mrs. Nieminski noted they're a recovery audit before the final audit—not a performance audit. He inquired, re the Budget tab, about keeping back-up records (backups/vendor file); she noted her recommendation is for three years. Mrs. Nieminski would like to see other documentation in place and would still like to have an audit trail in place of three years back. Mrs. Dozier inquired as to hearing Mr. Chilmonik say under difficult situations (re Mrs. Nieminski's service); he confirmed saying that. Mrs. Nieminski said she doesn't think it difficult but large projects to do, based on the way our system is designed—e.g., mainframe. There are manual tasks/very laborious; it's not as streamlined as could be in an audit process because of being a one-man shot. Mrs. Dozier would defer to Mr. Martin re retention of records, with the latter saying different timeframes for different documents; his best guess is a minimum of two years but it may be longer but he would have to research. (Dr. Browder had no comments). Meeting concluded at 3:39 p.m.

/dwm

 MINUTES BOOK NO. 44 - FY08

Jane E. Kuckel, Ph.D., Meeting Chair

ATTEST:

James W. Browder, Ed.D., Secretary and District Superintendent

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