



VISION
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Board Advisory Committee Chairs' Meeting – N O T E S
Monday – November 5, 2007

Call to Order: by Dr. James W. Browder, Superintendent (at approximately 3:40 p.m.)

Attendees: Ms. Carrie Chase-Robideaux, District Advisory Council Mr. David Hall, Finance Advisory Committee
Dr. Constance Dennis, Curriculum Advisory Committee Dr. Connie Jones, Chief Academic Officer
Mr. Nicholas Alexander, Compliance Advisory Committee Ms. Brenda Wall, Recording Secretary

Absent: Mr. Keith Martin, School Board Attorney Ms. Susan Waite, Construction Advisory Council

1. WELCOME FROM SUPERINTENDENT

Dr. Browder welcomed the group. Participants introduced themselves. Dr. Browder gave a special welcome to the new chairs. It was noted that the chair from the Construction Advisory Council was not in attendance because the committee had not yet officially elected their chair. This will be done at their next scheduled meeting.

For the benefit of the new advisory chairs, Dr. Browder explained how and why the advisory committee were created. It was an effort on the part of the School Board four (4) years ago to establish communication with the chairs of the board committees and for Dr. Browder to then provide the Board with an update on each of the committees. He further explained that the board committees are for advice to the Lee County School Board. Four (4) years ago there were "Zone Committees", consisting of one (1) committee in each zone. The Board did not feel that they were as intimate a group as they thought necessary to collect the data needed. At that point, the five (5) advisory committees were set up with each of the board members serving as a liaison, as well as a staff person, who also serves on each of the committees. Dr. Browder thanked each of the chairs for their work on the committees.

2. APPROVAL OF MAY 7, 2007 MINUTES

Minutes were accepted as submitted. Mr. David Hall moved and Mr. Nicholas Alexander seconded.

3. REMINDER OF COMMITTEE REPORTS

Dr. Browder reminded the group that they would have to present their quarterly reports to the Board in December. The date of the board meeting has not yet been set. A letter will be sent to the committee members prior to the meeting notifying them of the date.

Dr. Browder explained that the Board, by Statute, reorganizes at the second meeting in November and the date is set by the Statute. At that time, meeting dates are determined for the following year.

Dr. Browder gave a brief explanation to the committee members regarding their report to the Board. Dr. Browder requested that the reports be about 5-7 minutes in length. The Board is looking for a summarization of what the committee has been working on. All presentations are to be given verbally, however, the committee member is allowed to pass out a hand-out to the Board if they so choose.

4. DISCUSSION OF INDIVIDUAL COMMITTEE INITIATIVES

A. Dr. Connie Dennis of the Curriculum Advisory Committee (CAC) – reported at their first few meetings FCAT was discussed at length. Dr. Jones, Dr. Itzen and Dr. Tihen attended two (2) of their meetings and had a lot of data to present to the committee. Overall, the District is doing well, but there is a problem with the mobility rate. This is due to the fact that there are 18,000 new students in the District, 12,000 of them are from other Districts.

The last meeting was with their new people. They are very knowledgeable and eager to work. The committee spoke about mentors and volunteers and in order to go further with that, at their next meeting, they will have staff from the District attend and explain in more detail regarding what is needed.

Dr. Browder stated that Dr. Dennis had mentioned the 18,000 new students and he further explained those numbers to the committee. The District grew by 3,600 new students last year. The District had the largest growth in the State of Florida. This year the District grew by 1,500-1,800, not quite certain of the numbers, but substantially less than anticipated. There were 18,000 new student ID numbers, 5,000 of that kindergarten which leaves approximately 13,000. Take 4,000 off for the 3,600 new students, and that brings you down to about 9,000 new students. Those 9,000 new students that are coming to our system are about two (2) years behind in student achievement in relation to what our students are doing. Given the above facts, in the course of several years, instead of having an ability to take our students and move them forward, we are instead playing “catch-up.”

B. Mr. David Hall, Finance Advisory Committee (FAC)-Committee reviewed the budget in detail, which was approved by the Board. The budget department has a detailed calendar of events that lead up to the final budget being approved. The finance committee goes right along with the budget department's calendar to make certain that everything looks acceptable from the committee's perspective. The committee discussed at length what their charter should be. They actually pulled the written charter for their committee and made changes to it. Mr. Hall stated that there is a concern about the total revenue, what is coming in from real estate tax and impact fees. This discussion is on a regular basis to make sure that there is enough revenue coming in to cover expenses.

Mr. Hall reported the topic for the quarter was volunteerism. Difficult from an accounting point of view. The committee brought in a couple of gentlemen who were in charge, on a county-wide basis, of all of the career institutes throughout the system. They gave an excellent presentation of the different programs that we have. Discussed all the different existing programs and what the finance committee could do to help.

Dr. Dennis asked a question regarding the tax structure that Charlie Crist is advocating and the impact it may have on the school district. Mr. Hall stated that the District is concerned. The legislature really does not know for certain what effects it will have on the school districts. Mr. Hall stated that he is concerned that the State of Florida economy will be hit very hard. The finance committee feels that the 3.6% reserve that is built into the budget is not enough. Dr. Browder stated that the FTE shortfall for the 1st quarter is in the \$9 million range. The District has set aside enough money to cover \$12 million, if you count class size and the FTE shortfall reserve. We should be able to cover deficits without having to use the 3% that is in the reserve. The capital plan is being redone and the Board will be briefed on the new plan. The District anticipated building 28 schools in a five (5) year window, now we are probably down to ten (10). However, 18 were approved within the budget process; this is why the capital plan needs to be redone.

C. Nicholas Alexander, Compliance Advisory Committee (CAC) – Provided the committee a brief overview of his background. He is currently employed at General Electric as the CFO. He has been at General Electric for approximately two (2) years and GE has had a presence here for about 22 years. He has been a member of the Compliance Advisory Committee for approximately one (1) year. He noticed from very early on, from a compliance perspective, a lack of guidance and direction relative to where the committee charter was. He reported that the Compliance Advisory Committee is really focusing on where they can add value and help the Board, from a compliance perspective. One of the areas that they have been working on very recently is ESE compliance. The committee has been working in conjunction with Julie Nieminski. The committee would like to see some linkage between the Finance and the Compliance committees.

Mr. Alexander noted at the next meeting of the Compliance Advisory Committee, they will look at doing the best practice session with local compliance and/or accountants in the area to see some things they may be able to lend support.

Dr. Browder made the announcement that Julie Nieminski, the Board Auditor, has resigned. Dr. Browder suggested to the Board that they consider using the auditing function, similar to the way the District uses outside attorneys. He further explained to the Committee, that Mr. Martin maintains a roster of attorneys with varying specialties, and when a case arises that involves any of those areas, Mr. Martin hires that attorney. This has helped to keep legal costs under control. Using outside services for the auditing function would be in lieu of hiring a full time person. The District is audited every year financially. The Board is considering all of their options before making a decision regarding the Board Auditor position. Ms. Nieminski will still help in completing the ESE audit before she leaves. The State is now going to require every District to complete a self assessment

David Hall suggested that the Board may want to get input from the various committees about how best to proceed with filling the position of the School Board Auditor. Mr. Hall also spoke briefly about OPPAGA. The District received the gold seal for our compliance, one of only six Districts that have received this award.

D. Carrie Chase-Robideaux, District Advisory Council (DAC)-Provided the committee an overview of her background. The topic that was discussed at DAC was parent involvement. A speaker is scheduled to come in on the 14th of November. The elementary sub-committee is very interested in the school assignment procedure. Lellia Muvdi is scheduled to come in to speak regarding school assignment. The committee is also scheduled to discuss high school drop out rates and student evaluation. Ms. Chase informed the committee that a guest speaker had come in at the end of last year and spoke about the cumulative folders process. Teacher overload with the new PE requirement was also discussed. Ms. Chase asks of all of her sub-committees that if they have an issue they would like to bring forward, that they also suggest a solution to the problem. The committees has a main speaker every three (3) months and the next two (2) meetings are then dedicated toward sub-committee breakouts. The topics discussed during these meetings were chosen at the beginning of the term, the results of the sub-committee meetings are then brought back to executive DAC.

Ms. Chase reported that DAC membership has recently changed, in that the committee is made up of primarily parents versus the membership last year, which was more school related personnel. The parents on the committee have a lot more questions about the way things are set-up, such as school assignment.

Dr. Browder updated the committee on ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning). The District is going through the process of purchasing a new computer system that will allow the collection of the data. Dr. Browder referred to Ms. Julie Nieminski's last audits and noted that everything inside the audit related to the recommendation that the District go to a new system that will allow them to collect data across the system, as opposed to one (1) department at time.

This will be a positive step toward collecting and managing the data and providing the correct information to the appropriate people. Currently the District reports over 150 functions to the State and the data being reported is not consistent. The ERP may be something that Dr. Browder will ask the committees to talk about or have someone come to the individual committees meetings to discuss.

Dr. Browder informed the committee that the program the District will be using is People Soft. This was all studied very carefully, including the hiring of a project manager. A statement of work covering approximately 170 functions will be included in the package. The system that we are currently using is over 30 years old and it was borrowed from the county government. The ERP will bring the District into the 21st century and allow us to be more efficient in relation to what we do. The cumulative folders will be not placed electronically right now. The District has the capacity to go all electronic with cumulative records; however, there were not enough computers for everyone to look at the IEP online as they were completed, so the schools asked that this not be done yet.

Nicholas Alexander, Compliance Advisory Committee, asked a question regarding business objects, which is an "off the shelf" package that you can use as an overlay for Oracle or People Soft. Dr. Browder was not certain if all of the technical items are listed in the statement of work. The District also has the ability to grow up to 25%, without incurring any additional costs. The implementation will take place over the next three (3) years.

Dr. Browder reminded the group that his issue for the quarter was centered on volunteerism. Dr. Browder stated that he feels that volunteers and mentors are critical for schools.

Dr. Browder asked the committee what they thought would be subjects they felt should be examined in the next quarter. The comments from the committee were as follows: *Ms. Carrie Chase, District Advisory Council*, stated that parents had voiced concerns about the length of the school day in light of adding the new Physical Education requirements, etc. She felt that this was something that should be examined and discussed further. *Dr. Constance Dennis, Curriculum Advisory Council*, said her committee had mentioned bullying and concerns they had regarding this issue. *David Hall, Finance Advisory Committee*, stated that his group had concerns about school safety and what could be done to improve safety in the schools. Dr. Browder stated that he felt that the length of the day would be something that all of the committees could look at and discuss. It may also be a good idea to discuss the length of the school year in addition to length of the day. *Mr. Carrie Chase, DAC*, made a suggestion that when the committees meet to discuss the above topic, that each of the committees be provided with a copy of what was discussed at the other committee meetings, so each of them would be up to date with what had been discussed. It was suggested that the minutes from each of the committee meetings be distributed to all the other committees. Dr. Browder said that he would send a reminder to all of the secretaries to provide those minutes to all the committee chairs.

Dr. Browder stated that he would be willing to attend any committee meetings. Let his office know so that it can be placed on his calendar and he would be more than happy to attend.

5. **DISCUSSION OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

The next committee meeting was scheduled for January 28, 2008 at 3:30 p.m.

6. **ADJOURN**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

/blw