

Regular Board Meeting Minutes

Date: October 2, 2017

Present: Chair Caroline W. Doherty, Vice Chair Mary Blount Williams, Robert Moore, Mildred A. Council, Betsy Flanagan, Anna Barrett Smith, Melinda Fagundus, Benjie Forrest, and Worth Forbes

Attorney: Brian Gatchel

Time: 6:30 P.M.

Place: Pitt County Office Building, 3rd Floor Boardroom

1) Start of Meeting:

A) Chair Doherty called the Board of Education meeting to order in Regular Session on October 2, 2017 at 6:30 P.M.

B) Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence

Benjie Forrest led the Board members in the Pledge of Allegiance, and requested that Worth Forbes lead the Board in a Moment of Silence which Mr. Forbes ended with a prayer.

2) Routine Business:

A) Approval of the Agenda:

Robert Moore made a motion, with a second from Worth Forbes, to approve the Agenda as presented. The motion to approve the Agenda passed unanimously.

B) Spotlight on Teaching and Learning:

1) Emily Grubbs and Kailee Grubbs, A.G. Cox Middle School students, were recognized for being named Beta Club "Meeting of the Minds" National Champions at the June 2017 Beta Club Conference held in Florida. Anna Barrett Smith, on behalf of the Board, presented Emily and Kailee with a "Creating Excellence in the East" Award.

2) Amanda McDaniel, J. H. Rose High Schools' Media Coordinator, was recognized for receiving the West Memorial Grant totaling more than \$36,000 to complete the remodeling and updating of the Media Center at JHR. Robert Moore, on behalf of the Board, presented Ms. McDaniel with a "Creating Excellence in the East" Award.

3) Ali Setser, Principal at H.B. Sugg and Sam D. Bundy Elementary School was recognized for receiving the North Carolina Media Administrator of the Year award. Betsy Flanagan, on behalf of the Board, presented Ms. Setser with a "Creating Excellence in the East" Award.

C) Public Expression:

Ms. Jessica Lawrence with Barnes and Nobles informed the Board members about the upcoming Holiday Book Drive. Ms. Lawrence stated this year Barnes and Nobles would be collaborating with Pitt County Schools to give books to the students of PCS. Ms. Lawrence asked the Board members to help to spread the word about the Barnes and Noble Holiday Book Drive.

Kimberly Muktarian, of Raleigh came to address the Board members concerning the process PCS follows to ban individuals from school property, including how Board members are notified of such actions, how the individual is notified when a ban is lifted, and if there is an appeal process for individuals who receive a ban letter.

A parent who had not completed a "Request to Speak" form, required by Board Policy 2310 Public Participation at Board Meetings, asked to be allowed to address the Board. The parent was asked to read and complete the required form and return for Public Expression at the November Board meeting. The parent was also given the opportunity to speak with Dr. Travis Lewis, Director of Student and Community Services, concerning her urgent issue, which she chose to do.

3) Consent Items:

Robert Moore made a motion to approve the consent items as listed, with a second from Vice Chair Williams. The consent items included the following:

- September 5, 2017 Board Meeting minutes,
- September 21, 2017 Special Called Board Meeting minutes
- September 21, 2017 Board Work Session minutes, and
- Personnel Report for October 2017

With no discussion, the motion to approve the Consent Items passed unanimously.

4) New Business:

A) Revised Policy 4150, Student Assignment

Chair Caroline Doherty read the following statement at the start of the Revised Policy 4150, Student Assignment discussion.

"I'd like to take a few minutes to explain how we arrived at this point on this policy issue, so please bear with me. It is important to understand that this board and the current superintendent inherited this situation from a previous board and a previous superintendent. From my perspective, it seems that everyone had good intentions and were trying to accommodate families with children in Pitt County Schools.

It is my understanding that the previous superintendent was asked during redistricting by some residents of Irish Creek, Cedar Ridge, Treetops and Dudley's Grant to allow their children to attend DH Conley instead of their assigned high school, South Central. The redistricting was impacting their elementary and/or middle school assignments and they asked to also be redistricted at the high school level in order to stay with other children in their schools. Important to note was the fact that at least some of these neighborhoods were sparsely developed at the time with relatively few families living in them. My understanding is that Pitt County Schools also abandoned the 'feeder pattern' concept around the same time, no longer using it as a factor when creating school assignment zones.

Apparently, the superintendent at that time did not redistrict those neighborhoods for high school but decided instead to allow the residents of those neighborhoods to apply to the board using the student assignment transfer request process. I am told that the Board of Education's 3 person board transfer committee heard many requests in subsequent years from residents of those neighborhoods to attend DH Conley rather than South Central. I've been told that at some point during the previous superintendent's tenure, the 3 person board transfer committee verbally instructed the PCS Assignment staff to approve transfer requests for residents of those neighborhoods

without scheduling a board transfer committee hearing. This is what has been happening ever since, but at an increasing pace because many more families live in those neighborhoods now than when the initial request was made to the previous superintendent.

Of course, a board committee is not supposed to give direction to staff, and policy of any kind can only be changed by a vote of the full board. It is important to note that there is no documentation that a policy change was ever brought before the full board at any point about this issue.

Also important to note is that DH Conley has become more crowded over the years as development has continued at a fairly rapid pace in its attendance area. In fact, Conley and one other school had to be closed for Open Enrollment fairly early this year because the demand outstripped the number of seats available. Some families who applied for Open Enrollment seats at Conley were denied because there was not enough room to accommodate them.

The current board became aware of this situation in early 2017 when families in some of the four neighborhoods complained to three different board members that their children were not being allowed to attend Conley. The board members contacted the superintendent to inquire about the assignment process regarding these neighborhoods. That is when I learned about the 'special arrangement' that had been made by the previous superintendent and board transfer committee, after the administration had fully investigated its records, which took quite some time going back through several years of committee and board meeting minutes.

It became quite clear that Pitt County Schools had been operating for many years outside of board policy by allowing residents of these four neighborhoods to attend a different high school without going through the student transfer board hearing process. South Central High School has always been listed by OPIS as the districted high school for those four neighborhoods since it opened.

We as a Board of Education should apply policy in a manner that is fair to all Pitt County residents. Allowing the residents of a few neighborhoods to bypass board policy is unfair to people in other neighborhoods and undermines the entire student assignment process. I have been assured by the superintendent that the 'special arrangement' is no longer being followed and that everyone in all Pitt County neighborhoods must now follow the written board policy regarding student transfers.

Finally, it is important to keep in mind that families in the four neighborhoods may have believed that the 'special arrangement' would continue indefinitely. Some realtors, neighbors, and Pitt County Schools administrators have likely contributed to the residents believing that this might be the case.

Last May, PCS held a very well attended Listening Session to hear the perspectives of the residents of the four neighborhoods. The board and administration have discussed this issue extensively, including during two board work sessions since that time. This is an issue we have all taken very seriously because of the significant impact on families and because of the role that Pitt County Schools staff and board members had in creating the situation so many years ago.

It is unfortunate that our predecessors did not specify an end date to the arrangement that was offered to those early residents of the four neighborhoods in response to their complaints. It is also unfortunate that no previous board took action on this issue to create certainty for the residents of these neighborhoods.

So it now falls to this board to decide whether to change our policy to address this issue or not. As it stands at this point, the superintendent only allows transfer requests to be approved if they meet board policy requirements-the rules apply to everyone regardless of where they live. This board may or may not choose to take action to provide some leeway to the residents of the four neighborhoods in order to give them time to make adjustments. That is what is before this board tonight.”

Much discussion was had by all Board members, after which Chair Doherty moved to the next item on the Agenda.

B) Policy 2420, Suspension of Policy

Addressing the Board members, Betsy Flanagan stated, in an effort to be as fair as possible to the families in the four neighborhoods discussed earlier and to put an end to the process of operating outside of our Student Assignment Policy, she was ready to make a motion. Ms. Flanagan made a motion to suspend the second reading, as required in Policy 2420, Suspension of Policy, for Policy 4150, Student Assignment with a second from Robert Moore. The vote to suspend the second reading for Policy 4150 was unanimous.

C) Revised Policy 4150, Student Assignment

Betsy Flanagan made a motion to revise Policy 4150, Student Assignment, with a second from Robert Moore, with the following verbiage. *SY2017-2018 Eighth Grade Students domiciled in Cedar Ridge, Irish Creek, Treetops, and Dudley’s Grant Neighborhoods Upon application in accord with the requirements of this Policy 4150, students who were classified as in the eighth grade during the 2017-2018 school year and domiciled (or residence location if exempted from domicile requirements as described in policy 4120, Domicile or Residence Requirements) in the Cedar Ridge, Irish Creek, Treetops, or Dudley’s Grant neighborhoods may be reassigned by the Superintendent to D.H. Conley High School for the school year following the application date. A new application is needed each year. The initial application must be for the ninth grade at D.H. Conley High School.* The vote to approve the revised Policy 4150, Student Assignment was unanimous.

5) Closing Comments:

Closing comments were made by Dr. Lenker, Board Members, and Chair Doherty.

6) Closed Session

Vice Chair Williams made a motion to enter into Closed Session, with a second from Mildred A. Council, pursuant to General Statute 143.318.11 for the following purposes: under subsection (a)(3) to consult with our attorney to preserve the attorney-client privilege, under subsection (a)(5) to establish or instruct the staff or agent concerning the negotiation of the price and material terms of a contract concerning the acquisition of real property, and under subsection (a)(6) to consider the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, conditions of appointment or initial employment of a public officer or employee or a prospective public officer or employee. Time was 7:42 PM

7) Additional Action Items, if Necessary

No additional items were necessary.

8) Adjourn:

Robert Moore made a motion to adjourn with a second by Anna Barrett Smith. The motion to adjourn passed unanimously. Time adjourned was 8:36 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Caroline W. Doherty, Chair

Dr. Ethan Lenker, Secretary

Minutes Recorded by Carol Rankin