

DATE: November 8, 2010 PRESENT: Mary Grace Bright, Chair
Jill Camnitz
Benjie Forrest
Jennifer Little
Ralph Love, Sr.
TIME: 7:55 P.M. Barbara Owens
Billy Peaden
Roy Peaden
Marcy Romary
Dick Tolmie
Matthew Ward
PLACE: J. H. Rose High School Mary Williams

Chair Mary Grace Bright called the Board of Education to order in Regular Session at 7:55 P. M.

Mr. Benjie Forrest led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

To have discussion before the Board meeting next week when the redistricting recommendation will be brought before the Board for a vote, Chair Bright asked each member who wished to comment following the Public Hearing tonight to please let their voice be heard at this time.

Bishop Ralph Love stated he has listened in all sessions and done his reading regarding the plan. He feels very confident that everyone will not be happy with any plan selected. Bishop Love commented that he is confident with the Superintendent's recommendation and feels no more maps are needed – the Board has seen enough.

Ms. Mary Williams stated this is a difficult job, but she signed on for it when she ran for office. She commented that her daughter graduated from North Pitt High School in 2009. When she was in Pactolus School, they were redistricted and her daughter left that school in the fifth grade spending her last year of elementary school in Belvoir. She hated it, but she made it. She commented that there were 31 students involved in that move, but 11 of those children's parents spoke about going to the same church, playing baseball together, volunteering at the fire department, etc. and asked to keep those eleven students together. Ms. Williams stated it did not matter to her where her child was sent, if that school did their job. Her daughter learned to read and write and never got into trouble in school. She won the George Bush Gold/Silver Award at North Pitt. Ms. Williams stated all the schools did what they were supposed to do and as parents, we did what we were supposed to do. She commented that children are more resilient than parents and are prepared for their challenges.

Ms. William stated it's easy for people to talk when they have brick and mortar in their neighborhood, but that's not so when you don't. Sometimes that is hard to hear. She stated we know about the Court Order and know we need to make some changes. Ms. Williams stated some may not like what she says or the decisions she makes as she's received threats by letters, phone calls and emails. All she can say is that we're going to try to do what we're supposed to do for the sake of all children.

Mr. Billy Peaden had no comment.

Ms. Marcy Romary thanked everyone for coming to the sessions and meetings over the last several months. She commented that on the recommendations, there are parts she can support but greater portions she cannot support. Ms. Romary stated that the creation of more low performing schools is a great concern and will not help us achieve Unitary Status. She mentioned the middle school map suggested by Ms. Fagundus demonstrating better proficiency and a better balance of capacity and feels there needs to be further discussion regarding these issues. Ms. Romary ended by stating she's on her way out, but stated that Ms. Christine Waters will take her seat on the Board in a few weeks and she needs to hear from the community.

Ms. Barbara Owens stated we do listen; we see the faces of the children and don't make decisions without feelings for them. She stated twelve members have to make a decision that is best for all students and hopes to have support from the community.

Mr. Dick Tolmie stated he knew everyone was not going to be happy with the decision made, though the Board is not out to disappoint anyone. He reported that he's tried to think about what is best overall for the school system. The two comments he has heard stressed from tonight's meeting are stability and a better balance for diversity, proficiency, race and capacity. Mr. Tolmie stated he heard folks ask why better balance proficiency for redistricting. He commented that we cannot use socioeconomic (free/reduced lunch) nor race data to balance diversity, thus the reading proficiency test score was selected. Mr. Tolmie feels there is improved balance in the middle school map Ms. Fagundus presented and certainly supports the staff investigating further in this regard.

Mr. Benjie Forrest thanked everyone for their attendance at meetings, phone calls, e-mails and personal contacts. He commented that minor adjustments to the middle school map presented by Ms. Fagundus could be studied.

Ms. Jill Camnitz stated the Board has listened carefully to the community and has responded to concerns seeking the best possible plan. She commented that we need to continue to seek the best middle and elementary school plans until the Board votes next Monday night, and this new middle school map may provide a better balance as others have discussed. Ms. Camnitz mentioned the small neighborhood requests heard tonight and feels further data regarding these may be helpful.

Dr. Matthew Ward thanked everyone for coming to the meetings and voicing their views. As a new Board member, he stated he has studied the maps and listened to comments and read e-mails, which helped him in the process. Dr. Ward commented that the children are our greatest asset, and we need to do what is best for them. We cannot satisfy everyone, and he understands that some neighborhoods want to stay together. Dr. Ward stated we need to look at everyone's situation and do the best we can in redistricting the children across the county. He said it's sad when a child comes home and does not feel comfortable in his/her school. Dr. Ward commented that everyone needs to put their heart in this decision. Again, he stressed that we all can't have what we want, but the Board has to try to do what is best for all students.

Ms. Jennifer Little echoed the thank you to everyone and especially those in the community who contacted her. She stated the Board will react to what the public wants – stability/proximity together. Ms. Little also commented that she heard requests to improve and preserve the attendance area of J. H. Rose High School and success stories of the schools having improved proficiency since the 2005 redistricting. She stated we need to populate Lakeforest Elementary and move the children at Sadie Saulter Elementary, and the public needs to see a map to show that. Ms. Little feels we did a disservice to the public by not producing such a map; but in the spirit of moving on, she said small changes in the middle school map could bring a better balance for E. B. Aycock, A. G. Cox and C. M. Eppes. Ms. Little thanked the group for all the hard work they had done in preparing this map stating it was helpful and very much appreciated. In the recommended plan, there are some parts she likes and some parts she doesn't like. Ms. Little asked now what do we do – Monday night the Board is set to vote on the Superintendent's recommendations. She said we held listening sessions in the different communities, and we now have one week to make a **BIG DECISION**.

Chair Bright stated that the Board and the Superintendent have heard the suggestions during this meeting and these suggestions will be studied. Next Monday night, the Board will discuss the tweaks or reaffirm the superintendent's recommendations and then vote yea or nay for the outcome.

Ms. Barbara Owens stated that the plan has been known from day one – the Board would listen to the public and then make a final decision. She commented that tweaking of the map has been requested, and this can be done and results provided to the Board and the public. The Board may view the changes made and then vote on a final decision next Monday night.

Mr. Roy Peaden senses parents feel some schools are not as good as others – some say travel time, real estate value, other inconveniences, P.T.A.'s and community involvement are issues. He stated this process should be all about what is best for the kids. Mr. Peaden commented that possibly some adjustments could be made in the middle school map, but you can't swap one section for another without asking the folks who live in that section. He stated that the Board needs to try to do what's right and asked parents to do their part so when their children leave for school, they're in the right frame of mind. We need to make a decision we can live with in the days ahead.

Chair Bright thanked everyone for their attendance at any or all meetings. She stated that assigning students is always a hard job for anyone involved. Ms. Bright commented that a number of folks are unhappy because they don't like change, but children are resilient. She stated when these changes are made; she hopes everyone will continue to be supportive in whatever school their child/children attend.

Superintendent Beverly Reep also thanked everyone and stated she appreciated their diligence in a difficult situation. She stated that we are blessed to be in a community that is growing and had support of the ¼ cent sales tax for school construction. Dr. Reep commented that some areas across the country have to close schools due to lack of funding.

Dr. Reep then asked specifically what the Board would like – is that minor changes be made to the middle school map and how those changes can be seen by the community. She reminded all that one change will lead to other ripple changes. Superintendent Reep stated we have been very open and have had many meetings for input from the community. Again, she stressed that the Board direct her regarding their desires.

Ms. Jill Camnitz moved, second by Ms. Marcy Romary, that minor adjustments in the middle school map be made and results presented to the Board and the community before the Monday night meeting.

Discussion by Board members followed.

Ms. Barbara Owens asked someone to define “tweaking” and is the map presented “tweaking” or are there specific areas that will be tweaked. Ms. Camnitz commented that tweaking means there will be minor changes involved.

Mr. Dick Tolmie stated on the recommended plan, four segments would be moved from A. G. Cox to C. M. Eppes; instead he asked that we move the four segments from A. G. Cox to E. B. Aycock keeping the 18 segments together. The other one to four segments that were slated to go to E. B. Aycock could be moved to C. M. Eppes to better balance diversity and capacity.

Ms. Barbara Owens asked how many students would this involve with Ms. Camnitz stating research would have to be done for this number.

Ms. Owens asked will there have to be another map made. Mr. Roy Peaden asked where are the sections being discussed with Ms. Kay Weathington stating she would need to know what segments are involved and data could be adjusted for results.

Ms. Marcy Romary asked could an ALERT NOW be sent with the number of students involved.

Following discussion, Chair Bright stated a motion had been made and seconded as stated above. She now asked for a show of hands by Board members for the motion. “Ayes” were Ms. Jill Camnitz, Mr. Dick Tolmie, Ms. Jennifer Little and Ms. Marcy Romary. “Nays” were Mr. Billy Peaden, Ms. Mary Williams, Bishop Ralph Love, Ms. Barbara Owens, Mr. Benjie Forrest, Dr. Matthew Ward and Mr. Roy Peaden.

Superintendent Reep stated we will notify everyone of the results through Board packets, web site and newspaper. She asked should we start the Board meeting earlier on November 15th? Dr. Reep stated we have been working vigorously on this issue since July – we are now one week away from the Board vote. She stated the meeting will be held at South Central High School.

Chair Bright then reminded the Board that there will be a Closed Session November 15th at 5:30 p.m. with the Regular Board Meeting following at 7:00 p.m. at South Central High School. Ms. Marcy Romary asked again about any comments being received on the web site with Public Information Officer Heather Mayo stating copies of the comments will be shared with Board members. Chair Bright stated an ALERT

NOW could be sent to the parents from the schools involved, and comments will be heard during Public Expression at the Monday night meeting.

With no further discussion, Ms. Jill Camnitz, second by Ms. Mary Romary, moved to adjourn at 8:35 p.m. Motion was approved unanimously.

Respectively Submitted,

Ms. Mary Grace Bright, Chair

Dr. Beverly B. Reep, Superintendent