

DATE: August 23, 2010 PRESENT: Mary Grace Bright, Chair
Jill Camnitz
Benjie Forrest
Ralph Love, Sr.
TIME: 6:00 P.M. Barbara Owens
Billy Peaden
Roy Peaden
Marcy Romary
Dick Tolmie
Mary Williams

PLACE: Pitt County Office Building ABSENT: Jennifer Little

Chair Mary Grace Bright called the Board of Education to order in Special Session at 6:00 P.M.

Mr. Roy Peaden led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chair Bright offered the Agenda for consideration. Bishop Ralph Love, second by Mr. Roy Peaden, moved the Agenda be accepted as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

No one from the audience came forward to speak during Public Expression.

Under New Business, Chair Bright informed those in attendance that the purpose of the called Special Session is to interview candidates to fill the vacancy for District I, Seat A following the death of long term Board member Michael Dixon. She explained that there are four candidates who will be asked the same set of questions by Board members with interviews lasting approximately thirty minutes.

Ms. Jill Camnitz asked would follow-up questions be allowed, and when should they be asked? After conferring with In-House Attorney Rob Sonnenberg, Chair Bright stated follow-up questions would be allowed for clarification of a previous statement made by the candidates, which could be asked at the time a question was raised.

Chair Bright stated to the candidates that in showing courtesy to each candidate, she would ask that candidates wait outside the Board room until their interview begins. By doing so, each candidate would hear the questions as they were asked of them and not have extra time to plan their response.

The first candidate called was Ms. Minnie Johnson-Anderson. Chair Bright welcomed Ms. Johnson-Anderson and thanked her for her interest in serving on the Pitt County Board of Education for District 1, Seat A. She then asked Ms. Johnson-Anderson to introduce herself to the Board. Ms. Johnson-Anderson stated she is a native of Greenville, and for the last ten years, she has been a volunteer – helping in three different classes. She also informed the Board that she works with the Homeless Program and at Pitt Community College. Ms. Johnson-Anderson commented that she

wants to teach children how to manage money and is in the process of learning about different proposals and grants.

The first question of Ms. Johnson-Anderson asked by Mr. Roy Peaden is, "Why are you interested in becoming a member of the Pitt County Board of Education and what strengths will you bring to the Board of Education?" Ms. Johnson-Anderson replied that she's had forty-three years of educational experience. She commented that she is a team player and will be an ambassador for the school system. The candidate stated she was a good listener to parents, teachers, students and the Board and would provide frequent and immediate feedback. Ms. Johnson-Anderson noted that there has been improvement in the dropout rate and suspensions. She wants to reach out to parents, the community, churches and businesses for local support of students; letting them be aware of the aspirations of the schools and explaining to everyone what the Federal and State standards and expectations are for our schools. Ms. Johnson-Anderson also suggested having a Reading Day in the community with employers allowing employees to come one hour once a week to help our children.

Ms. Jill Camnitz asked question number two, "What do you see as the most pressing challenges facing the Board of Education over the next five years?" Ms. Johnson-Anderson responded that lack of money and futuristic ideas involving technology are prevalent.

Number three was asked by Mr. Benjie Forrest, "You will be representing District 1, how will you balance the interests of District 1 with the needs of the entire system?" Ms. Johnson-Anderson stated that every child can learn and the Board needs to work for all children, from the county and the city. She commented that the whole village needs to be on board for the children – from family members to Board members to custodians – or anyone who touches a child's life. We all need to create a positive atmosphere for our students.

Mr. Dick Tolmie then asked question four, "Is there anything that you believe the school system should be doing to reduce or eliminate the performance gap?" Ms. Johnson-Anderson stated we need to communicate – listening to parents, teachers and principals and talking with the children. She commented that every child does not learn in the same style, and we need to add the human factor for motivation of students as well as teachers. More volunteers in the school will also be of help for student achievement.

Chair Bright asked how can we motivate teachers and students? Ms. Johnson-Anderson stated many teachers spend their own money on supplies and resources for their classrooms. She stated we should give them positive feedback on what they do and always encourage students and staff.

Ms. Barbara Owens stated Board of Education members have regularly scheduled Board meetings, committee meetings and hearing panels, in addition to listening sessions, phone calls, studying, etc. which may take 12-20 hours per month. The sixth question is, "Can you make that commitment?" Ms. Johnson-Anderson quickly responded "yes". She stated she is retired and can give 150%.

The Chair then asked Ms. Johnson-Anderson if she had questions for the Board. The candidate asked what is the Board seeking in a person to fill the vacancy? Chair Bright stated most importantly for her it would be a commitment to helping educate all children in Pitt County, which is easy to say but harder to do. Also of importance is someone who will be a team player and will be present to carry out the work that needs to be done by the Board.

Ms. Barbara Owens stated that in an earlier question, Ms. Johnson-Anderson mentioned city and county in referring to schools. What did you mean or envision by that statement? Ms. Johnson-Anderson stated she was referring to all Pitt County Schools' students.

Mr. Dick Tolmie stated he would like to come as close as possible to finding someone like Michael Dixon, and also someone who is open-minded, intelligent, thinks outside the box and cares about the children in Pitt County.

Bishop Ralph Love asked Ms. Johnson-Anderson, "Who is the seat partner for District 1?" Ms. Johnson-Anderson stated she did not know. Bishop Love stated he is the other seat partner for District 1, and asked how she would work with him in supporting District 1 and for the entire Board. Ms. Johnson-Anderson stated that she has known Bishop Love for a long time and has had a good rapport through church and community activities, and she will strive to continue this type relationship in Board matters as well.

The second candidate to appear before the Board was Ms. Teresa Lee. Chair Bright welcomed Ms. Lee and thanked her for her interest in serving on the Pitt County Board of Education for District 1, Seat A.

Chair Bright then asked Ms. Lee to introduce herself to the Board members. Ms. Lee stated she was born and raised in Goldsboro, NC. She received her under graduate degree and Masters Degree in Education from East Carolina University. Ms. Lee stated she works with a mental health and substance abuse agency providing services for children, adolescents and adults who have issues of this nature. Her title is Chief Operating Officer with ReStart Incorporated.

Ms. Marcy Romary asked Ms. Lee the first question, "Why are you interested in becoming a member of the Pitt County Board of Education and what strengths would you bring to the Board of Education?" Ms. Lee responded that she works with children with behavioral problems everyday and sees on a day-to-day basis, children and parents who lack the educational factor in their life. This position will provide the opportunity for her to work within the school system to ensure all children have quality education. She hopes to bridge a gap between school staff, parents, students or anyone who will benefit from education through our school system.

Mr. Billy Peaden asked, "What do you see as the most pressing challenges facing the Board of Education in the next five years?" Ms. Lee quickly stated the budget, adding there are not enough resources for our schools in Pitt County and across the state of North Carolina. Ms. Lee also commented that the current problem of redistricting is a big issue knowing that whatever plan is selected, everyone will not be happy. Her final thought was to be sure qualified teachers are hired in all schools. Ms. Jill Camnitz

asked Ms. Lee what actions would she think the Board needs to take to be sure qualified teachers are in all schools. Ms. Lee responded that all teachers should be involved with culturally responsive training as issues often need to be approached in different manners, depending on the situation. She feels this type training will help teachers adapt to all students.

Bishop Ralph Love asked the third question, "You will be representing District 1, how will you balance the interests of District 1 with the needs of the entire system?" Ms. Lee stated she would need to research the needs for District 1 and the total district. She feels it's imperative to get through to the parents what student needs are and bridging the gap between school administrators and parents is critical. Ms. Lee feels finding "a balance" for the system will benefit each district.

Ms. Mary Williams asked, "Is there anything that you believe the school system should be doing to reduce or eliminate the performance gap?" Ms. Lee stated she couldn't say exactly what needs to be done. She feels knowing what has been implemented and researching what other counties have done would be helpful in determining the answer. Ms. Lee did comment that getting parents involved with their children and providing support at home is necessary.

Mr. Roy Peaden explained to Ms. Lee that the Board of Education members have regularly scheduled Board meetings, committee meetings and hearings panels, in addition to listening sessions, phone calls, studying, etc. This may take 12-20 hours per month. He asked, "Can you make that commitment?" Ms. Lee affirmed the Board that she can make that commitment. She pointed out that she oversees an agency, but stated education is most important to her and is the key to helping all students succeed. Ms. Barbara Owens asked will her job let her take the time off for activities involving Board member responsibilities. She stated yes, they may not like it at times, but she would take the time off when necessary.

Bishop Ralph Love asked Ms. Lee did she know who the other seat partner for District 1 is?" Ms. Lee stated you are. He asked Ms. Lee how would she work with him, as well as working with the entire system. She stated that she is a team player and it would be a team effort. Ms. Lee stated she does not know everything about the Board or education, but she will look to him and the entire Board for guidance. Ms. Lee stated she will ask many questions as she becomes familiar with the responsibilities of the Board.

Chair Bright then asked Ms. Lee did she have questions for the Board. She stated she actually has several she would like to ask. The first question Ms. Lee asked is what are other issues, other than redistricting, the Board foresees?

Mr. Roy Peaden answered that discipline and attendance are major factors to him. Respect by students for school employees is also a key issue for him. He also stated that parents' getting involved means everything.

Secondly, Ms. Lee asked what additional priorities does the Board have for this year?

Chair Bright listed several items that are constant for the Board: Dropout prevention, unitary status (2012), day-to-day operations, staying on top of the budget (have an excellent Finance Officer who helps us this) and supporting our staff.

Mr. Dick Tolmie mentioned the Long Range Facility Plan for Pitt County Schools. He stated Phase I was now in progress, but we have to identify what needs are essential over the next ten years and be sure there is money in the budget to meet these needs.

Ms. Mary Williams stated she thinks technology and working to integrate it into our curriculum to meet 21st century needs for our students is important. She commented that the dreams of children today are not like the dreams of old. Ms. Williams also feels it's a necessity to have proper guidance counselors in place to direct the students and sometimes parents toward those dreams.

Ms. Lee then asked what are some things the Board is most proud of?

Mr. Roy Peaden stated he is proud of the academic and athletic success of the students throughout the county. He commented that support from parents, staff and the whole county is relevant in many areas of student participation. Mr. Peaden also informed Ms. Lee that continued construction is vital to our system, and he himself is in favor of making additions to our present schools rather than building new schools.

Mr. Billy Peaden stated he thought the dress code of uniforms was a good step going from baggy pants to kids dressed in a manner that we are proud of.

Ms. Marcy Romary feels the dropout prevention program is having very positive results and thanked Ms. Lee for the generous donation her employer had made. She also stated the multi-million dollar Federal grant just received by Pitt County Schools would be a big asset in moving dropout prevention forward.

Mr. Dick Tolmie stated he is pleased with the success we have had in educating the vast majority of the children which is seen in many ways - success for our students at Pitt Community College and other colleges that they attend, as well as increasing ABC scores. Though you hear negatives about Pitt County public education from individuals on occasion, he commented that in talking with parents who are involved with their children through their schools are happy with our schools and look forward to continued success.

Mr. Benjie Forrest is glad there is re-emphasis on Career and Technical Education and feels there is an interest in these classes from all children.

Chair Bright ended this question response by stating she is proud of all Pitt County Staff who go the extra mile – from the superintendent to teachers to custodians and on down the line. She stated we have tremendous students enrolled in our system who have much needed family support.

Ms. Mary Williams then asked of Ms. Lee, “What is your vision of a neighborhood school?” Ms. Lee stated she needs to examine all options before responding.

The third candidate for the District 1, Seat A vacancy is Ms. Nutricia Perkins. Chair Bright welcomed her and thanked her for her interest in serving on the Pitt County Board of Education for District 1, Seat A.

In introducing herself, Ms. Perkins stated she is a jewelry maker. She has a daughter who is a freshman at St. Augustine College. Ms. Perkins is a native of Pitt County.

Ms. Jill Camnitz asked Ms. Perkins if she had any involvement with Pitt County Schools other than activity in which her daughter was involved with Ms. Perkins responding no.

Ms. Jill Camnitz then asked the first question of, "Why are you interested in becoming a member of the Pitt County Board of Education and what strengths would you bring to the Board of Education?" Ms. Perkins responded that education of a student is very important for a foundation and chance of moving forward. She stated counselors and teachers need to help children reach their goals, learn basic living experiences, i.e. filling out job applications, and guide them with their decisions. Ms. Perkins stated she went through an issue with her child this past year, and she wants to find the reasons for children dropping out of school, why some children are being favored over others and teach students to treat teachers like they do their parents.

Mr. Benjie Forrest asked, "What do you see as the most pressing challenges facing the Board of Education in the next five years?" Ms. Perkins answered "fairness". She also feels uniforms can be a challenge by trying to get all administrators to be consistent in handling issues that arise because of the dress code.

Ms. Marcy Romary asked Ms. Perkins did she mean fairness in terms of uniforms? Ms. Perkins answered no, with everything. She asked that all staff treat all students the same and enforce the same student handbook guidelines given out in all schools.

Ms. Barbara Owens asked about the statement in her letter regarding unfair treatment of students. Ms. Perkins stated that all children needed to be treated fairly when working through issues at school. She knows that many parents do not get involved with their children pertaining to school issues, and Ms. Perkins feels if the parents don't care, students don't care. She stated those parents who are involved need to speak up for kids who have no support and guide them in knowing the difference between right and wrong.

Mr. Dick Tolmie asked question number three, "You will be representing District 1, how will you balance the interests of District 1 with the needs of the entire system?" Ms. Perkins responded that we all need to pull together, and not pull apart. She further said that one person cannot solve a problem – we need to learn to agree and come together to figure a way to make the problem right.

Ms. Barbara Owens asked the question, "Is there anything that you believe the school system should be doing to reduce or eliminate the performance gap?" Ms. Perkins feels children need motivation and positive feedback. She stated that teachers as guardians, bus drivers, parents and all involved in a child's life need to encourage that child. Ms. Perkins commented that if a child fails, the teacher should explain to the child why he/she failed and not just give him/her a failing grade.

Ms. Marcy Romary informed Ms. Perkins that Board of Education members have regularly scheduled Board meetings, committee meetings and hearing panels, in addition to listening sessions, phone calls, studying, etc. This may take 12-20 hours a month. She then asked of Ms. Perkins, "Can you make that commitment?" Ms. Perkins quickly responded, "Yes, I can." She stated if you want something, you have to go out there and get it, because no one is going to bring it to you.

Bishop Ralph Love then asked Ms. Perkins did she know who the other seat partner for District 1 is?" Ms. Perkins said no, I don't. Dr. Love explained to Ms. Perkins that his was the other seat partner for District 1 and asked how could they work together. Ms. Perkins stated she is good at working with others, all anyone has to do is call and she will come.

Chair Bright then asked Ms. Perkins did she have any questions for the Board with Ms. Perkins responding no.

Ms. Mary Williams told Ms. Perkins she enjoyed her enthusiasm and wondered what she meant when she said that teachers should be guardians. Ms. Perkins stated that when a child leaves home, whoever is around that child – whether it be the bus driver, teacher, teacher assistant, cafeteria worker – that staff member becomes the child's guardian. She further commented that the child should respect his/her guardian at all times.

The last candidate for District 1, Seat A is Dr. Matthew Ward. Chair Bright welcomed Dr. Ward and thanked him for his interest in serving on the Pitt County Board of Education for District 1, Seat A.

In his introduction to the Board, Dr. Ward stated he is the Pastor of Haddocks United American Free Will Baptist Church in Winterville. He is a native of Greenville, and he and his children attended Pitt County Schools. Dr. Ward expressed that he would very much like to have the opportunity to serve on the Board of Education.

Ms. Jill Camnitz stated that on his resume', she noted he was involved with the Boys' Club in several communities, asked how did his involvement occur and is he involved now. Dr. Ward stated that when he was fourteen, he threw a trash can in front of a police car. He further stated that the policeman picked him up and took him to the Boys' Club. As he grew older, he became a janitor in a Boys' Club and ended up working with them ten years.

Mr. Billy Peaden asked Dr. Ward the first question, "Why are you interested in becoming a member of the Pitt County Board of Education and what strengths would you bring to the Board of Education?" Dr. Ward stated he worked 22 years with Pitt County Schools as the Quality Control Supervisor and ten years as the ISS Coordinator. He worked with many students and staff in these positions which he feels is an advantage for a Board member. Kids are our greatest asset, and his long range plan is to work on and accommodate students with their education. Dr. Ward stated in his past position, some children would talk to him about issues when they could not talk to their parents.

Mr. Billy Peaden asked in what schools he had worked. Dr. Ward stated while working in Quality Control, he was involved with all schools – checking the cafeteria, janitorial services, talking with principals – examining the cleanliness of a school. This assignment fell under Facility Services.

Bishop Ralph Love asked, “What do you see as the most pressing challenges facing the Board of Education in the next five years?” Dr. Ward feels redistricting and doing it properly is a huge responsibility. To have a true understanding of the process and prepare for future growth – facilities, programs, curriculum – is mandatory. He stated that Greenville is becoming the “Charlotte of the East”, and we need to do all we can to prepare our children for what’s coming up in the future.

Ms. Mary Williams stated you will be representing District 1. She then asked, “How will you balance the interests of District 1 with the needs of the entire system?” Dr. Ward stated he has lived in District 1 all his life. He commented that there are eleven other Board members and communicating with each other will help find a balance so that the separate districts become one body.

Mr. Roy Peaden asked the fourth question, “Is there anything that you believe the school system should be doing to reduce or eliminate the performance gap? Dr. Ward stated we need to take a good look at curriculum. He feels more assistance and tutoring are needed for children, and the students need to have a better outline and ability in choosing more subjects. It’s his opinion that we don’t know what children can do until we give them the opportunity to start and fine tune what their needs are.

Ms. Jill Camnitz asked the last question of Dr. Ward, “Board of Education members have regularly scheduled Board meetings, committee meetings and hearing panels, in addition to listening sessions, phone calls, studying, etc. This may take 12-20 hours per month. Can you make that commitment?” Dr. Ward answered yes, I can – I’m retired.

Bishop Ralph Love then asked Dr. Ward did he know who the other seat partner for District 1 is?” Dr. Ward responded yes, Ralph Love. Dr. Love asked of Dr. Ward, “How will you work with Ralph Love in District 1?” He said he has worked with Bishop Love down through the years, and he knows my nature and attitude and believes that himself and Ralph Love or himself and any Board member can sit down and talk because they would be doing this for the betterment of the children. In conclusion, Dr. Ward stated he believes we all can sit and communicate with each other so we can do what is best for the children.

Chair Bright then asked Dr. Ward did he have any questions for the Board? Dr. Ward stated no, but he hopes he would be selected to work with the Board feeling he has something to offer and is always willing to learn. He commented that somebody helped him and gave him an opportunity, somebody helped him go to school and made preparations by giving him grants and money to go to school and he would like to have something to offer kids too. Again, he affirmed that kids are our greatest asset. Dr. Ward stated that a lot of us are going to be moving on, and these kids are going to have to take our places and we need to prepare them for the future.

After completion of all interviews, Chair Bright then asked for discussion from the Board members.

Mr. Roy Peaden feels we have four very good candidates with great intentions for our students and could give the necessary time the position requires. He also believes each candidate would work well with Bishop Ralph Love. He challenged the one chosen to do his/her best for the kids who are our business.

Ms. Mary Williams stated this is the first time she is glad that she ran for office instead of being interviewed publically by the Board. Chair Bright stated she and Ms. Barbara Owens were both interviewed for their first seats on the Board, but Mr. Dick Tolmie reminded them that it was not in open session with the press in attendance – which is quite different.

Ms. Barbara Owens stated she did get a sense of community involvement which adds to the moment.

Bishop Ralph Love felt the interviews went very well, and stated he was ready to make a motion. In-House Attorney Rob Sonnenberg stated Dr. Love could make a nomination. Dr. Ralph Love then nominated Dr. Matthew Ward as the candidate to fill the vacant District 1, Seat A position for the Pitt County Board of Education. Mr. Billy Peaden gave a second. Chair Bright asked for other nominations from the members of the Board with none being given. Chair Bright stated the nominations are closed and asked that all in favor of Matthew Ward being appointed as the school board member to fill District 1, Seat A let it be known by saying “aye”, and all opposed with like sign. The vote was unanimous in favor of the nomination.

Chair Bright then congratulated Dr. Matthew Ward, and thanked all the candidates who applied for their interest in Pitt County Schools which she hopes will continue, and wished everyone well in the future.

With no further business to discuss, Ms. Barbara Owens moved, second by Mr. Dick Tolmie, that the Board adjourn. Motion carried unanimously. Time 7:20 p.m.

Respectively Submitted,

Ms. Mary Grace Bright, Chair