

SCHOOL BOARD WORKSHOP

EAST GADSDEN HIGH SCHOOL CAFETERIA
27001 BLUE STAR HIGHWAY
HAVANA, FLORIDA

March 6, 2017

6:00 P.M.

The workshop was open to the public and electronically recorded.

The following Board members were present: Mr. Isaac Simmons, Chairman; Mr. Steve Scott; Mrs. Audrey D. Lewis; Mr. Charlie D. Frost; and Mr. Tyrone D. Smith. Also present were Mr. Roger P. Milton, Superintendent and Secretary to the Board; and others. Mrs. Deborah Minnis, Attorney for the Board, was absent.

1. CALL TO ORDER

The workshop was called to order by the Chairman, Mr. Isaac Simmons, at 6:05 p.m.

2. DISCUSSION OF RECONFIGURATION OF SCHOOLS

Mr. Simmons stated that the community meeting was being held to share information with the community regarding the proposed school reconfiguration. He turned the meeting over to Mr. Milton.

Mr. Milton shared a power-point presentation with the community outlining his school reconfiguration proposal. He stated that there was a need to make changes to the schools in the district. He stated that the district currently has thirteen (13) schools. He stated that there are fewer than 5,400 students and 860+ employees in the district. He stated that the district has aging facilities that are in dire need of major repairs. He stated that there is a need to reduce the number of facilities and staff. He stated that the district needs additional funds in order to provide better wages for its employees. He stated that most schools in the school district are not positioned to offer a wider variety of courses to meet the needs of students. He stated that schools slated for closing are very old and do not meet modern day standards for schools. He stated that classrooms are too small to provide for active learning environments. He stated that in essence, the district must have recurring revenue streams, improved academic opportunities for our students, more up-to-date school facilities to provide wholesome environments that are conducive to teaching and learning, and the opportunity to "Move Gadsden County Public Schools from Good to Great". He stated that the majority of the district schools are old with failing equipment and infrastructure, which provides a less than desirable learning environment for students and working environment for staff. He stated that eight of the district schools are years behind current code requirements. He stated that there is no way to solve these issues without major renovation or replacement with new

construction. He stated that the longer these issues remain unaddressed, the greater the likelihood of HVAC system failures. He stated that with so many schools in the same shape, the likelihood of multiple failures challenges the district to reconfigure schools and relocate before failures occur. He stated that being proactive by reconfiguring and/or replacing the old schools puts the best interest of the students and staff in the forefront of planning. He stated that the proposed action for the 2017 – 2018 year includes the movement of grades 4 and 5 from Chattahoochee Elementary School to what will become West Gadsden Middle School; movement of grades 1 thru 3 from Chattahoochee Elementary School to Greensboro Elementary School; and keep grades PK and KG at Chattahoochee Elementary School where it will become an early learning center. He stated that as a result of the schools reconfiguration proposal, there will be no earlier school starting times than the district currently have; no loss of certified teachers as they will be reassigned to other schools which will in turn afford the district to a more highly qualified staff, and no loss of non-instructional staff that received satisfactory evaluations and who were recommended back for employment. He stated that other proposed actions for the school year 2017 – 2018 include discontinuing operations at Gretna Elementary School by moving grades PK thru 3 to Greensboro Elementary School and grades 4 and 5 to West Gadsden Middle School; discontinuing operations at St. John Elementary School by moving grades PK thru 3 to Greensboro Elementary School and moving grades 4 and 5 to James A. Shanks Middle School; movement of grades 4 and 5 from Greensboro Elementary School to what will become West Gadsden Middle School; movement of grades 9 thru 12 from West Gadsden High School to East Gadsden High School; the School Board applying for Special Facilities Funding from Florida Department of Education. He stated that other proposed actions for the school year 2020 – 2021 include discontinuing operations at Gadsden Elementary Magnet School and move all grade levels to the newly constructed K-8 facility. He stated that the district want to be able to offer courses such as dual enrollment, advanced classes, and IB programs. He stated that he want to build other academic and athletic programs, along with performing arts, band, music and dance.

Mr. Simmons thanked Mr. Milton for his presentation on his school reconfiguration proposal. He stated that the workshop was held to gather input from the community. He stated that a Board workshop will be held on Monday, March 13th at 6:00 p.m. to discuss and compile information regarding community concerns. He stated that he does not agree with bussing students 18 to 30 miles to be educated. He stated that the one high school concept is good if the school is centrally located. He stated that the Board and the Superintendent will regroup and discuss ways to have a plan to do what is best for parents and students. He stated that student's health, safety and welfare must be taken into consideration.

The following individuals from the audience participated in the discussion and shared their comments and concerns regarding the proposed school reconfiguration plan: Ms. Stacy Hannigan, Mrs. Maresha Alexander, Ms. Bianca Murphy, Mr. Jakari Wilcoxson, Ms. Vicki Muse Johnson, Ms. Angela Burgess, Ms. MeMe Robinson, and Principal Sonya Jackson.

3. EDUCATIONAL ITEMS BY THE SUPERINTENDENT

None.

4. SCHOOL BOARD REQUESTS AND CONCERNS

Mr. Simmons commended Principal Jackson for sharing her overview of East Gadsden's course offerings. He stated that he was concerned that the district should not do anything drastically with school reconfiguration. He stated that he wanted to see how the new open transfer border with students will affect the district.

Mrs. Lewis stated that she was glad that everyone came out to the workshop. She applauded the Superintendent for being bold and transparent with his proposed school reconfiguration plan. She stated that she was tired of being at the bottom and last. She stated that there are different levels of parental involvement for parents to be involved in their child's education.

Mr. Smith thanked everyone for coming out to be informed of the proposed school reconfiguration plan. He stated that the district is battling a bad reputation. He stated that the district needs the support of everyone to make a difference.

Mr. Frost stated that he was glad to see everyone. He stated that it is difficult for parents to travel far. He stated that the district must have the support of parents. He stated that the school reconfiguration proposal was presented to the Board by the Superintendent. He solicited the community to bring students back to the schools.

Mr. Scott stated that schools exist for parents and students. He stated that the district has needs. He stated that the district has the need to provide salaries to improve educational opportunities for students, the need to improve facilities, and the need to improve courses in arts and technology. He stated that it is difficult for community persons to say they want to lose their schools.

Mr. Simmons thanked his colleagues for sharing their concerns and comments. He thanked the audience for their concerns.

5. The workshop adjourned at 7:30 p.m.