

MINUTES

MURFREESBORO CITY BOARD OF EDUCATION RETREAT

Tuesday, November 9, 2010

5:00 p.m.—Central Administration Building

ATTENDANCE

Board: Chair Mary Wade, Susan Andrews, Ray Butrum, Butch Campbell, Nancy Duggin, Nancy Phillips, Dennis Rainier, and Council Liaison Ron Washington.

Staff: Director Linda Gilbert, Gary Anderson, Caresa Brooks, Crystal Farris, Kim Fowler, Cheryl Harris, Karen Hawkins, Michelle Hummel, Ralph Ringstaff, and Priscilla Van Tries.

Others: City Staff Attorney Kelley Baker, *Daily News Journal* Reporter Mealand Ragland-Hudgins, principals, and others.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

I. CALL TO ORDER BY BOARD CHAIR

Chair Wade called the special board meeting/retreat to order at approximately 5:05 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and moment of silence.

II. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

A. Miscellaneous

1. Approval of Proposed Revision to PER 11

Mr. Ringstaff explained that with the floods last May, the State Department will not be able to process all of the requests for Advanced Degrees in a timely manner. The recommendation to the Board is to waive the December 1st deadline in Board Policy PER 11—Anticipation of Advanced Degree or Academic Credentials for all documentation to be submitted to the system for the applicants to receive the pay increase associated with their advanced degree (retroactive to July 1). He also pointed out that school systems would verify that the colleges/universities are accredited; Mrs. Duggin added that the transcripts are not copies, but are originals with the official seal of the college/university.

Mrs. Baker reminded the Board that they can override the two readings for approval of Board policies for those policies that are time-sensitive. Dr. Andrews moved to waive the December 1 deadline for submission of transcripts for graduates earning advanced degrees through the summer session 2010 to February 1, 2010. Mrs. Phillips seconded the motion. The motion passed by acclamation.

2. Field Trips

Dr. Gilbert asked for approval of the field trips as indicated on the enclosed form at this meeting due to the fact that some will take place before the regularly scheduled Board

meeting. Mr. Rainier moved to approve the field trips as presented; Mrs. Duggin seconded the motion. The motion carried by acclamation.

3. Gifts for Employees

Dr. Gilbert explained that in the past, the Board had provided to principals a \$10 allocation per employee as a holiday gift. Principals have used the allocation at their own discretion, i.e., a luncheon, lanyards, etc. Mr. Anderson shared, however, that gift cards cannot be purchased according to the State Department of Education auditors. Mr. Rainier noted that the City government does provide gift cards to their employees so asked that this be looked into as he could not see how the City Schools doing this would be any different. Dr. Gilbert asked that the Board continue to allow principals to decide how the allocations to their schools would be used. Mrs. Duggin stated that some teachers might wish to have the \$10 placed in their room accounts. Mrs. Duggin moved to allow principals to decide how to use the holiday gift allocation; Mrs. Phillips seconded the motion. The motion carried by acclamation.

B. Process/Procedures for Evaluation of Director of Schools

Mrs. Baker referred to the Director's contract, #9, Evaluation, noting that her evaluation by the Board will take place in the spring of 2011. Examples of evaluation instruments used by other school systems were provided in the packet. Mrs. Baker shared TSBA's brochure regarding their Director's evaluation services. The Board has used TSBA in the past. The approximate cost for the service is \$2,000. Mrs. Phillips, Mrs. Wade, and Mr. Campbell noted that they were in favor of contracting with TSBA. Mrs. Duggin asked that teachers, principals, and administrators also be surveyed to provide input. Dr. Andrews noted that TSBA has in the past worked with the Board and Director to develop the evaluation instrument.

Mrs. Baker referred to Board Policy BO 20—Director's evaluation pointing out that: *The Board will develop, with the Director, a set of performance objectives based on the needs of the system. The performance of the Director will be reviewed in accordance with these specified goals.*

Mrs. Duggin moved that the Board Chair and Director meet no later than January to determine what goals and objectives based on the needs of the system would be included in the evaluation instrument. Mrs. Phillips asked that the Board have input on what would be included in the instrument; Chair Wade asked Board members to email their recommendations/input/comments to her and to the Director. It was pointed out that the final evaluation instrument would be brought to the Board for approval. Mrs. Duggin asked that this be done in a timely manner that would allow for revisions if necessary. Mr. Rainier seconded the motion. The motion carried by acclamation.

C. Jobs Bill—Plan for Use

Dr. Gilbert provided the Board information regarding the Education Jobs Bill which will provide approximately \$1.5 million to the system. She reviewed the document titled “Education Jobs Bill Spending Analysis” detailing her recommended use of the funding that include: an additional social worker, school nurse at Bradley, partial funding of the existing secretary in instruction, a 1% raise for all employees, increasing the assistant principals’ supplement from \$3,000 to \$5,000, funding for professional development, and to reserve \$30,000 for an undetermined use.

Dr. Butrum stated that he felt there was a greater need to put more teachers in the classroom than venturing further in the social services aspect as the focus needs to be on student performance relative to the system’s scores. Also, that offering an early retirement incentive would reap immediate financial benefits to the system. Dr. Gilbert stated that the administration has been looking into an early retirement incentive although she is reluctant to encourage veteran teachers to leave. She also explained that the current system social worker, Tonya Hobbs, in addition to overseeing staff members that serve students and families in this capacity, has a heavy caseload. Principals Robin Newell and Emily Spencer shared their positive experiences with having the services of a social worker, noting that she provides assistance at a higher level due to her contacts in the community with agencies such as DHS. They both stressed that a child who is homeless, hungry, has emotional/behavioral issues, family issues, cannot be successful in school unless those issues can also be addressed. They both felt that Mrs. Hobbs’ impact in addressing those issues listed above has had a positive impact on the education of the children, which stays with the instructional/educational emphasis of the school system. Dr. Andrews asked that the Board focus always on what is best for the children.

Mr. Anderson stated that an employee raise or bonus is the Board’s decision, but in response to their question to him, he would feel more comfortable offering a 1% bonus due to the sustainability factor of a percentage increase. Any decision would be taken back to MEA for negotiation. Dr. Gilbert stated that although she prefers a 1% raise for all employees, full-time and part-time, she could agree with the bonus of \$350 if the Board prefers the bonus over the percentage raise; however, she feels strongly about the three recommended positions. Mrs. Phillips also voiced a concern about the sustainability of a percentage raise. Mr. Rainier noted that new employees hired this year were hired at a stated salary; he questioned whether they would receive the percentage raise or bonus the same as other employees. Dr. Gilbert stated that a raise or bonus would also be given to new employees hired this year as when approved it would be approved for all employees.

Dr. Andrews asked Mr. Anderson his view on the economy. He responded that the county has seen an increase in sales tax revenue, but the building/construction industry is not back where it needs to be. Dr. Butrum inquired about the positions funded from ARRA or other sources where funding would cease over a course of two years. Mr. Anderson stated that positions funded through ARRA include the social worker, school nurse, and resource teacher. Dr. Butrum stated that in terms of sustainability, he would

like for the Board to receive a plan for sustainability specifically for positions funded through sources where funding will cease. Even though the positions are needed, the possibility would exist that the system would have to turn around and make cuts. Mrs. Duggin added her concern that employees whose positions may be lost due to the loss of funding have a clear understanding that this is the case when they are hired. She also pointed out that the new governor has only indicated that he will fund preschool at the existing level; it is uncertain at this point what level of support exists for the state's preschool program.

Dr. Gilbert noted that some of the new 11 positions were funded due to retirements. Eleven new positions were added, but the bottom line of the budget was not increased. She pointed out that increasing the salaries of the system's employees sets us apart from other school systems.

The system has 503 licensed positions, 850 full-time employees, and 1,000+ employees if you include full- and part-time positions. Dr. Andrews suggested splitting the proposed funding for raises between all employees. In response to Mr. Rainier, Dr. Gilbert stated that it would be cleaner to split the raise evenly if full-time and part-time employees are to receive an increase. Mr. Anderson explained that part-time employees work 29 hours or less receiving no benefits. An employee working 30 hours or more is considered full-time and receives benefits. MDA's work 15-20 hours, and food service employees work 20 hours.

Mr. Washington asked that the Board stay close to City Manager Rob Lyons as to the fiscal situation and real-world view of what we might be looking at. There has been no improvement in home building.

Dr. Butrum mentioned again that the system's student population did not increase this year so repositioning of employees could be looked at for next year. Dr. Gilbert explained the location of the new positions: special ed at Bellwood, three positions at MNP, two at Hobgood, one at Pittard, one at Northfield, and three at Scales.

In response to Mrs. Phillips' question, Dr. Gilbert stated that JOBS funding cannot be used to purchase equipment or buses or for systemwide/administrative personnel.

Mr. Rainier stated that he would like to see everyone get the same amount if receiving a bonus. Mrs. Wade asked that Mr. Anderson bring the amount of the bonus that all employees would receive using the \$375,000. Mr. Washington pointed out that this is what the City did; each employee received \$750 before taxes. Mr. Anderson stated that every City Schools employee would receive \$350 before taxes. He will arrange a negotiation session with MEA.

D. Administrators' Salaries

Director Gilbert provided the Board with a document titled "Principal's Beginning Salary Formula" and reviewed the process used in determining that person's salary. She pointed

out that a principal's salary is basically established when entering into that administrative position. If a principal, or assistant principal, moves from a school with a student population of 699 or less into a school with 700 or more, the formula does not address the additional responsibility placed on that principal/assistant principal. Also, if a principal moves to a school with less students, his salary remains at the same level as when he was responsible for the larger student population. She asked that the Board be aware that this is an issue. The system's salaries for principals and assistant principals are comparable to other systems in the area. In addition, Dr. Gilbert provided the Board a list of certain positions and salaries at the central office and also the salaries of the system's principals on their current 11-month calendar year and what those salaries would be if computed to a 12-month calendar year.

Dr. Gilbert reviewed the job descriptions of the five instructional department's certified administrators: Coordinator of Special Programs (Michelle Hummel); Coordinator of Literacy and Instructional Interventions (Caresa Brooks); Coordinator of Federal Projects and School Support Services (Crystal Farris); Coordinator of Curriculum (Karen Hawkins); Coordinator of Teaching and Learning (Kim Fowler). Principals Robin Newell and Emily Spencer explained the advantages and benefits to the system by having these individuals who have brought their areas of expertise so that assistance is readily available in so many areas that it was difficult to obtain before. Teachers and administrators are talking and sharing information. PLC's are helping to obtain this level of collaboration. The instructional staff attend these meetings to give support. Dr. Andrews stated that the system will have to absorb these positions in the future. Dr. Gilbert stated that Mrs. Brooks and Dr. Fowler are those funded through ARRA, and they understand about the temporary funding. She also noted that the instructional department does not have more employees than it has had in past years.

Dr. Gilbert also provided and reviewed a listing of new personnel/titles with salaries and funding sources listed for each. An organizational chart was distributed for the Board's information.

Dr. Butrum stated that he is surprised in looking at salaries of central office administrators that the special education supervisor's salary is so low. Mr. Rainier asked how the compensation ranges as indicated on the information provided had been determined. Mr. Anderson responded that a consultant had been hired to do the study approximately eleven years ago. He pointed out that as raises have been approved, the figures in the low, middle, and high point on the ranges were also adjusted. Dr. Butrum stated that he felt the ranges were inflated for a school system this size as the compensation study done at the time had compared our system to those with demographics in areas like Atlanta, etc. Dr. Gilbert responded that MCS pays its administrators and principals comparable to those of other school systems in the area, and that the system must be competitive to be able to attract the best qualified applicants for positions within the system. Mr. Campbell asked what factors are used when hiring employees such as past experience, etc. Dr. Gilbert stated that experience and education as well as other factors are considered.

Dr. Gilbert stated that with the level of responsibility that the Supervisor of Special Education is held accountable for, she would like to increase that salary by \$10,000. She also stated that a \$10,000 increase in salary for the Director of Finance is justified due to the increased responsibilities associated with ten different departments answering directly to him. She also noted that with the goal to make schools the centers of the community, it might be advantageous in the future to entertain changing principals to a 12-month contract and assistant principals to a 10 ½ or 11-month contract, although the current economic situation will not allow this. Mrs. Duggin pointed out that for an assistant principal that serves two schools, if you add the two student populations together, they would fall in the upper range indicated on the current formula for principals.

Mr. Rainier stated that a new compensation study is due, and that he would like to see the criteria used when assigning an employee to a range.

Dr. Andrews explained that the compensation study was a well-done study at the time as it positioned the system to be able to hire the brightest and highly qualified candidates. A new study would be expensive. Dr. Butrum suggested a new study be done in house to include systems comparable to MCS.

Dr. Gilbert asked the Board to approve a \$10,000 increase in salary for Gary Anderson and Priscilla Van Tries. Dr. Butrum suggested \$20,000 for Mrs. Van Tries. Dr. Gilbert responded that she is comfortable recommending \$10,000 for each. Mrs. Phillips suggested that the Board defer these issues giving the Board more time to think about it. Mr. Rainier felt that Mr. Anderson should at least be at the mid-point in his range. Mr. Washington asked that the Board come to an educated agreement.

E. Proposed 2011-2012 School Calendar

Dr. Gilbert pointed out that the 2011-2012 calendar proposed by MEA has a two-week winter break. When the unified calendar was adopted last year, those on the alternative calendar expressed their desire for the three-week break. She proposed that since the three-week break has not taken place yet, perhaps the decision about a two- or three-week break should be decided after cycling through this winter break. Mrs. Duggin stated that she would prefer to not take away the three-week break as it appears the Board would be going back on its word.

Dr. Gilbert also noted that MEA's calendar reflects that parent/teacher conferences would take place on a half-day in the fall and in the spring with other conferences as parent schedules permit. Traditionally, the required six hours in the fall and the six hours in the spring for parent/teacher conferences took place after the regular school day. Dr. Gilbert asked for the Board's input on these two calendar issues.

Dr. Butrum suggested getting principal input. Dr. Andrews preferred that parent/teacher conferences take place after the regular school day so that both parents have an opportunity to attend. Mrs. Phillips felt the set time was too restrictive on parents. Dr. Butrum noted that with some parents working second and third shift, day conferences

might be beneficial. The proposed calendar reflects day and after school hours for parent/teacher conferences. Mr. Rainier stated that we could try it and get feedback on it. Mr. Campbell also stated that we could try it.

Dr. Gilbert stated that she would survey parents, teachers, and principals after the three-week break to see if it is preferred.

Dr. Gilbert stated that she would also like to propose that the administration look at a different way to handle registration of students. Those who need student data (food service, transportation, etc.) must have that data by the first student attendance day. When registering students on one day, the attendance clerks have to work long hours to try to input all of the data within a short time. Student data is rolled over to the next school year, but the data has to be verified and updated.

F. Percent of TCAP for Student Grade

Mrs. Baker referred to Senate Bill No. 3427, TCA 49, Chapter 1, Part 6 which was amended to add a new section: *Each local board of education shall develop a policy by which student scores on the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program's grades three through eight (3-8) achievement tests shall comprise a percentage of the student's final grade for the spring semester in the subject areas of mathematics, reading/language arts, science and social studies. The percentage shall be determined by the local board from a range of no less than fifteen percent (15%) and no more than twenty-five percent (25%). The policy shall utilize performance levels determined by the State Board of Education and be developed and implemented for the spring semester of 2011.*

Dr. Gilbert recommended using the lowest percentage, 15%. Dr. Butrum moved to use 15%; Mr. Campbell seconded the motion. The motion carried by acclamation.

G. Approval of Hearing Officer List

Mrs. Baker referred to the memorandum provided the Board regarding the dismissal of teachers. Tennessee First to the Top Act of 2010 amends TCA 49-5-512 as follows:

Dismissal or suspension – Hearing – Tenured teachers in certain counties and directors of schools. (a) A tenured teacher, who received notification of charges pursuant to 49-5-511, may, within thirty (30) days after receipt of the notice, demand a full and complete hearing on the charges before an impartial hearing officer selected by the board...

Mrs. Baker stated that the City of Murfreesboro has established a list of three local attorneys from which a hearing officer could be selected. In addition, TSBA has a list of attorneys available that can be accessed. She cautioned that the hearing officer should have knowledge of how to run a hearing, rules of procedure, etc. In the event the final decision should be appealed by the teacher, the hearing officer must know how to maintain the appropriate records, briefs, rules of evidence, etc. as the appeal goes to court and a decision is rendered strictly from the transcripts, with no witnesses called, etc. That

decision would be final with no appeal. Mrs. Baker asked if the Board would wish to access TSBA's list of attorneys or if they would wish for her to draft applications for attorneys to submit for consideration. She pointed out that the employee's attorney would object if they felt the recommended hearing officer was too closely aligned to the school system. She noted that most cases regarding termination would require an attorney familiar with employment law, although in some cases an attorney familiar with education laws would be advantageous. Involving the entire Board in a due process hearing would make the hearing a public event which is not fair to the teacher. It is now mandatory that an impartial hearing officer is used in the process. The hearing officer would submit the information with his recommendation based on law to the Board for review. The Board decides to approve or to not approve the recommendation.

Mr. Campbell moved that Mrs. Baker develop an application and send it to local attorneys and get the feedback, bring this back to the Board, and the Board can vote to use all of the list or part of it. Mr. Rainier seconded the motion. Mrs. Duggin stated that the use of hearing officers will have budget implications. With the RTTT mandating that 35% of the teacher's evaluation is based on student scores, legal issues will likely arise. Mrs. Baker noted that this is being debated in the education realm. She will gather more information on this. In response to Dr. Andrews' question, Mrs. Baker stated that the Board could piggyback on the attorneys used by the City: Jerry Scott, Susan Bradley, and Jim Duncan. She also noted that Jeff McCullough is a local attorney with a background in education.

On roll call: Andrews—yes; Butrum—yes; Campbell—yes; Duggin—yes; Phillips—yes; Rainier—yes; Wade—yes. The motion carried.

Mrs. Wade stated that the remaining items could be addressed at the January 29 Board retreat; however, if there is an item that a Board member feels should be dealt with at the November Board meeting, please let her and Dr. Gilbert know.

H. Discovery School Update

I. Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan/Projects

J. Laptops for Board Members

K. Replacing Computers/Technology Update

L. Discussion of Health Insurance

M. Discussion of Instruction Plan

III. ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. Wade adjourned the special Board meeting/retreat at approximately 8:45 p.m.

Director of Schools

MISSION STATEMENT

***To assure academic and personal successs
for each child.***