

MINUTES

MURFREESBORO CITY BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL CALLED BOARD MEETING--
POLICY WORK SESSION
Tuesday, November 8, 2011
6:30 p.m.—Central Administration Building

ATTENDANCE

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

Staff: Director Linda Gilbert, Gary Anderson, Caresa Brooks, Tammy Grizzard, Karen Hawkins, and Ralph Ringstaff.

Others: Staff Attorney Kelley Baker and MEA President Natalie Hopkins.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

I. CALL TO ORDER BY BOARD CHAIR

Chair Mary Wade called the meeting to order at approximately 6:30 p.m.

II. BOARD POLICY REVIEW

Passed on First Reading:

BO 39—School Support Organizations

STU 24—Disciplinary Hearing Authority

No additional revisions were recommended for BO 39 and STU 24 as presented.

For Discussion:

BO 10—Board Policy Development (*Revision*)

(Combined BO 10 and duplicate Board Policy BO 42—Policy Development/eliminate BO 42)

Mrs. Baker explained that BO 10 and BO 42 were duplicates. Information had been merged, and she recommends BO 10 as presented be brought before the Board for approval, and then BO 42 be eliminated. There were no other recommendations for revision from the Board.

FM 1—Petty Cash Accounts (*Revised*)

Mrs. Duggin moved that the Board ask Mrs. Baker to develop a calendar by which to review policies with flexibility to review the policies that must be dealt with due to changes in law; Mr. Campbell seconded the motion. The motion carried by acclamation.

Mr. Anderson explained that schools are allowed to keep a petty cash fund for small purchases (usually \$100 or less). Mrs. Phillips asked Mr. Anderson about the fact that purchasing has become an extensive process. Mr. Anderson responded that due to the state identifying cases (not in MCS) where funds were being misused, the state has tightened the reins on spending. A purchase order of \$100 must first be approved by the principal and then the Director of Schools. In addition to following state law, the purpose was to make sure those items support the focus/learning taking place in the most efficient way, and to also make sure that those items are compatible (i.e., software). Mrs. Duggin stated that the reason for this procedure should be made clear to teachers so they don't view it as punitive. Mr. Campbell added that as a previous administrator, it is important to note that state and federal regulations have to be followed.

Mrs. Phillips inquired about the lunchroom procedure. Mr. Anderson explained that the cafeteria now handles situations when students do not have lunch money; parents are notified by phone calls and letters. The students are fed items that meet the food requirements, but not the same meal that they would have purchased. Mrs. Phillips stated that she did not want a non-paying child to be identified as a result of this procedure. Mr. Anderson stated that this would only affect those persons who are not on free lunch so are capable of paying. If a child needs to be on free lunch but the parent has not or will not apply for this benefit, the principal now has the authority to file for the child. Although we are not required to feed children who have forgotten lunch money, the system feeds these children. Mrs. Smith stated that the online payment method is available and works. Mrs. Baker added that the online payment method also has the feature that if your child's account is below a certain amount, for example \$10, the parent can be notified by email. Mr. Campbell stated that this is a financial situation and must be dealt with in that way.

FM 2—Annual Operating Budget (*Revised*)

Mr. Anderson reviewed the date changes in bold, and Mrs. Duggin stated that she appreciates the February 1st date for Board members to receive the budget preparation calendar. There were no recommendations for additional revisions.

FM 3—State and Federal Aid Eligibility Determination (*No Revisions*)

FM 4—Bonded Employees (*No Revisions*)

There were no recommended revisions to FM 3 and FM 4.

FM 5—Accounting System, Financial Reports and Records (*Revised*)

There were no recommendations for additional revisions.

FM 6—Internal Accounting Manual (*No Revisions*)

FM 7—Audit (*No Revisions*)

There were no recommendations for revisions to FM 6 and FM 7.

FM 8—Purchasing Authority (*Revised*)

Mr. Anderson explained that the revisions indicated in bold were made to further clarify what is required by law. He explained that in the bid process, the bid that best suits the needs of the system would be the one chosen. If there is little monetary difference in two bids, but the higher one better meets the needs of the system, that bid can be selected. An example he gave was the purchase of a school bus. If the low bid is not a bus that the mechanic is trained on or the system has available parts for, it might not be financially prudent to purchase that bus due to the cost to retrain the mechanic and purchase an inventory of replacement parts. Mrs. Baker stated that specifications can be placed in the bid document to assure that the purchase is the most efficient and beneficial to the system. She also noted that you cannot “sole source” a bid. In response to Mrs. Duggin, Mr. Anderson stated that for food products, you could show preference for U.S.-made products, but not with other items. There were no recommendations for additional revisions.

FM 9—Sales Calls, Demonstrations and Vendor Relations (*Revised*)

Mrs. Baker explained that typically gifts under \$100 do not have to be reported, but gifts should be limited to those of an advertising nature. Board members should not accept gifts from vendors that do business with the school system, as Board members are decision makers. There were no recommendations for additional revisions.

FM 10—Travel Regulations (*No Revisions*)

FM 11—Personal Property Sales (*No Revisions*)

There were no recommendations for revisions to FM 10 and FM 11.

FM 12—Authorized Signatures and Expenditure of Funds (*Revised*)

Mrs. Baker noted that the purchasing procedures put in place are to assure taxpayers that the system is being a good steward of tax dollars. She also stressed that an employee cannot enter into a contract without prior authorization. If an employee enters into a contract without prior approval, the employee is bound by the contract, not the school system. Contracts are to be reviewed by her/legal department before being signed by school officials. Mrs. Hawkins shared that with two new adoptions, an email was sent to teachers telling them the options for disposal of the retired textbooks. In response to Mr. Campbell's question, Mr. Anderson explained that a "restricted account" is one in which those funds must be spent only for the purpose for which the funds were provided. Mrs. Baker added that funds must be spent in the year when they were raised, therefore on the students who raised the funds.

Mrs. Phillips asked if all software is available systemwide to all students. Mrs. Hawkins stated that software purchased at the district level is provided to all students. However, schools may choose to purchase additional software with funds donated to them through PTO or discretionary funds, such Brain Pop, IXL, etc. Mrs. Phillips suggested that it might be beneficial to see if the additional software purchased by those schools positively impacts student learning so would be an item that the system could provide to the other schools.

FM 13— Additions, Changes, Alterations on Buildings and/or Grounds (*No Revisions*)

Mr. Anderson stated that the most efficient way to provide schools with additional resources through donations would be to donate the money directly to the school/school system. Direct donations of equipment or other resources can have hidden costs, might not be the best supplemental aide, or in terms of technology, the system might not be able to support it. Also, playground equipment must be purchased following strict regulations. Mrs. Baker added that purchasing equipment that does not meet federal or state regulations could result in a lawsuit if a child is injured on that equipment. Mr. Campbell pointed out that the system can usually obtain a better price for these items.

FM 15— Administrative Procedure for Title I Equipment (*No Revisions*)

The Board made no recommendations for revisions to FM 15.

FM 16— Purchase Requisitions and Purchase Orders (*New*)

Mr. Anderson stated that this policy is new and is recommended to support the procedures that have been put in place.

FM 17—Payroll Procedures (*New*)

Mr. Anderson explained that the system did not have a policy in place for payroll procedures and during an audit it was recommended that the Board adopt one.

III. DISCUSSION OF RESOLUTIONS

Dr. Gilbert provided the Board with proposed resolutions regarding elected superintendents and the school calendar year. She also provided proposed resolutions and a letter addressing the impact of vouchers on public education. She noted that she preferred the letter to a resolution as many resolutions received by legislators would say the same thing and not garner the needed attention. A letter is a more personal appeal. Following discussions, it was decided that Dr. Gilbert would bring a proposed resolution/letter opposing charter schools to the November 29 Board meeting for their review and approval. Mrs. Phillips stated that rather than just reference research that backs the Board's opposition, the research should be attached to the letter. Mrs. Duggin pointed out that charter schools are not held to the same rules and regulations as public schools. Dr. Andrews added that there is no standard for accountability.

Dr. Gilbert stated that she believes that vouchers would result in re-segregation for those families who cannot afford to pay the balance of private school tuition as well as a loss in funding for our school system. Dr. Andrews recommended that the Board address the voucher situation first and a month later address elected superintendents and the school calendar. Dr. Gilbert stated she will bring the letter with research back to the Board on November 29. Mr. Campbell asked that they individually contact legislators or others who would have an impact on this legislation.

Dr. Gilbert stated that the recent change in the evaluation process is nice but will actually only reduce the principal's involvement by a 15-minute observation. The paperwork is still extensive. Mrs. Duggin added that by combining two observations, teachers have more things to deal with in one lesson. She complimented principals for being positive and upbeat with teachers about the process. MEA President Natalie Hopkins stated that MEA has not contacted legislators, but she personally has written to all legislators.

In response to Mrs. Wade's concern that teachers are evaluated while trying to address different learning levels in the classroom, Dr. Gilbert stated that there should be evidence of differentiated instruction in the teacher's lesson plan. Dr. Grizzard noted that she has met with teachers and shared different strategies that can be used everyday in the classroom.

IV. DISCUSSION OF INTEREST-BASED BARGAINING

Mr. Ringstaff provided the Board with a document detailing Public Chapter 378—The Professional Educators Collaborative Conferencing Act of 2011, which completely abolished the Education Professional Negotiations Act. TOSS in conjunction with other stakeholders will develop a training program that LEA's must implement by July 1, 2012. The system's existing contract with MEA does not expire until June 30, 2012. This requires collaborative conferencing on salaries and wages, insurance, fringe benefits, leave, grievance procedures, payroll deductions, and working conditions. An MOU is required that shall be valid for up to three years. If there is no agreement on any items, the Board has the authority to address them according to board policy.

Between October 1 and November 1 of any year, 15% of the professional employees of an LEA must submit in writing a request to conduct collaborative conferencing to the local board. For MCS, that would require 80 teachers to start the process.

No board shall engage in collaborative conferencing unless a majority of those eligible to vote respond yes to the question: Shall the professional employees of this LEA undertake collaborative conferencing with the board of education? If yes, the board shall appoint 7-11 persons to serve as management, and professional employees shall be represented by the same number of persons. Mr. Ringstaff continued to explain the stipulations concerning the representatives. The following items are explicitly prohibited: Differentiated pay plans or incentive compensation programs; expenditures of federal, state, local or private grants; evaluations of professional employees; staffing decisions and state board of education or local board of education policies relating to innovative education programs, innovative high school programs, virtual education programs; personnel decisions such as transfers, assignments, and filling vacancies, and none of these decisions may be based on seniority or length of service; payroll deductions for political activities. Through the process, the two teams may enter into an MOU not to exceed three years.

The Act does not require collaborative conferencing, agreement on any terms, or an MOU. Absent an agreement and MOU on terms and conditions specified for collaborative conferencing in this act, the board of education shall have the authority to address such terms and conditions through board policy.

Mr. Ringstaff asked Board members to contact him if they have any questions.

V. ENERGY EFFICIENCY SCHOOLS UPDATE

Mr. Anderson provided the Board with a copy of the DNJ article titled “City Schools cuts energy consumption.” He pointed out that the system conserved 97,752 kilowatt hours during the months of February and March. The system has received recognition for its efforts to conserve energy, and Mr. Anderson has been asked to speak at the state’s Energy Management Workshop to be held on December 6. He will discuss how the system obtained the interest-free loans and grants and how the initiatives were implemented that resulted in such large savings. Mrs. Phillips remembered board member Dr. Lon Nuell who had requested an energy audit resulting in the system taking a close look at energy conservation. Mr. Anderson explained that schools reduced consumption, but the utility costs did not decrease due to TVA rate hikes. He also pointed out the great savings at John Pittard are due to the fact that they have a geothermal system. Mr. Anderson stated that he is asking for another interest-free loan. Dr. Andrews stated that she hopes in the future a way to retrofit the other schools with geothermal systems will be developed that is cost effective.

Mr. Anderson made the Board aware of a roofing issue on the old part of MNE that will require replacing the roof.

VI. REVIEW OF NOVEMBER 29, 2011 DRAFT AGENDA

Approval of the Charter Schools Resolution will be added under Action Items.

Mrs. Phillips asked Board members to read out loud the Board’s “Code of Ethics” (renamed School Board Accountability Standards) at the next meeting.

VII. OTHER BUSINESS

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chair Wade adjourned the meeting at approximately 8:50 p.m.

Director of Schools

MISSION STATEMENT

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

