

BOARD RETREAT MINUTES  
Murfreesboro City School Board  
4:00 p.m., Wednesday, January 18, 2017  
Murfreesboro City Schools Administrative Offices

ATTENDANCE:

Chair Butch Campbell, Vice Chair Nancy Rainier, Jared Barrett, Phil King, Collier Smith, Wesley Ballard, and David Settles

Staff: Dr. Linda Gilbert, Ralph Ringstaff, Lisa Trail, Joe Marlin, Gary Anderson, Greg Lyles, and Sheri Arnette,

Assistant City Attorney Kelley Baker and City Council Liaison Bill Shacklett

I. CALL TO ORDER BY BOARD CHAIR

Mr. Campbell called the meeting to order.

II. E-MEETING PRESENTATION

Mr. Randall Bennett presented information on e-Meetings. He said that many surrounding systems use e-Meetings at their board meetings. He explained that you can connect links to the calendar or connect to MCS homepage. Once the minutes are done, you can put them in archives. The Board can use an option in e-Meeting to type goals and do reports. Items can be attached to the agenda in pdf format. If board members want to be on auto pilot, they can do that, and whomever controls the meeting, will move through the agenda.

Mr. Campbell asked the advantage of this program compared to what we have. Mr. Bennett said less paper, a friendly format, things are updated immediately, and you can make notes.

Collier Smith asked about the cost of the program. Mr. Bennett said that it is \$2000 for the first year and \$1500 each year after.

Nancy Rainier asked that in comparing it to what we have now where it would take us to something on the consent agenda, will that show on the right hand side? Mr. Bennett said that it would show on the right hand side and you could just click on whatever you wanted to view on the agenda.

Mr. Bennett said that online voting is also available.

Wesley Ballard asked if it was a video meeting. Mr. Bennett explained that it was not a video meeting, but just a program to help maneuver through board meetings and to keep everything organized.

Jared Barrett said that one advantage is that you can have everything archived and review back to policies and past meetings during a board meeting.

Mr. Campbell asked if we would still have paper copies if we go with this program. Mr. Bennett said that it will do away with paper copies. Mr. Campbell also asked if someone would come and train the Board on this new program. Mr. Bennett said that it's not much harder than logging into email, but yes, someone would come and train everyone.

Nancy Rainier asked if it will work on all of our computers. Mr. Bennett said yes.

Phil King asked if there was a way to search a policy by number through e-Meeting. Mr. Bennett said that there wasn't a way to do that because what is archived will be past meetings. Mr. King also asked if this system could hear voices and transcribe minutes. Mr. Bennett said no.

Kelley Baker said that we already have the capability of searching agendas & minutes on the city website.

Mr. Bennett says that it gives the secretary a place to start instead of starting from scratch.

Dr. Gilbert said that the determining factor is whether or not the board will use it.

Mr. Bennett said that if everyone is on board, it will be good. And you can search things online.

Nancy Rainier asked if it would be beneficial to someone who was out of town. Mr. Bennett said that you could conference call that person and they could follow along on a computer.

Collier Smith asked if this is just an informational session or are we voting on it. Mr. Campbell said that he didn't know.

Kelley Baker asked Mr. Bennett if he could provide the Board with a test site. Mr. Bennett provided the Board with a website and password.

Jared Barrett said that he just wanted this to be an informational meeting. He was very impressed with the program and thought that we could discuss it at budget time.

Mr. Bennett went over the list of counties that are using it. He said that he just wants to make things easier for us.

### III. EMPLOYEE SURVEY

Ralph Ringstaff explained that we are already starting to plan a job fair for March 18. Also, on January 25<sup>th</sup> at 4:00, HR has invited 50 student teachers from MTSU to come here and go through the hiring process. He mentioned that no other school district supports new teachers like

MCS. Sheri Arnette goes in and models lessons and talks with teachers. Our goal is to hire the best of the best. We have to hire earlier and earlier each year.

Mr. Ringstaff handed out a new hire handout and discussed this with the Board. He said that he would like to hire 25 new teachers by March 31. Mr. Ringstaff mentioned that we rank 23<sup>rd</sup> in the state for teacher salaries according to the 14-15 data. Mr. Campbell asked where Rutherford County ranked and Mr. Ringstaff wasn't sure of the number, but said that it was lower than us.

Collier Smith said that she spoke with a young student teacher at a school, and she said that someone from MCS was going to come and observe her teaching. She was very excited.

Mr. Ringstaff told the Board that we hired six UT graduates for the 15-16 school year. Dr. Gilbert said that we hired one teacher last week that was dynamite. Mr. Ringstaff explained that he sends an invite to seniors in elementary education in the local colleges such as Trevecca, Lipscomb, and also Belmont.

Collier Smith asked how we are competing with Metro Nashville. Dr. Gilbert said that we are competing very well with everyone around the area. Mr. Ringstaff mentioned that we have an on-line application process where the applicants send videos to us which is very helpful in the hiring process. We increased our minority teachers to 10% last year.

Mr. Ringstaff also informed the Board that we are 98% female teachers. He also mentioned that the primary reasons for teachers leaving are relocation, some want to stay home, some transferring to other states, and some retiring. Mr. Ringstaff handed out some information on exit interviews that we've done in the past. He said that everyone is sent an exit interview, but not everyone completes it. They submit it and it's anonymous. We only know the school. We ask several open ended questions. We get about 45-50 percent of the exit interviews back.

Mr. Campbell asked what we do with the information that we receive on these exit interviews. Dr. Gilbert said that she looks at the comments from the staff and puts that with information that she has received from the AdvancEd survey, along with other information that she has, and looks at the whole picture. If Dr. Gilbert knows that there is a situation at a school, she looks at everything. She gets calls from certain schools about things going on at the school. There are certain schools that she will hear things from and other schools that she won't hear anything from. She has to weigh everything that she hears before making decisions. She has to know about things that teachers are concerned about. She said that she uses that to judge what we need to do in any situation.

Sheri Arnette gave each Board member a jump drive with the AdvancEd survey information. She explained that we have to do this survey annually to keep what used to be called SACS accreditation. This survey takes about 45 minutes to complete. The site is open for a two-week period. It opens in February each year. It is for certified and classified staff. We normally have a response rate of 80%, which is what we have to have. This survey is completely anonymous, but we know the name of the school. She explained that on the jump drive, they have a

spreadsheet that shows questions and scores. The questions are what do you like best, least, and one suggestion.

Wesley Ballard asked how the information flows back to teachers. He wanted to know how teachers know that something is being done about the concerns that they have. Sheri Arnette explained that all principals have access to the survey and Dr. Gilbert talks with principals when she reviews the information. Dr. Gilbert explained that you can look at principals' scores and see who scores high and who scores low. Dr. Gilbert sees what needs to be addressed. She also hears from the Teacher Advisory Committee, the MEA, and from individual teachers about problems in the schools. Mrs. Arnette said that she sends the link to teachers and they take the survey. Mrs. Arnette periodically checks during the two-week period to see what schools have taken it and which ones still need to.

Bill Shacklett asked if the AdvancEd information can be distilled into groups. He said that if the staff doesn't see that something happens with their comments, then they will stop responding. Dr. Gilbert said that it varies. In some cases, Dr. Gilbert has to move administrators. If there is a problem, then changes will be made. Mr. Shacklett asked about a more formal response. Dr. Gilbert said that typically the teachers recognize that the action has happened. Mr. Ringstaff said that Dr. Gilbert meets with the Teacher Advisory Committee every two months and they tell her problems. Mr. Campbell asked if principals can see the results on AdvancEd, and Mr. Ringstaff said yes.

Collier Smith said that she really liked the exit survey questions. She said that it would be nice if we could have those answers before they exit. She said that her point is that the board needs to get information from teachers and the information not be filtered through everyone else.

Nancy Rainier said that the Board needs to go into the faculty meetings and explain that they have a survey to take. She felt that they could get verbal feedback from teachers and promote the survey monkey survey. Mrs. Rainier doesn't want any survey with numbers on it.

Mr. Campbell said that he didn't know if they could go out as a group and ask questions. Kelley Baker said that they would have to go out individually to schools if they did not want to clarify it as a public meeting.

Mr. Campbell asked what the Board wanted to find out when they go into the schools. Collier Smith said that she thought the Board could ask how do you feel about leadership? Any suggestions? Is there anything that needs to be corrected?

Mr. Campbell asked what do we do with that information when we receive it. David Settles wanted to know the same thing. Mr. Settles said that since the Board members' contact information is out there, why couldn't they email it? Mr. Settles also asked if adding another survey was going to be overkill. He wondered if there was another way that they could get this information. Mr. Settles asked that when they get the results, would they then just bring them to Dr. Gilbert and ask her what she is going to do about it?

Jared Barrett said that the Board needs an action plan and asked why was the Board doing this? He mentioned that they could use it as part of the Strategic Plan.

Nancy Rainier said that she thought that when it was mentioned before about getting with Luke Dickerson with MEA, she didn't think that was necessary. She just felt that the Board would like to know....What are we doing right, wrong, and how could we improve? Mrs. Rainier felt that if it's something that the Board can improve on, they come back as a Board and work with Dr. Gilbert in that direction. Mrs. Rainier said that she still likes the idea of an open-ended survey and going in to the schools and explaining it. She said that she would like the staff to know that this is coming from their hearts.

Phil King thanked Ralph Ringstaff and Sheri Arnette for the AdvancEd survey. He felt that there is good information in it. He stated that the Board could probably make use of the information we have. His fear is that whatever topic the Board chooses for the 10 questions, and the staff comes back with answers, and we don't act on it, we will lose credibility.

Wesley Ballard also felt that the AdvancEd information was very good and he wanted to know when we would get the results from AdvancEd. Sheri Arnette said that once she closes the site in mid-February, she would have the results immediately. Mr. Ballard asked if this survey was really something that the Board wants to do because it seemed to be superseding Dr. Gilbert. He said that we need to use the information that we have for continuous improvement that turns into retention and happy campers. He felt that the Board should just use the AdvancEd information.

Dr. Gilbert asked the Board that when and if they receive phone calls with problems or concerns to please let her know so that she can do something about it. Dr. Gilbert said that if she can fix it, she will.

Bill Shacklett said that the city council started town meetings to hear concerns from citizens. He also suggested that Board members have forms that they carry so that people can write down concerns and return them to the Board. He suggested the Board have a listening session at each school or a couple of schools come together and meet quarterly. He said that might be an alternative idea to going into the schools. Jared Barrett felt that Mr. Shacklett's suggestion was a great idea. Collier Smith said that was great idea for parents, but not a solution for teachers in a public setting like that.

Mr. Campbell said that instead of doing a survey, what if the Board went into the school as a listening session and asked how they feel we are doing. He said that the Board could also let the staff know that the budget process is about to begin in case they have suggestions. Ms. Baker reminded Mr. Campbell that if more than one Board member is present, it's a public meeting, then the public can attend.

Bill Shacklett said that as a word of caution, he would not go and meet with employees without the administrator. He felt that would be unhealthy.

Collier Smith said that the Board doesn't have a lot that they can do as board members, but they can get input from teachers. She felt too that the Board could make sure that they are in the schools trying to help. She said that if the Board is not in schools, how would they know what they need to suggest during the budget sessions?

Collier Smith made the motion to do a simple open-ended survey and go into the schools to promote that survey. Nancy Rainier seconded the motion.

Mr. Campbell called for a vote.

Wesley Ballard	Yes	Phil King	Yes	Nancy Rainier	Yes
Butch Campbell	No	Collier Smith	Yes	Jared Barrett	No
David Settles	No				

4 Yes

3 No

The motion passed.

Wesley Ballard said that he would like to see the results of the AdvancEd Survey.

Mr. Campbell asked who would develop the survey that Collier was referring to in her motion. Mrs. Smith asked if it was feasible for her to draft the questions. Phil King asked if the Board could pick the topic and let a company do the survey.

Mr. Campbell said that the strategic plan asks about system information. He asked if the Board was looking for a survey for individual schools or as a system. Dr. Gilbert said that we are one system but each school is unique, so we have to know the school.

Collier Smith came up with the following questions and wants to include the school name at the top of the survey:

- What do you like most about your school?
- What do you like least about your school?
- What suggestions do you have for your school?
- What do you like most about Murfreesboro City Schools?
- What do you like least about Murfreesboro City Schools?
- What suggestions do you have for Murfreesboro City Schools?
- Is there anything else that you would like the Board to know?

Jared Barrett said that he was not comfortable asking the name of the school. Mrs. Smith said that she doesn't think we should do it without the school name.

Wesley Ballard asked if the Board ever looked into getting a committee together with our MEA representative, Luke Dickerson. Mr. Campbell said that he contacted Mr. Dickerson, but Mr. Dickerson decided to wait.

Nancy Rainier made a motion to accept the following last four questions that Mrs. Smith came up with, but to eliminate the ones that were school specific.

- What do you like most about Murfreesboro City Schools?
- What do you like least about Murfreesboro City Schools?
- What suggestions do you have for Murfreesboro City Schools?
- Is there anything else that you would like the Board to know?

Wesley Ballard seconded that motion.

Mr. Campbell asked if the Board was planning to deliver the surveys to the school staff and wait while they take the survey and then collect them. David Settles explained that the survey that has been voted on would be on-line (survey monkey). Mr. Settles said that he did feel that the listening session was a good idea and if we post it on the website and with the media, we are covered.

Mrs. Rainier amended her motion to read that we will use the four questions that Collier Smith came up with, but use Mrs. Smith's contact, Terri Sterling, to produce the survey for no more than \$2300.00.

Kelley Baker asked if the \$2300.00 fee would include analysis of the responses, and Mrs. Smith said yes. Wesley Ballard seconded the amended motion.

Mr. Campbell requested a roll call vote:

David Settles	No	Jared Barrett	No	Collier Smith	No
Butch Campbell	No	Nancy Rainier	No	Phil King	No
Wesley Ballard	No				

The motion did not pass.

Phil King asked why we need Terri Sterling if we are doing survey monkey.

Jared Barrett said that he doesn't feel comfortable spending this money on a survey. He said that we have all of the information that we need with AdvancEd. He stated that we need to keep a focus of what our job is as a board.

Phil King said that he felt the same. He thought this all started with teacher retention. He was all for this when he thought that it was for attracting good teachers. He said that the more he thinks

of it, the more he is against a survey. He said that the Board needs to know about issues and try to fix them, but he felt that the Board was getting lost.

Mrs. Smith said that the Board should develop a survey on survey monkey themselves. Mr. King said that they should wait until after the AdvancEd survey in February. Collier Smith said that the Board was building a rapport with teachers and the survey would show how teachers feel.

Mr. Campbell suggested that the board visit schools and let the staff know that they will be receiving a survey and to please take it. Also to let them know that the budget process is coming up and the 5 year strategic plan and if they want to have input to please let the Board know. David Settles agreed.

Dr. Gilbert agreed that a listening session was a good idea. She said that she would notify the principals that the Board would be doing this. Mr. Ringstaff added that he could let them know the date of the AdvancEd survey so that they could tell the faculty.

Nancy Rainier made the motion to do a survey with the four previously discussed questions, and to do it through survey monkey at no cost.  
The motion died due to no second.

Jared Barrett made a motion to not do a survey, but have the Board go into schools and tell them about the AdvancEd survey, budget concerns, and the strategic plan.  
Wesley Ballard seconded.

Mr. Campbell asked for a roll call vote:

Wesley Ballard	Yes	Phil King	Yes	Nancy Rainier	No
Butch Campbell	Yes	Jared Barrett	Yes	David Settles	No

Collier Smith had left the meeting.

4 Yes  
2 No

The motion passed.

Phil King recommended to amend the motion and take out word concerns and put suggestions.  
Mr. Barrett amended the motion.

Mr. Campbell asked that each Board member choose the schools that they would like to attend a faculty meeting to encourage them to take AdvancEd survey and inform them of budget suggestions and the strategic plan.

Since Mrs. Smith had to leave, Mr. Campbell thought that she had mentioned wanting to go to Northfield. So the following list was formed:

Collier Smith-Northfield  
David Settles-Reeves Rogers/Hobgood  
Jared Barrett-Cason Lane/Overall Creek  
Butch Campbell-Black Fox/Discovery  
Nancy Rainier-Mitchell Neilson/Scales  
Phil King-Bradley (and offered to be an alternate if someone couldn't make it to their second school)  
Wesley Ballard-John Pittard/Erma Siegel

Mr. Ringstaff informed the Board that the AdvancEd survey would open on February 6 and the staff will receive an email on February 6 to begin the survey.

Dr. Gilbert said that she wanted open communication. She asked that the Board please let her know about concerns from teachers.

David Settles asked Dr. Gilbert that when she communicates with principals, to please let the Board know two or three dates that they could come into the school.

#### IV. PRELIMINARY BUDGET DISCUSSION

Mr. Lyles informed the Board of the immigrants that we will be getting. He said that about 25 students would be coming into our system. Cason Lane received some students today. He said that we would be hiring an ESL teacher and an MDA. He explained that this was being handled by the World Relief Program in Nashville. Mr. Lyles explained that the families would be residing in the Summer Lake apartments beside our office and that we would be busing the students to Cason Lane. Mr. Lyles thought in the beginning that these students would fall under the McKinney Vento Program, but he found out that they would not. He said that we are the first district outside Davidson County to receive these students.

Dr. Gilbert explained that she received a call that we would be getting refugees and could they use our facility for classes for the adults. She was told that there was a shortage of housing in Nashville. She said that Rutherford County would receive about 60 students.

Mr. Campbell asked if we get funding for those students. Dr. Gilbert explained that funding would not come until next year. She said that transportation is adding a bus and shifting students. Dr. Gilbert said that she was going to contact the State Department and ask about funding. She also told the Board that we have an Arabic translator working with Greg.

Kelley Baker asked if the Tennessee Foreign Language Institute would be able to offer any assistance other than teaching adults. Mr. Lyles said no, probably not.

Mr. Campbell asked who allowed this. Mr. Joe Marlin said that the World Relief Program was helping and the Federal government probably just said yes, you may.

Mr. Lyles said that he is looking at each case, but at this time, we are not identifying them as homeless. He said that we currently have 181 homeless students.

a. TRANSPORTATION FOR DISCOVERY SCHOOL

Mr. Gary Anderson handed out the information regarding the cost that the system is incurring to transport students to and from Discovery School. He said that in the mornings students are brought to their zoned schools and then transported by bus to Discovery School. He said that in the afternoons, they are transported by bus all over the city. The annual cost (just for afternoon transportation) is \$67,531.39.

Nancy Rainier asked have we not always provided transportation? Mr. Anderson said yes we have.

Jared Barrett asked what if we did the same thing in the afternoon as we did in the morning. Mr. Anderson also had a handout showing the cost if we did it that way. He said that it would cut the cost down to \$25,927.26. Mr. Anderson explained that taking these students back to three zoned schools in the afternoon would cut the cost that much. Plus, they would be closer to their homes.

Nancy Rainier asked if the normal population of students would be gone in the afternoon when the Discovery School students arrive at Cason Lane. She was informed that they would be gone. Mrs. Rainier clarified that the parents could either enroll their child in ESP at Discovery or at the zoned school. Mrs. Rainier then asked what if parents don't want to pay for ESP? Dr. Gilbert said that the parents could pick their student up if they didn't want them to go to ESP.

David Settles asked why did we start this transportation in the first place? Dr. Gilbert explained that Discovery was not a gifted school, but a high achieving school and when Discovery was established, the idea was that every student who tested in should have the opportunity to go to Discovery. David Settles said that was not fair.

Mr. Settles mentioned that Bradley, Hobgood, and Mitchell Neilson are classified as choice schools yet they don't get the perks that the students at Discovery School get. Mr. Anderson said that this has been brought before the Board three times.

Dr. Gilbert said that Kristina Maddux, principal at Discovery School, wants to have more diversity and has been concerned about the transportation issue for a while.

Kelley Baker noted that parents have been warned that busing could be phased out during prior budget years.

Jared Barrett asked how much it would save our system if we completely did away with busing, and Mr. Anderson said that it would save \$70,000-\$80,000 a year.

Mr. Campbell said that the Board would not change anything at this meeting because we have to let parents know what is going to change. Mr. Campbell said that the Board has three choices: to continue doing what we are doing, choose the alternative plan, or don't transport at all.

David Settles made the motion that we begin the process of cutting out the transportation that is currently provided morning and afternoon at Discovery School over the next two months. The motion died for lack of a second.

Mr. Campbell said that we need to start letting parents know what we are planning.

Lisa Trail told the Board that acceptance letters for Discovery School are mailed in late March. She said that at this point, parents have done tours and applications for Discovery School. The next tour is February 9. They will be testing students for acceptance from now through March. They will receive results March 24. She said that it would be nice to say to tell parents that we will provide no busing. Ms. Maddux has been telling parents the possibility of no transportation next year when they come to open house.

Mr. Campbell asked if the Board wanted to put this on the January 24<sup>th</sup> board meeting agenda. Jared Barrett said that he wouldn't be able to attend the January 24<sup>th</sup> board meeting.

## V. PAYROLL DEDUCTIONS

Mr. Ringstaff explained to the Board that there are since we have a lot of employees, there are always groups coming in wanting to service the 403B, 401K, and other accounts. He said that more and more systems are beginning to not allow outside groups to come in. They are using the State TCRS 401K program. Mr. Ringstaff recommended that we do the same. He said that if someone has a current 403B plan, they can keep it, but any new accounts will be done through the State. He said that we currently have 165 employees already on the State plan.

Mr. Ringstaff gave the Board a policy recommendation, 2.803, Payroll Deductions (old policy is PER 10), along with an AD FM 15. He said that it is exactly the same as Williamson County's policy.

Mr. Ringstaff said that by streamlining vendors, it will cause more of the teachers' money to go toward their investments. It will also help reduce the work for payroll when doing deductions.

Jared Barrett made the motion to approve Board policy 2.803, Payroll Deductions and AD FM15, on the first reading. David Settles seconded the motion. All approved by saying aye.

## VI. Strategic Plan

Dr. Gilbert explained that the Strategic Plan is on their jump drive with goals and what has been completed. Because of lack of time, she asked the Board to call her with any questions they may have. We will be looking at developing a new strategic plan over the next several months.

The meeting adjourned at 8:57 p.m.

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Director of Schools