

**SWITZERLAND COUNTY SCHOOL CORPORATION
MINUTES OF THE MAY 09, 2011**

EXECUTIVE SESSION BOARD MEETING	4:00 P.M.
REGULAR SCHOOL BOARD MEETING	4:30 P.M.
OPEN WORKING SESSION	4:45 P.M.

The School Board of Trustees met before the regular public meeting for an Executive Session beginning at 4:00 at the Switzerland County School Corporation's Administration Office to discuss I.C.5-14-1.5-6.1(b)(9).

The board members present were Mr. Truitt, Mr. Roberts, Mrs. Moore, Mr. Daugherty, Mrs. Peters, Mr. Phipps and Mr. Waltz. Dr. Elizabeth T. Jones, Superintendent; School Board Attorney, Ron Hocker and Matthew Hocker were also in attendance.

The board discussed no subject matter in the Executive Session other than the subject matter specified in the public notice.

The Executive Session adjourned and the meeting was opened to the public.

CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE TO THE FLAG:

Mr. Truitt called the regular meeting to order and led those in attendance in the pledge to the flag.

ATTENDANCE:

The board members present were Mr. Truitt, Mr. Roberts, Mrs. Moore, Mr. Daugherty, and Mrs. Peters, Mr. Phipps and Mr. Waltz.

Others in attendance were Dr. Elizabeth T. Jones, Wilma Swango, Mona Crabtree, Ronald Hocker, Matthew Hocker, Michael Jones, Rhonda Pennington, Dan Noel, Pat Lanman, Jill Cord, Travis Griffith, Shellie Fowler, Sharon Barbour, Christine Demaree, Denise Crawford, Kim Temple, Tara Justice and Rob Banta.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA:

Mrs. Moore made a motion to approve the agenda as amended to delay public comments until after the public working session for the discussion of the future location of sixth grade students. Mr. Waltz seconded the motion and the board voted unanimously to approve the amended agenda.

CLAIMS:

Mr. Phipps made a motion to approve **Vendor** Claims #41103 through #41149 and **Payroll** Claims for 04/29/2011. Mr. Roberts seconded and the vote to approve the claims as submitted was unanimous.

PERSONNEL:

The recommendation for a Reduction in Force of current employees, Laura Lovern McClure, Jennifer Druba and Natalie Daugherty Wheeler was made by Superintendent Jones. Mrs. Moore moved to approve the recommendation. Mr. Phipps seconded. Mr. Daugherty abstained from the vote while all other board members voted to approve the RIF as presented.

OPEN WORKING SESSION: FUTURE LOCATION OF SIXTH GR. STUDENTS

Mr. Truitt said regarding whether or not to keep the sixth grade at Jefferson-Craig next year, as is the current situation, a Census Report, which he considered to be very important, would not be received until June. He said Mr. Griffith had some information which he would like to share with the board and the public first. He said the meeting would then be opened up to anyone wishing to make public comments this evening and afterward, the board members would have time to express their personal opinions on what needed to be done.

Elementary school teacher, Travis Griffith, presented an in-depth look at the results of survey questions handed out at a Camp Livingston meeting with 47 families of fifth grade students in attendance. Also, the staff members at Switzerland County Elementary were surveyed. A Research of Minimum Classroom Size and Number of Students Per Classroom, by C. Kenneth Tanner from The University of Georgia School Design and Planning Laboratory was also presented at the meeting. The results of the survey of concerns, questions and suggestions and the conclusions from the classroom size research were shown in a power point presentation.

Mr. Griffith noted that out of the 47 surveys given to the families, 37 of them were returned. He said the data showed that of the 65 students who responded, 44 were in favor of moving to Jefferson-Craig next year. Mr. Griffith said the survey also revealed that if the future sixth grade was kept at SCES, more office staff would be needed as well as additional restrooms, an additional computer lab, a larger gym with more seats to be in compliance with fire codes, and additional playground equipment. He said people felt that scheduling issues, such as lunch, would also need to be addressed.

Mr. Griffith said one of the suggestions from the survey was to turn the Kindergarten room at SCES into the library and make the current library into four classrooms. Another suggestion was to build an additional sixth grade wing onto the school and yet another suggestion was to use the Old Gym as a Pre-Middle School.

Mr. Griffith said one fear respondents had was that the class sizes would be larger if the sixth grade stayed there which could negatively impact students' grades.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Sixth grade teacher, Kim Temple, said Jefferson-Craig had only housed the entire sixth grade for one year. She said the sixth grade teachers were a team and they worked together very well. Mrs. Temple said she felt having all the sixth graders at the same site provided for a more uniform and consistent instruction. She said she sees successes at the school. She said Mrs. Pennington was a good administrator who made them feel like they could go to her with any issue. Mrs. Temple asked why things needed to be messed with if learning is taking place. She said she also feels one year is not enough time to support any data.

Mrs. Moore said the teacher and student relationship was much closer in a self-contained classroom. She said she had parents of sixth graders tell her their child hated school when they had to change classrooms at the Middle School. She said she felt students needed that extra year of maturity.

Mr. Waltz commended the sixth grade teachers and the board because it sounded like they had done something right when the students were sent back to self-contained classrooms.

Mrs. Cord said her concern about the sixth grade going back to the elementary school was the 14,000 extra minutes the students were supposed to be getting. She said she thought it was unusual that Mrs. Temple was going to 4th grade next year if things were going so well for her as a 6th grade teacher. Dr. Jones said personnel issues could not be discussed in a public meeting.

Mr. Pat Lanman said self-contained classrooms at the students' respective community elementary schools was presented as an option, as well as 6th graders being moved back to the Middle School, but it seemed to him there was a third option. He said the option of having sixth graders in self-contained classrooms at the Middle School should also be considered.

There being no further public comments, board members were asked by Board President Truitt to give their opinions.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS:

Mr. Truitt began by saying what he really wants to focus on is the child and doing what is in their best interest educationally to become productive young adults. He said personally he is not up for changing things if there is not a huge gain to be seen from it. He said financial aspects also needed to be looked at and all of this needed to be revisited next year when there was good, hard evidence.

Mr. Roberts said he could see no value in busing students twenty more minutes each day. He said if there was room at Switzerland County Elementary, the kids needed to be moved back. He said he thought rooms should be added, if not for right now, for the future. He said the corporation should not wait until it is overwhelmed. He said the school was thirty-one years old and needed to be upgraded with things anyway. He said the board has been through each building and they know it needs attention, so why not upgrade it and move on. He said those students should not be driven extra miles for no purpose and that was just being frugal.

Mrs. Peters said she had nothing against self-contained classrooms. She said if the plan was to keep the sixth graders at the elementary, students should stay at the school in their own community. She said if that was not the plan, the sixth grade should return to the Middle School which should be for 6th, 7th and 8th grades.

Mr. Phipps said the result of the test scores have not been seen yet, so he was not sure at this point in time what needed to be done. He said he was eager to see those tests results. He said he realized it comes from a different pot of money, but didn't feel more construction needed to be done out at Switzerland County Elementary School when three teachers were being RIF'd.

Mr. Waltz said that one year ago he voted for the switch with the understanding that the decision would be revisited. He said part of him agrees with Mr. Roberts and his heart was leaning toward sending the kids back to Switzerland County Elementary School. But, on the other hand, there was no solid data to consider. He said all of it needed to be looked at, not just the financials but the educational data.

Mr. Daugherty said at one time, the High School had housed grades 7 through 12. He said then there was a need for space and the Middle School was built for the seventh and eighth grades. Then, he said the sixth grade moved in. He said he wanted to think that whatever was done to the buildings and grounds would be good for fifty years. Mr. Daugherty said the sixth grade move was done as an educational experiment because things couldn't get much worse. He said he was under the impression that the board would try to get the sixth grade back to Switzerland County Elementary School if the experiment didn't work. He said there was room last year for the students. He said now, we are requiring more space for technology. Mr. Daugherty said he thought the sixth graders needed to attend the school in their own community. He said he would like to see the SCES added on to, but that couldn't happen next year because the money just isn't there.

Mrs. Moore said she wanted the sixth grade back in both elementary schools. She said those students and parents didn't want it and were promised that the board would look at it in a year. She said SCES needs repairs such as a new roof and new floors. She said the bus situation was not good. Mrs. Moore said an hour on the bus is too long. She said she was not saying that the administrators and staff were not doing a good job now. She said

there was a reason for what was done but the board had promised parents that it would be revisited, and she would like to see the SCES repaired and the sixth grade back out there.

Mr. Waltz said he would like to hear from Mr. Jones. Mr. Jones said when he was asked, he was not going to tell parents the school didn't want them. He said it was still a beautiful building and how the space was being used needed to be reconsidered. He said the bottom line is the students were being given the best education the staff could give them.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Roberts moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Phipps seconded and the vote was unanimous. The meeting was so adjourned. (6:26 p.m.)

Andy Truitt, President

William Roberts, Vice President

Tonya Moore, Secretary

Wayne Daugherty, Member

Nancy Peters, Member

James Phipps, Member

Vernon Waltz, Member