

Regular School Board Meeting
November 28, 2005
5:30 p.m.

PRESENT:

The meeting was called to order by Ms Yvonne Keaton-Martin, president. Board members present were Ms. Shannon Blatt, Ms. Jeannie Cole, Ms. Barbara Hathcock, Dr. David Hunton, Dr. Deanie Mehl and Mr. Wyman R. Wade, Jr. Also present were Dr. Benny Gooden, superintendent, Dr. Johnny Owen, deputy superintendent and Ms. Carolyn Kincaid.

The pledge of allegiance was recited and Mr. Wyman R. Wade, Jr. gave a brief history on our country's tradition of Thanksgiving and read a prayer of gratitude.

Ms. Blatt made a motion, seconded by Dr. Hunton, to approve the minutes of the October 24, 2005, regular school board meeting. The vote for approval was 7/0.

SUPERINTENDENT'S
REPORT:

Dr. Benny Gooden yielded to Dr. Johnny Owen who reviewed the recommendations for employment.

Recommendations for Employment

Karen R. McLaughlan
Kathryn B. Rahn
Misty A. Thomas
Amanda L. Thompson

Ms. Hathcock made a motion, seconded by Ms. Cole, to approve the recommendations for employment. The vote for approval was 7/0.

Dr. Johnny Owen reviewed the Student Services Report.

Dr. Gooden and Ms. Keaton-Martin presented certificates to Ms. Joyce Taylor, Cook Elementary School, 2005 Arkansas Wal-Mart Teacher of the Year, and Ms. Sharon Sutton, Ballman Elementary School, 2005 Arkansas Council for Exceptional Children Distinguished Teacher in General Education Award.

Dr. Gooden noted that the Arkansas Supreme Court has concluded oral arguments and reviewed the Special Masters Report with regard to pending school finance litigation. He stated that hopefully we could have a decision before the Christmas holiday.

Dr. Gooden also informed the Board that the Texas Supreme Court had ruled in a similar school finance case. The Court determined that the schools in Texas were not funded constitutionally due to the manner in which property taxes are distributed. However, they did not address the question of adequacy.

FINANCE COMMITTEE
REPORT:

Ms. Keaton-Martin recognized Dr. Hunton for the Finance Committee Report.

Dr. Hunton made a motion, seconded by Dr. Mehl, to approve the Financial Report for the month of October. The vote for approval was 7/0.

Dr. Hunton inquired about an article in the *Arkansas Democrat Gazette* on November 17 regarding "leftover" school funds.

Dr. Gooden stated that the information in this article was erroneous and misleading and noted that the funds referred to were "Legal Fund Balances" and "Building Fund Balances." Auditors for the Fort Smith Public Schools recommend having an adequate "legal fund balance" set aside to operate for at least 25-30 days. These funds are available to fund general operating budgets of schools to conduct business during the period of time before tax revenue is collected and distributed. He further stated these funds are designated for future buildings, encumbered funds, categorical "targeted" funding and a percentage of the operating budget and are not "leftovers" as the newspaper characterized them.

Ms. Cole asked Dr. Gooden if the bond election would have any effect on funds for schools in Arkansas. Dr. Gooden stated that to the best of his knowledge the issue for road bonds would not affect our schools. The bonds for higher education would be targeted directly for higher education and obligated to pay specifically for those needs. This could possibly be less money for our schools but money is also needed for higher education improvements.

PUBLIC/STUDENT
AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
REPORT:

Ms. Keaton-Martin recognized Mr. Wyman Wade for the Public Student Affairs Committee Report.

Mr. Wade made a recommendation from the Public/Student Affairs Committee to approve the proposed 2006-07 Fort Smith Public Schools calendar. The vote for approval was 7/0.

CURRICULUM
COMMITTEE REPORT:

Ms. Keaton-Martin recognized Ms. Barbara Hathcock for the Curriculum Committee Report.

Ms. Hathcock made a recommendation from the Curriculum Committee to accept the proposed elementary textbook adoption committee. The vote for approval was 7/0.

Ms. Hathcock made a recommendation from the Curriculum Committee to accept the proposed secondary textbook adoption committee. The vote for approval was 7/0.

BOARD MEMBERS
FORUM:

Ms. Cole made a motion, seconded by Ms. Hathcock, to move the December Board meeting to December 19, due to the Christmas holiday. The vote for approval was 6/1 with Ms. Blatt opposing.

Mr. Wade asked Dr. Gooden about the possibility of involving students in Board meetings to recite poetry, sing or perform in other ways. Dr. Gooden stated that he would communicate with principals about the idea and hopefully have a group of students for the December Board meeting.

CITIZEN
PARTICIPATION:

There were no requests to speak.

ADJOURN:

There was no further business and the meeting adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

Yvonne Keaton-Martin, President

Wyman R. Wade, Jr., Secretary