

HOLMES COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD
REGULAR SESSION
MARCH 22, 2016

The Holmes County School Board met in Regular Session on Tuesday, March 22, 2016 at 9:00 a.m. in the Board Room at 701 East Pennsylvania Avenue in Bonifay. Board Members present: Sid Johnson – Chair, Shirley Owens – Vice-Chair, Debbie Kolmetz and Alan Justice. Also present: Superintendent Eddie Dixon, Board Attorney Jeff Goodman, Administrators Carmen Bush and Donnita Butorac and Resource Officer Adrienne Odum. Board Member Rusty Williams was unable to attend.

Chairman Johnson called the regular scheduled meeting to order and the adoption of the amended agenda. Alan Justice moved to approve the agenda as amended, second by Debbie Kolmetz which passed unanimously. Chairman Johnson announced there would be a Student Expulsion Hearing followed by an Executive Session immediately after the regular meeting.

HEARING THE PUBLIC/RECOGNITIONS

- Perry Steverson addressed the Board regarding the decision made by the DOAH Judge on the Administrative Hearing on his wife Susan Steverson.
- Randy Hendrix spoke to the Board concerning the baseball equipment at BHS.
- The Board recognized and applauded three of the High Impact Teachers recently recognized by the State. Teachers in attendance were: Mandy Boyd – HCHS, Valerie Wink – BMS, and Shelley Smith – BHS.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROGRAMS –

A. OVERNIGHT/OUT OF STATE TRIPS – BHS Aerospace Club to Daytona Beach; HCHS Key Club to Orlando; PS Sr. Class to St. Augustine. Alan Justice moved to approve, second by Debbie Kolmetz which passed unanimously. s. min. p. ____

FOOD SERVICE/TRANSPORTATION –

A. EXEMPTION FOR OPERATING A SUMMER FEEDING PROGRAM FOR 35 DAYS – Reduce the Program to 24 days for the 2016 Summer Feeding Program as set forth in the Willie Ann Glenn Act for HBB 277, Section 1 – Shirley Owens moved to approve, second by Alan Justice which passed unanimously. S. min. p. ____

The Consent Agenda was unanimously approved on a motion by Alan Justice and second by Shirley Owens as follows: Invoices, Warrant List, and P.O.'S over \$3000, Budget Amendments (None), Out of County/State Students, Monthly Financial Report and 03/01/16 Workshop and Regular Session Minutes. S. min. p. ____

PERSONNEL –

A. Superintendent Dixon made the following recommendations:

HIRE the following for the 2015-2016 school year: (effective 03/21/16)

- Jessie Brown, Aide III at PDLE.
- Haley Harris, ESE Aide I at BES.
- Deanna Shirah, Lunchroom Worker at BES.
- Karen Watson, 10 Month Custodian at BES.
- Krystal Carroll, 10 Month Custodian at BES.

ACCEPT the Resignation from Employment on the following: (For Retirement Purposes)

- Jennifer Braxton, Teacher at BES, effective 05/31/16 at 11:59 p.m.
- Julie Short, Teacher at BES, effective 05/31/16 at 11:59 p.m.

Lucinda Brown, Teacher at BES, effective 08/01/16 at 3:00 p.m.

HIRE the following for WINGS Substitutes, effective March 21, 2016

Sheila Bailey, Christine Lauen, Lisa Mathews, Lisa Merchant, Kristyl Messer, Sharon Parmer, Hannah Watkins

AMEND the Ending Date on the Maternity Leave of Absence on Ashley Moseley, Teacher at BES, beginning 01/05/16 and ending 06/30/16 at 3:00 p.m.

AMEND the Ending Date on the Maternity Leave of Absence on Amie Petty, Teacher at BES, beginning 01/12/16 and ending 06/30/16 at 3:00 p.m.

Alan Justice moved to approve, second by Shirley Owens which passed unanimously.

B. STAFF RECOMMENDATION REGARDING THE RECOMMENDED ORDER IN HOLMES COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD V. SUSAN STEVERSON (15-2016TTS), ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE, ON 03/17/16 – Board Attorney Jeff Goodman presented the order handed down by the DOAH Judge on the Administrative Hearing held on 12/22/15 and recommended the Board accept. The Judge made the following recommendations:

- 1) Dismissing the charge of gross insubordination against Respondent and setting aside any discipline subsequent to Respondent's suspension with pay and reprimand received in December 2014;
- 2) Dismissing the allegations set forth in the Notice of Charges to the extent they seek to impose or support any discipline subsequent to Respondent's suspension with pay and reprimand received in December 2014; and
- 3) Reimbursing Respondent for the five days of pay that Respondent did not receive during her suspension from January 12, 2015 through January 16, 2015, plus interest, as appropriate under applicable law.

The Judge's Recommendation was unanimously approved on a motion by Shirley Owens and second by Alan Justice. S. min. p. ____

Discussion included:

- Debbie Kolmetz stated she agrees whole heartedly with the recommendation and feels since Mrs. Steverson was not found guilty of any gross insubordination by the Judge and he dismissed all the allegations this should be taken out of her record and she should be moved back to her teaching position at Bethlehem. She stated that she was involuntarily transferred to the GAP and feels it is in the best interest of our children for her to be teaching instead of an intern at Bethlehem.
- Alan Justice commented on the enthusiasm and passion shown during this process and feels that the Board always wants to make the right decisions when it involves our students, faculty and staff. In this current situation the Board's decision didn't align with the Judge's ruling. He believes if it was all to do again maybe different decisions would be made but he hopes all have learned something from these proceedings and will be better individuals because of it.
- Superintendent Dixon made the following statement:

“As you know, a few weeks ago a hearing was held between the School District and Mrs. Susan Steverson. This was her challenge to the decision to suspend her for five days without pay for gross insubordination. The hearing was conducted by an Administrative Law Judge who had been assigned to take over the case just 24 hours earlier. Last week that same Judge issued his Proposed Recommended Order. Although the Judge agreed with most of the facts supporting the decision to suspend, he came to the conclusion that Mrs. Steverson did not commit gross insubordination and recommended that the School District reimburse Susan Steverson for the five days suspension.

The Judge based his recommendation on one fact –what was said at the parent meeting by Mrs. Steverson, and whether the statements by Mrs. Steverson at that one meeting constituted “gross insubordination”. I understand the logic he applied however I respectfully disagree with his conclusion. He focused on a single fifteen minute event in isolation, when in reality her conduct at

that parent meeting was one piece of a much larger puzzle of over two years of Mrs. Steverson's confrontations with two different Bethlehem Principals.

I recommended her suspension based on two years as Superintendent dealing with Mrs. Steverson's insubordinate behavior towards Bethlehem Administrators. I was concerned that the leadership and authority that is absolutely necessary for a school to function was being undermined. Principal Jones officially reprimanded her for reading an unapproved statement to students indicating he was hindering her ability to teach to her classes and refusing to give him a copy of it when requested. This statement was written in response to him asking her to stop locking children in the halls unsupervised and being more reasonable with her classroom rules. The parent meeting occurred a couple of weeks after the written reprimand. I viewed the parent meeting as a continuation of the behavior of Mrs. Steverson for which she was given a reprimand. The next step on our progressive discipline plan was suspension without pay and that is why I made that recommendation. I had already spoken to Mrs. Steverson on a couple of occasions about the serious nature of being insubordinate toward her principal to no avail.

As stated to you by Mr. Goodman, the School Board now has the choice to file exceptions to this Proposed Recommended Order, and can after a review of the record, adopt or reject the Judge's recommendations. Although I strongly disagree with his findings and his recommendation, especially with some of his factual findings not being accurate, I feel it is in the best interest of the school system as a whole to accept the Administrative Law Judge's recommendation and move on with our greater mission of educating children.

As Superintendent, and I know you as School Board members, will continue to support the administrators who operate our schools and care for our children. My expectations for both faculty and staff will continue to be very high as we move forward, and this recommended order will not alter my goal of making a difference in the lives of children each and every day."

Chairman Johnson announced a short break and the Board would hold an Expulsion Hearing and then would go into Executive Session for the purpose of salary negotiations. Alan Justice moved to adjourn, second by Shirley Owens which passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:30 a.m.

The Board reconvened at 9:40 a.m. for the Expulsion Hearing on a Bonifay Middle School student. Superintendent Dixon recommended the student for expulsion for at least one year and allowing the student to return after one year from today. The Board heard testimony from Principal Donald Etheridge, Assistant Principal Chey Bowers and the student's father. Shirley Owens moved to accept the recommendation, second by Alan Justice which passed unanimously.

Alan Justice then moved to adjourn, second by Debbie Kolmetz which passed unanimously. The Expulsion Hearing adjourned at 10:15 a.m. and the Board went into Executive Session.

Sidney M. Johnson, Chairman

Eddie Dixon, Superintendent