

## **Board of Education Summary – Monday, May 14, 2012**

Mr. Washington called the meeting to order at 5:35 PM.

### **Statement of Media Notification**

### **Pledge of Allegiance**

### **Invocation**

Mr. Burnes provided the invocation

### **Naming of facility**

The Board approved the naming of a district facility.

### **Introduction of Deonia Simmons**

Mr. Campbell introduced Dr. Deonia Simmons, the new director of the Beaufort-Jasper Academy for Career Excellence, to the Board. Several Board members expressed their confidence that Dr. Simmons would move ACE forward.

### **Budget discussion**

Dr. Truesdale introduced Chief Operational Services Office Phyllis White's presentation as a preface to the BOE's budget discussion. Dr. Truesdale said that although the Board had directed her to cut another 45 positions in addition to the 169 positions eliminated over the past four years, she does not believe the district can eliminate 45 additional positions and continue to see the kinds of academic improvement that the district has made in the last few years.

Ms. White outlined the recent history of school district budgets, expenditures and cost-cutting. She updated the Board on budget deliberations in the General Assembly and also laid out the challenges ahead in developing a district budget for 2012-13. (Ms. White's PowerPoint presentation is available on the district's website.)

Mr. Washington expressed his preference to open budget discussions with an examination of programmatic expenditures, and possible cuts to academic programs, before taking up the issue of expenditures related to salaries and employee positions.

Mr. Wilson said that he cannot, in good conscience, vote to approve a budget that further impairs the district's ability to sustain the district's improvements in student achievement.

Ms. White explained the district's fund balance status, noting that Board policy approved in 2011 calls for a fund balance that is 14-15 percent of annual expenditures. The two main bond rating agencies (Moody's and Standard and Poors) have said that the district cannot continue to draw on its fund balance as a revenue source without harming the district's excellent credit rating, which allows for lower interest rates for building renovation and construction. The fund balance also supports district operations during periods when tax revenues are not coming in, and it provides a safety net in cases of

catastrophic emergencies, such as hurricanes. Ms. White said, "We cannot continue to survive on your savings account for years, and that's what we've been doing."

Mr. Washington said that he wants to ensure that schools have the tools they need to meet students' needs. He asked if the proposed budget would have a negative impact on poor-achieving students at non-Title I schools, and he specifically asked about the potential harm to discontinuing Extended Learning Time initiatives across the district. Dr. Truesdale said that the end of federal funding streams supporting those initiatives will necessarily mean a draw-down, but Sean Alford stated his belief that even a trimmed-down version of the program will still provide a boost to student academics if it is carefully targeted. Mr. Wilson noted that the percentage of children performing below standard has been sharply reduced.

Dr. Truesdale and Dr. Alford laid out their vision for replicating the College and Career Readiness Initiative that has been so successful with students at Whale Branch Early College High School at other schools in the district. A key part of that would be expanding the availability of computer technology to middle and high school students, which would include using iPads on carts that could be moved to different classrooms within a small group of schools.

Dr. Truesdale and Dr. Alford answered Board members' questions about the viability of an August start date; about existing research on students becoming overly dependent upon computers as learning tools, making it more difficult for them to keep up with their studies if they don't have Internet connectivity in their homes; and about whether teachers will receive appropriate training to ensure that the initiative's potential can be realized.

Mr. Campbell moved to approve the administration's proposal to begin implementing the expansion of the College and Career Readiness initiative to include eighth- and ninth-graders across the district; Ms. Bell seconded. The Board voted 8-1 (with one abstention) to approve the motion.

Returning to the 2012-13 budget discussion, Ms. White laid out a variety of options for Board members to consider, including reductions of 30 or 45 additional employee positions but no millage increase, as well as 1-mill and 2-mill increases for 2012-13 and 2013-14. Ms. White said that without revenue increases, all of the options currently on the table eventually will lead to fund balance draw-downs of increasing size.

Mr. Washington said that if the Board does approve a millage increase, it should be ready and able to make a strong case for doing that.

Rev. Rivers stated that maintaining flat, revenue-neutral budgets rather than advocating for revenue increases will strangle the ability of future Boards to produce balanced budgets. Mr. Wilson echoed the sentiments of Rev. Rivers and points out that the county is not really operating on revenue-neutral budgets because it benefits from higher fees, a route that the school district has not chosen to take.

**The meeting was adjourned at 8:54 PM.**