

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF ALACHUA COUNTY, FLORIDA  
APPROVED MINUTES OF  
**Joint Public Meeting with Board of County Commissioners**  
April 20, 2015

The School Board of Alachua County, Florida, met in a Special Meeting, held jointly with the Board of County Commissioners, duly called at 10 a.m. in the Boardroom, 620 East University Avenue, Gainesville, Florida. School Board members present were: Leanetta McNealy, Chairman; Eileen Roy, Vice-Chairman; April Griffin, Rob Hyatt, and Gunnar Paulson, members; Owen Roberts, Superintendent; and David Delaney, Board Attorney.

Board of County Commissioners members present were: Charles “Chuck” Chestnut, IV, Chair, Mike Byerly, Ken Cornell, Robert “Hutch” Hutchinson, and Lee Pinkoson.

WELCOME AND  
INTRODUCTIONS

Dr. McNealy welcomed the group.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Motion by Mr. Hyatt

Seconded by Mrs. Griffin

Moved to adopt the agenda for the April 20, 2015, Special School Board Joint meeting with the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners, as presented.

The question was called.

Upon Vote: Motion passed 5-0

The Alachua County Board of Commissioners also adopted their Agenda.

SCHOOL RESOURCE  
OFFICERS (SROs)

Opening statements were made. Mr. Byerly noted that the Commission funds the Sheriff’s Department budget, but the Sheriff determines where the budget is spent.

DISCUSSION

There was extensive discussion and comments, including:

- Where does responsibility for the program lie? (School Board, Alachua County government, or all Alachua County municipalities).
- Are sworn law-enforcement officers always required?
- Importance of SROs building relations with students.

Sheriff Sadie Darnell’s comments included:

- As long as the law enforcement budget is maintained at minimum status quo, the program can continue.
- Deputies have said that there is an evident difference with students who have had deputies through middle and high school. Now that SROs are in elementary schools as well, she is convinced that we will ultimately have a markedly different—and better—society.
- If budget is cut, programs such as the Washington DC trip could be jeopardized.
- Our community is well-positioned for this type of program, as opposed to very large communities that have too many schools, or small communities where it is unaffordable.

[Mr. Chestnut left the meeting.]

Discussion/comments continued:

- Consider possibility of sharing officers as GPD does with city schools.
- In relation to juvenile justice issues, Deputies in schools will save money in the long run, and probably already have.
- The County funds departments, does not set priorities within those departments.

Superintendent Roberts stated that the question is how to fund the SRO program, within the budget constraints, to give a sense of security to students, teachers and parents.

Mrs. Roy reviewed a report of program expenses and projections for the next three years. She suggested that an equitable funding arrangement would be the School Board's safe-schools funding, matched by the County, with Sheriff Darnell and Chief Tony Jones determining resource distribution. Regarding the possibility of the Sheriff cutting Safety Patrol trips to Washington, DC, Mrs. Roy pointed out that the trips have gone on for many years prior to having SROs in every elementary school.

Mr. Pinkoson elaborated on other County funding needs, state requirements, and their early childhood program aspirations. He referred to the County having a smaller budget than the School Board.

Mr. Cornell echoed the importance of their focus on early childhood.

At Dr. Roberts' request, Mr. Scott Ward, assistant superintendent for Planning and Budget, compared total County and School Board budgets: County - \$370 million, School Board - \$246 million. Mr. Ward also spoke on School Board limitations compared to the County's discretion regarding taxes.

## CITIZEN COMMENTS

- SROs must not be lost. It is the responsibility of elected officials to figure out the funding. He favors an option be given for parents to contribute. He spoke about SROs building relationships with students, a good long-term investment.
- Money should be invested in parents and things like 4-H and leave the police out of the schools, unless they need to be called.
- ACEA President Karen McCann stated that the purpose of the SROs should be clearly identified. She then made comments related to security.
- A parent stated that the SRO dislodged food from his son's throat, thereby saving his life. He noted that he is an excellent role model for the students.
- An Alachua parent recommends an officer be kept in every school, commenting their job is so much more than security.
- An Irby parent read a letter from the PTA to the Board and Commission, supporting the need for SROs. She noted that Irby has a Junior Deputy Program for service projects.
- Tim Martin, Newberry elected official, cited the need for problem solving, not problem identifying.

- Margo Reeves, parent of Waldo teacher, read a letter from that teacher in support of saving Waldo Community School.
- A parent spoke in support of full-time Officers at every school, reminding the group of a shooting incident in High Springs a couple of years ago.
- A parent supports having SROs as security for all schools and cited the importance of the relationship building that goes on with the students.

**BOCC Vote:**

Motion by Mr. Pinkoson

Seconded by Mr. Cornell

Moved to schedule another joint meeting with the School Board, prior to finalization of the Sheriff's contract.

The question was called.

Upon Vote: Motion passed 4-0

Dr. Roberts stated that before we come back for another discussion, there needs to be a plan.

Mr. Pinkoson suggested to Chairman McNealy that the School Board could communicate by letter to the Commission whether another meeting would be beneficial or what the Board's plan is. Dr. McNealy agreed.

2016 EDUCATION  
REFERENDUM BALLOT  
LANGUAGE AND TIMING

In Mr. Chestnut's absence, Vice-Chair Robert "Hutch" Hutchinson continued the meeting with a subject on the Commission's Agenda: 2016 Education Referendum Ballot Language and Timing.

Vice-Chair Hutchinson stated that the BOCC has essentially been locked out of the possibility of placing a Referendum on the Ballot in the prime slot of a Presidential election year, due to the One-Mill initiative. He then reviewed three options:

**Option 1** – Send a joint request from the Alachua County School Board and the Board of County Commissioners to the Legislative Delegation and the Legislative Leadership, requesting that the term of the School Board's Optional Millage be extended to eight years.

This would allow other referendums to be placed on the ballot every-other presidential four-year term.

**Option 2** – The School Board would limit the next Referendum to a term of two years, and then continue with future Referendums at four years.

The County Commission feels that our proven community support means that not being on the Presidential election cycle will not hurt the passage of the One-Mill.

**Option 3** - Add School Resource Officers as one of the allowable expenses in the Referendum language on our next ballot.

Mrs. Roy expressed being open to Option 1 but did not favor Option 2. She added that everyone ought to put pressure on the state to adequately fund Safe Schools.

Mr. Hyatt agreed with the possibility of Option 1, not 2. He felt Option 3 could be looked into, as long as adequate funding for the present programs is maintained.

Dr. McNealy also supported Option 1.

Dr. Paulson is not in favor of Options 2 and 3.

Dr. McNealy noted that the School Board will not be taking action at this meeting.

**BOCC Vote:**

Motion by Mr. Hutchinson

Seconded by Mr. Byerly

Moved to send a joint request from the Alachua County School Board and the Board of County Commissioners to the Legislative Delegation and the Legislative Leadership, requesting that the term of the School Board's Optional Millage be extended to eight years and that Safe Schools funding be increased.

The question was called.

Upon Vote: Motion passed 4-0

A Waldo parent stated that they had not received answers to questions that were asked at the April 1 School Board Workshop.

A Waldo citizen spoke of the effect on the community if Waldo school is closed. He believes other things can be done.

Vice-Chair Hutchinson suggested the School Board speak to other counties that have millages, regarding legislative efforts to extend the term.

Mrs. Jackie Johnson, Public Information Officer, stated the need to inform the One-Mill Oversight Committee and the Citizens for Strong Schools Committee about the Board's plan. She also expressed concern about extending the term of the Millage, that it might affect the outcome of the Referendum.

Dr. McNealy commended SROs and spoke of the value of all those officers. She also commended Sheriff Darnell and stated that the Board will be taking action on the SRO issue.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:13 p.m.