

Half-Cent Oversight Committee Meeting
Approved Minutes
December 11, 2023 at 4 p.m. (District Office – Boardroom)

WELCOME

Chairman Brian Scarborough called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

Members Present: Karen Alford, Jennifer Boe, Tom Mason, Jeanna Mastrodicasa, Karen McCann, John Roberts, Brian Scarborough, Karl Smith, Steven Vann

Members absent: Dean Cheshire, Scott Costello, Carolyn Webber

District members present:

Keith Birkett, Interim Chief of Finance

Maria Eunice, Chief of Operations

Suzanne Wynn, Director, Community Planning, Concurrency & Major Construction

Jackie Johnson, Director, Communications/Community Initiatives

Board members present:

Leanetta McNealy, Board Member

**APPROVAL OF
MINUTES**

Motion by Karl Smith

Seconded by Tom Mason

to approve the minutes of the September 18, 2023, meeting.

Upon Vote: Motion Passed

FACILITIES UPDATE:

Suzanne Wynn started the meeting by reviewing the current Facilities Update.

Westwood Middle construction is on track. We have all our walls up and are starting ceiling grids and trimming out. Westwood will be moved out of the transition school this summer and into the revitalized campus in time for the start of school in August 2024

The design of the revitalized Littlewood Elementary campus is 60% complete. The CM is on board, which is Parrish McCall. Targeting completion and the move in date is August 2025. We are also starting the process of renovating the transition school at Westwood to suit elementary students with toilets, fencing, playground.

The \$50,000 that was allocated for each school from the ½ cent has been used. There are a few remaining items such as the down payment for HMHS track and additional laptops for A. Quinn Jones.

Discussion followed concerning the additional funds and if a school has a need, would the funds be available. Ms. Wynn responded that it would depend on the school's needs, emergency or non-emergency, and would be decided on a case-by-case basis.

Construction costs will probably not be coming down. An updated plan and projected costs for facilities projects over the next few years is expected to be presented to the Board in January. The challenge is to make the public aware of rising construction cost and let them know what we've done and how much we have accomplished.

Regarding the priority list – this committee should have some input. Once Littlewood is completed, the reserves of half-cent revenues will be depleted and we'll need to build up the funds again.

The committee should be included in the discussion of what happens next and any change of direction that might be necessary.

**UPDATES BY
JACKIE JOHNSON**

The School Board pushed back by a few weeks the schedule for rezoning. The vote is now scheduled for January 11 at 6 p.m. We've gone through three revisions of the proposed plan--they've been updated based on public input and other factors. There is likely to be one more revision before the break.

Changes in transportation, which will take effect January 16 of 2024, should eliminate 15-19 routes, which cost \$110,000-\$120,000 each. Magnet bus stops will be consolidated and courtesy busing (for students living less than two miles from school) will be eliminated for students at all but our seven highest-needs schools. This will not affect ESE students. The district spends a significant amount of money on courtesy busing. The district receives from the state only 30-40% of the costs of busing for students we are required to transport and nothing for courtesy busing. Courtesy busing may be provided for students whose walk to school would be considered hazardous under state law.

We are looking at holding a workshop in late January to talk about Facilities planning.

School grades came out today—the state is calling them “Informational Baseline” grades due to new tests that they're based on. We had 11 schools that raised their grades this year, four schools with lower grades and 20 that remained the same. The majority of our turnaround schools had a higher grade this year so some of them will no longer be turnaround schools next year. Idylwild, Terwilliger, Alachua, Lake Forest were the turnaround schools that had higher grades this year.

FINANCE UPDATE:

Keith Birkett went over the Financial Update Report. Discussion was held on revenues, expenditures, interest and the payment schedule for the half-cent funds. It looks like the tax collections are less than they were last year but interest rates are up, which is good for revenues.

Discussion followed on interest and bonds, paying and receiving interest.

GENERAL DISCUSSION:

Prairie View – what is the plan for turning that site into a magnet and what funds would be used to do the necessary upgrades? This would be a 1½ Mill project. A member asked about the training of teachers for this magnet, and it was explained that this would not be funded through the half-cent.

Regarding the possibility of a school being run by an outside operator due to low school grades—the school facility will still belong to the district. Just the day-to-day operations will be contracted out. The district is developing a contract with an outside operator only in case it is needed for Lake Forest Elementary for the 2024-25 school year.

The committee members will be notified about the upcoming School Board workshop on facilities. It was pointed out that in the past there was a situation in which the committee was not notified in advance of an expenditure of half-cent funds, and that the committee should always be informed and have input.

MEETING ADJOURNED: Adjourned at 4:52 p.m. Next meeting will be February 5, 2024.