

**GOOCHLAND COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD  
SPECIAL MEETING  
JANUARY 19, 2010  
GOOCHLAND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
7:00 P.M.**

**MINUTES**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Raymond A. Miller, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

**Present were:**

Raymond A. Miller, Chairman  
Maxwell G. Cisne, Vice Chairman  
Mr. Ivan O. Mattox, Sr.  
Mr. Andrew A. Meng, III  
Mr. James L. Haskell  
Dr. Linda A. Underwood, Superintendent

**Also attending were:**

Peter M. Gretz, Assistant Superintendent  
Thomas DeWeerd, Director of Secondary Education  
Lynne Venter, Director of Finance and Operations  
Betty Thurston, Supervisor of Transportation  
Johnette Burdette, Principal, Goochland Middle School  
Dianna Gordon, Principal, Goochland Elementary School  
Stacey Austin, Principal, Randolph Elementary School  
Peter Martin, Technical Services Coordinator

**The Media was represented by:**

David DesRoches, *The Central Virginian*  
Amy Condra, *The Goochland Gazette*

**ADDITIONS/DELETIONS/CHANGES TO AGENDA**

None.

Dr. Underwood presented the plan for the evening.

Mr. Miller explained the budget process.

**ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION**

Dr. Underwood read questions and answers.

1. **How many school system employees are there that do not meet the definition of full time employment (30 hrs/wk as per the state and Anthems qualifications standards) that are receiving full time benefits (health, retirement, fringes)? Why does the budget allow for this when it is not standard business practice?**

School divisions, and perhaps other governmental employers, have more flexibility in benefits than private employers. If employees are "regular contracted employees," they do not have to meet the 30 hours/week criterion described in the question and can be covered by, in this case, the Goochland County Public Schools' health insurance plan.

Given that, we do have people who are contracted, but work less than full-time. That includes:

- 7 professional staff on teacher contracts
- Transportation – 68 bus drivers
- Food Service – 19 cafeteria workers
- Maintenance – part-time cleaners

Part-time cafeteria workers and bus drivers qualify for our health insurance program, but we pay only a portion of the premium. Staff who have teacher contracts receive full health insurance benefits if they are at least 50% time.

Some employees work part-time in two different areas (e.g., transportation and cafeteria), resulting in full-time employment. They qualify for the full contribution for health insurance.

Cafeteria staff health benefits are paid from the separate cafeteria account, not local funds.

All of our health insurance practices are common to other school divisions, so although it may not be standard business practice, it is standard school practice.

**2. There have been a number of questions about health insurance costs – why we stay with our current carrier, what other options have we looked at.**

We analyze our insurance costs and potential increases on a monthly basis. We put our insurance program out for bid whenever we may get a better rate. For example, we changed insurance carriers October 1, 2009 resulting in a 25% increase rather than a 39% increase. A few years ago, we separated from the county when we could get a better rate for the school division individually than we could as a combined group. We have talked with other school divisions who use different types of insurance programs, including those that are more non-traditional for schools. We have had a conversation with a firm that administers HSA programs. The county consultant is working on various options for combined rates and carriers right now. As we move into the spring and our current carrier provides us with more firm estimates on rates for next year, we will decide if we need to put out an RFP, investigate non-traditional insurance programs, or look at self-insurance. These are all options we are currently exploring, both on our own and with the county. Our "experience" rating with our past carrier was very high, thus our current carrier is waiting for more recent experience (since October 1) to provide us with future rates. Other carriers, who might respond to an RFP, will also need that more recent experience rating in order to give us the cost of any health benefits program. As frustrating as it is, we have to wait.

**3. Why are certain positions in the Instruction Category, when they appear to belong in the Administration Category?**

This question crosses over a number of rules, regulations, procedures and Code. For example, the Assistant Superintendent has been in the Instruction Category for the seven years I've worked with the budget. Positions are in the categories in which they are funded. As the responsibilities within positions have changed over the years, they cross categories, but they haven't been moved from the category in which they have

been funded. Positions are simply in the category in which they are funded – categories that are funded by appropriation from the county.

There are some inconsistencies among the state procedures that require that we make judgment calls. For example, there is no code in the Administration Category for special education. It is important to the state and us that we have an accurate accounting of how much we spend for special education. School psychologists spend virtually 100% of their time working within special education procedures and functions. To put them in Administration would remove them from special education costs. That would be inaccurate and misleading.

I believe that the employee list that was used to generate some of the questions we have received was compiled before the Grants Fund was approved and created this fall. The Grants Fund consists exclusively of federal revenues and expenditures. Several positions that have been questioned as to placement in the Instruction Category are fully funded with federal money and are thus in the Grants Fund, not the Instruction Category of the Operating Budget. When the Annual School Report is compiled these positions will be included as Instructional expenditures, under special education, elementary instruction, or secondary instruction.

Because we are a small school division, most of our administrative and central office employees have a multitude of responsibilities that may cross categories, and these responsibilities shift year to year as requirements, mandates, or the instructional program changes. Administrative personnel, whose services are instructional, are appropriately included in the Instruction Category and are reported as instructional administrative personnel in the state's Annual School Report. It is legal. Our budget is consistent with that of other school divisions.

**4. Why does the Superintendent's Budget propose cutting teaching positions, while making no cuts in "central office administration and support staff?"**

The proposed budget does include reductions in "central office administration and support staff." In terms of staff positions eliminated, there was an 11.08% central office reduction compared to 5.6% building reduction. All staff housed at central office contracted for 200 or more days will take the same number of furlough days as all other 200+ contracted staff. There have been additional reductions in the number of contract days for central office clerical staff.

**5. How can transportation and maintenance costs be reduced?**

Alternatives in student transportation have been considered, but have not been included in the proposed budget at this time.

We continue to identify and implement energy-savings methods. This is a process, not a single event in time.

Comparison of our maintenance and transportation costs to those of other school divisions requires individual conversations with representatives of other school divisions - we can't tweak out the differences from the reports or budgets. For example, New Kent County Public Schools shares a transportation facility with the county, thus overhead costs are shared. Prince Edward schools are all on one campus, reducing transportation costs county-wide. GCPS staff continue to have discussions with their

colleagues in other school divisions. When they find a cost-saving measure in another school division, they evaluate it to see if it will work for us.

**6. Adding ½ hour each school day would make up for early dismissals and snow days whilst reducing transportation, cafeteria, heat, and AC costs. Has this even been considered? Why would the school board not adopt changes in the calendar to realize some cost savings? Why do we need to start school the third week of August? What effect does that have on the air-conditioning costs for the schools?**

The calendar is developed to maximize instruction and student learning. Reducing the number of days from 180, even with adding time to the remaining days, would run counter to optimizing student learning. Early dismissals are counted as part of the 180-day school year. Days missed due to weather are added at the end of the school year to preserve instructional time, remain consistent with pacing guides, and provide optimal preparation for end-of-year assessments.

We start before Labor Day in order to complete the school year as early in June as possible. It is necessary to complete the SOL assessments and review those results in order to enroll students required to attend summer school. We need at least two weeks turn-around time in June in order to begin summer school the first week in July.

**7. Given that the current budget process has created a climate of distrust with the community, what specific changes will the School Board and Superintendent make to the budget process in future years to encourage two-way communication with the community? Would you continue to have all public hearings on the School Board budget in a town hall format?**

This has been an unprecedented budget year. We are usually having conversations about the priorities for additional services and additional staff.

Staff and the School Board will continue to review the process this year and, as always, make changes that will improve the process in coming years. Many suggestions are being considered.

Public Hearings are required by Code, and have a specific format. Meetings such as the one held on January 19 can be held in addition to the one required Public Hearing, but they cannot replace the Public Hearing.

Mr. Miller asked if Board members have comment:

Mr. Mattox mentioned that in the budget process we have not only had to deal with what the county has requested, but also the state. It is a moving target and may move even more next year. This poses difficulty in putting together the budget. Dr. Underwood concurred explaining the process and stated we may see some of those reductions this year.

Mr. Haskell stated that the communication could have been different. He stated the process started very early and some people got involved later and may not have been up to speed. He went on to explain that we need to keep people involved in the process. The more people that show up and stay involved, the better it will be. He reminded everyone that the Board of Supervisors needs to hear from the citizens because in order

to meet the deficit, there needs to be a tax increase. He feels we need to work together as a community.

**Additional questions from index cards:**

**The Governor has announced a possible \$3.9 billion reduction. At what percentage will our schools be affected by this decision?**

It depends on where he makes the cuts. Being a .8 composite local composite index has its good days and has its bad days. A .8 local composite index, rule of thumb, means the county pays about 80% of our education costs. The state pays about 20% of our costs. So when the state makes a reduction we are hurt less than school divisions who rely on a lot on state funds. Will we have to make additional reductions? Yes. As we go through the process we are looking at where some more of those economies are that we can find, if and when those additional state reductions come.

**If we could get community support to decrease bus stops would this small effort make a big enough impact on transportation expenses?**

Dr. Underwood answered: Decreasing number of bus stops in subdivisions is a consideration. We don't have a dense population. We are pretty spread out. We don't have a lot of sidewalks in Goochland either. Safety is the number one consideration. If we can decrease the number of stops, but still ensure the safety of our students who are waiting for the buses, that is something we always looking at.

**Please explain what the Community Advisory Committee is and ask members to identify themselves so community is aware of potential conduits.**

Dr. Underwood answered: There is a community advisory group and I meet with them every couple of months. They represent the five districts in the county. Usually I update them on what's going on as them what they're hearing, ask their advice on things and it's always a very productive meeting. Members present stood up and introduced themselves: Elizabeth Nelson-Lyda-District 3, Jim Popp-District 5, Beth Hardy-District 4, Bill Cleveland-District 2.

Mr. Mattox stated there are several committees in the county and asked citizens to let us know if they are interested in functioning in one of these capacities.

Mr. Miller stated that there were additional questions, but time has expired. These questions will be answered on the blog.

**PUBLIC HEARING ON THE BUDGET**

- Treve Hosken presented a document to the School Board from Goochland Education Parents Association (GEPA) stating he feels there is a need for some explanation. He said he feels that as result of parents speaking there have been changes to budget. Mr. Hosken stated the parents feel the proposed budget would reduce the education of the children. GEPA has drawn on the Superintendent's budget but proposed not eliminating any classroom teachers. Secondly, it provides for the replacement of textbooks and keeps the Tender Tots program. Mr. Hosken presented a copy of a proposed budget put together by GEPA and stated it can be found on GEPA blog.

- John Herrmann stated he had done a lot of analyzing of the cost of the county and found we are one of the most efficient school districts in the state. He stated financially country is in bad shape and feels we need to continue to invest in classroom technology to help children succeed. He spent a lot of time looking over the transportation budget and suggested continuing sharing costs with the county. Mr. Herrmann feels we need to find a better way to transport our children, make calls to other counties to find out what they are doing.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Mattox made a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Meng to adjourn the meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.

**APPROVED:**

**APPROVED:**

*Raymond A. Miller*

*Diane W. Bennett*

Signature

Signature

*2/19/10*

*2/19/10*

Date

Date