

Anderson County Board of Education
402 Bleckley Street, Anderson, South Carolina 29625
January 18, 2011

Board Members Present: Rev. Dr. Rufus Mitchell, Ms. Brenda Bradberry, Dr. Craig Drennon, Ms. Dana Grant, Mr. Mike Brock, Dr. Gary Burgess, Mr. David Draisen, Mr. Steve Garrison, Mr. Joey Nimmer, Ex Officio

Board Members Absent: Mr. Dale Martin

Call to Order: Mr. Draisen called the meeting to order. Rev. Dr. Mitchell presented the invocation. Everyone joined in the pledge of allegiance to the American Flag.

Approval of Agenda: Ms. Bradberry made the motion to approve the agenda with the deletion of item VII due to the absence of Mr. Don Bowen. Mr. Garrison seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Minutes--- December 20, 2010 meeting: The motion was made by Ms. Bradberry to approve the minutes of the December 20, 2010 board meeting and seconded by Mr. Brock. The board approved unanimously.

Recognition of Media and Patrons / Public Comment Period: The visitors present were Ms. Betty Bagley, Mr. Bill Baker, Ms. Christie Payne, Ms. Gail Southard, Dr. Lee D'Andrea, and Mr. Dick Smith.

Election of Board Officers for Calendar Year 2011: Mr. Garrison nominated Mr. Draisen as board chairman, Ms. Bradberry seconded the motion and Dr. Burgess motioned the nominations be closed. The board unanimously approved Mr. Draisen as the chairman of the board.

Mr. Brock nominated Mr. Garrison as vice chairman of the board with a second by Ms. Bradberry. The nomination passed with a seven yea vote. Mr. Garrison abstained from voting.

Dr. Burgess nominated Ms. Bradberry as secretary, Ms. Grant seconded the nomination and the board voted all in favor.

Administrator's Report: Mr. Nimmer reported:

- A.** It is time for board members to fill out the yearly Statement of Economic Interest Form online.
- B.** A confirmation of attendance is needed for the South Carolina School Boards Association conference in order to complete registration.
- C.** Jean is doing well. Joey stated he appreciated the thoughts, prayers and concern during Jean's surgery and recovery.

Financial:

- A. Tax Collections YTD vs. Budget:** Tax collections are amazingly consistent for this time of year. Collections are good and even ahead of what they were this time last year. The last big money should come in soon consistent across all districts.

B. Assessment Totals, December 31, 2010: There has been a slight dip in assessment totals of \$1000 per mil countywide due to the many appeals which have mostly been completed, according to the Anderson County Auditor.

Old Business:

County Board Projects Update: Mr. Garrison, chairman of the Study Committee, explained the campaign has started to gather information from the public concerning their opinions on the Strom Thurmond study, but hackers went into the system and skewed the figures by voting multiple times. The online survey had to be taken down and redone in order to protect the integrity of the data. Now a person has to register to participate. The purpose of the survey is to gather information to finalize what started with the Strom Thurmond Institute study regarding inequities in county education. When Mike Gray passed, the Board took time to honor Mr. Gray's passing. Then we regrouped and decided on the next step which is to complete what was started with the study. We hired Martin Advertising, who specializes in marketing for a referendum, to help with the process of directing the public to the One + One website asking them to voice their opinions in a fair manner.

Mr. Nimmer asked those present if they had already taken the survey to please take it again since the website has been changed.

Mr. Garrison stated the Board would like to see finality to the project.

Mr. Draisen asked if Mr. Garrison would like to set up more committee meetings to keep the board informed to which Mr. Garrison replied that he would.

Mr. Garrison stated the communities are proud of their districts, as is the County Board. When Mike Gray became a board member he was concerned about the inequities in Anderson School District Three and the other districts concerning educational opportunities. He advocated that every child deserves equal opportunity for equal education.

Mr. Draisen stressed the goal of the Study Committee to be equal education for all students, regardless of district rather than the goal being consolidation. He also asked the public to give honest input of their opinions in the online survey.

Dr. Burgess asked if a person who takes the online survey does it anonymously, and Mr. Nimmer assured him everyone participates anonymously. Mr. Nimmer also informed everyone the survey was made as easy as possible, and they could check a running tally.

Mr. Brock expressed his opinion an action should be made soon so that the board can move on to other matters.

Dr. Drennon asked if the intent of the survey was to move to a referendum to which Mr. Garrison replied the survey was to gather public opinion to see if there was enough interest to vote on a referendum.

Mr. Garrison stated he spoke with people in other states who now have areas instead of districts. They have developed a policy of having a supervisory board in each area which handles personnel and another board handling the directing of the superintendents.

Mr. Drennon expressed his opinion that a larger district is not always a good move and asked how active the superintendents and boards have been in the process with the study committee.

Mr. Garrison stated there has not been much interaction so far. He explained the board tried to have a public forum explaining the study at the Anderson County Library but that was not successful because of lack of communication. He believed the people present were misinformed thinking the board wanted consolidation of all districts instead of equal opportunities for all Anderson County students.

Mr. Garrison and Ms. Bradberry assured Mr. Drennon everyone is welcome to the study committee meetings.

Dr. Burgess stated the current governor and current state superintendent of education are in favor of consolidation but that his concern is to understand the purpose of the survey and what the board is trying to do. He wanted to know if it is about equal access for all students. Dr.

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Burgess said his son is a student at the governor's school where there is an outstanding music program we are all paying for that an average child does not have access to. He asked if it is about saving money and expressed he is only one voice, but personally he does not see how you can know what the public wants without a referendum. He also believes people will not go back and retake the survey. He thinks all superintendents would indicate from looking at test scores that Anderson School District Three outscored everybody.

Mr. Garrison believes all districts are not equal in the amount of money being spent per child for education. There are obviously programs, AP courses, music and fine arts that will not be available to all children.

Dr. Burgess said he had a bigger concern when he was superintendent on stratification of school systems. We have almost eight tracks that parents do not know about, thinking all kids get same education but there is a gap. So who is getting the real education? Then we skew the numbers by stacking numbers or spreading numbers out. I thought personally as a citizen of the county that the purpose of the study was to gather information from professionals and then have a referendum. Personally, I think it should be on the 2012 referendum.

Mr. Draisen said the online survey is just a part of the promotion which will also include town meetings. He made it clear the Study Committee makes decisions and presents to the board for finale approval or disapproval of information.

Ms. Bradberry wished the public would give honest and true opinions.

Mr. Garrison announced invitations would be given for all districts to send representatives to the committee meetings in order to keep the districts better informed.

Ms. Grant stated that once the survey is completed it is most important to look at what is best for the children. The bottom line is the need to look at how the children are academically affected and to confer with the academic experts to provide that information.

Dr. Drennon said that as principal at Crescent a lot of services were shared. The Alternative School, for example, was a shared service. The needs of the children must come from the superintendents.

Dr. Burgess presented information that one of the pieces of data he takes issue with in the Strom Thurmond Study is that minority students, Hispanics and black students, don't do well in large school districts. The truth is those students do well wherever they get attention. You give them attention whether it is a large or small school district and they will do well.

Ms. Bradberry stated that is true with all students.

Dr. D'Andrea said that the superintendents met last year to discuss sharing services and were still discussing working on virtual school to offer courses to the high school students. She explained there are variances in courses offered and equalization of money distributed at Liberty, Daniel and Easley High Schools. She believed it very important for everyone to work together.

Ms. Bradberry expressed she would like for it to be possible for parents to send their children to other districts that have more opportunities and not have to pay such high out of district tuition.

Mr. Garrison said he would like to formally invite a representative from each district to the meeting in February 8, 2011 at the county board building at 5pm and he also invited everyone who wished to attend.

Mr. Baker stated meetings were supposed to be open to the public, but they did not receive information concerning the meetings ahead of time.

Ms. Southard said she would like to be more informed and did not see any information concerning the committee meetings in the minutes.

Ms. Bagley stated when she found out about the meeting at the library, she met with every committee member expressing concern on behalf of the Board of Trustees. She asked Mr.

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Nimmer if meeting was open to the public and he said it absolutely was open to the public. She assured those present she orchestrated nothing but only let people know about the meeting. She said there would have been more people at the meeting at the library if some of the districts had not had open house that night. Ms. Bagley continued by saying the presentation started with what the board thinks needs to be done about consolidation. Her interpretation of the Strom Thurmond Institute study was that consolidation was not going to save money, and it was not going to improve achievement. She believes there are lots to celebrate in Anderson County and some of the questions in the online survey as status quo are negative. Ms. Bagley said the status quo in Anderson County is that the five districts collectively are number one in science and social studies, number one in ELA, number one and number two in math. Ms. Bagley stated she had yet to see where brochures were approved, there were committee meetings or there was any of this project discussed at the board meetings. She said Mr. Baker attended the board meetings but never heard any of the projects discussed.

Ms. Bradberry stated Projects Update was on every agenda and that if Mr. Baker had been at every meeting he would have heard projects discussed.

Mr. Garrison said Mr. Baker was not at the August, September, October and November meetings.

Ms. Grant suggested the county board website be updated and all the committee meetings posted.

Mr. Nimmer assured everyone he would make sure all the committee meetings would be posted separately from regular meetings in the future.

Mr. Draisen encouraged the board members to let Mr. Nimmer know on which committee they wished to serve.

Mr. Drennon said he was embarrassed to hear two superintendents say they first knew of the promotion One + One = You on billboards and radio instead of being previously informed.

Mr. Nimmer declared he would make sure meeting times and dates would be given to the public in the future.

Ms. Mack asked how the board members felt about attending the South Carolina State Board meetings taking into consideration the financial crisis. Ms. Bradberry replied she had not been attending the meetings in recent years. Mr. Draisen believed information received at the meetings is very important and would be willing to pay for himself in order to attend.

New Business: Ms. Bradberry made the motion, Mr. Brock seconded, and the board agreed unanimously to approve the ADM and SFS accounts payable.

A. ADM Accounts Payable

B. SFS Accounts Payable

C. Schedule of County Board Meetings for 2011

Mr. Nimmer gave the new 2011 board meeting schedule to the board members.

Ms. Bradberry asked Mr. Nimmer how soon budget meetings should start for the school year 2011-12. He replied they usually start in March.

Meeting adjourned

Respectively submitted,

Ms. Brenda Bradberry, Acting Secretary of the Anderson County Board of Education
This is a true and correct copy of notes taken at the meeting.

