

Charleston County School District Board of Trustees Meeting

January 23, 2017

Observer Corps Member: Macy Adams

Agenda Items:

1. Board postponed approval of previous minutes due to an inaccurate dating on the official agenda. Items 9.1 A, C and D were pulled from the Consent agenda and added to the official agenda items.
2. Executive Session items were addressed and approved.
 - a. Legal update: needed no action
 - b. Personnel matters: needed no action
 - c. Voluntary transfer appeal: a student transfer was refused
 - d. Contractual matter: regarding Mr Jeff Borowy was passed
3. Special recognitions were made to acknowledge various scholarships and awards granted to Charleston county students and staff
4. Seven different citizens voiced concern over a decision to remove and defund the elementary strings program in the county. Superintendent Postlewait later interjected that this decision had not been made by the board, but was rather an oversight in communication. The program has since been reinstated and citizens made it known that they would like to see the program expanded. The desire to see a full-time fine arts director for the district was also made known.

A number of teachers also spoke to the board regarding a proposed policy regarding communication practices. The proposed policy would have restricted what the teachers saw as their 1st amendment rights to free speech. Again, a board member spoke up to quell citizens' concerns. According to members of the board, the proposed communications policy the teachers saw was a preliminary draft and, in response to concerns, as well as the general policy writing process, those sections had been removed. The policy was brought up in the agenda later in the meeting.

Multiple parents, as well as constituent board district 10 member David Childress, also spoke to the board about concerns over safety at West Ashley high school. The parents seemed quite upset about what one mother described as, "a fight a day" at West Ashley high school. They claim the two existing resource officers are not enough and that their children are being denied a safe learning environment due to "the actions of a few bad children".

5. An external legal firm gave the board counsel on standing state and local procurement policy.

6. Agenda item 8.1 A was passed. This was a second reading of the Effective Governance Policies, not an approval of the policies. Rev. Collins expressed a desire to revisit the formatting of the policies and to receive legal counsel regarding the policies.
7. Agenda item 8.1 B, the aforementioned communications policy, was approved as a first reading. The board will continue to develop the policy before the second reading.
8. Mr. Charles Stephens was appointed to the Audit and Finance Committee
9. Board members passed a resolution to forward a proposed amendment to Act 388 on to the state Legislative Delegation. Act 388 is an existing policy intended to alleviate SC homeowners of school related taxes on primary residences. This, according to the board, has had a negative consequence on the district, and the approved resolution addresses these disparities.
10. Action on agenda item 8.3 was differed to the February board meeting.
11. The board approved Rev. Eric Mack's request for funding to attend the March 2017 National School Board Association conference. Rev. Collins requested to attend the same conference at the time of vote, and both were granted at a cost of \$2000 per member.
12. Agenda item 9.1 A, approval of the 2017-2018 school calendar, was differed to another date. The board requested that the superintendent come up with an alternate schedule that allows students to finish the school year before mid June, as the calendar currently stands.
13. Item 9.1 C was approved with plans to address the recruitment of underserved populations in academic magnet high schools.
14. Item 9.1 D, or policy GCQF, was approved. This was a second reading of the policy that outlines the board's ability to delegate teacher/staff dismissals, or to hear the appeals themselves.
15. Other Consent Agenda Items were not addressed, but are included in the supplemental materials pdf.

Observations

-Board members continue to bicker during meetings. The meeting could have been over long before it actually ended if certain members had come prepared to vote on items they had previously been charged with reviewing.

Proper board etiquette and procedure seem to be an afterthought. This leads to confusion and adds to a general air of inefficiency during meetings. Such frustrations led one member, Chris Staubes, to call out other members for holding up the meeting due to their "poor reading comprehension skills".

Perhaps this will be important to remember as the League considers action during the next school board election.