

MINUTES OF THE COMBINED WORK / BUSINESS SESSION OF THE MARSHALL BOARD OF EDUCATION HELD ON MONDAY, APRIL 26, 2021 AT 7:00 PM IN-PERSON IN THE MARSHALL OPPORTUNITY HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM

PRESENT: LINDSEY, NICHOLSON, MIDDLETON, WILLIAMS, M. DAVIS, GAMBLE, LANKERD, R. DAVIS

ABSENT: NONE

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by President Lindsey. A moment of silence was observed.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The pledge of allegiance was led by Treasurer Williams

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Moved by Gamble, supported by Middleton, that the agenda be approved as presented. A roll-call vote unanimously carried the motion.

DISTRICT HIGHLIGHT – NAACP YOUTH GROUP

NAACP Staff Representative Audra Granger was joined by NAACP Student Members to highlight the NAACP youth group at Marshall High School. Three student members shared what it means to have a chapter and some of the goals of the group. A synopsis of their thoughts/comments were as follows:

- They wanted to create a safe place for students now and into the future for students coming after them to go no matter who they are or where they come from; and to resolve the issues they've dealt with already.
- School should be a place you want to come.
- The students of MHS are predominately white.
- Black Lives mural was something positive they could share during Black History Month; some of the students felt supported by the school in that change could happen.
- The mural spearheaded conversation, it was picked up by local television news media. It felt good to be supported by so many in the community and that people believed in them.

Ms. Granger indicated when she started working for the district there was no good framework for students of color. Her goal was to have a safe space where they could talk about anything they wanted to; a place that was comfortable and someone they could go to. When there are stirrings of something happening, she is able to help by having restorative conversations. She strives to get students to understand one another and that it is okay to say what you are doing or saying is offensive to me and this is why.

Trustee LankerD asked the students to share with the Board an experience that could have been handled differently for them. The students shared the following:

- Some of the teachers are not comfortable addressing students of color. Few teachers are helpful.
- Would like to have a teacher that looks like her.
- Improve the experience for students of color that come to MHS after them.
- MHS is very segregated.
- Not been able to reach out to the community.
- Its been six years since high school students transitioned from Albion to Marshall the struggles should not be continuing.
- Marshall students are cared about more than Albion Students.
- Have asked to have activities in Albion such as athletic events, dances... but have been told it is not safe. This is the community we live in and you are saying it is not safe.

Trustee Davis asked the students to expand on their experience with community.

They responded it is all of the aforementioned reasons; that Marshall students don't feel safe in Albion; and the Marshall community, as a whole, doesn't know anything about Albion and doesn't want to. A lot of the Facebook comments, related to the Black Lives Matter Mural, were ignorant. Some commenters didn't understand the Black Lives Matter Movement but pretended they did and then felt compelled to comment.

Trustee Gamble shared that she was proud of the youth group and of the three young ladies that spoke for being strong, smart and wise; and for their thoughtfulness for paving the way for the underclassman that will follow them. She appreciates that they understand how painful and harmful ignorance can be. She thanked them for sharing their voices as others may want to but are afraid to do so.

PUBLIC COMMENT

President Lindsey called for any members in the audience to address the Board.

Nels Christensen, a resident of Albion, parent of a senior at MHS and a faculty member at Albion College, shared there are a lot of things that make him feel grim and hopeless but the three young women that spoke made him feel good; adding that sometimes the kids are raising us up. He thanked the Board for the work they do. He shared a story about a former student of his at the college that is now a fourth-grade teacher at Harrington Elementary; he believes this young man was called to be a teacher; and that it was a beautiful moment when he witnessed a crazy beautiful multi-generational moment between the teacher and his students that made Mr. Christensen happy. He added that he trusts the Board knows what is best, that any new school in Albion will make him happy and that he would advocate that it be placed on Albion College's Campus.

David Abbott, a teacher at Albion College, a parent of a child that attends Harrington Elementary and a resident of Albion is interested in the arts. He cares about what is happening in school and is confident the Board will make a great decision about placement of a new elementary school. He shared that he started a choir at Harrington Elementary and unfortunately because of COVID the students have been prevented from putting on a concert; he indicated they would perform in the future. He shared a story of

a former student of his, an Albion resident, a student that has excelled and is likely the best music education student he has ever had. He wants to see more STEAM going on in school. A good school is needed in Albion; he would like to see it at the Washington Gardner location or at MOHS.

Cressie Vargo, a parent of two elementary students, a student at MOHS and a resident of Albion. She interned at Harrington Elementary for social work and has seen a lot of good and some bad, however, the staff is amazing with the students. She is thrilled about a new school building. She asked her children where they would like new elementary school to be placed and they agreed with her that Watson Street is the best option.

Todd Hicks, a teacher at Harrington Elementary and a resident of Albion, indicated the students need a new elementary school. He cited problems with the current elementary including asbestos, fire alarm system doesn't work well, heating system old and breaks down, air quality is poor, students and staff go home every day smelling like mold, students need a real gym, more classrooms, upgraded restrooms and a parent pick up area that is safe for kids. He spoke in support of a new elementary school and having it located on Watson Street as the best choice as it would meet all of the needs. After all of the politics the decision of placement needs to be made based on what is best for students. He believes the cost of a three-story building would be more than a single story and it would come with difficulties in monitoring stairwells while students move about the building. He appreciates what the college does for the community but feels for many reasons a new elementary school should not be located there, one of them being safety.

Garrett Brown of Albion believes what the college is offering is the soundest plan; that there is a definite need for a new building; that the services the college would offer is an outstanding situation; and that students will have access to the college. He does not believe there is a safety concern at the site offered by the college; and that the college connection will attract people.

Keena Williams of Albion attended school at Washington Gardner and believes locating a new elementary school there would provide students unique opportunities. There is a true benefit to a partnership with the college; and this could be an opportunity to create a school that could be the envy of others.

Patty Hunt, a kindergarten teacher at Harrington Elementary, thanked Board members for their service. She asked that an equitable decision choice for students be made. She shared her concerns that nobody has visited Harrington, that they should during the school day and stay for a staff meeting as there are many concerns about the building. She cited asbestos in the building, fire alarms that don't always work, shortage of space to learn, lack of staff and resources, and an unsafe parking lot for parent pick up to name a few. She asked the Board to consider the Watson Street campus as the location for a new elementary school. She stressed changing the inequities in order for students to reach their full potential.

Superintendent Davis indicated the needs of a new elementary school have been thoroughly vetted. The question that sits before the Board is the placement of the new proposed school with location options being two district owned properties or Albion

College's offer adjacent to its campus. He indicated a direct mailer was sent to all families that have children attending any of the four elementary schools in the district that reside in Albion; this included 352 students that represent 240 families. The staff of Harrington Elementary also received a hard copy survey to complete. An electronic version of the survey is posted to the district's Facebook and emailed to individuals to complete a survey through a link. All of the results will be reported to the Board separately. He will be meeting with Albion Community Leaders April 28th to discuss the options and answer questions.

Trustee Gamble indicated she has been involved in the facility needs process for over a year and this is the first time she has heard about concerns with asbestos and mold being at Harrington. She has heard that Harrington has a lot of issues that the district needs to address and knows the committee determined building a new school would be the best recommendation. She asked for clarification; is there mold and asbestos in this building; and suggested that something be done now should exposure be occurring.

Superintendent responded to Trustee Gamble indicating there has been testing on mold, testing on air quality and testing on water. Each test came back indicating there is nothing wrong. He added when you talk about asbestos every one of the district's buildings built prior to a specific time has asbestos in ceiling tiles, in floor tiles, and a lot of times in the walls. That asbestos is encapsulated within those structures. If you ever move change these areas that is when the asbestos risk occurs and that is when the abatement occurs. He can provide the Board with the results of what has been tested.

Vice President Nicholson referred Board members to their Facility Needs Assessment book as she believes some of the information is contained in it.

Trustee Gamble indicated she understands asbestos and how it is handled. What she is trying to understand is if staff and students are going home smelling like mold and other stuff in the building. She asked what the problem is. She urged that if there is a problem that it be addressed now as it could be a health and safety risk to everyone in the building.

There were no virtual comments from the online audience.

REVIEW AND PUBLIC COMMENT RELATED TO THE DISTRICT'S COVID-19 EXTENDED PREPAREDNESS PLAN FOR LEARNING ONLY

Superintendent Davis recommended making no changes to the district's COVID-19 extended preparedness plan for learning; the most recent update was approved on March 22, 2021. He asked if there were any comments or questions about the plan now that recommendations have been presented. There were no public comments.

Trustee Lankerd appreciated the statistics the middle school included in the leadership team report as it related to the number of students that chose to return to school four days a week. She would like to see statistical data district-wide for the number of students that are now attending in-person. Also, she asked if there were any issues now that the district has completed a full week of the updated learning model or anything the Board should be aware of related to it.

Superintendent Davis responded there have been a couple bumps here and their but nothing that is disruptive or a problem that he has heard; management is going well. He acknowledged some teachers are stretched; he is impressed by the teaching staff and their handling one more change in the extraordinary year; and kudos to the staff for making adjustments. Families and parents are responding well. He added the district takes recommendations made by the Calhoun County Health Department as it relates to COVID and in making decisions about delivery of instruction to students.

ACTION ITEM – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION – OTHER
RECONFIRM COVID-19 EXTENDED LEARNING PLAN: As required the district must hold a Reconfirmation Meeting every 30 days to review the COVID-19 Extended Preparedness and Response Plan for Learning and to consider reconfirmation of the plan.

Moved by M. Davis, supported by Gamble, that Action Item – Curriculum and Instruction be approved as presented. A roll-call vote unanimously carried the motion.

**APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA
MINUTES, EXPENDITURES, AND PERSONNEL**

Items included on the consent agenda were minutes of the March 11, 2021 special and closed/executive sessions, March 18, 2021 board retreat and closed/executive sessions, the March 22, 2021 business session, March 26, 2021 special and closed/executive sessions, and April 12, 2021 special bond work session; March disbursements in the amount of \$3,060,854.98; and the employment of Robert Karlick as bus driver.

Moved by Lanker, supported by Gamble, that the Board of Education approve the Consent Agenda – Minutes, Expenditures and Personnel as presented. A roll-call vote carried the motion unanimously.

REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

SPECIAL RECOGNITION: Superintendent Davis presented background information about the new hire included in the consent agenda.

Superintendent Davis recognized the upcoming retirements of Ramona Roberts an elementary teacher at Harrington Elementary, Barb Tobin an elementary teacher at Walters Elementary and Transportation Director Mike Walbeck.

ALBION COLLEGE UPDATE Superintendent Davis welcomed Albion College President Dr. Matthew Johnson to provide an update from Albion College.

Dr. Johnson thanked the Board for giving him a few minutes to speak. He referred to his letter shared with the Board. He shared the college's vision of focus on diversity, inclusion and belonging. He indicated investment at the college, for every college, is to help the community in which it is located. He conveyed his sense of urgency about a new elementary school. He has heard conversations for many months from the community and students about Harrington Elementary and its needs; the need for the school came up over and over. He shared that newly hired Albion college employees want to live in the town but they do not want their young children to attend Harrington Elementary so often times they decide to live in a different community for a better choice

of school for their children. There are significant design opportunities during a building project that can be accomplished more easily as it is harder to collaborate after the build is accomplished. He feels a sense of urgency and he hopes the Board feels this too. He is in awe of the work that the staff and faculty do at Harrington Elementary; and they are all owed a better school. Wherever the school ends up the college will continue to partner with the district however there are limitations depending on where the district decides to put the school. He added the college is committed to bring broadband to the community; and there are opportunities to share services with the district such as grounds keeping and building maintenance, shared space, and an elementary school in close proximity to the college will benefit the school in many ways. He returned to equity stating, the research is clear that when students are on or in close proximity to a college campus, they go through a process called procreation and they form an identity that gives them the confidence and they begin to feel they belong on a college campus. He could list the many reasons and benefits of locating the elementary school near the campus as there are many. He indicated should the district choose the site of a new elementary be close in proximity to Washington Gardner the college will transfer ownership to the land resulting in clear ownership fully to the school district. He added he was not present to plead with the Board about this; he wants to be a partner in the process and how much the college's students need the elementary students of the Albion community. A member of the community delivered to him earlier in the day a petition containing 38 signatures supporting the placement of a new elementary school next to the Albion College campus; he believes they are all parents of current students at Harrington Elementary.

Trustee Gamble asked if there was a way to verify if the people that signed the petition are parents of students at Harrington to which Dr. Johnson responded the petitions include contact information.

LEADERSHIP TEAM REPORTS: Superintendent Davis indicated that Leadership Team Reports were included in the board's packet. He asked Board members to specifically review Director of Curriculum and Instruction Chad Holt's broad report. Board members shared parts of the leadership team reports that resonated most with them.

DISCUSSION

MASB GOVERNANCE TRAINING AND STRATEGIC PLANNING: Superintendent Davis relayed a good conversation occurred with MASB and the district's consultant about Board training. He shared background information about Deborah Macon, MBA of MASB as she will be the district's consultant for Board Governance Training and Strategic Planning. Ms. Macon will be working with the Superintendent and Board President about timing and scheduling training. He thanked the Board for approving the training.

DIRECTION WITH DEI CONSULTATION: Superintendent Davis thanked Trustee Gamble for putting together the conversation they had with Montgomery County Public Schools to obtain information and referrals. He indicated DEI training this will be a long-term commitment.

ACTION ITEM –OTHER

RESOLUTION REGARDING THE PROPOSED CALHOUN INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL DISTRICT (CISD) GENERAL FUND BUDGET: Approve a resolution regarding the proposed 2021-22 CISD general fund budget.

Moved by M. Davis, supported by Williams, that the Board of Education approve Action Item – Other as recommended. A roll-call vote carried the motion unanimously.

ACTION ITEM – FINANCIAL - TRANSPORTATION

AWARD BID AND APPROVE THE PURCHASE OF TWO OFF-LEASE BUSES: Award bid and approve the purchase of two 78 passenger off-lease buses that includes a 247 camera system, 48-month engine warranty and 48-month body and chassis warranty at a cost of \$55,510 each for a total of \$111,020.

Moved by Gamble, supported by M. Davis, that the Board of Education approve Action Item – Financial – Transportation as recommended. A roll-call vote carried the motion unanimously.

ACTION ITEM – FINANCIAL – FACILITIES

AWARD BIDS FOR LAWN MOWING SERVICES: Award bids for lawn mowing services for the upcoming season, with a potential to rollover for a second year based on performance and value from the company or companies. as recommended by the Facilities Director.

Moved by M. Davis, supported by Lanker, that the Board of Education approve Action Item – Financial – Facilities as recommended. A roll-call vote carried the motion unanimously.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Trustee M. Davis asked if anyone knew what happened with Albion City Council over the weekend. President Lindsey said a special meeting of the council was called. They voted on its support of Albion College as the location of the new proposed elementary school; a vote carried the motion with a split vote of five in favor, two opposed.

President Lindsey thanked all the people that attended the meeting. He added he appreciates their input about the location of a new elementary school; that the survey is being pushed out to many; and that the Board will decide the location of it at its next meeting on May 10, 2021.

Vice President Nicholson asked why there was no second opportunity for public comment to which Dr. Davis responded the two comment sections were combined to allow all comments at the start of the meeting. Adding since virtual comments were being taken it allowed the listening audience to make their comments early in the meeting rather than having to wait until the end.

Secretary Middleton asked for an update on where the district is on purchasing materials for teachers to which Ms. Jones replied she would respond and provider her with the requested information.

Trustee Lankerd indicated it is crucial to her, to know how parents, staff, and members of the community feel about the location of a new elementary school. She urged getting the survey to as many people as possible. She asked what may change and what may stay the same for the 2021-2022 school year as she would like the process to get started soon.

Secretary Middleton shared that members of Facility Needs Assessment Committee spent much time visiting schools, reviewing needs and want lists to come up with a recommendation for a bond. She didn't want their work to not be recognized.

President Lindsey thanked everyone who served on the Facility Needs Assessment Committee for their time and efforts.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:46p.m.

LISA MIDDLETON, SECRETARY

KIMBERLY VANWORMER, RECORDING SECRETARY