

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MONROE COUNTY

Special Meeting Minutes
Marathon High School Media Center
December 16, 2008 at 1:00 pm

PRESIDING: Andy Griffiths, Chair

PRESENT: Steven Pribramsky; Duncan Mathewson; John Dick; Debra Walker; Randy Acevedo, Superintendent and School Board Attorney Richard Collins,

Meeting called to order by Chairman Griffiths at 1:10 pm.

The first order of action was to waive our policy on tape recording the meeting as Sally was excused for this meeting. Chairman Griffiths offered to take notes and have Sally publish them for future approval. Dr. Walker dissented to hold the meeting without a tape recorder though legal by State statute. She did decide to participate in the meeting however.

The board members discussed the latest columns in the press and the impact of those articles on our working relationship. **It was noted that tough times are ahead and that we could not undermine the administration's budget cutting decisions but rather set a policy mandate for those decisions such as budget amount totals and allow the schools and the administration to determine the appropriate areas for cutting. This was a general consensus but not a majority vote.**

It was agreed unanimously that inflammatory and accusatory words used in news stories were not helpful to our process. In tough times we needed to function as a team and while we may not always agree we must not act in any way unprofessional.

The board expressed the difficulty, in regards to certain items and issues, with speaking in generalities and expecting precise action

on specifics contained in those generalities. When the board gets specific, people are likely offended and it gets personal. When the board is vague and generic in giving direction, its' directives are not interpreted in the intended way. The challenge will be to strike a balance.

It was noted that some information processing lapses have led to board members responding to perceived issues through statements to members of the press. Board members need to be in the notification loop on everything that is potentially an item which Board members will receive inquiries about from the public and the news media.

The Superintendent agreed to alert Board members to developing stories in the press, but he noted it was not possible to anticipate every issue that may become a story. When he is contacted by the press, he will alert Board members to the issue involved particularly in the areas of school construction schedules, employee compensation, and partnerships with non profit organizations. Board emphasized they did not want to first learn of issues in the news media.

Other topics discussed included styles of communication, concerns about intimidating behavior, treatment of staff members, resistance to change by staff, and significant cost-cutting measures that have to be addressed.

Additionally, Board members expressed concerns that the Superintendent seems to dismiss Board members inquiries and input on some matters since he is not breaking the law or school board policy. The Superintendent's position is interpreted to be that he is operating under his legal authority and Board members should not question management decisions.

Lastly, it was the consensus that the Board needs to be clear in its directions to the Superintendent; that the Board's expressions on matters need to be specific and not ambiguous; and that personnel matters should not become personality or personal issues.

The chairman adjourned the meeting at 2:20 pm.

***agreements are in bold**

Andy Griffiths, Chair

Randy Acevedo, Superintendent