

The League of Women Voters of Manatee County Education Issues Committee observes the **School Board of Manatee County** meetings for items of interest to citizens and to the League, and notes adherence, or lack of adherence, to good governance procedures and the Sunshine Law. The League also provides feedback to school board members.

Following are the major points from the **School Board Meeting on June 23, 2026**.

ITEMS OF INTEREST

The meeting was called to order at 5:32 p.m. by Chair Spray. A moment of silence was held for Patrice Royal, an employee at the HR department, who passed away recently. The District Vision was read by Mr. Tatem who also provided the invocation. The Superintendent introduced Mr. Baker who is the manager of Stewart Elementary's cafeteria and a former member of the US Navy. He led the Pledge of Allegiance with his daughter. He was then presented with a flag that flew over the US Capitol.

Recognitions / Student Celebrations

Lakewood Ranch High School student wins America250FL Essay Contest

Jamie Carson, Director of Communications offered a "dad joke" as an introduction, "Why doesn't America knock? Because Freedom Rings." Rising sophomore, Jorja Lowe, Lakewood Ranch High School read her winning essay about Henry Plant and his relationship to Federalism. Jorja plans to attend either Florida State or University of Miami to pursue a law degree.

Ms. Carson also announced that today Manatee Technical School students won the statewide Peoples' Choice Award in the Welding and Fabrication Challenge.

Public Comments

FE advocated for the naming of the tennis courts at the park next to King Middle School to honor both Nick Bollettieri and Mike DePalmer. He said he will also send the same information to the County Commissioners to ask that Mike DePalmer's name be added in addition to Nick Bollettieri. He related that Mike DePalmer was responsible for bringing Nick Bollettieri to Manatee County and started the process that made Manatee County the mecca of tennis. He said the park next to King Middle School should be named "DePalmer-Bollettieri Park."

Consent Items – Thirty-six items were approved 5-0.

New Business: (Non-Consent Items)

Approval to Advertise Naming of the Courts in the Park Adjacent to Martha B. King Middle School

Dr. Breslin clarified courts would be named DePalmer-Bollettieri.

New Business: (No Superintendent Recommendation)

Approval of the Superintendent Evaluation as Provided by the School Board

Mr. Choate thanked Chair Spray for conducting a smooth, organized process. Ms. Felton thanked the Superintendent as she was the first one to meet with Dr. Breslin and neither had been through the process before. Ms. Spray thanked her for a smooth transition and she based her rating on feedback from parents, students and community members. Mr. Tatem said Dr. Breslin has done better than he expected her to do and rated her highly. Mr. Kennedy said the entire Board was all on the same page and rated her accordingly with high marks; there has been an outpouring of positivity since coming to her position. He said her first year has gone really well with her work ethic and communication skills across all levels and community. Superintendent Breslin said she couldn't have done her work without the support of all of her staff. Approved 5-0.

Updates

Instruction – Mr. Jensen indicated the district is awaiting the DOE assessment results. Many students are participating in the district's summer learning programs including the "Soar in 4" lab with 1,648 visitors just in June to date. There are no summer programs next week (June 29-July 3). Title-I camp ends this week. Summer Reading Camp (359 students), Summer Bridge and ESY (267 students) will run through July 16. Summer VPK (52 students) runs through July 28th. There are ongoing graduations throughout this week at Manatee Technical College.

Operations – Mr. Clark said the Summer Nutritional Food program has served 90,522 meals in the first three weeks. Summer replacements of fire alarms, roofs, and floors as well as painting are ongoing at the schools throughout this summer. He described today's event coordinated by the Security Department in partnership with Manatee County emergency groups, fire departments, Sheriff, EMS, and other community organizations to do a full-scale preparedness exercise. It was held at Bayside Community Church. It was a realistic hands-on exercise for reunification after an emergency when an event causes students to be moved from the campus. This resulted in strengthened coordination between agencies. Goals were accomplished.

Legal – Mr. Dye, continuing to cover the work of the district's general counsel, said he reviewed the contracts within the consent items approved today.

Superintendent Remarks – Dr. Breslin thanked Mr. Dye for having the contracts in the consent agenda ready. She highlighted all of the community partnerships for student learning and capital improvement projects. The new schools are having furniture delivered and everything will be ready to welcome parents and students prior to opening. Dr. Breslin also mentioned the workshop held from 2-5:30 p.m. prior to the Board Meeting where the budget and strategic plan were reviewed. She mentioned the next workshop is on July 14. She thanked the Board for the clear process of her evaluation. Dr. Breslin will follow up with meetings with Board Members after the strategic plan implementation plan is completed to clarify expectations for her performance. She wished everyone a Happy July 4th and hopes everyone celebrates well and safely.

Board Comments

Ms. Felton has been visiting the six summer programs. This morning, she visited the “Dive into Reading” program at Anna Maria Oyster Bar. This program was not put on by our school district alone but through partnership with our community. Volunteers from the community come to read to the students. The Patterson Foundation is involved. The Early Learning Coalition provides the books for all participants. Anna Maria Oyster Bar fed the students and adults. She said there are so many organizations that support the students and that she never realized it when she was in the classroom. Since she serves on the Children’s Services Advisory Board, her mission is to visit the programs that are funded with that tax. Ms. Felton described the amazing community support our students receive. After visiting the school program at the jail, she thought their library needed more books. She said she put out just two posts and ended up with over 800 books that she packed in her mini-van, took them to the PSC for processing and hauling to the jail. She said, “The outpouring of the community is amazing.” She also thanked all school board employees and the community that are making our district so successful.

Mr. Kennedy thanked Ms. Felton for her continued enthusiasm after almost two years on the board. He said he may be old and jaded and he admires her energy. He thanked the community for all of their support. Mr. Kennedy referenced a remark Mr. Choate made during the workshop that acknowledges the School District as a key part of the county as a whole and the importance of choosing our district schools. He thanked the chair for breaking her own record for holding a short meeting and how she represents the Board in the community. He noted Mr. Tatem is on his ‘final approach’ and is still engaged and asking good questions. Mr. Kennedy said he is so pleased he likes and respects the people he works with.

Mr. Choate thanked staff for putting together both the workshop and the meeting. He liked getting together prior to the workshop so he understood the topics more deeply. He thanked Dr. Breslin and staff for always listening to his ideas and even asking questions. He appreciated the FSBA workshop on AI and wants the district to continue to find ways to keep it on the cutting edge. He appreciates working together with City of Bradenton, Manatee County and the School District with Sheriff, Pirates and other industries to develop the City Park near Ballard and Rogers Garden Elementary Schools. He wished everyone a good and safe July 4th.

Ms. Spray pointed out item 9.2. It is the agreement between New College and the district for a teacher intern program which is something new and much appreciated. She also appreciated the many agreements on the consent agenda between the district and hospitals, dental practices and other industries for working with the MTC students so they get first hand experiences in addition to the classroom knowledge. Ms. Spray said she also appreciates the challenges of change because the last thing needed is stagnation and “we need all the new ideas we can get.”

Mr. Tatem gave Mr. Choate a new call sign based on reading Gen. Jim Mattis’ book Call Sign CHAOS and designated it to be “Choate Has Another Outstanding Suggestion.” He showed a video of Guy Gruters’ homecoming accompanied by the song “I’m Proud to be an American.” Mr. Tatem credited Mr. Gruters’ survival as a 5-year Viet Nam prisoner to his virtue and faith.

Meeting adjourned at 6:38 p.m.

GOVERNANCE AND SUNSHINE

Chair Spray led an efficient meeting.

As Mr. Tatem prepares to depart from his service on the school board, observers recommend that he keep his closing comments brief and relevant.

The Board Members are commended for their endurance and participation in both a Workshop and General Meeting back-to-back.

However, having a Workshop and a General Meeting back-to-back rushed the budget portion of the Workshop. Scheduling the two meetings close together could have prompted an item be added to this Board Meeting Agenda to continue the conversation as a presentation. The items covered in the Workshop merited thorough discussions.

LWV MC recommends readers review the video of the Workshop to hear the discussions of the Strategic Plan, Budget, and Capital Plans. E.g. Should they raze the district office? Watch the video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QtLrUIHPf9U> and read the agenda packet here: <https://d3n9y02raazwpg.cloudfront.net/manateeschools/3dfaef23-63ff-11f1-9b4d-005056a89546-c0f8575c-7cf0-4ca7-bfee-17c675bfcd71-1782227910.pdf>