

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 August 27, 2024**.

ITEMS OF INTEREST

The meeting was called to order by Chair Choate at 5:01 p.m. Richard Tatem read the district's vision statement and introduced Pastor T.J. Wilson, Family Pastor at Tabernacle Church of Sarasota, to give the invocation. The Pledge of Allegiance followed.

The agenda was approved, 5-0.

The minutes (July 23, July 25, July 30) were approved, 5-0.

Recognitions

Mr. Barber, Executive Director of Communications, debuted a new MSTV video featuring the First Day of School. [LWV note – view video [here](#).]

In addition, Mr. Barber introduced the district's Communications and Manatee School Television Teams: Deborah Perry-Gambino, Kimberly Henley, Melissa Parker, Michaela Dorflinger, Scott Martin, Matt Messenger, Susan Gilbank, Nick Bachelder and Carl Shelton.

Mr. Barber recognized Carl Reynolds Law and WWSB ABC 7 for the Chalkboard Champions Day of Giving held from 5-8 on Friday, August 9, 2024. He recognized Jeff Benninghoff, Carl Reynolds, Mary Glass, Mark Lardarci, and Mark Wlodarczyk. More than \$30,000 was raised, which was split between Manatee and Sarasota County. The \$15,442.00 goes to Manatee Education Foundation for grants for teachers.

Public Comments No public comments.

Reports and Presentations

Personal Financial Literacy and Money Management Instructional Materials Adoption Plan was presented by Ms. Tiffany Spradley. Students in high school, per legislation, must take a ½ credit course in Personal Financial Literacy starting with the 2025-26 school year. A review committee, as with other courses, is being convened to select instructional materials according to an adoption process timeline. [LWV note: see presentation slides [here](#).]

A 2024-25 Instructional Materials Implementation Update was also provided in regards to social studies and science print materials. In addition, digital access for all K-12 social studies and science resources are now available.

Mr. Tatem asked what the state requirements are for the public to access the curriculum. Mr. Jensen indicated parents should start at the school level for access to the curriculum.

Ms. Foreman, Ms. Spray, and Mr. Choate expressed their excitement for the financial literacy and money management plan.

Consent Items

The Consent Agenda included 21 items that were approved 5-0.

New Business: (Non-Consent Items)

Approval of a Revised Job Description and Position of Specialist, Graphic Design and Marketing (General Fund). Dr. Wysong stated that this is an existing position within the School District, with one individual splitting their time between the MTC and the District. The revised job description allows for both the district and MTC to employ a graphic design and marketing specialist with each site holding its own position. Approved 5-0.

Approval of Advertising a Notice of Intent to Amend School Board Policies, Including New Board Policies, and Setting a Public Hearing at the Board Meeting On October 8, 2024. These will be workshopped on Friday, August 30. The purpose of the amendments is to update policies to conform to current legislation and statues. Approved 5-0. [LWV note - View changes [here](#).]

Approval of Interlocal Agreement Relating to the Collection of Educational Facilities Impact Fees Between Manatee County, the City of Bradenton, and the School Board of Manatee County (No Financial Impact) Dr. Wysong stated this is the routine collection of impact fees. Mr. Ranaldi spoke to specific questions regarding the costs associated with the cost of collecting the impact fees of 3.5% are paid by the payer and not the school district. Approved 5-0.

Approval of Interlocal Agreement Relating to the Collection of Educational Facilities Impact Fees Between Manatee County, the City of Palmetto, and the School Board of Manatee County (No Financial Impact) Approved 5-0.

New Business: (No Superintendent Recommendation)

Approval of Travel Expense for School Board Members to Attend the 2024 Manatee Chamber of Commerce Planning Retreat Not to Exceed \$5,0000.00 (General Fund). Approved 5-0.

Approval of Internal Audit Report of Payroll Department Report (No Financial Impact). Approved 5-0.

Updates

Instruction – Mr. Derek Jensen, Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction, stated it was going to be a good year in Manatee County. “We are two weeks in and it has been a great start.” He plans to walk all the school during the 1st semester. State Required instruction for September includes: 911 day on 9/11 requires 45 minutes in civics classes; on 9/17 schools must hold an education program regarding the US Constitution; during Freedom Week 9/25-29 there must be three hours of instruction in K-12 social studies regarding the Declaration of Independence; and

Hispanic Heritage Month starts 9/15 focusing on contributions of Hispanic-Americans.

In addition, an update of the Instructional 2024-2025 Timeline will be presented at the Workshop on Friday, August 30.

Operations – Mr. Ranaldi, Executive Director of Operations, stated Human Resources will have a job fair on 8/29 at Wakeland from 9-12. It will include bus drivers, aids, maintenance, food services, etc. The next job fair is scheduled for 9/19 from 2-5, also at Wakeland. A Para and Teacher job fair is scheduled for 9/26 at MTC from 4:30 – 7:30.

Regarding transportation, there are 99 routes, five of which are vans. There are currently 88 bus drivers and 3 drivers are in training with 2 drivers on leave. There are 4 van drivers and administrators are filling in for the 5th.

There are 10 auto mechanics for both the white and yellow fleets, with 8 vacancies. Two mechanics are outsourced.

Construction Services had items on the consent agenda that included the prototype for two elementary schools and an 8 classroom building for Williams Elementary that will be ready by July 2025.

In Food Services, training was held for 400 staff members; 17 received the Diamond Apron Award, 15 Golden Smile Awards. Food Service Director, Regina Thoma was also recognized for her participation at the University of Southern Mississippi in designing training guidelines for food service directors.

Legal – Mr. Dye said no news is good news.

Superintendent Remarks –

Dr. Wysong thanked the Board for approving 21 consent items to keep routine matters going. He highlighted the \$5000 grant from the Sarasota Community Foundation to continue teacher engagement with literacy training at USF. The athletic tracks at LRHS, MHS, and PHS are being resurfaced. The SEHS chorus will perform at Carnegie Hall in March. He said it has been a smooth start to school year. He thanked the parent community for increasing attendance at the schools’ open houses. He has spoken to SROs and school guardians, food services, and has visited seven schools since start of school. He expressed appreciation that all five of the board members attended the Chamber event with him. Tomorrow he will give a similar update to the Lakewood Ranch Business Alliance.

The board workshop on Friday will begin with a shade session on security, followed by policy changes, legislative priorities, audit and CFOC Charter, school improvement updates to support three schools with state supplemental funds, and hear from three principals' plans for sustaining improvements.

The Sept 13th workshop will have four big topics: financial advice for building two new elementary schools, annual investment report, update on enrollment and capacity, and begin naming the East K-8 school. The 30-day window is open on the district website for making nominations with the final decision being made on October 22.

Regarding student enrollment, the student population has surpassed the state's projections. The first 10 day count last year was 51,473, the 8-day count this year was 52,480 with an increase of 1,007 students this year. 60% of the growth is in our district run schools, mostly elementary schools, and 40% of growth in charter schools.

District leadership met on day 10 and put out additional allocations based on the increased student population. They did not have to institute the teacher displacement process which means no students will lose their current teacher.

Board Comments

Mr. Tatem's safety tip was to keep an eye on your child around high waters. He also encouraged everyone to go to sporting events to support the schools.

Ms. Foreman said it's a great beginning of the school year and enjoyed meeting at Sugg with Mr. Hird. She enjoyed waving to buses at 5 a.m. on the first day. She highlighted Sheriff Wells' involvement with SRO and football video. She has met with purchasing, finance departments and audit committee and went through setting up a time line and process for bids on both external and internal auditors.

Ms. Messenger enjoyed Dr. Wysong's speech at the Chamber event and the importance of seeing the principals there and is amazed with their schools' growth. She acknowledged the wonderful start of the school year and how it takes everyone working together to be successful. She commended Mr. Ranaldi that job fairs are posted on the external billboards of the schools.

Ms. Spray highlighted the work completion being done on this building due to leaks. She also commended job fair postings on social media to advertise careers available in the district. She too enjoyed the Chamber event. Everyone has the same goal – educate students. First two weeks of school she had fewer emails. She's eager to proceed with the East K-8 school naming and suggested to put on school signs the opportunity to make nominations.

Mr. Choate congratulated Dr. Wysong on his great job at the Chamber Luncheon. He thanked Dr. Wysong for inviting board members to the school visits. Program "Game On" is working well at Lee MS. He encouraged people to come in to schools and volunteer. He shared that the Athletic Directors from SEHS and MHS spoke at Kiwanis today about the impact sports

have on students. He is excited for the school year and appreciates everybody working during the summer, especially the food service workers.

Meeting adjourned at 6:28 PM.

GOVERNANCE AND SUNSHINE

Ms. Foreman's depth of knowledge on finance is greatly appreciated and her willingness to lead to set up processes and timelines is commendable.

The discussion about the new semester course on Personal Financial Literacy and Money Management was informative. Ms. Foreman acknowledged the wide range of topics included and her interest in seeing the material that will be used in the course. Ms. Spray expressed her enthusiasm for the practical skills to be taught; however rather than saying it was a "deal breaker" she may have been more accurate in calling it a "game changer."

Ms. Spray's reminder to put slides on the screens for viewers was appreciated.

We appreciate the light-hearted moments that helped make for a pleasant meeting, e.g. Mr. Choate's asking if anyone needed policy numbers reread, and Ms. Messenger and Mr. Choate getting called by the district during the board meeting.

We remind board members that there are many more opportunities for the public to support extracurricular activities than the athletic programs, including visual and performing arts.

This report is sent to the members of the [School Board of Manatee County](#), as it has been since LWV observations began, and to [League of Women Voters of Manatee County members](#), and subscribers to our mailing list. This report is published by [The Bradenton Times](#), [WSLR News](#) and [Education Matters in Manatee County Facebook Page](#).

[School Board of Manatee County meetings are typically held](#) on the second Tuesday at 10 AM, and on the fourth Tuesday at 5 PM. Meetings are live streamed on [Manatee Schools TV](#), and can be viewed on local cable including Spectrum Channel 646 and Frontier Channel 39. Meetings can also be streamed on the School District of Manatee County App, available for Apple TV, Roku, and Amazon Fire TV devices.