

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 April 9, 2024**.

ITEMS OF INTEREST

The meeting was called to order by Chair Choate at 10:02 a.m. Ms. Spray read the district's Vision Statement and asked Mr. Tatem to provide the invocation in the absence of Pastor LaRoche, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Recognitions / Student Celebrations – Boys & Girls Clubs Youth of the Year

Michael Barber introduced two young women honored by the local Boys and Girls Clubs as their Youths of the Year. Gracie Jean-Charles, a junior at Palmetto High School, was selected as Youth of the Year. She was awarded a two-year FL Prepaid Scholarship and will attend a statewide convention with other county winners to vie for additional awards. Gracie is an exceptional student and plans on pursuing a career in Radiology. Gracie thanked her amazing mentors at the Boys and Girls Club and all of the opportunities provided to her there. She hopes to inspire others to find their voices.

Elizabeth Osibajo, a fifth-grader at Rogers Garden-Bullock Elementary, was named the Junior Youth of the Year. She has been invited to join the Take Stock in Children program when she begins sixth grade, where she will be paired with an adult mentor and have the opportunity to earn a four-year college scholarship. Principal Michael Escorcia spoke of Elizabeth's outstanding academic record.

Public Comments There were no public comments.

Reports and Presentations – Spring Assessment Schedule Update

Deputy Superintendent Jensen updated the Board on the April and May Assessment Calendar pointing out the dates for the following summative assessments: Florida Alternative Assessments, BEST assessments for 4-10th grades, K-2 Early Literacy/Reading, 3rd-10th FAST Reading, 5th grade science and 8th grade social studies and Biology, Civics and US History, K-1 STAR Math, and K-8 Math, Algebra I and Geometry. He also reviewed the importance of preparing for the tests and how the family can support success. [LWV Note: Link to presentation https://legistarweb-production.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/attachment/pdf/2541300/4-9-24_School_Board_Presentation_-_Spring_Assessments.pdf]

In response to board questions, Mr. Jensen clarified that Alternative Assessments are given to students with disabilities, all charter schools take the same assessments, the amount of the day taken up with assessments depends on the scheduling at each school site, free breakfasts are available for all students every day, opportunities are given for students who must make up tests, writing tests are scored both by humans and machine, FAST assessments are for 3-10th graders and STAR for K-2 which are not a part of the school grade but useful for instruction. Superintendent Wysong expressed appreciation for the Test Coordinators, Principals and Teachers at each school for not only coordinating all of the assessment administration but also all of the end of year events as well.

Consent Items – Fourteen consent items passed 5-0.

New Business (Non-Consent Items)

Approval of the Budget Amendments for February 2024. Deputy Superintendent Sellers provided a summary. Passed 5-0.

Approval of Reimbursement Resolution for Expenditures for New Elementary School - North County Rye Ranch and New Elementary School - Artisan Lakes (No Financial Impact). Dr. Wysong clarified that this will provide an optional financing vehicle if desired. Ms. Sellers indicated this has been used before. Passed 5-0.

New Business (No Superintendent Recommendation)

Acceptance of the Resignation of Citizens' Financial Oversight Committee Member. The motion was made and passed 5-0 to accept the resignation of Ms. Katelyn Booth from the Citizens' Financial Oversight Committee. Ms. Booth has been a Citizens' Financial Oversight Committee Member since January 2024.

Discussion and Possible Appointment of Value Adjustment Board Members. Ms. Foreman reminded the board that as one of her assignments, she represents the School Board on the Value Adjustment Board with a term that expires before the November elections. She suggested the need for someone whose seat is not up for election to serve from August 1, 2024 through July 20, 2025. In addition, the current citizen chosen by the School Board to serve on the Value Adjustment Board needs to be re-elected. After the appropriate motions, Mr. Choate will serve as the School Board representative, Mr. Tatem will continue as the alternative, and citizen Brady Chapman will continue on the Value Adjustment Board, passing 5-0.

Information Only (No Board Action Required)

Year-to-Date Financial Statements Through February 29, 2024

Year-to-Date Charter School Financial Statement Summary Through February 29, 2024. Ms. Sellers reported that two charter schools had deficits in their unassigned operation balances, one for the second month, and the other for the fourth month. The charter with deficits for the

fourth month has provided a corrective action plan to the Commissioner of Education and is awaiting results.

Updates

Instruction – Mr. Jensen announced the Math Superstars competition in partnership with the American Association of University Women for teams of 4th and 5th graders will take place on April 27th at Manatee Technical College from 9-10 a.m. The Science Adoption process held the final review on April 2nd and will bring this to the School Board for a final decision on April 24th. The State Science Fair was held in Orlando on April 2nd to 4th with two winners from Manatee High School, three from Southeast High School, and a team and two individuals from Mona Jain Middle School. Art Center Manatee will host the student art show opening April 11th through the 26th. Adult, Career and Technical Education students are participating in a variety of competitions. The advisors of SEHS's FBLA and Nolan MS's HOSA were recognized as Advisors of the Year.

Operations – Mr. Ranaldi indicated the recent operational Job Fair was a success. The Annual Great Florida Teach-In will be April 13th in Lakeland from 9-4. Teacher and Para Job Fair will be held April 20th from 9-noon at MTC. The groundbreaking for Blackburn Elementary's new building and the full renovation of the remaining buildings was April 8th.

Legal – Ms. Pat Petruff sat in for Mr. Dye. No report.

Superintendent Remarks – Dr. Wysong expressed appreciation for the Board Members' leadership in approving the fourteen consent items. He highlighted the many travel requests for students to compete nationally with STEM in Charlotte, NC; DECA in Los Angeles; and debate in Chicago. Another consent item of note is the acquisition of a touchless screening solution that will be utilized daily next school year on four campuses to screen for guns. He indicated there are openings for school guardians. He expressed appreciation for his own professional development with the new superintendents' meeting in Orlando recently. He announced the two topics for the April 12th Workshop to be a transportation update and a Code of Conduct update with a conversation about cell phone policies. Changes in the Code of Conduct are expected to be approved well before August start up.

Board Comments

Ms. Messenger thanked everyone for the Blackburn groundbreaking.

Mr. Tatem emphasized the importance of the arts. His safety message focused on safe driving for teens. He clarified the acronym COPS as a way to borrow money for capital projects.

Ms. Foreman followed up by adding that COPS stands for Certificates of Participation and that it is like issuing a bond. She spent last Saturday judging the debate contest at Southeast High School and remarked about the critical thinking and reasoning that was exhibited. She made a special commendation to media specialists and said next year for April there needs to be a

proclamation. She read a DOE letter that emphasizes the critical role school libraries play in the success of students.

Ms. Spray shared she has been to all the tennis courts at all the high schools. She indicated the Citizens' Financial Oversight Committee is working on their annual report to be completed on April 22nd. She reminded everyone that the School Board is in the customer service business with the community as the customers.

Mr. Choate thanked the district staff for their work of preparing the items for each agenda. His safety message centered around prom and thanked all the junior class sponsors for their work with the students and all the teachers who volunteer to chaperone. The end of school year with all the testing and spring sports winding up is a busy time of the year.

Meeting adjourned at 11:18 a.m.

GOVERNANCE AND SUNSHINE

The brief, focused agenda resulted in a very short meeting. Discussions were succinct and on topic, and Mr. Choate moved the meeting along appropriately. Updates from staff are appreciated and it is always a pleasure to have presentations on curriculum and assessment. Thanks to everyone who took the time to commend employees for their service to the community.

An opportunity for transparency and accountability was missed when no school board member asked the names of the two charter schools that have a deficit in their unassigned operational balances. Also, no one asked for the names of the two teachers honored as Career and Technical Education advisors. Both the in-person and virtual audiences were left in the dark.

Speakers, including those receiving recognition, should be gently reminded to speak into the mic. The Board needs to remember that their meeting also is attended by a virtual audience which depends on the sound system receiving and recording their comments. They need to speak into the mic. Ms. Spray often does not speak clearly and observers are constantly turning up the volume on their devices to try to understand what she says. It is unfortunate so much of what she says is never understood by the listeners.

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 and WSLR News.

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.