



JEFFERSON COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
Minutes of Special Meeting of March 01, 2017

Special Meeting of the Jefferson County Board of Education held at VanHoose Education Center, Stewart Auditorium, Louisville, Kentucky, on Wednesday, March 01, 2017, at 5 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chair Chris Brady

Mrs. Linda Duncan

Mrs. Stephanie Horne

Ms. Diane Porter

Vice-Chair Lisa Willner

Mr. Benjamin Gies

Dr. Chris Kolb

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Superintendent Donna M. Hargens, Ed.D.

Francis J. Mellen, Jr., Wyatt Tarrant & Combs LLP

Angie Gilpin, Assistant Secretary to the Board

SPECIAL MEETING

Chair Brady called the March 01, 2017, Special Meeting of the Board of Education to order at 5:04 p.m. He stated that this is a special meeting and the only discussion will be regarding the Board's legislative position on student assignment.

I. Call to Order

II. Jefferson County Public Schools Position on Neighborhood Schools and House Bill 151

Each Board member was given an opportunity to comment and ask questions. Jonathan Lowe, Director of Strategy, was available to answer questions.

Mrs. Horne asked the staff to provide an overview regarding what is going on in Frankfort and also for a frame on this topic.

Mr. Lowe explained that the bill has passed the House and is now in the Senate Education Committee. The Senate Education Committee meets tomorrow at 11:30 a.m.; it is not currently on the agenda. He plans to go with Dr. Hargens to attend the meeting. He has had conversations with legislatures on both sides in order to express concerns and offer alternative language that would mitigate some of the issues within the bill.

Mrs. Horned asked Mr. Lowe to explain the factors that are of grave concern to Jefferson County Public Schools.

Mr. Lowe stated that as it is currently written, the bill would do a number of things that are of concern. It would essentially eliminate magnet programs that are in schools that also have resides areas. There wouldn't be a meaningful boundary line for schools which would cause uncertainty for parents. The impact to diversity would be significant and would create schools with high concentrations of poverty. The opportunity for student's choice of school would be severely restricted and they would not be permitted to transfer schools.

He expressed appreciation for legislators that have been open to hearing concerns and who are actively engaged in conversation.

Mrs. Horne stated that she does not accept the current paradigm in JCPS. She continued by saying that JCPS has schools that are in different states of repair. Sometimes, you can walk into a school on the west side of Louisville and it seems like it's the year 1950, and that is under the current student assignment plan. The scores relating to equity are very disappointing and it's not right. There are also high percentages of free and reduced lunch under the current plan. If JCPS wants to retain local control then we need to get control of the situation and actually open this up for a community discussion – which several Board members have requested. Hopefully, we can look at all aspects of this as a community. Because, if we want local control then we need to work together to create a different paradigm. She stated that she believes that it's broken right now and we have to open it up for discussion and really get to the heart of this.

Ms. Porter stated that we can always do better. We can have as many community conversations as we like but the bottom line is, what are we going to do? We know what the situation is and the proposed bill will take the authority away from the Board to make decisions about the education in JCPS. She continued by saying that it's not just about the amount of diversity and free and reduced lunch, which will go up significantly. If this bill passes, it will create a situation where there are not enough seats in schools for students. We need to be better, we have called out Facilities and the fact that the diversity index is not the way it should be – do something about it.

Mrs. Duncan stated that this is a logistics issue as much as anything since we have twenty schools that are already committed to non-neighborhood school kids. She questioned how it would be possible to carry out a neighbor schools plan when we have so many schools with seats that are already taken. She expressed disappointment and stated that she wished Representative Bratcher consulted with student assignment in order to understand the complexity of this issue. She concluded by discussing the fact that this is about local control for the whole state, not just Jefferson County.

Dr. Kolb stated that this issue is something that has affected his life a great deal and is something that he is very passionate about it. He read from a constituent's email which praised the district and expressed concern with the possibility of segregation in schools. He also read from a prepared statement in which he stated that this bill threatens the core principle of our democracy. The government overreach would cause us to lose local control of our school system. He gave multiple examples of significant negative impacts that this bill would cause for our students and families such as less choice, less predictability, less equity, and wider achievement gaps. He read data statistics and stated that boundaries would change every year and the only way to guarantee you will get into your neighborhood school would be to move directly across the street from it. In closing, he read excerpts from the 2015 article *The City That Believed in Desegregation* from *The Atlantic* magazine.

Mr. Gies thanked Dr. Kolb for his remarks and for making this decision a human decision. He gave a personal testimony and stated that he would be a different person if he had not been given the opportunity of school choice. He closed by stating that public school equals public opportunity.

Dr. Willner stated that she is not satisfied with where we are and this board has made that clear; we are not done with the work that needs to happen. We need to continue to get better but we need to do so strategically, thoughtfully, and with expertise. She is hopeful that the Board is able to maintain authority to oversee the work that we know needs to happen.

Chair Brady stated that the purpose of meeting today is to reaffirm the Board's position. His understanding was that the Board currently has a position which was approved in 2014. He went on to explained that during the floor debate at the State House, someone asked Representative Bratcher if the JCBE had taken a position and his response was no. Then, that misconception was out and Board members felt the need for a special called meeting to set the record straight. He continued by stating that this is an issue that affects districts across the state, not just JCPS. There have been multiple conversations with legislators and we have answered all questions, so any unintentional consequences caused by this bill will be intentional from this point forward. He then discussed government overreach and gave personal testimony regarding his first impression of school and of hate. He concluded by stating that this bill will undo 40 years of hard work and that is something that is worth defending.

Order #2017-066 - Motion Passed: Superintendent Donna Hargens recommends the Board of Education reaffirm the attached position regarding legislation relating to student assignment passed with a motion by Ms. Diane Porter and a second by Dr. Lisa Willner.

Mr. Chris Brady	Yes
Mrs. Linda Duncan	Yes
Mr. Benjamin Gies	Yes
Mrs. Stephanie Horne	Yes
Dr. Christopher Kolb	Yes
Ms. Diane Porter	Yes
Dr. Lisa Willner	Yes

III. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:42 p.m.

Order #2017-067 - Motion Passed: A motion to adjourn passed with a motion by Ms. Diane Porter and a second by Mrs. Linda Duncan.

Mr. Chris Brady	Yes
Mrs. Linda Duncan	Yes
Mr. Benjamin Gies	Yes
Mrs. Stephanie Horne	Yes
Dr. Christopher Kolb	Yes
Ms. Diane Porter	Yes
Dr. Lisa Willner	Yes

Chair Chris Brady

Dr. Donna Hargens, Superintendent/Secretary

**THESE ACTIONS, ALONG WITH THE AGENDA ITEMS, MAKE UP THE OFFICIAL
MINUTES, WHICH ARE ON FILE IN THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY**