

**In The Matter Of:**

*DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION  
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION*

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*WORK SESSION RE: DOLLARWAY  
December 1, 2020*

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**Min-U-Script® with Word Index**

ARKANSAS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
WORK SESSION  
re: DOLLARWAY SCHOOL DISTRICT

DECEMBER 1, 2020  
10:00 A.M.

A P P E A R A N C E S

BOARD MEMBERS (In Person):

MS. CHARISSE DEAN, Chairman  
MS. OUIDA NEWTON  
DR. FITZGERALD HILL  
DR. SARAH MOORE

BOARD MEMBERS (Via Zoom):

MS. KATHY McFETRIDGE  
MS. SUSAN CHAMBERS  
MS. ADRIENNE WOODS

NON-VOTING MEMBERS:

MR. JOHNNY KEY, Secretary of Education  
MR. JOEL LOOKADOO, Arkansas Teacher of the Year

DESE LEGAL COUNSEL:

MS. LORI FRENO                      General Counsel  
MS. COURTNEY SALAS-FORD      Attorney

LOCATION:

ARKANSAS DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION  
#4 Capitol Mall, Auditorium  
Little Rock, AR 72201

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SBE Questions w/ Answers and Documentation

EXHIBIT TWO (2)

Overview of Governing Scenarios for Dollarway School District: Guide to SBE Decisions

EXHIBIT THREE (3)

Budget Considerations for Local Control

EXHIBIT FOUR (4)

Phase 2 Stakeholder Feedback Summary

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. SMITH: Good morning, everyone. I'm going to stand up here just because I know Jason and Felicia and the WestEd staff, they're going to do some talking and some presentations today, and I think it would probably be easier instead of me trying to flip from my computer back and forth.

So I first feel like I need to almost apologize because y'all were getting documents even this morning. But then at the same time I want to brag on lots of different people who put together lots of information and who have done lots of work since the last State Board meeting. So, again, the WestEd staff, you know -- and they're from all over; they're from California, Boston, D.C. They've been doing lots of work. The OCSS team; you've got Sheila and Brent in the back; we've got Donna up here and Cindy from the Fiscal Office. Lots of work going on. The legal team has been doing lots of work even over the Thanksgiving break. As late as 40 minutes ago we were getting slides for this morning's presentation, just trying to get the most updated information, especially on the stakeholder feedback groups that have occurred in the last week-and-a-half to two weeks. So, lots of information.

1           So those of you who are here in person, I did  
2           give you a folder with two of the documents that were  
3           emailed out today. One of the documents that --  
4           those of you who are at home working, I numbered the  
5           Document Number 1. You had four documents and I  
6           numbered each of them. Document Number 1 would be  
7           the one -- if you were going to print one, that would  
8           be the one to print, and it's just kind of a working  
9           document for you guys today on decision points that  
10          have to be made. All right.

11          Document Number 2 was the -- a document that you  
12          received over the weekend. At the last State Board  
13          meeting you had lots of different requests on  
14          information that you would like to have. And so what  
15          we tried to do -- and, again, there were lots of  
16          different people who pulled information together to  
17          make this document. That was kind of a one-stop-shop  
18          place, trying to answer a lot of those questions. I  
19          know someone had requested, you know, national  
20          research articles or national -- and so we embedded  
21          some of those in here. Ms. Freno went through and  
22          looked at the history of annexations and  
23          consolidations within the state; that was embedded in  
24          here. And then we just tried to pull additional  
25          information. One that was added this morning that

1 was not in your information, and so the newer one has  
2 it, is the numbers for school choice from the  
3 Altheimer District. So that was added in here and we  
4 did update some of the assessment numbers. This  
5 document will be posted on the State Board agenda  
6 that's being posted today for everyone to have access  
7 to. But you do have the most updated one that was  
8 emailed all to you this morning.

9 Document Number 3 are the slides, that you do  
10 not have access to, on the finance that Mr. Willis is  
11 going to present in a second.

12 And then Document Number 4 is the comprehensive  
13 stakeholder feedback document. And Felicia, in a  
14 second, has already pulled out the high points of  
15 that document and she'll do those in a presentation  
16 here in just a second. But you then have the  
17 comprehensive -- all the information in a document  
18 for you to read later on.

19 So, bragging on lots of different people who've  
20 done lots of good work.

21 So, Dan, if you could pull up that presentation.

22 So what we're going to do real quick is quickly  
23 go through two points of information that you  
24 requested on today's working session. One of those  
25 is you wanted to hear what the stakeholder feedback

1 was for Round 2; so Felicia is going to go over that.  
2 And then the second request that you guys requested  
3 at the last meeting was what is the financial status  
4 if Dollarway were to go back as a local control  
5 district or under reconstitution, what would their  
6 finances look like; and Jason did a projection on  
7 that and he'll go over those with you. Okay, so  
8 we'll start there.

9 So let's see, let me turn this on. So I'm going  
10 to go ahead and --

11 Felicia, can you hear me?

12 MS. BROWN: Yes, I can.

13 MS. SMITH: Okay. So this is Felicia, and  
14 Felicia is in Boston, I believe. Correct? Is that  
15 right?

16 MS. BROWN: Close-by, yeah.

17 MS. SMITH: All right. So I'm going to let  
18 Felicia take over and talk about stakeholder  
19 engagement Round 2.

20 MS. BROWN: Thank you. Good morning, everyone.  
21 And you can hear me okay, right?

22 MS. SMITH: Yes.

23 MS. BROWN: Okay. Perfect.

24 Good morning, everyone. Thanks for the  
25 opportunity to share the results of Phase 2 of our

1 stakeholder outreach.

2 In Phase 2 we shifted from the approach in Phase  
3 1 where we asked folks to share more about their  
4 vision, their broad-scale -- likes and dislikes about  
5 the district, sort of big-picture questions. And  
6 then in Phase 2 what we did was share exactly what we  
7 presented to you back in November, those scenarios in  
8 much more detail, sort of their -- a chance for them  
9 to interact. We did so in three ways:

10 We asked for folks to join us in open community  
11 feedback forums. We scheduled five of those sessions  
12 between the 20th of November and the 24th; so that  
13 was a Friday, Monday and Tuesday, right before  
14 Thanksgiving. They were open to all, with or without  
15 registration. We did have 21 that did register.  
16 Each registrant got a reminder email as soon as they  
17 registered and each participant got a thank-you  
18 email; so some people received up to three, or four  
19 even, emails. And it was an opportunity for the  
20 participants to share about what the scenarios were  
21 and respond to them one-by-one. We had 27 unique  
22 participants. We did have a few folks who joined  
23 multiple times to share their opinions. And we had  
24 eight of those 27 complete an experience survey,  
25 which I'll share the results of in just a moment

1 here.

2 We also had the opportunity for folks to  
3 participate in a feedback survey. This was an online  
4 sort of at your own pace feedback survey that asked  
5 the same questions that we asked in the forum. So  
6 they had an opportunity to review a video about the  
7 scenarios and had a written explanation of what the  
8 details of each scenario could be, explaining that no  
9 decisions had been made and this was just for their  
10 reaction. And we had 12 unique participants  
11 participate in that. That was open from November  
12 15th through the 29th, and we -- so we closed it just  
13 two days ago. And we had -- most -- the average time  
14 it took for the participants was 15 minutes and 15  
15 seconds, so we were right on with the number of  
16 questions and we warned people it would take about 15  
17 minutes. And we asked participants to identify what  
18 role they were in and whether they lived within the  
19 Dollarway District boundaries or not. Again, we  
20 asked each participant a number of aspects of each  
21 scenario, whether it would be positive or negative  
22 for the community in different ways -- and we'll be  
23 able to share that data with you as well.

24 And then, finally, we had an open comment  
25 period, which is still open. So for those of you

1 listening who are not on the Board we would love an  
2 additional -- any additional open comment that we can  
3 gather. That will be open until December 8th. We  
4 had one participant who submitted open comment and  
5 that is submitted in your packet as well for your  
6 consideration.

7 And I will say, before we move on to results,  
8 that all the opportunities -- all three opportunities  
9 were advertised in a number of ways: it was on the  
10 Dollarway School District website; it was on the  
11 Department of Education website; a flier went home  
12 with every in-school participant in Dollarway schools  
13 to their parents; we had -- there was an article in  
14 the Pine Bluff Commercial that covered all three of  
15 these options; we reached out to 110 individuals via  
16 email who participated in the last round or whose  
17 email we had gotten from a variety of places; it was  
18 posted on a Facebook group and -- of alumni; and we  
19 were able to ask all the participants in the  
20 discussions, in the follow-up email to sort of tell  
21 their friends and gather those other folks who might  
22 want to participate as well.

23 So that is what we did, and here were the  
24 results:

25 So while we know that the participation was

1 fairly low we still believe that there's a lot of  
2 value in what was presented, and a lot of it was  
3 different than what we heard in the first round.

4 Stacy, will you go to the next slide, please?

5 Thank you.

6 So we'll start with the community feedback  
7 forums. Again, there were 27 total participants and  
8 -- oh, it seems that something funky has happened  
9 with my formatting. But that big blue space is  
10 community members and alumni who identified as having  
11 some connection to Dollarway but not necessarily a  
12 current educator or student or parent in the  
13 district. So they were sort of outside of the  
14 district, and may in fact be -- most in fact probably  
15 were not living in the district; so differences of  
16 perspective there. But just so you know that was  
17 about 63%. We had 22% that did not participate  
18 verbally, so you will not see their feedback included  
19 in the results that we'll go through in just a  
20 moment. We had one parent who identified as just a  
21 parent, and we had a few educators who came from both  
22 Pine Bluff and Dollarway School Districts.

23 Next slide, please.

24 Okay. So given those diverse groups, which were  
25 very different than what we -- than what we had in

1 the first round, we did get some different data.  
2 These are the top five most frequent sentiments. And  
3 if you look in your packets you'll see some quotes  
4 that support each of these; so if you're interested  
5 in that, please go ahead and take a look. Eighty-six  
6 percent (86%) of the participants were -- and this is  
7 similar to the Phase 1 -- were strong -- a strong  
8 proponent of Dollarway when needing its own school  
9 district, with its own name and its own identity.  
10 They were very conscientious of the Dollarway School  
11 District as its -- as a cultural entity. So we did  
12 have that, which was common to the first set.

13 Additionally, 71% of the participants were in  
14 favor of incentive funds. So when we talked about  
15 the funds that would come along with annexation or  
16 consolidation 71% of the participants said, "yeah,  
17 that's a great thing; that would be nice to have."  
18 But very few of those participants actually provided  
19 specific feedback on what they would do with that  
20 money or what could advance because there was  
21 additional funds. However, the participants that  
22 were -- that identified as educators, almost 100% of  
23 them -- so 14% of the total -- did provide further  
24 feedback on potential benefits of both annexation,  
25 consolidation, and those additional funds. So you

1 can see some of those examples in the quotes.

2 Next we had 62% of participants expressing  
3 concern about the current district leadership and the  
4 sentiment was the current leadership, which included  
5 the Superintendent and the State, has had five years  
6 to make improvements and they haven't done that  
7 successfully. So interestingly, this was a very  
8 different sentiment that we heard in the first round,  
9 which was much more of a close-knit community to  
10 Dollarway schools right now. Many of the folks who  
11 we heard from were connected to Dollarway many, many  
12 years ago and had this opinion -- 62% of them had  
13 this opinion that because the current district  
14 leadership did not show progress in the last five  
15 years that they should not remain in place; so  
16 differing from that close-knit -- the teachers and  
17 parents and students who are currently in the  
18 Dollarway School District, and felt very strongly  
19 that the current leadership should remain in place.

20 Additionally on that one, 52% of participants  
21 were concerned about the combination of Dollarway and  
22 Pine Bluff, saying that both districts are  
23 struggling, so what would help -- what would be the  
24 helpful part of bringing both of them together, and  
25 there was concern over the sort of compounding

1 effects of both of their struggles.

2 42% of participants expressed that they wanted  
3 to see plans that addressed student services,  
4 academic needs, and financial needs, rather than  
5 structural changes. And as we know, the decisions  
6 before the Board today are mostly structural and  
7 that's by law. But it is interesting to note that  
8 42% of the participants, unprompted, said, "hey,  
9 look, these are great scenarios but none of them  
10 actually address the challenges that are before the  
11 District." And there were -- so there was some  
12 skepticism that they would make significant change in  
13 the experience of students in the District.

14 And then, finally, 38% of the participants were  
15 interested in reconstitution as a way to pursue those  
16 innovative options and to incorporate local input and  
17 more partnerships; so they expressed some interest in  
18 that. However, 42% of stakeholders expressed a  
19 concern that even with that opportunity to be  
20 innovative and to partner that coordination and  
21 improvement of student services might still be  
22 difficult. So there was a little bit of "yeah, we  
23 would love to do that," but skepticism that it could  
24 come to fruition.

25 In your packet following this page, which is on

1 page 4, you will see some questions that came up -- a  
2 whole list of questions that came up from the  
3 stakeholders during the feedback forum. And we put  
4 those in there, in their entirety, because it does  
5 give a great sense of what people are thinking about,  
6 what they're concerned about, what their first  
7 thought is. And you'll see questions in there such  
8 as what -- when cuts are made will it be elective  
9 courses, will there be a reduction in teaching force,  
10 what would happen to the name of the buildings, who  
11 -- if the buildings were consolidated who gets to  
12 name them. There were a number of questions -- and I  
13 would encourage you to peruse those -- as a thought  
14 process of what are the next steps here, what are the  
15 questions that we need to answer next once the  
16 initial decisions are made.

17 So what you're seeing now is the feedback survey  
18 -- and we're on page 7, for those of you following  
19 along in your packets. The feedback survey  
20 participants -- so, again, we offered that feedback  
21 survey which asked similar questions to what we asked  
22 in the forum. We had 12 participants, and you'll see  
23 who participated. We had three -- or, I'm sorry,  
24 four that were identifying as community leaders or  
25 community members, and of those four one of them did

1 not live in the District. Teachers and staff  
2 members, we had five participate -- and of those five  
3 four, again, did not live in the District and one  
4 did. And then, finally, we had three parents that  
5 participated and one was just not sure whether they  
6 lived within the boundaries or not. The second  
7 circle there that you'll see is about how many -- we  
8 wanted to give a sense of how many people were  
9 overlapping between input opportunities, and about a  
10 third -- so about four of those said, yes, I will  
11 also participate in the discussions as well as  
12 filling out the feedback survey. So there may be  
13 some overlap in who was there, but being an anonymous  
14 survey we don't actually know.

15 Next slide, please.

16 So, again, we tried to summarize the main points  
17 that came across in that feedback survey, given the  
18 12 participants. We had 50% -- and these questions  
19 were much more specific in -- they were sort of  
20 multiple choice questions, and you'll see this data  
21 outlined very specifically in the next several pages  
22 of your packet. But here's some highlights: so 50%  
23 of participants believed that return to local control  
24 was desirable, while 50% said it's undesirable. They  
25 had a scale from this is very desirable to this is

1 not desirable at all for me and my family, and it was  
2 split half-and-half between -- or on the return to  
3 local control. And that was the highest positive  
4 rating, but still 50-50. And on this one we asked  
5 about whether a specific scenario would have a  
6 positive impact on various aspects of the community  
7 experience, and more participants than not believed  
8 that the return to local control option would have a  
9 positive impact on the culture and atmosphere of  
10 Dollarway, the academic outcomes, the community and  
11 family connection to Dollarway, and the momentum that  
12 Dollarway is making towards improvement. So more  
13 participants said "yes, I believe this will have a  
14 positive impact" than those who said "yes, other  
15 scenarios would have a positive impact." And that  
16 data is a little bit complicated to explain in one  
17 word, so you might want to just check that out in the  
18 next couple of pages.

19 More -- and then on the opposite side, more  
20 participants found reconstitution, annexation, or  
21 consolidations undesirable than desirable. So we had  
22 more than 50% say that those three options were not  
23 desirable for them and their families, and on the  
24 opposite side of that the negative impact would --  
25 they believed that consolidation specifically would

1 have a negative impact on cultural and atmosphere,  
2 academic and non-academic opportunities, and momentum  
3 towards improvement.

4 And then, finally, on average, participants  
5 agreed to strongly-agreed that they were able to  
6 share their perspective via the survey or the  
7 feedback forums. They were -- the forums were well-  
8 organized, they were able to understand the scenarios  
9 that were under consideration, and that they believe  
10 their input would have an impact on the Board's  
11 decision.

12 So this is very consistent with our last group  
13 of data. We asked very similar questions in Phase 1  
14 and, again, folks were saying "yes, this opportunity  
15 really did feel like it was an opportunity to share  
16 my perspective and that it will matter."

17 So if you would like, you'll have -- you have a  
18 bunch of data that gives specifics on folks'  
19 responses to the different scenarios. You can peruse  
20 that. You also have every open-ended response. It  
21 was so varied that there was just no way to  
22 consolidate it, so I kind of gave it all to you for  
23 your enjoyment. And then, finally, at the very end  
24 you have the one open comment submission. That was  
25 the only option that was not anonymous, so it is

1 signed.

2 I will stop there. That's all I was going to  
3 share today, but happy to take any questions you  
4 might have.

5 MS. SMITH: Thank you, Felicia.

6 Just one note again -- we did have -- I just  
7 want to point out again this was in the Pine Bluff  
8 Commercial, it was emailed out, it was sent home in  
9 backpacks with students, it was put on the District  
10 website, we dedicated a web page to it on the ADE  
11 site. The largest group that actively kind of  
12 participated in this stakeholder feedback group was  
13 an alumni group who kind of organized, and I think  
14 that's where you saw a lot of that data was an alumni  
15 group. And you kind of saw opposite kind of  
16 scenarios from that first round because a lot of  
17 teachers -- so, again, very different groups. And,  
18 again, still very low participation even with an  
19 effort to try to engage participation.

20 So I appreciate the work that they did over the  
21 holiday break trying to pull -- and, again, a lot of  
22 this information and documents were coming in late  
23 last night and early this morning, and trying to get  
24 that into your hands as fast as possible. And so  
25 we'll continue to collect information. Again, we did

1 open forums; there's an actual survey link, and then  
2 there's an open comments link where people can type  
3 in comments. And the survey and the comments link  
4 will remain open all the way until State Board, and  
5 so we'll continue to collect information and get that  
6 to you. Okay.

7 So Jason -- I believe Jason is in California,  
8 and he was supposed to be here in person again, but  
9 they denied his travel, and so he's going to Zoom  
10 with us and he's going to talk about the budget  
11 considerations going back to local control.

12 So, Jason, are you ready?

13 MR. WILLIS: Yeah. Thank you so much. Can you  
14 all hear me okay?

15 MS. SMITH: Yes, sir.

16 MR. WILLIS: Great. Thank you, Stacy, and good  
17 morning to Commissioner Key and the Board members. I  
18 appreciate the opportunity to be with you again today  
19 and Felicia kicking us off with some of the  
20 stakeholder engagement feedback that we've gotten on  
21 the second round.

22 So one of the other critical questions that came  
23 up during the last State Board meeting towards the  
24 end was really a question about what were -- what  
25 would happen should Dollarway continue on its current

1 path returning to local control, and particularly  
2 looking at this question from a financial standpoint.  
3 And so hats off to other members of the WestEd team  
4 that supported this analysis. And this slide really  
5 lays out the key assumptions. I'm happy to unpack  
6 further assumptions that we made in projecting this  
7 financial outlook to FY22 which is the next school  
8 year.

9 First and foremost that we assumed continued  
10 declining enrollment in the school district  
11 consistent with previous year patterns. It's  
12 approximately about a 5% less ADM from FY21 to 22.  
13 Funding is based on the prior year but is consistent  
14 with that reduction in ADM year-over-year, which  
15 results in a reduction in ADM and funding associated  
16 that uses that figure for revenues. So this includes  
17 your foundation funding amounts. We also removed any  
18 noticeable one-time revenue amounts that would not be  
19 available to the District in FY22. On the  
20 expenditures side of the ledger we assumed a 3%  
21 increase in labor that was consistent with prior year  
22 patterns. This is in particular associated with  
23 increases in compensation, either salary or benefits,  
24 overall for the District. We didn't look at line-by-  
25 line detail, but really operated off of average year-

1 over-year prior year patterns to look at those  
2 increases. We also assumed no change in non-labor  
3 expenditures from the FY21 to 22 year.

4 So go ahead to the next slide, please.

5 Thanks.

6 So this slide shows you a trend of what the  
7 total revenue and total expenditures difference in  
8 ending balance look like for Dollarway School  
9 District from FY-2017 through FY-20, which is the end  
10 of this most prior fiscal year in Arkansas. We show  
11 the FY-21 budget. So these are the projected annual  
12 total revenues, total expenditures, the difference  
13 between those two figures, which is a -\$284,280,  
14 which continues to buy down the ending balance that  
15 you can see has been steadily declining since FY-  
16 2017. So using the assumptions that we just  
17 discussed, the FY-22 projected revenue against total  
18 expenditures would result in a net decrease in the  
19 funding balance of about \$654,000, that if allowed to  
20 proceed would result at the end of the FY-22 year a  
21 negative just over half-million dollars for Dollarway  
22 School District, which is a -5% on total expenditures  
23 for that subsequent year, which clearly is not a  
24 viable solution for Dollarway regarding both its  
25 fiscal solvency and help.

1           So if we can go to the next slide, I'll talk a  
2 little bit about some of the results and  
3 implications.

4           So without any of those further expenditure  
5 adjustments either, you know, continuing to curtail  
6 mild increases in labor expenses and/or reducing  
7 other non-labor expenditures, as I mentioned,  
8 Dollarway would have a negative ending fund balance  
9 by the end of the FY-22 year. The cash analysis that  
10 we ran on the revenue expenditures, accounts  
11 receivable, and accounts payable into FY-22 suggests  
12 that Dollarway's fund balance would go negative  
13 approximately sometime in the early spring of 2022,  
14 thereby month-over-month in paying contracts for  
15 their positions would continue to eat away at that  
16 balance up to that projected just over half-million  
17 dollars that I had just mentioned on the previous  
18 slide. So in order to balance the budget and retain  
19 some marginal ending balance, which, you know, is  
20 equivalent to about \$200,000, Dollarway would have to  
21 initiate expenditure reduction plans imminently,  
22 basically next month, and introduce reductions of  
23 approximately \$700,000 on a projected 10.1 million  
24 dollar budget or nearly a 7% reduction in ongoing  
25 expenses. So that would not include any of your one-

1 time expenses that were made for, you know,  
2 technology upgrades or other one-time planned  
3 expenses for this year; those would be ongoing annual  
4 expenses for Dollarway. I don't think it's an  
5 understatement to say that that's a really large cut  
6 in a single year to a district that is already  
7 struggling to insure that it's providing its core  
8 instructional opportunities. That reduction would --  
9 if applied across the district, may result in two to  
10 three teachers per school building being reduced in  
11 order to achieve that \$700,000 in savings. As we  
12 presented our analysis at the last board meeting, on  
13 November 13th, we don't see tremendous opportunities  
14 for achieving that level of savings at the Central  
15 Office level. I think some of that might be able to  
16 be achieved.

17 But I think I want to return just in my closing  
18 comment to the notion that if allowed to move forward  
19 without any other intervention it seems like a very  
20 unviable position for Dollarway to be in with a  
21 negative ending fund balance at the end of the FY-  
22 2022 year.

23 So I'll pause there and, Stacy, I'll turn it  
24 back over to you. I'm happy to take any questions  
25 that the Board might have on these slides.

1 MS. SMITH: Does anyone have any questions about  
2 the financial slides for Mr. Willis or even for Cindy  
3 and Donna? I know Mr. Rogers is around here  
4 somewhere listening as well. So if anybody has any  
5 questions about the finances --

6 MS. NEWTON: I know that Cindy keeps up pretty  
7 close with what's going on at Dollarway. Could you  
8 kind of tell us if that mirrors what you have been  
9 figuring and looking at over the last few years with  
10 Dollarway?

11 MS. CINDY SMITH: Cindy Smith, Fiscal Services.  
12 They are on point with that. We have had a  
13 steady decline, and remember a lot of this is due to  
14 the loss of students. So to make it a little more  
15 understandable, what happens when you lose students,  
16 you lose the foundation funding for those students.  
17 But then your remaining tax dollars stretch further  
18 between those students that remain, further reducing  
19 the foundation funding that you will get for those  
20 kids that remain. So it's almost like a double-  
21 whammy. And then if your assessment goes up, that's  
22 a third piece; that money goes further and then your  
23 money reduces again.

24 We were just looking at numbers and we've  
25 already lost 20 kids at Dollarway just this year. So

1 now their money was coming in a little bit better on  
2 taxes but still, we're going to be in that same  
3 situation.

4 MS. NEWTON: So are you projecting a negative  
5 balance by spring of '22 also or is it --

6 MS. CINDY SMITH: We would be pretty close to  
7 that, I would think, because we're projecting the end  
8 of this year to be about \$152,000.

9 MS. NEWTON: Okay.

10 MS. CINDY SMITH: And if you've lost 20 kids,  
11 you know, your money is going to be much less. And  
12 if you don't start reducing staff significantly you  
13 are going to have that negative ending balance.

14 MS. NEWTON: Okay. All right. Thank you.

15 MS. CINDY SMITH: Uh-huh.

16 MS. McFETRIDGE: I have a question --

17 MS. SMITH: Yes, ma'am.

18 MS. McFETRIDGE: -- Ms. Smith. Yes. I know  
19 last meeting, in November, we heard about the casino  
20 coming in. And are there any -- do we think this is  
21 going to have any effect at all on our student  
22 enrollment or dollars coming into the district?

23 MS. SMITH: I think that the projections have  
24 been more of a positive projection for the Pine Bluff  
25 School District versus Dollarway. And even the tax

1 revenue from it was really hitting Pine Bluff and not  
2 necessarily Dollarway. So --

3 MS. McFETRIDGE: Okay.

4 MS. SMITH: -- as we're talking about our  
5 different options, you're going to see in an  
6 annexation or consolidation of the two districts that  
7 you could have -- benefit them.

8 MS. McFETRIDGE: Okay. Thank you. I wasn't --  
9 it wasn't very clear to me, so I appreciate that.  
10 Thank you.

11 MS. SMITH: Okay. So moving forward, in your  
12 folders or emailed to you, Document Number 1 -- what  
13 we tried to do was kind of looked everything up and  
14 pros and cons that we've kind of discussed in  
15 different scenarios; also tried to put the legal  
16 parameters on here. And then also we were asked at  
17 the last State Board meeting to make it very clear  
18 what were the decision points that the State Board of  
19 Education had to make. And so on each of the --  
20 Document Number 1, which you have, is the red, the  
21 green, the yellow, and the orange pages; you have  
22 loose pages in your folders. And those of you on  
23 Zoom it's Document Number 1 that was emailed to you.  
24 The gray box on this document here that's grayed out,  
25 those are the decision points by the Board. Okay.

1 Everything else are factors that help you make a  
2 decision, but those are your decision points. Okay.

3 So, first, with local control -- if you look at  
4 the legal parameters for local control -- and again I  
5 would ask Ms. Freno and Ms. Salas-Ford, if there's --  
6 if I stray in any way, you're welcome to tackle me.  
7 Okay?

8 The legal parameters for local control -- one,  
9 the Commissioner has to make a recommendation that  
10 the District has met criteria and DESE has to certify  
11 in writing that the District has resolved indicators  
12 for their fiscal classification. I can tell you that  
13 under fiscal classification DESE cannot certify in  
14 writing that they have met those due to the declining  
15 balance and the Commissioner at this time is not  
16 making a recommendation to return to local control.

17 Is that correct?

18 SECRETARY KEY: Correct.

19 MS. SMITH: So with that, has the District met  
20 the above criteria? If yes, they can be returned.  
21 If not, local control is not an option. And so  
22 because they've not met fiscal classification and  
23 because the recommendation is not being made local  
24 control is not an option.

25 So that takes us to the other three options for

1 the State Board, which include reconstitution,  
2 annexation, and consolidation.

3 So on reconstitution, which is the green  
4 heading, again what we've tried to do on this is pull  
5 out the pros and cons and I'm going to kind of  
6 highlight some for you. Now, again, I want to --  
7 it's one of those I want to apologize and I want to  
8 brag. I want to brag that we've given you so much  
9 information, but I want to apologize for anything  
10 that's in the incorrect place or misspelled or  
11 rushed. And as I'm going through it I keep seeing  
12 things that I go ewww, and so I apologize; like the  
13 word "trend" earlier I think had three n's in it or  
14 two n's and I didn't see it until it was on the big  
15 screen. So we'll work through those. So on  
16 reconstitution the State Board does have the  
17 authority to reconstitute and that would be a  
18 different form of governance. The suggestion or  
19 scenario that's been made would be to merge the  
20 central offices of Pine Bluff and Dollarway. That  
21 was a recommendation that would be made; there would  
22 be a decrease in expenditures which would result in  
23 some cost savings. A con for reconstitution is they  
24 do not have access to the consolidation or annexation  
25 funds that they would have available if you annexed

1 or consolidated. So the three-and-a-half million  
2 dollars over two years they would not have access to,  
3 so that's kind of a con for that. While merging the  
4 two central offices -- what we can tell you from this  
5 year, since we kind of have done that this year, we  
6 do have some fiscal savings with the Superintendent.  
7 And if they looked at continuing to do that we would  
8 look at other positions and shifting. However,  
9 there's still an inefficiency of serving two  
10 districts: there's two budgets, there's two federal  
11 reports, there's two -- there's two of everything. I  
12 mean I think we double-hit Ms. Warren up for  
13 signatures twice as much as any other Superintendent  
14 because she has to sign for two different districts  
15 on everything, and so there is a lack of efficiency  
16 in that manner as far as organization of running two  
17 different districts. The pros, it would remain as a  
18 separate district. They would maintain their  
19 identity and mascot, and that is something that we  
20 have heard about from the community. It goes back to  
21 this idea of their own elected board. Again, a con  
22 for that, and one I think that has kind of been  
23 brought up even through the stakeholder feedback  
24 within the first round, there were those who  
25 expressed concern that the lack of qualified

1 candidates stepping up and actually participating in  
2 a state -- in a board. And we ourselves have  
3 struggled, again trying to get participation and  
4 engagement on that forefront when we talk just to  
5 Dollarway as standalone. So, again, that is a --  
6 would be a con moving forward. So, that kind of  
7 talks about reconstitution, and again these are your  
8 sheets for you guys to look at and kind of look at  
9 the different ones.

10 Let me move you to annexation so I can kind of  
11 pull up the high points for you on annexation. That  
12 has the yellow at the top. And again I want to --  
13 Lauren is on line with WestEd, and Lauren again did a  
14 lot of work on this document with the team.

15 So, Lauren, at any time you want to step in or  
16 holler feel free to.

17 With annexation the proposal has been to  
18 consider the annexation with the Pine Bluff School  
19 District. Again, both districts are under state  
20 authority. So if you annexed Pine Bluff -- or  
21 Dollarway with Pine Bluff it would resume under state  
22 authority; so the Commissioner could remain the  
23 appointed board. Pine Bluff School District will  
24 remain under state authority -- or could potentially  
25 remain under state authority until 2023. As far as

1 millage rates for finance and operations, millage  
2 rates would remain the same in each of the districts.  
3 There would not be an adjustment unless there was a  
4 vote to adjust the millage rates. Pine Bluff School  
5 District would receive approximately three-and-a-half  
6 million dollars over the next two years for the  
7 annexation. There would still need -- and I want to  
8 say this -- under every scenario there will probably,  
9 most likely be some type of reduction in force at  
10 some point just to -- getting the budgets in line  
11 from where we are now with the deficit spending.

12 Let's see if there's anything else I want to  
13 pull out to you.

14 Implication for stakeholders -- in the first  
15 round, you know, we did hear many positive comments,  
16 especially from those that were currently in the  
17 district and children in the district, of  
18 Superintendent Warren; so the continuity of having  
19 Superintendent Warren being able to be, again, the  
20 Superintendent for a single district, and both of  
21 them together, and that continuity continuing. Also  
22 under annexation the Dollarway School campuses could  
23 remain open as long as they are financially viable.  
24 And I know just within discussions within the  
25 Department there would be no plans to close any of

1           these buildings for next school year. And then for  
2           future, beyond that, it would be a local decision  
3           within the Pine Bluff School District to determine  
4           which buildings would remain open and which would be  
5           closed. But there's nothing that says that the  
6           campuses in Dollarway have to close -- and there are  
7           a lot of times people automatically think that has to  
8           happen, and so that does not. There is the cost  
9           savings associated with the closure of campuses, so I  
10          want everybody to recognize that. So when you talk  
11          about significant to moderate to minimal cost savings  
12          that comes in the packages of consolidating of  
13          campuses, reduction in force; and so those are  
14          decisions that would have to be made on a local level  
15          on how to get the budget in line.

16                 And, Ms. Warren, in a little bit I'll probably  
17          ask you to speak to some of that.

18                 So those are kind of the high points on  
19          annexation.

20                 Consolidation is that fourth sheet with the  
21          orange bar at the top. So under consolidation you'd  
22          be creating an entirely new district. Again, the  
23          proposal or recommendation that we are considering --  
24          or asking you to consider is that with Pine Bluff.  
25          The pros again would be moderate to significant cost

1 savings. The resulting district again would get the  
2 three-and-a-half million annexation funds over the  
3 next two years. What it does not guarantee is it  
4 does not guarantee that -- the Superintendent  
5 leadership, because you would be creating a new  
6 district. You would also be setting forth a new  
7 board and they would not remain under state control  
8 unless we brought the District back to you guys as a  
9 new district based on criteria that I'm not a  
10 hundred-percent sure what it would be yet; so if  
11 they'd be placed in Level 5. So those are some of  
12 those unclear factors if we were to start a new  
13 district. It would be very difficult to say  
14 consolidate, brand-new district, and all of a sudden  
15 they're in Level 5 support with an appointed board;  
16 so most likely it would be an elected board. Okay.

17 MS. WOODS: Yeah, I have a quick question.

18 MS. SMITH: Yes.

19 MS. WOODS: Under annexation, does the timeline  
20 start over for the Districts?

21 MS. SMITH: So under annexation what would  
22 happen is it would be -- since Dollarway would be --  
23 just be assumed by Pine Bluff it would stay within  
24 the Pine Bluff timeline.

25 MS. WOODS: Okay. Thank you.

1 MS. FRENO: (Nodding head up and down.)

2 MS. SMITH: I'm getting head-nods from my --

3 So I'm just going to kind of pause there because  
4 I've given you a lot of information. These sheets  
5 really are just to kind of pull up the high points  
6 for you, let you kind of start processing some  
7 decision points. If you look at the decision points  
8 for you, it is which option would you choose and then  
9 how is the board established. So if you were looking  
10 at -- if what feels comfortable to you is the  
11 Commissioner remaining in authority, the only one for  
12 that is annexation. If what's comfortable for you is  
13 a brand-new board, new district, that's  
14 consolidation. If it's an appointed board, you could  
15 be looking at reconstitution or annexation. So on  
16 that last sheet I tried to put the bubbles -- and  
17 WestEd -- we tried to take some of those points and  
18 align them to the different options for you.

19 So again this is a working session for you to  
20 kind of start processing this and asking questions.

21 MS. CHAMBERS: Stacy, this is Susan. Could I  
22 ask a question about -- if the Department -- do you  
23 yet have a recommendation that you're making to us?  
24 That's my first question. Or that's something that  
25 we'll come to a conclusion on as we go through the

1 working session?

2 MS. SMITH: I think if -- the recommendation I  
3 think that we would probably have at this time would  
4 be annexation. I feel like that's probably the most  
5 benefit to the District as far as the funding, the  
6 incentive funding; I also feel like the continuity of  
7 district leadership with Ms. Warren; I also feel like  
8 that the ability to keep the Dollarway campuses open  
9 right now without them losing their identity and the  
10 continued progress. While they have not met all  
11 their exit criteria, there has been significant  
12 progress made, especially in the last three years.

13 I'm not going to say in the first two progress  
14 wasn't made, because you changed climate and culture.  
15 I mean you did lots of work there.

16 And again I want to remind you that Ms. Warren  
17 is here if you guys would like to hear from her.

18 MS. CHAMBERS: Yes. The second question I had  
19 that's related to that -- and it ties back to some of  
20 the verbatim comments we were talking about earlier  
21 -- I know this is a little unusual because Pine Bluff  
22 is under state authority. But what point of view  
23 does that community get to bring to bear on these  
24 decisions given the implications for them?

25 MS. SMITH: So within the Pine Bluff community

1           you had kind of two different organized groups who  
2           have been talking about the school districts and  
3           different matters. You've had Go Forward Pine Bluff,  
4           who just recently released a report that's kind of  
5           encouraging consolidation of actually several  
6           districts that goes well beyond what we're talking  
7           about today.

8           You know, again Ms. Warren is here today; she  
9           could probably speak to some of that if you guys  
10          would like to hear from her.

11          MS. CHAMBERS: When it's appropriate, I'd sure  
12          like to hear how Pine Bluff feels about all this. I  
13          think we've heard some of it. But if annexation is  
14          the direction that we're leaning in, I just want to  
15          make sure we understand the implications for them.

16          MS. SMITH: And I know -- so Ms. Warren has I  
17          think --

18          Ms. Warren, you've talked to your Pine Bluff  
19          administration and stakeholders and you've talked to  
20          Dollarway folks; is that correct?

21          SUPT. WARREN: That's correct.

22          MS. SMITH: Yeah. Do you want to make some  
23          comments?

24          Is that okay, Ms. Dean?

25          CHAIRMAN DEAN: Yes.

1 MS. SMITH: Okay.

2 SUPT. WARREN: Good morning, all. I really want  
3 to say, if I may, that I appreciate this opportunity  
4 to be here and, of course, to speak and share. This  
5 is a very interesting time. And so I'll speak  
6 directly to what I've been asked. I did prepare my  
7 heart to share today.

8 And so specific to the stakeholders, not only,  
9 as you saw with WestEd, did the opportunities be  
10 presented for stakeholders to share, but I've also  
11 tried to make certain that I had conversations with  
12 Dollarway leadership, with the Dollarway staff via  
13 sharing the link and pushing that out -- and actually  
14 had a conversation, like I say, with leadership.  
15 It's been the agenda for Dollarway for the last few  
16 meetings, an agenda item in our monthly meetings.

17 With the Pine Bluff School District I felt that  
18 it was important to make certain that they were aware  
19 as well, so it hasn't been to that same degree. But  
20 even with the most recent actions, there was the  
21 letter, of course, from Attorney Freno on behalf of  
22 the Department. I shared when we received that  
23 information with the Pine Bluff School District; I  
24 shared exactly that they've been named. And so --

25 MS. SMITH: Ms. Warren --

1 SUPT. WARREN: I'm sorry?

2 MS. SMITH: -- can I get you to come up here so  
3 you would be on camera?

4 SUPT. WARREN: Sure, I'd be happy to.

5 MS. SMITH: Come on up here.

6 MR. DAN DAVIS: You're not joined to Zoom, so  
7 the people on Zoom aren't seeing you; they're only  
8 hearing you. Do you want to keep the PowerPoint up?

9 SUPT. WARREN: Uh-huh.

10 So I shared with the Pine Bluff School District  
11 to take an opportunity to let them know that that  
12 letter had come to the District. And so I send out  
13 Monday Messages to both districts every Monday for my  
14 Monday focus message, and I shared that with them.  
15 And then in the recent information shared that Round  
16 2/Phase 2 with WestEd -- I shared that information,  
17 of course, with both districts as well and did ask  
18 for feedback, even from the Pine Bluff School  
19 District. I've had opportunity to discuss this with  
20 the cabinet level at the Pine Bluff School District  
21 and we talked about a variety of things associated  
22 with it. So there I believe has been some  
23 opportunity for Pine Bluff as well.

24 What I'll share with you right now is kind of  
25 anecdotal. I don't have a dataset to refer to or an

1 official survey. And so, just as Ms. Smith shared,  
2 Go Forward Pine Bluff has been a part of the  
3 conversation. And I'd be remiss not to say that it's  
4 really the NAACP and that Go Forward Pine Bluff  
5 helped to power the opportunity to get stakeholder  
6 feedback around what everybody has called  
7 consolidation. And a lot of education has taken  
8 place with how the Department has rolled out these  
9 pieces to say these are the four options and this is  
10 what it means. But basically the community has been  
11 talking about consolidation as a concept; so a lot of  
12 education, again, has gone forward. What I would say  
13 is the District -- from an anecdotal standpoint,  
14 people felt that just my being placed there spoke to  
15 possibilities. And as we've had conversations -- I  
16 mean we've been together a long time in that  
17 community, working as regional schools, the Arkansas  
18 River Education Service Cooperative, working together  
19 as superintendents, and working together as teachers  
20 who are, you know, elbow-to-elbow in professional  
21 development activities. Ms. Newton, you know how we  
22 do all that in that area. And so it hasn't -- I  
23 would say it's not the strangest thing for Pine Bluff  
24 to consider. And it's -- we've tried to be as  
25 transparent as possible as early as we could be.

1           If I had to say how they feel, I'm not  
2           comfortable saying to you that. I've again not  
3           surveyed, but I've heard from many people who have  
4           talked about the potential benefits of our coming  
5           together. And if I had to say to you there have been  
6           some negative comments made to me, there actually  
7           have not been.

8           So that's what I'd share with you related to  
9           Pine Bluff School District's perspective.

10          Yes, sir.

11          SECRETARY KEY: Ms. Warren, thank you. And, you  
12          know, thank you again for being willing to take on  
13          this very unique role of Superintendent of two  
14          districts. And I can't think of anybody better to  
15          have handled it, and can't even imagine, you know,  
16          the issue with Covid that we're all dealing with and,  
17          you know, having two separate districts and all. But  
18          that's one of the things I want to talk to you about  
19          or ask you about from the community's standpoint.

20          In my conversations with the mayor -- you know,  
21          Mayor Washington and some of the other community  
22          leaders down there, one of the benefits is the fact  
23          that, you know, you have the Pine Bluff School  
24          District and Dollarway School District, but they  
25          exist -- obviously, Dollarway goes into rural

1 Jefferson County but much of it also exists within  
2 the footprint of the city of Pine Bluff and -- for  
3 the purposes of city planning, the purposes of the  
4 economic development, and those types of things,  
5 things that as a Department we don't really delve  
6 into. But what they have -- what I have had  
7 communicated to me is that they see this as an  
8 opportunity for more efficient planning, more  
9 efficient community development, economic development  
10 -- all those things that they're working so hard in  
11 the Pine Bluff area to be able to attract people, to  
12 get people to stay in Pine Bluff, to attract new  
13 residents to come to Pine Bluff.

14 So when we're thinking in this work session  
15 setting about the pros and cons, I mean talk to me a  
16 little bit about those conversations that you have  
17 had with the leaders -- community leaders down there.

18 SUPT. WARREN: Yes, sir. There are a variety of  
19 stakeholders. And I should say to you that while the  
20 numbers for -- the number of stakeholders who are  
21 sharing definitely are not what we want them to be,  
22 there are so many dedicated people in the greater  
23 Pine Bluff area, in both districts, and people who  
24 show up to love on both districts. And so, sir, as  
25 you said, it is a common thought that when you have

1 multiple school districts you have multiple expenses,  
2 and even among social services.

3 When you talked about the footprint, I am  
4 serving from both district offices. I have days when  
5 I'm at District Dollarway and I have days when I'm at  
6 District Pine Bluff. But literally the central  
7 office for the Pine Bluff School District is like  
8 three minutes away from the Dollarway buildings, if  
9 you're familiar with that side of town. And this is  
10 the case with Pine Bluff as well, the Greater Pine  
11 Bluff. But basically Pine Bluff and Dollarway are  
12 just right there on one another's lines. So when you  
13 provide services, when you provide supports, be it  
14 civil supports or other auxiliary -- Department of  
15 Human Services or what-have-you, you do have to make  
16 a decision to do the same thing twice and do very  
17 similar things twice. And so as similar we are -- as  
18 similar as we are, we find that we have a lot of  
19 transient students who kind of bounce back and forth,  
20 and oftentimes we have to make a lot of decisions  
21 together and do a lot of planning together anyway  
22 because often we're dealing with the same students.  
23 But as was mentioned with Go Forward Pine Bluff, I  
24 think Mayor Washington's perspective has been shared  
25 at different points. There are so many things that

1 we do now in duplicate that it has been expressed it  
2 would be easier -- and not even just the fiscal  
3 piece, but it would be easier if we could provide,  
4 coordinate, and connect services.

5 I should share with you that there have been  
6 times over the years that the Dollarway School  
7 District sometimes will be left out of some pieces.  
8 And I don't think it has just a huge negative effect,  
9 but there are many people even in that area who are  
10 still not clear about the fact that they're not the  
11 same district and that we have -- the number of  
12 districts that we have in that community area. So it  
13 has been -- you have to even acclimate people who  
14 come to provide services to the fact that you're not  
15 dealing with the same people. You even get calls  
16 from time to time of people who are looking for  
17 administrators relating to a student, to find, well,  
18 they're actually in the other district -- and that's  
19 prior to even this year.

20 So, yes, sir, there is a -- there's some common  
21 footprints, common services, common needs. And for a  
22 long time -- long, long time we just work together.  
23 We just work together.

24 DR. MOORE: Thank you for being here today. I  
25 have a few questions.

1           First, so we do have students that reside not in  
2 Pine Bluff city limits, that are north of the river  
3 -- and actually that number was smaller than I  
4 expected it to be. I think what we had was 94 at  
5 Altheimer and 17 north of that.

6           SUPT. WARREN: Uh-huh.

7           DR. MOORE: Do you have -- in working with those  
8 communities, are you -- what are you hearing from  
9 them?

10          SUPT. WARREN: So while it is smaller, of  
11 course, than it was, it's a huge percentage of the  
12 little over 900 students who were in the Dollarway  
13 School District. We have talked more with the  
14 leaders of those communities when we've had  
15 stakeholder meetings and conversations and  
16 opportunities -- and to be honest with you, Altheimer  
17 still feels such concern --

18          DR. MOORE: Uh-huh.

19          SUPT. WARREN: -- over the last combining. And  
20 the expressions that I'll say their mayor shares and  
21 then other community members that I may be connected  
22 to, be it church or otherwise, they just share they  
23 don't want that to happen again.

24          DR. MOORE: Uh-huh.

25          SUPT. WARREN: They don't want to -- it to

1           happen if they're left out, and they don't want it to  
2           be that the concerns or issues that they have are not  
3           raised. I've not heard anything per se that was "we  
4           would prefer this versus that," because there's also  
5           a sense that it's going to happen -- or whatever does  
6           happen -- and our voices might not be as loud. And  
7           that's why it was really important to me, when I had  
8           the opportunity to collaborate with Ms. Smith and Ms.  
9           Whitlow and, of course, Secretary Key, that it happen  
10          in a way where their voices were heard and an  
11          opportunity to speak, to connect, to be a part of the  
12          process -- whether only one person or not -- that  
13          that was made available. Because at another time in  
14          specifically the communities north of us, north of  
15          the river, when it happened before they just kind of  
16          woke up and that's where it was. I can't speak to  
17          every event.

18                 DR. MOORE: Uh-huh.

19                 SUPT. WARREN: I'm not -- it's not an indictment  
20                 on anybody who was in leadership at the time. But  
21                 that's what that community has shared, and has shared  
22                 every opportunity they get.

23                 DR. MOORE: That makes sense. I think because  
24                 of that, their past, it will certainly take a lot  
25                 more -- more conversations as we go down this road.

1           Probably shifting gears from that, we've talked  
2 a lot about Dollarway's fiscal state. What about  
3 Pine Bluff? I don't know if the Department has any  
4 data on that or you just want to speak in general  
5 about Pine Bluff's budget and overall fiscal state?

6           SUPT. WARREN: I can speak generally. Pine  
7 Bluff over the very brief amount of time under Dr.  
8 Owoh's leadership did some great things when it came  
9 down to impacting the fiscal footprint, reducing  
10 their budget by a great amount. And you all can  
11 correct me; those numbers might not be quite accurate  
12 for me, but like millions of dollars. And that was  
13 done with reduction-of-force and closure and sale of  
14 buildings and a variety of things that impact the  
15 efficiency of the Pine Bluff School District. So  
16 fiscally the District is definitely in a much better  
17 place than it had been. And then, like I say, just a  
18 short time ago major strides were made to do that.

19           DR. MOORE: So in Dollarway you're operating  
20 three campuses; is that correct?

21           SUPT. WARREN: Yes, ma'am.

22           DR. MOORE: How many campuses are there in Pine  
23 Bluff?

24           SUPT. WARREN: There are six campuses in Pine  
25 Bluff and that includes a pre-K center.

1 DR. MOORE: Okay. So how many elementary,  
2 what's the breakdown on that?

3 SUPT. WARREN: The breakdown for -- there are  
4 about 1,000 -- 800 to -- well, a little over 800; I'm  
5 going to say about 900 high school students. There  
6 are about 180 pre-K students. And I apologize I  
7 didn't have the information --

8 DR. MOORE: That's okay.

9 SUPT. WARREN: -- for you. There are roughly,  
10 elementary students, a little under 1,000. And then  
11 the balance would be Jack Robey --

12 DR. MOORE: Okay.

13 SUPT. WARREN: -- as those three elementary  
14 campuses are operating. One is a little bit larger  
15 than the rest, but a little over 400; and then -- so  
16 around 300 or so for the other two.

17 DR. MOORE: Okay.

18 SUPT. WARREN: Uh-huh. I can get better numbers  
19 for you.

20 DR. MOORE: Well, and they actually gave us --  
21 because I think I'd asked last meeting about the pre-  
22 K numbers. And I was very surprised; it looks like  
23 there's a lot of open slots in all the pre-K centers  
24 in the county. Is that because of Covid or is that  
25 typical?

1 SUPT. WARREN: Yes, ma'am.

2 DR. MOORE: Okay.

3 SUPT. WARREN: Absolutely.

4 DR. MOORE: Okay. And so I expect whatever  
5 post-Covid looks like those numbers would be -- go up  
6 again?

7 SUPT. WARREN: Oh, yes. Both Dollarway and Pine  
8 Bluff have robust pre-K programs. And, yes, it's  
9 definitely due to Covid.

10 DR. MOORE: Is there -- and kindergarten in both  
11 districts, is enrollment down this year or has it  
12 changed?

13 SUPT. WARREN: Kindergarten did have a little  
14 uptick, but it's -- the numbers have held pretty  
15 decently in kindergarten.

16 DR. MOORE: Okay. Okay. Thank you.

17 SUPT. WARREN: You're welcome. Thank you.

18 MS. McFETRIDGE: I have a question. I noticed  
19 that there was a Pinecrest Technical School at one  
20 time in the Dollarway District. Can you talk a  
21 little bit about why that school was closed? We're  
22 seeing more districts come to us asking for a  
23 conversion charter to kind of have a school -- a  
24 technical school. I'm just curious about that.

25 SUPT. WARREN: So actually that was not a

1 technical school; Pinecrest was one of the other  
2 grade centers several years ago. But what was the  
3 Pinecrest Technical School is SEARK now, and so at  
4 one point you had that. So we have a Jefferson Area  
5 Technical Career Center that all of the districts in  
6 Jefferson County consort to provide CTE programming  
7 to students. But that was actually one of the grade  
8 centers in the Dollarway School District that was  
9 closed quite a while ago.

10 MS. McFETRIDGE: Okay. All right. Thank you.

11 SUPT. WARREN: Uh-huh. Yes, ma'am.

12 MS. NEWTON: Ms. Warren, I know you've been  
13 giving thought to what possibilities might happen  
14 from all of this. Have you given any thought to what  
15 innovations that might -- because of the funding from  
16 the casino and the funding that would come possibly  
17 from a consolidation or annexation have you given any  
18 thought to what possible innovations might come from  
19 this as an opportunity?

20 SUPT. WARREN: Yes, more from the place of just  
21 getting excited about possibilities for the entire  
22 community. So the funds from the casino, as was  
23 mentioned, will, you know, by-and-large support the  
24 Pine Bluff School District as they are in their tax  
25 zone. When we think about innovation it's hard not

1 to get excited because you -- and then when you're --  
2 when I support both districts I think about what  
3 maybe one district has that could benefit -- or even  
4 ask the question, "oh, my, if we had this here, or  
5 that." So there have been conversations about  
6 innovation; there have been conversations about, you  
7 know, virtual academies; there have been  
8 conversations about magnet school settings, been  
9 conversations about conversion charters. There's  
10 just -- but it's of course just conversations. But,  
11 yes, we talked a great deal about how we could, you  
12 know, use innovative ways to really do some things in  
13 Pine Bluff that have never been done; so yes.

14 MS. NEWTON: What impact do you think that would  
15 have on academics for both Dollarway and Pine Bluff?  
16 Because I think that's probably our -- one of my  
17 biggest concerns is what's the impact going to be on  
18 students and their academics and their opportunities  
19 to -- for the future to be prepared as they leave  
20 high school.

21 SUPT. WARREN: One of the immediate things that  
22 I know, if we don't do something for Dollarway we  
23 won't be able to afford to do more than we're doing.  
24 And even now with what we do we are at the point  
25 where we would have to cut services and cut teaching

1 opportunities that actually are already at what I saw  
2 in somebody's comments, "bare bones." We already  
3 don't have the layers of support and services. I  
4 mean, you know, we meet the standards and in some  
5 areas we've done some things that we're really proud  
6 of. But to be able to go beyond, Dollarway would not  
7 be able to. So it would be -- it would have a very  
8 negative impact if we don't do something major soon  
9 for Dollarway. For the community at-large we have  
10 the opportunity, depending on the direction, of  
11 course, you know, to look back and see what we have  
12 in both places that maybe the other needs. And of  
13 course the fiscal benefits -- people sometimes think  
14 that, well, we're talking about teaching and  
15 learning, so we can't talk about fiscal. But one of  
16 our greatest barriers, and huge to recruitment and  
17 retention, is that we don't pay people as much as  
18 they can get going right down the street. So fiscal  
19 becomes the dividing line for the quality educators  
20 and the quality administrators that you get. It  
21 makes a huge difference. So off-the-bat one huge  
22 thing that we would have to do is invest in how much  
23 we pay people. We will have to incentivize working  
24 under those conditions because by-the-way, although  
25 it's a phenomenal family, wonderful, great, there are

1 tough, tough conditions and especially without the  
2 appropriate services. So it would have a huge impact  
3 when it comes down to being able to recruit, retain,  
4 and even incentivize to get the other persons onboard  
5 that you really, really need. Both of the districts  
6 are at different stages, but close stages with the  
7 professional learning communities -- that word  
8 "process," and I'm a huge fan. Huge, huge component.  
9 It's the right direction for I think any school  
10 district, you know, not just our school districts.  
11 But it's the right direction and we are working along  
12 those lines. When you partner the efforts, and  
13 especially some of the persons that you have on both  
14 sides of the line when it comes down to the two  
15 districts, it will just create I think synergy, be in  
16 a position to improve and to increase the work and  
17 just to be able to go deeper in there. While if it's  
18 not handled well or if the next steps for either  
19 district are combined or what-have-you, whatever the  
20 case, some major changes have to happen I think in  
21 both districts for us to be able to meet the needs  
22 academically that we need to meet.

23 MS. NEWTON: And one last question: one of the  
24 things that has been mentioned is if we do  
25 consolidation or annexation there would still have to

1 be a reduction in staff. What are the thoughts and  
2 plans and --

3 MS. McFETRIDGE: I'm sorry, we can't hear Ouida.

4 MS. NEWTON: My mic went off. Let me try it  
5 again.

6 MS. McFETRIDGE: Can you start over --

7 MS. NEWTON: Yes.

8 MS. McFETRIDGE: -- Ouida?

9 MS. NEWTON: Yes, ma'am. Sorry.

10 One of the things that's been discussed is that  
11 if this happens either through annexation or  
12 consolidation there would have to be reduction in  
13 staff. What strategy are you going to use to bring  
14 the best staff to whatever results from this?

15 SUPT. WARREN: The first phase to me is looking  
16 internally and making certain everybody is on the  
17 right -- in the right seat on the bus. And there are  
18 gaps now in both districts, be it openings or  
19 situations where people are doing many jobs versus  
20 let's say the one or two jobs that they normally  
21 would. So internally making certain that efficiency  
22 is met and that, again, the right people are in place  
23 and the combining of some tasks and some pieces.

24 One of the things that I've actually done this  
25 year is in collaboration, which it's something that

1 we could've done and would've done because I think  
2 relationships among the districts have been great.  
3 But we always talk about, "hey, do you have one of  
4 these, because we need this." And so with choir --  
5 I'm sorry, not with choir -- with band and with  
6 orchestra we've been able to do that. One of the  
7 district leaders in the Pine Bluff School District is  
8 providing support in Dollarway where we have some  
9 gaps. That's not a strange thing to do already. But  
10 it would be that type of thing that you would make  
11 certain -- you make certain, you know, that  
12 efficiency and again the best people are in place to  
13 do the work. We have situations which you know well.  
14 To meet standards you have to have all of these  
15 offerings and we have to offer them separately in  
16 both places, where we may be able to just with the  
17 one take care of that need for both districts because  
18 of the numbers perhaps in those particular sections.  
19 So internal efficiency, internal placement to me is a  
20 Phase 1.

21 I dream about and think now that if certain  
22 decisions are made it would be possible to have a  
23 very robust recruitment and retention plan that ties  
24 to it incentives and the fiscal benefits that need to  
25 come to make our districts competitive, not only with

1 internal to our community but with communities  
2 abroad. Often people come -- and I'll use Dollarway  
3 as this example -- often people come and enjoy  
4 themselves and connect and they don't leave because  
5 they're leaving Dollarway; they leave because of  
6 opportunities, you know, within just minutes were so  
7 much better, or the opportunities in the community  
8 at-large for their spouse may have dried up, or there  
9 may be some challenge or some need that is not being  
10 met by where they are fiscally. So a robust  
11 opportunity to recruit and to retain and to  
12 incentivize teaching in our area, because it takes a  
13 whole lot more to do what we have to do in our  
14 community education-wise than it may in some other  
15 areas. That would be my hope and plan.

16 MS. McFETRIDGE: Dr. Warren, some states have  
17 really seen an improvement in student learning by  
18 combining and having a K-8 school. And I'm wondering  
19 what your thoughts are on that as far as combining  
20 Matthews Elementary and the Morehead Middle School  
21 there in Dollarway?

22 SUPT. WARREN: So I have heard and read some  
23 research to the same. I am a proponent of community  
24 schools in that your littlest ones need to live as  
25 close as they can to the schools that they attend.

1                   Specific to Robert Morehead and to James  
2                   Matthews, right now the numbers would not support  
3                   that in respect to the enrollment and to the capacity  
4                   those buildings have. I definitely think that K-8 is  
5                   a concept for sure, is one that could be and I'm sure  
6                   would be if numbers continued to decrease. And I am,  
7                   like I say, a proponent of especially K-8 elementary  
8                   students and middle students being near their  
9                   buildings.

10                  MS. McFETRIDGE: Is there any opportunity to  
11                  possibly have a pre-K center which would, you know,  
12                  give you more space at that school or --

13                  SUPT. WARREN: So I think you're peeking at my  
14                  -- at the dream. So James Matthews having a pre-K  
15                  center with the four classrooms that we have there,  
16                  one of the things that I would see, if everything  
17                  worked well and all approvals were in place, would be  
18                  to move those classrooms to the pre-K center that is  
19                  dedicated to pre-K work. And, yes, that would be a  
20                  major consideration.

21                  MS. McFETRIDGE: Okay. Thank you for that.

22                  SUPT. WARREN: Yes.

23                  DR. MOORE: Does either district in that case  
24                  enroll pre-K-3 or any ages below that?

25                  SUPT. WARREN: Yes. Yes, two -- two and up.

1 And at one time Dollarway did have a toddlers program  
2 -- infant and toddlers program.

3 DR. MOORE: And are those pre-K-4 teachers on  
4 the same pay-scale as the K-12 teachers?

5 SUPT. WARREN: They are.

6 DR. MOORE: Okay. Thank you.

7 SUPT. WARREN: That was really important to us.

8 MS. McFETRIDGE: Do you have partnerships  
9 involved in your pre-K programs?

10 SUPT. WARREN: Yes, we do. Our early childhood,  
11 special ed. services are provided through the  
12 consortium effort through our -- through ARESC, and  
13 of course they're ABC funded. And we have program  
14 components that are DHS supported and we connect with  
15 the other early childhood area supports and services.  
16 Very rich -- we have very, very rich programming and  
17 collaboratives among both the pre-K programs, both  
18 Dollarway and Pine Bluff.

19 MS. McFETRIDGE: Okay. Thank you.

20 SECRETARY KEY: Ms. Newton, you had asked  
21 earlier about, you know, possible innovations in  
22 that. Yeah, I think one of the opportunities that we  
23 have here is with the partnership with the Tribe and  
24 the casino operations -- not necessarily the casino  
25 itself, but they have a number of ancillary

1 operations. If you look at what they've done with  
2 the Downstream, it's -- the Quapaws have the  
3 Downstream Casino and Resort and they have  
4 established their own bison and cattle farm, and it's  
5 my understanding that they're looking at replicating  
6 some of that, maybe not the full-blown operation.  
7 But if you think about the area of Pine Bluff, you  
8 think about UAPB and their expertise in fisheries;  
9 you look at just ag-science in general and the  
10 opportunities that are possibly there with some of  
11 these partnerships. There are some of those things  
12 that really would be appealing that could keep kids  
13 and families, you know, from wanting to go somewhere  
14 else. I mean if a Pine Bluff/Dollarway District had  
15 -- you know, could taunt that we have the only  
16 partnership in these areas and give kids the  
17 opportunity to really be a part of that I think  
18 that's -- you know, looking out obviously in the  
19 crystal ball -- but '21, '22, '23, those are things  
20 that are going to come onboard in some fashion  
21 locally as a result of the casino. I think they also  
22 have farming operations; I'm not sure. I mean, but  
23 my reading of what they do with their restaurants is  
24 they really try to source locally; they try to source  
25 their own vegetables, you name it. I mean whatever

1           they cook in their kitchens they try to make sure  
2           that it's available from their farming operations.  
3           You know, that's not innovative; that's just taking  
4           advantage of the opportunities that are there and  
5           putting students in a situation where they're going  
6           to see and they're going to learn some things;  
7           they're going to get exposed to agriculture science;  
8           they're going to get exposed to, you know, fishery  
9           sciences, all those things -- and really that's some  
10          of the beauty of the opportunities that are out  
11          there. Now, again, it's hard for us because there  
12          are certain local actions that have to take place for  
13          that to happen. But I think in our -- you know, what  
14          we're looking at from the Department's standpoint and  
15          what I look at from the decision the State Board  
16          needs to make is what do we do -- and we've said this  
17          before with other state takeover districts that we're  
18          getting ready to turn back -- what can we do that  
19          gives them the best opportunity for success moving  
20          forward. And that's just, you know, some of the  
21          context that I think is out there locally that we  
22          need to keep in mind and find ways that we can help  
23          encourage that and facilitate that, if possible.

24                 MS. NEWTON: I think that's kind of my mindset  
25                 on this is instead of trying to look at -- and I

1 know, because of my history with small schools, the  
2 negative viewpoints that can come from that. But,  
3 you know, we can think of this as an opportunity to  
4 impact students' lives for the positive and to make  
5 sure they're prepared for what would be real life  
6 after -- and jobs and being able to support a family  
7 and go on and make an impact on -- not only on their  
8 family but then in the future on the community. And  
9 then that cycle of the community improving I think  
10 can start to happen. So, you know, I'm trying to  
11 look at it from the positive, as an opportunity  
12 rather than trying to focus on the negative.

13 SUPT. WARREN: If it's appropriate to comment,  
14 Secretary Key, there are a variety of different  
15 entities who are waiting on the districts to have the  
16 type of continuity of operations where they can get a  
17 foothold to support. And so we're really excited  
18 about those types of opportunities, like you  
19 mentioned, with the casino, the hospitality, you  
20 know, industry, and the programs of study that are  
21 starting in our local colleges. We have the  
22 University of Arkansas Pine Bluff, outstanding STEM  
23 program, and fisheries, like you talked about, and  
24 agri. Agri is not big in that area when you look at  
25 Pine Bluff, and so the why behind why it's not is

1 something that we have to answer. But there are  
2 different partnerships that are waiting to bloom that  
3 we often feel a stigma from "well, you know, what are  
4 y'all going to do?" You know, there may be the  
5 question about what's going to happen in those  
6 districts or what will -- and almost sometimes like  
7 people are waiting till decisions are made to decide  
8 how they'll invest. And it causes some uncertainty  
9 when it's not clear what the next steps are going to  
10 be.

11 I'm very happy that of course our education  
12 partners -- P-12, the, like I said, University of  
13 Arkansas Pine Bluff, SEARK is working in partnership  
14 with us directly related to a middle college concept  
15 and trying to make certain that that's onboard. We  
16 want students to graduate with their Associates and  
17 beyond; we want them to be in positions where those  
18 opportunities, like we're talking about, are in  
19 place. Continuity is a benefit for that. And so  
20 there's some opportunities, like you said.

21 I would be remiss not to tell you that there are  
22 a lot of heartstrings tied to all this with the  
23 community operating, you know, literally four school  
24 districts forever, for as long as they have. And the  
25 thought that there would be some loss -- some loss of

1           -- some loss is concerning, most definitely. But  
2           what we have to embrace is what is it that we need to  
3           do to make certain that we position our students to  
4           have the very best opportunities possible; what do we  
5           need to do to make certain that our teachers have  
6           access to the resources and that they can focus on  
7           teaching and learning, and our administrators the  
8           same. So I love what you said about the positive,  
9           because there are barriers and concerns; but I think  
10          that the people that we have in the room and the  
11          partners that we have, and even the untapped  
12          partnerships, I think together we can do a new thing  
13          that could do and make for very good, new, positive  
14          things for students.

15                 SECRETARY KEY: Ms. Warren, you know, we touched  
16          this morning on -- and we did at the last meeting --  
17          but, you know, the difficulty that we've had in  
18          getting participation, you know. And you mentioned  
19          the low participation, but you also mentioned that  
20          you don't have a shortage of people who are wanting  
21          to love on --

22                 SUPT. WARREN: Oh, yes.

23                 SECRETARY KEY: -- both districts. So it's --  
24          and I understand that. I mean it's a lot easier to  
25          put yourself out there when you think, you know,

1           you're having a direct impact on students or teachers  
2           and you're going to be engaged in that; that's  
3           exciting and the heart can get into that. The heart  
4           -- it's hard to get the heart into having a Zoom  
5           meeting to provide feedback and a public setting --  
6           and, you know, we know that; I mean that's been our  
7           experience here for a long time. So I'm not as  
8           concerned about the community involvement from that  
9           standpoint.

10           I do wonder if you could give us your insight on  
11           how long do you think -- I mean are we thinking maybe  
12           a year, two years? I mean at what point do you think  
13           there might be a level of readiness for engagement  
14           in, you know, either an appointed board, an elected  
15           board, that sort of thing, based on the conversations  
16           you've been having in the community -- and the  
17           readiness of the school? Because there's also that  
18           element of -- and I'm sorry to add to it -- but the  
19           readiness of the work that you're doing in the school  
20           of taking two districts that have been in difficult  
21           places and moving them to better places; and then,  
22           the layer of the local control element.

23           SUPT. WARREN: Yes, sir. So a very loaded  
24           question, sir, and I'm happy to answer it. One of  
25           the things that I've tried to be, and you all have

1 positioned me to be able to do so, and that is to be  
2 transparent and direct; so I'm going to take the  
3 opportunity to do that.

4 It's not a matter of not having persons in the  
5 community who are ready to help govern and lead; it's  
6 not a matter of that. Now I won't say that our  
7 numbers are as high all over; you have pockets of  
8 people, pockets of professionals who live in some  
9 areas, pockets of persons who may not be. And so I  
10 don't -- it's not a matter of my saying that my  
11 community doesn't have an adequate number of people  
12 to govern and support. And you might say I feel this  
13 way because it's me. But we often have people very  
14 concerned about local control -- very concerned, and  
15 I really think it's tied to the climate of what's  
16 just going on in the world, the challenges that local  
17 districts have had. And so I do think there are  
18 people who are ready. I do think there are people  
19 who are ready who do a whole lot of stuff already,  
20 they're on a bunch of boards, they are very engaged  
21 and connected to a lot of things, and the time and  
22 opportunity to do another thing could even be a  
23 challenge.

24 So when you say the amount of time, I think the  
25 best opportunity when you do something new anyway is

1 to prepare for it. And so to me I think that we  
2 would need to position ourselves to give everybody in  
3 the community an opportunity for courses or workshops  
4 connected to governance and what the roles look like,  
5 as well as maybe special appointed persons who are  
6 targeted to provide those types of supports and that  
7 type of work. I don't have a good answer for the  
8 "how long." But I will say when I look out at the  
9 timeline for the Pine Bluff School District is the  
10 hope that we will do what we need to do to exit  
11 earlier than that. But we know that with the  
12 timeline we're in the Department's care till 2023; a  
13 time where we map out a trajectory for, again,  
14 supporting an entire community because that would be  
15 a benefit everywhere. People serve on a lot of  
16 boards in all kind of places. But what we -- you  
17 know, maybe ask for some leadership from our -- from  
18 DESE, Department of Ed, ASBA to provide support in  
19 general throughout the community, and then, like I  
20 say, those targeted persons. That timeline is going  
21 to go really fast, just a couple or few years. I'm  
22 not comfortable saying "oh, we'll be ready X-year."  
23 But I think that there are people who can be ready to  
24 be trained and to be prepared, you know, as early as  
25 in a year.

1           What makes this really loaded is this next thing  
2           I'm going to say and that is this is a hard job. I'm  
3           happy to do it. Happy to do it. I feel like I'm  
4           supposed to do it; feel like I'm uniquely qualified  
5           -- and not necessarily I'm the best person to do it,  
6           but, you know, I know a couple of things about this  
7           and what's going on in this area. I know one day  
8           someone who is -- who has a whole lot more than I've  
9           got and who knows a lot more than I know -- but what  
10          I see potentially my role as being, sir, is to get it  
11          situated for the next level, and that's going to mean  
12          reducing the distractions as much as possible. And  
13          please don't take it ugly, anyone listening, for me  
14          to say that local support is a distraction; local  
15          distraction is not a distraction. But if there's  
16          another layer of governance that requires a huge  
17          amount of attention of the administrators, the  
18          teachers, the families, and even of the supporters  
19          who come around us, then it will be even harder to do  
20          this very hard work that we have to do. So I just  
21          would ask that there would be a time where there  
22          would not be -- whether I'm at the helm or whether I  
23          would not be that there would be a time when the  
24          Department -- the school or schools are still in the  
25          care of the Department so that that level of

1 distraction -- because to do that well and to serve a  
2 board the way you need to serve them and give them  
3 information they need and to position them to make  
4 the decisions they need to make, that's a work and  
5 it's an honorable work and it's one that I want our  
6 school districts to be in a position to do one day.  
7 I will just say we're not there yet to be able to do  
8 that; maybe not so much of the community can. But I  
9 don't think the District is even yet where it needs  
10 to be to provide and do and to collaborate as it  
11 needs to. So it would be an ask to me that -- a year  
12 or more, especially for a new landscape, that the  
13 District not have that other work to do.

14 SECRETARY KEY: Okay. Thank you.

15 SUPT. WARREN: Yes, sir.

16 MS. CHAMBERS: Ms. Smith, I don't want to be  
17 redundant, but I do want to be redundant to something  
18 that Secretary Key said. Superintendent Warren, we  
19 are so lucky to have you in that role. And thank  
20 you. Thank you.

21 SUPT. WARREN: Thank you.

22 MS. SMITH: Yeah. If we could start a CTE thing  
23 on cloning we'd start with Ms. Warren, wouldn't we?  
24 Just -- she's pretty good.

25 Okay. So are there any other questions or

1 points?

2 One thing that I do want to just kind of  
3 piggyback on, what a lot of you were talking about,  
4 about projecting for the future and innovations and  
5 ideas and things to come -- that is a role that we  
6 see ourselves at OCSS -- that that's part of our job  
7 to also do is not only should we be creating an  
8 action plan about how to get the District out of  
9 state takeover, but we should be creating an action  
10 plan on what their future is going to look like. And  
11 so with whatever decision is made at the December  
12 10th board meeting, from that point -- and Ms.  
13 Warren, Sheila, and I, we all talk about this  
14 frequently -- what's next; you know, what are the  
15 community partnerships, you know, and is that the way  
16 to start bringing in the community to start actively  
17 being involved on the what's-next part. Maybe  
18 they're not the appointed board at this point, but  
19 maybe they're the working committee on pre-K or the  
20 working committee on, you know, community pathways or  
21 mental health supports, and we start there with those  
22 working groups. And so I think there's roles there.

23 Dee, I wish you would've worn the shirt with the  
24 zebra and the cardinal sitting on it. There are  
25 people in Dollarway who walk around with t-shirts and

1           bags and there's a coffee mug -- I think she has one  
2           -- that literally has the Pine Bluff zebra with the  
3           Dollarway cardinal sitting on the head. And so while  
4           this is an emotional decision, there are lots of  
5           things going in the right direction and there were a  
6           lot of people -- do you have it? Do you have -- look  
7           at this. Yeah.

8           SUPT. WARREN: If I may, this was actually a  
9           gift, when I was first named, that persons at one of  
10          the schools -- they got together and, like I said,  
11          made shirts, coffee mugs. It was so overwhelming for  
12          me; I was so amazed. Dollarway was so supportive.  
13          They were excited for me. They were excited that I  
14          had this opportunity. And, like I say, literally  
15          members said -- it says Two Districts, One Leader  
16          Barbara J. Warren, Pine Bluff Strong. I didn't do  
17          this, y'all. I didn't do this. But, yes.

18          MS. SMITH: So there is momentum with some type  
19          of annexation or consolidation, and there are  
20          advantages and disadvantages to all the scenarios  
21          we've laid out. I am just going to say again as far  
22          as the Department looking at it and looking at the  
23          incentive funding, looking at some type of identity  
24          still remaining within an annexation, we do think  
25          that's probably the direction we'd encourage you to

1 look at and ask questions. I am available for any --  
2 if you want to individually sit down and talk or have  
3 questions about something, I'm more than happy to do  
4 that with you.

5 Ms. Dean, do you have anything else today that  
6 you need to ask or for me to cover?

7 MS. DEAN: No.

8 MS. SMITH: Okay.

9 SECRETARY KEY: Let's see if Legal can help us  
10 with this. One of the options that has been laid out  
11 for the Board is the -- keeping open the Dollarway  
12 campuses. And given the feedback -- you know, Ms.  
13 Warren was -- you know, talked about the Altheimer  
14 situation and all that. I would -- I wonder if Legal  
15 could give us some -- give the Board a sense of if  
16 part of their action was to say annexation but  
17 leaving the campuses open for a period of time or  
18 operating for a period of time -- if y'all could talk  
19 about, you know, what those options might be. What  
20 are the Board's limitations, if any, with respect to  
21 those types of operational questions?

22 MS. FRENO: Lori Freno.

23 Is this the right microphone, guys?

24 Lori Freno, Department of Education.

25 There are -- I mean there are options. There

1 are options for that type of thing.

2 I lost my train of thought. Could you help me?

3 I'm sorry.

4 SECRETARY KEY: I'll just give you a --

5 MS. FRENO: Real small.

6 SECRETARY KEY: Well, I'm going to give you a  
7 scenario and -- if you say -- so if the Board wanted  
8 to say, okay, we -- you know, we approve annexation  
9 of the two districts, of Dollarway into Pine Bluff  
10 District, with the stipulation that the Dollarway  
11 campuses remain open for X-period of years --

12 MS. FRENO: Yes.

13 SECRETARY KEY: -- just as a -- just kind of  
14 throwing that out there --

15 MS. FRENO: Thank you.

16 SECRETARY KEY: -- not as a recommendation, but  
17 just as a thought point for y'all.

18 MS. FRENO: Yeah, and that certainly would be  
19 allowed. The State Board has a lot of authority when  
20 it comes to annexations and consolidations. So they  
21 -- the State Board certainly could do something like  
22 that. You know, when you look back -- if you look  
23 back at all the different annexations and  
24 consolidations that took place, something I thought  
25 was very interesting was oftentimes there's an

1 annexation but they adopted both names. You know, a  
2 campus was left open in Weiner and a campus was left  
3 open in Harrisburg, and they both kept their own  
4 mascots. I mean that's something I think that's  
5 important to remember is the State Board does have a  
6 broad authority when it is making decisions  
7 concerning annexations and consolidations.

8 SECRETARY KEY: As I recall, Emerson-Taylor-  
9 Bradley used to be Emerson and Taylor and Bradley,  
10 and over the years -- I don't think it all happened  
11 at the same time; I think over years.

12 MS. FRENO: Yeah, that was another one. It was  
13 Emerson-Taylor, and then Bradley annexed; so now it's  
14 Emerson-Taylor-Bradley.

15 SECRETARY KEY: Right.

16 MS. FRENO: And we have -- I mean there are  
17 several -- there were several annexations where the  
18 name actually changed.

19 SECRETARY KEY: And I guess the difference  
20 sometimes is that the State Board has approved  
21 annexations or consolidations but has left the  
22 decisions on campuses -- you know, whether they keep  
23 them open or not -- to a local board. But in this  
24 case -- unique case that we were saying potentially  
25 annexation to another state takeover district, then

1           that decision-making still resides in the Board. So  
2           then that helps give a little more authority, I  
3           guess, or understanding that they -- the Board has  
4           more -- could be more specific in their order, I  
5           guess.

6           MS. FRENO: Absolutely.

7           SECRETARY KEY: Okay.

8           MS. FRENO: I mean that authority lies both with  
9           the Board and it would lie with the new  
10          administration of the new school district. But  
11          certainly it would lie with the Board, if that's what  
12          the Board so chose.

13          SECRETARY KEY: All right. Thank you.

14          DR. MOORE: I do have a lingering question, so  
15          -- and I don't know who it's for. But when we look  
16          at the incentive funding for the annexation/  
17          consolidation, is there strings attached with that  
18          money? What can that money be spent on?

19          MS. SMITH: There are some -- go ahead.

20          SECRETARY KEY: Well, my understanding is that  
21          is unrestricted funds that is very generally -- you  
22          know, the legislation gave great flexibility to  
23          districts to cover -- [clearing throat] -- excuse me  
24          -- cover costs that would be associated with the  
25          annexation or consolidation process. It is -- it is

1 an incentive that was established to try and  
2 alleviate some of the concerns that you've heard  
3 voiced or concerns that we've experienced in Arkansas  
4 for the last nearly 20 years -- well, over 20 years  
5 since the first round of consolidations that --  
6 modern consolidations, in 1983, I think.

7 MS. SMITH: Yeah.

8 SECRETARY KEY: So, but it's very -- it's not  
9 very specific on how that money can be used.

10 DR. MOORE: Would there be a way -- you know, I  
11 don't think it could be before next month, but -- to  
12 make sure that money is spent -- not just folded into  
13 the budget, treated like anything else, but treated  
14 truly to benefit the community because of this  
15 annexation, if that makes sense?

16 SECRETARY KEY: I don't think that would fall  
17 under the Board's authority to do that. But I can  
18 guarantee you that we would work very closely with  
19 our finance -- Fiscal Support office, Mrs. Warren,  
20 and the fiscal team at the district level to make  
21 sure that it didn't just become absorbed and used as  
22 a way to prop the normal up until, you know --

23 DR. MOORE: You wouldn't want to do that because  
24 then you wouldn't have it in three years, and that --

25 SECRETARY KEY: Exactly. We wouldn't -- we

1 would want to make sure that this -- over the two-  
2 year period that the -- the two-year period that this  
3 money was available that it would be used in a way  
4 that again helps prepare the district for future  
5 success. I just -- I want to keep coming back to  
6 that. I mean every decision would have to be made in  
7 the context of what are we doing to make sure this  
8 district has potential for longer-term success.

9 MS. NEWTON: So as I'm thinking about  
10 annexation/consolidation, that would be another plus  
11 on the annexation side because we would have a little  
12 bit of -- the Department would have say-so in that  
13 money; but if we went consolidation that would be up  
14 to the local district, the local board?

15 SECRETARY KEY: Yes. With consolidation you'd  
16 be creating a brand-new district that would have a  
17 birth-date as of whatever date y'all set, probably  
18 July 1. And then it would, you know, have its own  
19 governance structure and everything else that would  
20 be developed.

21 MS. SMITH: And currently, so with annexation  
22 they -- Pine Bluff School District is considered  
23 fiscal distress, and so working with the fiscal  
24 distress office, continuing. We could set up its own  
25 source code for those funds and we could track over

1 the years how those funds were utilized.

2 MS. NEWTON: But that could only be done through  
3 annexation?

4 MS. SMITH: Yes.

5 DR. MOORE: Thank you.

6 MS. SMITH: Any other questions?

7 So I'm going to correct all spelling errors on  
8 all documents and we'll make sure they get on the  
9 State Board agenda. But other than that, I think we  
10 are done. So just --

11 SECRETARY KEY: I know it's been awhile since  
12 we've had a work session and this is a little more  
13 formal than some of those work sessions that we've  
14 had in the past. But, you know, maybe -- I don't  
15 know if -- it's up to y'all, but if there's any  
16 further discussion, informal discussion that y'all  
17 want to have -- and with the board members too -- we  
18 could let our friends --

19 MS. SMITH: At WestEd?

20 SECRETARY KEY: Yeah, they could go; so they  
21 don't have to stay on with us and move on to other  
22 things. But there may be some other questions that  
23 y'all want to come back and discuss or just general  
24 conversation about it, but we'll keep the team -- our  
25 team here to support that and keep everything

1 running, you know, until y'all say you've exhausted  
2 the questions that you have today. So --

3 MS. SMITH: So, again, thank you to our WestEd  
4 team -- Jason, Felicia, Kalisha, Lauren, and Kamileh.  
5 All you guys are on there. So we appreciate you and  
6 thanks for all the efforts and the work that you did.  
7 We appreciate you.

8 CHAIRMAN DEAN: Yes, thank you.

9 SECRETARY KEY: I want to also say that if  
10 there's more information or something specific y'all  
11 want us to bring to the December board meeting  
12 relative to this, I think this would be a good time  
13 for y'all to ask us or discuss what it would be.

14 DR. MOORE: Also, I think -- I appreciate the  
15 questions we asked last session and we all sent in  
16 documents and you answered for us. One lingering  
17 thing we didn't discuss was school-based health  
18 centers. And I saw where Dollarway has maybe a  
19 volunteer informal one. That's something I certainly  
20 want to continue to be on the table looking forward  
21 at Pine Bluff, especially with the hospital there and  
22 what kind of partnerships y'all could get there.

23 SUPT. WARREN: Okay.

24 MS. NEWTON: And I don't know if this would need  
25 to be a question that would need to be researched or,

1           you know, looking at budget and projections, along  
2           that sort of thing. What would be a reasonable time  
3           to -- if we said keep the Dollarway campus open, what  
4           would be a reasonable time to? And also thinking  
5           about the conditions of the buildings and enrollments  
6           and that sort of thing -- would it be three years,  
7           five years, beyond that? What would be the time,  
8           taking all of those things into consideration, where  
9           we don't just pull a name -- a number out of the hat?

10           SECRETARY KEY: Well, that's a good question,  
11           and I don't think we would have the answer for that  
12           now. I think certainly much of that would depend on  
13           the staffing levels that would be required; you know,  
14           if you think about just strict operations now; you  
15           know, the savings that is potentially there through  
16           consolidated transportation, consolidated food  
17           service -- you know, whatever those support functions  
18           are in the district. But the direct instruction, I  
19           think it would take a little bit to see, okay, what  
20           -- you know, and we'd have to base it on some  
21           assumptions of are we going to say static student  
22           enrollment, are we going to base it on, you know, a  
23           similar decline? I mean at some point we would  
24           really love to get to that point where you come back  
25           and say we see this -- an avenue here that the

1 decline would -- the student enrollment decline would  
2 stem -- be stemmed. [coughing] Excuse me. But we  
3 can work on that.

4 MS. NEWTON: Okay.

5 MS. SMITH: Beyond doing just a timeline, if you  
6 -- maybe if there was some type of "while the Pine  
7 Bluff School District is under state authority any  
8 closure of any campus would need to come to State  
9 Board of Education for approval" so it doesn't bind  
10 us by -- if something happens in a year and we need  
11 to do it, we would be coming to the State Board to  
12 give you the information so that a decision could be  
13 made to do it instead of just having an absolute.  
14 And so that would take us to 2023.

15 DR. MOORE: Having visited the campuses pre-  
16 Covid, I know because of certain challenges y'all  
17 face -- you had high school students taking virtual  
18 courses at your high school pre-Covid because you  
19 couldn't find teachers. So I would be hesitant to  
20 put numbers on things before an inventory -- and I  
21 know with you serving both roles now you're doing  
22 that. But before an inventory is taken of what is  
23 going on in the district, what is needed, and moving  
24 from there -- I'm certainly a proponent of small high  
25 schools, but also see the combined effort of a larger

1 high school with new facilities, more career tech  
2 programs, and that sort of thing.

3 SECRETARY KEY: Stacy, would you -- can you turn  
4 your Zoom on there? Dan remind me, do you still have  
5 it up there? Okay. Thank you.

6 MR. DAN DAVIS: You, Ms. Warren, since y'all  
7 aren't on the Zoom, if you speak for the Zoom people  
8 you'll have to come to the podium.

9 MS. SMITH: Do I need to repeat what I said?  
10 So what I was making a comment to, the question  
11 Ms. Newton talked about, about timeline, about --  
12 instead of maybe just saying a timeline, if we just  
13 said under school -- no school closures unless  
14 approved by the State Board while the school remains  
15 under state authority. And that would take you to  
16 2023, but it would not keep a closure from happening  
17 if it needed to occur. And plus, I think that  
18 there's -- Ms. Warren could speak to this in the  
19 future, if needed -- but the campuses in Dollarway  
20 are outstanding campuses; there's some very solid  
21 buildings. It may not be a Dollarway campus that  
22 closes; it might be a different building somewhere  
23 else or movement of offices or things like that. So  
24 I think it's much broader than just Dollarway  
25 campuses.

1 MS. NEWTON: Another question along that line --  
2 I know you said 2023. Are we talking January 2023,  
3 December --

4 MS. SMITH: November.

5 MS. NEWTON: November. Okay.

6 SECRETARY KEY: So if y'all will recall, the  
7 Dollarway High School -- the old Dollarway High  
8 School campus, we moved those students out of there  
9 several years ago because the facility -- there was a  
10 much better facility available. And so the three  
11 buildings that they are in now are -- we don't have  
12 facility problems there. I mean we do have the issue  
13 with what do we do with the old high school, but  
14 that's been with us for a couple of years now.

15 MS. NEWTON: Another thing that I would like  
16 information on, and I know Ms. Warren touched on it  
17 -- but I would really like a little bit more  
18 specifics in thinking about reduction-in-force. Are  
19 we talking about non-certified, certified? You know,  
20 about how many positions are we talking about as far  
21 as -- I know you can't give specifics for something  
22 that's going to happen a year from now as far as  
23 force. But just kind of -- a little bit more  
24 specific on what you're anticipating on having to  
25 reduce as far as staff.

1 MS. SMITH: That might be something the Board  
2 would consider requesting in their quarterly reports  
3 --

4 MS. NEWTON: Okay.

5 MS. SMITH: -- the plan for, you know, any type  
6 of reduction-in-force, something like that, maybe  
7 under the reporting structure.

8 MS. NEWTON: Okay.

9 MS. SMITH: That might be something -- the way  
10 to address that.

11 MS. NEWTON: Okay.

12 MS. SMITH: If you look on the annexation page,  
13 on that gray part where it talks about your decision  
14 points, if you kind of make your notes on that box,  
15 things that might be paired there. And then if we  
16 get to a point where you want to visit individually  
17 with one of the attorneys or with me or somebody, we  
18 can talk through some of those.

19 MS. NEWTON: Looking at that gray area I see  
20 that it says when will changes begin to occur, and  
21 there's two different dates: January 1st and July  
22 1st. Could someone speak to that a little bit?

23 MS. SMITH: So, again, trying to help guide the  
24 choice and what makes logical sense -- so when we  
25 talked about when the State Board makes a decision,

1 it can be immediate, it can be -- but it has to be  
2 done, in legislation, by July 1 or any other time.  
3 So we in-house talking, the idea of it being  
4 immediate January 10th or being immediate starting in  
5 January 1 could be possible options. The district  
6 would go ahead and begin making those changes and  
7 adjustments starting January 1, or it could be July  
8 1.

9 MS. NEWTON: Are there pros and cons for those  
10 two choices?

11 MS. SMITH: Some of the -- okay, so some of the  
12 pros is -- for example, the business manager for Pine  
13 Bluff School District has -- his last day is in  
14 December. And so everything is kind of on a hold to  
15 see kind of what happens to decide what we're going  
16 to do for January -- you know, is that a position  
17 that needs to be filled, is that a position that can  
18 be consolidated, is that -- so if there was a January  
19 1 consolidation, then we could go ahead and maybe  
20 start moving and making plans -- you know,  
21 intentionally putting people in the right seat and  
22 making some adjustments. We could also begin looking  
23 in the spring about adjusting salaries. I mean it  
24 wouldn't be full-fledge, you know, but they could  
25 maybe do some small things. That would probably be

1 something too I'd follow-up with finance.

2 Would that be a nightmare mid-year?

3 MS. CINDY SMITH: No.

4 MS. SMITH: No. Okay.

5 Legal, in their mid-year would that -- anybody  
6 concerned about that?

7 MS. FRENO: (shaking head from side to side.)

8 MS. SALAS-FORD: (shaking head from side to  
9 side.)

10 MS. SMITH: Okay. And it would allow the  
11 District to begin operating as one. I mean we would  
12 just start having to --

13 DR. MOORE: Yeah, I guess as I'm sitting in the  
14 perspective of a student or parent, what would  
15 change? If that decision was made for January 1,  
16 what would change for me? And it seems like at that  
17 point in time nothing would change; either you're  
18 still at your school or you still have your same  
19 teachers --

20 MS. SMITH: Yes.

21 DR. MOORE: -- under the same contract.

22 MS. SMITH: Yeah, it would be structurally --  
23 contracts, money, funding.

24 DR. MOORE: Okay.

25 SECRETARY KEY: I'm going to ask would we have

1 to reissue contracts to the Dollarway staff since as  
2 of whatever date the Board said that they would be  
3 part of the Pine Bluff District?

4 MS. SMITH: That's a good question.

5 SECRETARY KEY: And I don't know if --

6 MS. SMITH: If it was immediate to January 1,  
7 then Dollarway staff would then fall underneath the  
8 pay-scale for Pine Bluff. Is that correct?

9 Do you have a comment?

10 SECRETARY KEY: Come on up, Ms. Warren. Yeah.

11 DR. MOORE: While you're up there could you  
12 share if there is a difference in the pay-scales and  
13 what it is just for information purposes?

14 SUPT. WARREN: There is a difference in the pay-  
15 scale, a \$500 difference at base, but there are  
16 differences as you go over in the range. I think  
17 Dollarway's masters level, there are variations  
18 there. And so it would be better if I got you good  
19 information related to that, but there are some  
20 variations.

21 DR. MOORE: Which one being lower, does anybody  
22 know?

23 SUPT. WARREN: So Dollarway is lower in most  
24 range areas, but where Pine Bluff pulls away is that  
25 the step increase is higher at Pine Bluff.

1 DR. MOORE: Okay.

2 SUPT. WARREN: So there would be variations.

3 DR. MOORE: Okay. Because I know you've worked  
4 hard to increase Dollarway's.

5 SUPT. WARREN: Absolutely. And that's why we're  
6 just a few hundred dollars away with the base.

7 DR. MOORE: Okay.

8 SUPT. WARREN: Speaking to the possibilities --  
9 so as Ms. Smith was talking about January she -- you  
10 know, we do have a major decision to make and we've  
11 been problem-solving around that. One of the  
12 considerations related to July is related to what you  
13 all just asked. Secretary Key related to contracts,  
14 and so there are a lot of -- there are several pros  
15 and several cons. I don't know, of course, exactly  
16 all of the implications -- and there are a lot of  
17 conversations. But that would be a huge thing to  
18 consider, the changes and the shifts that would have  
19 to happen for just a semester. So off the top of my  
20 head I think there may be fewer cons for July 1. It  
21 might be just in my thinking, just -- thanks for  
22 letting me say that.

23 DR. MOORE: I guess I will ask a question. So I  
24 think WestEd has done a great job of attempting to  
25 facilitate conversations; I know Go Forward Pine

1 Bluff has as well. At whatever point in time our  
2 decision is made, will we -- I know that ownership is  
3 largely on the District. But will the Department  
4 continue to provide support to the District to  
5 communicate with parents and families about what the  
6 changes -- what the decision was, what the changes  
7 may or may not be, to work with families,  
8 particularly those north of the river that do have  
9 those longstanding concerns?

10 MS. SMITH: Yeah. So the Office of Coordinated  
11 Support and Service, we would directly work with Ms.  
12 Warren and the administrative staff in creating  
13 communication for the District.

14 DR. MOORE: Okay.

15 MS. NEWTON: I'm looking at the questions that  
16 this survey gave us that the public had asked. And  
17 it says if Dollarway becomes part of Pine Bluff how  
18 will the naming of the District, the buildings, and  
19 athletic teams work. You know, whether we like it or  
20 not that's a big deal to communities. How will that  
21 work?

22 MS. SMITH: So if the Dollarway High School  
23 remains -- campus remains open right now I would  
24 foresee that the campus would still retain their  
25 mascot and their football team and their athletics.

1           SECRETARY KEY: It would be like Little Rock has  
2           Central High Tigers, they have -- you know, all the  
3           -- Parkview Patriots; you know, it wouldn't be any  
4           different.

5           MS. NEWTON: Okay.

6           MS. SMITH: Yeah.

7           MS. NEWTON: And then the zoning question, we  
8           wouldn't have to address that now. But at the time  
9           that Pine Bluff released then would we have say-so in  
10          zones, how many zones, and where they would be?

11          SECRETARY KEY: That would have to be considered  
12          at that point because you're looking at a district  
13          whose geography has changed considerably before it's  
14          returned to local control. So, yes.

15          MS. NEWTON: Okay, that would be at that  
16          particular time.

17          MS. SMITH: One thing Ms. Smith up here reminded  
18          me was because of the fiscal -- the rules changed;  
19          and so even after getting off fiscal distress there's  
20          still three years of reporting to the Department.  
21          And so that would impact the districts too to  
22          maintain their financial viability moving forward.

23          MS. McFETRIDGE: As I understand it too, it'll  
24          be two cities kind of merging in on this as well.  
25          Have we -- how is that -- how will that work? I

1 can't seem to get my head around that.

2 SECRETARY KEY: Ms. McFetridge, it's one city.  
3 There is not a city of Dollarway, but -- so there are  
4 -- within the geographic boundaries of Dollarway you  
5 have Altheimer, which is a separate city, you have --  
6 which one, Miss --

7 SUPT. WARREN: Wabbaseka.

8 SECRETARY KEY: Wabbaseka. Okay. So you have  
9 four cities that are covered by the -- in the rural  
10 -- what we call the rural area of Dollarway, but then  
11 you have the city of Pine Bluff which Dollarway  
12 shares part of the city of Pine Bluff with Pine Bluff  
13 School District. So really there's no merger or  
14 anything of the cities in the Greater Pine Bluff  
15 area.

16 MS. McFETRIDGE: Okay.

17 MS. WOODS: I know we talked about, at our last  
18 meeting, the bus routes and how that would be  
19 affected with annexation. If we kept the Dollarway  
20 schools open do the same bus routes continue as well,  
21 so we don't have kids on a bus for hours a day?

22 MS. SMITH: Yeah. So in that last presentation  
23 that bus information that was presented was presented  
24 in a manner of for the most significant savings. You  
25 know, so if we talk about minimal, moderate,

1 significant savings, it was presented as a  
2 significant. So if you were going to try to, you  
3 know, look at the budget -- so if the Dollarway  
4 campus is remaining open, I would assume probably the  
5 same bus routes would probably -- there could be an  
6 opportunity to consolidate some buses and some routes  
7 and make some adjustments. But I don't believe that  
8 Ms. Warren or the Dollarway School District  
9 anticipates students being on a bus for as long as  
10 that was previously presented. That might be okay in  
11 California, but not here in Arkansas; right?

12 MS. WOODS: Exactly.

13 MS. SMITH: We'll blame that on the Californian  
14 that was presenting. And he's not on Zoom anymore,  
15 so he doesn't know that we said it.

16 DR. MOORE: No matter what the decision is made,  
17 Ms. Warren and the District have a lot of challenges  
18 in the future with so many students being online/  
19 virtual this year in your districts and what that  
20 looks like when they do return to campuses, and in  
21 the meantime. However we can eliminate a road bump  
22 -- road bumps for you so that you can focus on  
23 delivering the best instruction to those students is  
24 what I keep thinking about. Thank you.

25 MS. NEWTON: I'm going to go back to the January

1 1/July 1 thing again. Could y'all research that a  
2 little bit more thoroughly and actually come back  
3 maybe with a recommendation for that?

4 MS. SMITH: Yes.

5 MS. NEWTON: That would be very helpful --

6 MS. SMITH: Yes.

7 MS. NEWTON: -- because -- other than us just  
8 picking a day.

9 MS. SMITH: It's muddy right now. Yeah, we can  
10 go back and try to answer some of those questions  
11 about contracts and talk to some of the other finance  
12 folks and just other things that we maybe haven't  
13 thought about.

14 MS. NEWTON: Okay. Thank you.

15 MS. CHAMBERS: Stacy, regarding the establishing  
16 of a kind of appointed board, does that decision have  
17 to be made at the same time as the decision of  
18 annexation, if that were the direction we went in?

19 MS. SMITH: So if you do annexation it could  
20 resume under the Commissioner as the appointed board  
21 for Pine Bluff. If you made the recommendation for  
22 an appointed board, then we'd be looking at doing an  
23 appointed board for the Pine Bluff School District.

24 MS. CHAMBERS: Would that decision -- or she  
25 answered. But that decision can be made at the onset

1 or could be made later on as we have maybe more facts  
2 at-hand in terms of the opportunity?

3 MS. SMITH: So when you make the decision for  
4 annexation you could make it where the decision was  
5 to remain under the Commissioner, and then in a  
6 future date come back and we could talk about an  
7 appointed board at another time.

8 MS. CHAMBERS: It may be bold; does the  
9 Commissioner have a point of view?

10 SECRETARY KEY: Well, I think Mrs. Warren gave  
11 us a pretty good rundown of her view on that question  
12 and just the opportunity that -- in something that is  
13 going to be so new not looking at that for the first  
14 year. And I would certainly concur with her  
15 assessment of that; it would be very difficult I  
16 think to try to start with an appointed board at the  
17 same time you're looking at a merger of this  
18 magnitude. But I also think that in the -- you know,  
19 in the absence of appointing a board I think setting  
20 a schedule of, as Mrs. Warren mentioned, using DESE  
21 staff and School Board Association staff to start  
22 having training sessions, if you will, where members  
23 of the community can come and learn what it means to  
24 be a board member; you know, what are the roles, what  
25 are the duties, what are the responsibilities; you

1 know, where are the lines; you know, where does the  
2 Superintendent have the authority to run the District  
3 versus the policy setting of the board. So I think,  
4 you know, looking at some period of time which -- in  
5 which that can be done to begin paving the way for  
6 either appointed/elected -- you know, whatever the  
7 board would decide at some point in the future,  
8 having a plan. I mean Ms. Coffman talks about this  
9 all the time; you know, you give folks a plan and you  
10 don't keep them -- they don't feel like they're in  
11 the dark. And so I think if we could move into, over  
12 the next few months, developing that plan so the  
13 community can see very clearly this year is this  
14 adjustment and transition year, and then, you know,  
15 what does year-two look like, and how does that  
16 relate to eventually what we all hope which is a  
17 fully elected school board operating as most other  
18 school districts in the state and the nation.

19 So I hope that helps, Ms. Chambers.

20 DR. HILL: Commissioner, would that be possibly  
21 with what you're really recommending -- could you  
22 appoint an advisory board, I mean just for that  
23 communication purposes?

24 SECRETARY KEY: I think for the purpose -- when  
25 we changed the statute a few years ago, in 2017, we

1 removed that language about a community advisory  
2 board and replaced it with the idea of a board that  
3 could either be elected or appointed with limited  
4 authority. So this board could put whatever  
5 limitations or grant whatever authority they wanted  
6 that board to exert. So, you know, I think many  
7 times we've talked about this gradual release model;  
8 so that's really what we'd be talking about instead  
9 of just having a figure-head board or anything like  
10 that. It would grow into its role depending on where  
11 you all thought they were ready to take the right  
12 steps.

13 DR. HILL: And I think to echo her position,  
14 what she needs is to make the decision that she needs  
15 to make right now. But I think the communication to  
16 your community is invaluable to garner that support  
17 when that team effort comes back together, because  
18 you will need some help and some support for what  
19 you're doing. And I think, you know, to communicate  
20 that is valuable even though you do need to be able  
21 to make those decisions, you know, immediately and  
22 oftentimes. But I understand where you're going.

23 MS. CHAMBERS: Secretary Key, I couldn't find my  
24 mute button fast enough. I just wanted to thank you.  
25 I completely agree with what you represented and it

1           seems exactly the right approach to -- in line with  
2           what Ms. Warren had said she needs, where her focus  
3           could best be given.

4           MS. NEWTON: Ms. Warren, are there any students  
5           that live closer to the Dollarway campus that are  
6           currently going to Pine Bluff and maybe vice-versa  
7           where those students might end up going to Dollarway  
8           at that campus to maybe increase those numbers at  
9           Dollarway?

10          SUPT. WARREN: So when the zone changes are  
11          taken into consideration there are a lot of  
12          opportunities for exactly that. So, yes, ma'am,  
13          we're just so close in some concentrations -- I mean  
14          literally across the street from one another. Many  
15          opportunities for that type of thing.

16          MS. NEWTON: So this could be a way that we  
17          might slow down or stem the declining enrollment in  
18          the Dollarway buildings themselves?

19          SUPT. WARREN: And potentially balance, yes --  
20          from the standpoint of balance there's some major  
21          possibilities.

22          MS. NEWTON: Okay.

23          SECRETARY KEY: I would just caution though that  
24          it wouldn't be a net change or benefit on the funding  
25          part because we'd be looking at it as the entire

1 district. But I think for the types of programmatic  
2 and academic offerings that could be made obviously  
3 more high school students gives you more opportunity  
4 to do more things. So --

5 MS. NEWTON: I was just thinking about the  
6 likelihood of being able to keep a Dollarway campus  
7 open in the future, rather than thinking -- you know,  
8 having to think about that that building may close at  
9 some point. But if we could move kids there and  
10 provide opportunities where it would be, you know, a  
11 positive thing to go to the Dollarway campus, then  
12 that might be a way that we could keep Dollarway  
13 Cardinals still going.

14 SECRETARY KEY: May I ask a process question of  
15 the Board, just for your opinion of this process?  
16 This is considerably different than what we have done  
17 in the past with respect to our state takeover and  
18 the discussions of, you know, how to resolve at the  
19 end of what we do with these districts. And you  
20 don't have to answer this now, but I would ask you to  
21 think about what part of this process did you like,  
22 what part did you not like, what could be better.  
23 Personally, I think it's overall a much better  
24 process to help you all get the right information to  
25 make the informed decision, and I credit Stacy, Ivy,

1 the legal team -- I mean a lot of people -- finance  
2 team -- a lot of people put a lot of work into this  
3 -- OCSS, Mrs. Warren. You know, I like what we have  
4 created here. I would ask y'all to help us refine it  
5 and make it better. So any thoughts that you have on  
6 the process itself please let us know in the coming  
7 weeks and months so that we can -- you know, as other  
8 districts come up and we need to have these  
9 conversations we can give you the best possible  
10 information, the best possible process for making  
11 decisions.

12 CHAIRMAN DEAN: I will say I think it was quite  
13 a benefit to have the third-party to come in, an  
14 objective point of view to get data from the  
15 community and feedback from the community. I think  
16 that allowed us just to be objective and to step back  
17 and look and see what other eyes see and allowed the  
18 community I think to feel better about the process as  
19 well with having a third-party come in. So, a  
20 phenomenal job. I think this was -- this so far has  
21 been a great process and has been extremely helpful,  
22 very informative. We have all the information -- so  
23 much information laid out for us to make the best  
24 decision possible. So thank you to the team and  
25 everyone that was involved in this process because

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it's been very helpful.

Well, if we don't have any more questions -- do we have any more questions or a request for information from anyone?

Then I think we are done. Thank you, Stacy. Thank you, team. We will adjourn and I will see you all on December 10th.

(The work session was concluded at 12:19 p.m.)

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EXHIBIT ONE (1)

Sharon K. Hill, CCR  
(501) 680-0888

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**EXHIBIT THREE (3)**

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**EXHIBIT FOUR (4)**

**Sharon K. Hill, CCR  
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## C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF ARKANSAS    )  
                                   ) ss.  
 COUNTY OF SALINE     )

I, SHARON K. HILL, CCR, a Certified Stenomask Reporter and Notary Public before whom the foregoing board work session was taken, do hereby certify that the same is a true and correct transcription before the Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, State Board of Education, in Little Rock, Arkansas, on December 1, 2020; that the said work session was reduced to typewritten form by me or under my direction and supervision; and that the foregoing pages constitute a true and correct transcription of the work session.

I FURTHER CERTIFY that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to this action.

I FURTHER CERTIFY that I have no contract with any parties within this action that affects or has a substantial tendency to affect impartiality, that requires me to relinquish control of an original transcript or copies of the transcript before it is certified and delivered to the custodial agency, or that requires me to provide any service not made available to all parties to the action.

WITNESS, MY HAND AND SEAL, THIS DATE: December 7, 2020.

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SHARON K. HILL, CCR  
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