

**Minutes  
State Board of Education Special Committee  
for the Pulaski County Boundaries Study  
Wednesday, May 13, 2015**

The State Board of Education Special Committee for the Pulaski County Boundaries Study met Wednesday, May 13, 2015, in the Board Room of the Pulaski County Special School District Administration Building. Chairman Jay Barth called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m.

Present: Dr. Jay Barth, Chair; Diane Zook; and Kim Davis

Additional State Board Members present: Vicki Saviers

Absent: Sam Ledbetter

**Reports**

**Chair's Report**

Dr. Barth had no report.

**Consent Agenda**

Mr. Davis moved, seconded by Ms. Zook, to approve the consent agenda. The motion carried unanimously.

Items included in the Consent Agenda:

- Minutes - April 8, 2015

**Action Agenda**

**Public Comment**

The Special Committee heard public comments from the communities.

Little Rock

Little Rock School District Superintendent Baker Kurrus said the district needed to build a large circle of community to run the district efficiently. He said the community of interest was needed to win.

Mayor Mark Stodola said Ward 5 students attend PCSSD. He recommended

that area should be included in LRSD. He recommended that everything south of the river should be one district.

Vice Mayor Lance Hines said Ward 5 needed representation on the local school board. He recommended that everything south of the river should be one district. He recommended a new middle school and high school in west Little Rock. He said people would want to come to Little Rock if the schools are fixed.

#### North Little Rock

Mr. Danny Bradley, chief of staff for Mayor Joe Smith, said great cities make a great state. He said North Little Rock has a world-class school district. He recommended extending the boundaries of NLRSD to the NLR city limits. He said this would improve the economy and bring jobs to NLR. He said he does not object to extending the school district beyond the city limits.

Ms. Michelle Conner said her family moved to NLR and her children attend NLRSD. However, she said the boundary map shows two houses on her street are indicated as PCSSD. Although her children attend NLRSD, she said she could not vote in the school district or pay taxes to the district. Also, she will be unable to run for the school board. She said it would make more sense for zip codes and city limits to match the school district boundary.

Representative Eddie Armstrong said expedited recommendations would be helpful to these communities.

#### Scott Community

Mr. Martin Gibson said in reference to a question from last month, that he included a map of the Scott School attendance zone.

Ms. Shannon Armand said the Scott Community is concerned about PCCSD building plans. Ms. Armand lives within the NLR boundary and her children attend a public charter school because of long travel times. She said community parents want school choice for their children. She requested a quick recommendation from the subcommittee.

Mr. Harry Simmons said he lives eleven miles from England School District. He requested that his children attend the England School District. He requested to have school choice.

Representative Camille Bennett requested the committee make recommendations expeditiously.

Shannon Hills Mayor Mike Kemp said the millage vote was a vote of no confidence in the Pulaski County Special School District (PCSSD). He said it is



time for a new beginning. He said Shannon Hills students should not be bused to PCSSD. He said approximately twelve students live in Saline County but attend PCSSD.

### Maumelle

Ms. Mary Peyton said she is a resident of Maumelle. She said in 1994 the city task force was tasked with bringing quality education to Maumelle. She said the Maumelle charter was approved in 2000. She said the students at Academics Plus are still attending school in portable buildings and a former strip mall. She said excellent teachers, an excellent board, and a strong superintendent is the key to success.

Alderman Preston Lewis said Maumelle is requesting to have its own district. He recommended Maumelle and Sherwood have the legal pathway to move forward with detachment. He also requested that Shannon Hills students be permitted to go to the Bryant School District. He also recommended choice for the Scott Community. He said the proposed Maumelle School District would have over 30% African American students.

### Sherwood

Ms. Linda George, representing the Sherwood Public Education Foundation, said the group supported the PCSSD millage and continued to work forward toward a detachment for Sherwood.

Ms. Ruth Bell, League of Women Voters for Pulaski County, said her constituents recommended that districts should be financially adequate, including appropriate facilities, millage and assessed values; districts that can meet the needs of a diverse population of students; and districts that encourage community and involvement.

## **Consideration of Legal Guidance**

Department Attorney Ms. Kendra Clay said there are two broad ways in which the State Board of Education may change the boundary lines of a school district. She said the first way is through Ark. Code Ann. § 6-13-1414. That statute allows for the State Board of Education to consider a petition from a local board of directors of any school district that seeks an adjustment or change or boundary lines between its school district and adjoining school district. She said under Ark. Code Ann. § 6-13-1414, the Board may not order any change in school district boundaries that would hamper, delay, or in any manner negatively affect the desegregation efforts of the public school districts of the State.

Ms. Clay said the other way is more indirect. Under Arkansas laws related to the standards for accreditation, fiscal distress, academic distress, and facilities

distress, the Board may consolidate, annex, or reconstitute a school district. In an order of consolidation or annexation, the Board would include a provision that establishes the boundary lines of the new school districts. She said Arkansas law states that the Board may not order any annexation or consolidation that hampers, delays, or in any manner negatively affects the desegregation efforts of a school district or school districts. She said prior to entering such an order, the Board would also be required to get an advisory opinion from the Attorney General's Office concerning the desegregation issue.

Ms. Clay said with regard to Pulaski County, the Pulaski County Special School District remains under court supervision with regard to five areas in its desegregation plan: Discipline, Facilities, Staffing, Student Achievement, and Monitoring. She said pursuant to an order issued in the early 2000s in the desegregation case, before taking any action relative to the boundaries of the Pulaski County Special School District, the Board would have to petition the presiding federal court for permission to do so. That order required a party that wanted to seek a change in the boundaries of the PCSSD to provide the court with a detailed feasibility study and specific data sufficient to allow the court to conduct an evidentiary hearing to determine whether the boundary change would substantially impact the student populations of each district and if such a change would better meet the educational needs of the students in the districts involved.

Representative Bennett asked for the Scott School to remain open until the opportunity is available to petition for a boundary change. She said England School District and Lonoke School District are willing to accept these students.

Mayor Kemp said the Bryant School District is willing to accept the students that live in Saline County.

## **Work Session**

### **Consideration of Data**

Mr. Davis said some changes make sense.

Ms. Zook said the committee has heard from communities of interest that will work for excellent schools. She recommended one district for the area south of the river.

Dr. Barth said south of the river makes sense as one district. He said north of the river could be four districts – North Little Rock School District (NLRSD) should match the North Little Rock city limits, Maumelle and Sherwood could potentially detach from PCSSD and the Jacksonville North Pulaski School District (JNPSD).



Ms. Zook said Shannon Hills and the Scott Community issues are immediate.

Mr. Scott Miller recommended a collaborative conversation between Maumelle and North Little Rock to prepare for the Maumelle detachment process.

NLRSD Superintendent Mr. Kelly Rodgers said the NLRSD would be willing to have these community conversations. He said the unincorporated areas needed to be decided upfront.

Maumelle Mayor Mike Watson said the Camp Robinson area should not be a barrier to agreements.

The Committee discussed the information received from the public comments. The committee recommended:

#### South of the River

One district south of the river in Pulaski County, with the recommendation that Saline County students go to the Bryant School District.

#### North of the River

Scott – Upper Steel Bend Road to NLR and the area below Lower Steel Bend Road would go to England.

JNPSD – no alteration to the boundaries.

NLRSD and PCSSD will collaborate on appropriate boundaries to move forward with detachment of Sherwood and Maumelle that would make boundaries that are reflective of the communities of interest (to the degree possible). Local leaders agreed to collaborate on a peaceful decision-making process.


The Committee recognized the constraints placed on the State Board by previous federal court judgments.

Dr. Barth will draft a report to be submitted to Ms. Coffman by May 22. The Committee will meet either May 26 or May 27 to finalize the report for submission to the State Board. The report will be submitted to Ms. Coffman by June 1 for entry in the State Board Meeting scheduled for June 11, 2015.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 3:27 p.m.

*Minutes recorded by Deborah Coffman.*

  
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Jay Barth, Chair