

**Minutes
State Board of Education Special Committee
for the Pulaski County Boundaries Study
Wednesday, April 8, 2015**

The State Board of Education Special Committee for the Pulaski County Boundaries Study met Wednesday, April 8, 2015, in the Auditorium of the Department of Education Building. Chairman Jay Barth called the meeting to order at 10:35 a.m.

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

Reports

Report-1 Chair's Report

No report provided.

Consent Agenda

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

Items included in the Consent Agenda:

- Minutes – March 11, 2015

Action Agenda

Consideration of Presentation from Metroplan

Presenter: Jeff Runder, GIS Planner for Metroplan

Mr. Jeff Runder, GIS Planner for Metroplan, presented maps for north of the river and south of the river. The maps included race (2010 census data) and property assessment.

Consideration of Perspective from Communities

Scott Community

Mr. Martin Gipson, Scott resident, said the PCSSD is closing the Scott Elementary. He said the Scott community is losing students because of the feeder patterns for middle school and high school. He said the community was requesting to send their students to England School District or North Little Rock School District according to the map submitted. He said the community wanted a feeder pattern that keeps the students together K-12.

Ms. Shannon Armand, parent, said her children attend a charter school. She said school options are critical to housing growth in the area.

Dr. Jerry Guess, Superintendent of the Pulaski County Special School District, said the PCSSD has future plans for a millage increase that would permit building in the district.

Shannon Hills Community

Mr. Mike Kemp, Mayor of Shannon Hills, said some of the students live in Saline County but attend PCSSD. He said these families are disenfranchised and have no representation. He said the most efficient and effective response would be to allow these students to attend the Bryant School District.

Dr. Guess said he supported this information but he would continue to serve PCSSD. He said once the district is unitary the district should be able to offer school choice.

Maumelle Community

Mr. Michael Watson, Mayor of Maumelle, said his community desired to have its own district in the future. He requested to keep the current PCSSD boundaries at this time for the Maumelle area. He said parents want choice for their students. He said he was concerned with any adjustment of the school boundaries to the city limits. Maumelle wanted to continue to include Oak Grove.

Representative Mark Lowery said Act 372 would allow Maumelle and Sherwood to detach when appropriate. He asked how the unitary status of PCSSD would be impacted by realignment and possible detachment.

Sherwood Community

Dr. Linda Remele and Ms. Beverly Williams, co-chairs of the Sherwood Public Education Foundation, said Sherwood is the fourteenth largest city in the state but does not have its own school district. Dr. Remele said the area between Jacksonville/North Pulaski School District and North Little Rock School District would be considered for the new Sherwood School District. She said the proposed district boundary would include students outside of Pulaski County. She said the feasibility study does not include the Scott community but the

foundation is willing to consider including Scott students. Ms. Williams presented tables showing a distribution of race percentages, free/reduced lunch percentages, SPED student percentages, assessment value of the Sherwood district in relation to PCSSD. She said the size of Sherwood district would compare to Russellville, Jonesboro and Benton. She asked the Special Committee to leave the current boundaries as to not harm the plan of the Sherwood Public Education Foundation to detach from PCSSD. Ms. Williams said the foundation supports the PCSSD millage increase.

Dr. Guess said a millage increase for PCSSD would provide new buildings in Sherwood. He said the PCSSD proposal for a millage increase would serve all of the students in PCSSD.

North Little Rock School District and Community

Mr. Kelly Rodgers, Superintendent of North Little Rock School District, said the NLRSD district building plan included room for growth in enrollment. He said the district staff is focused on preparing students for college and careers. He said the community, mayor, and chamber requests extending the boundaries to the city limits plus additional areas that want to come to the North Little Rock School District.

Ms. Sandy Campbell, NLRSD Board Member, said the district is working to meet the expectations of the community.

Mr. Wes Havens, Co-Chair of the NLRSD Capital Improvement Campaign (2012), said the NLRSD is providing the resources to compete. He said the millage increase, new administration, fiscal planning, facilities improvement are examples of how the district is working for the community. He said the NLRSD could be an example of a successful urban district. He asked the Special Committee to consider the data he submitted.

Mr. Isaac Henry, Special Assistant to the North Little Rock Mayor, read a prepared letter from Mayor Joe Smith, who was unable to attend the meeting. The mayor requested that the boundaries be adjusted so that students living in North Little Rock attend North Little Rock School District.

Consideration of Perspectives from Legislators

Senator Linda Chesterfield, Senate District 30, said the children must have the best education. She said she was concerned about the travel time for students. She said the students deserve state of the art educational facilities. She asked for districts that are made up of diversity. She encouraged parents and community members to be very involved in their schools.

Public Comment

Ms. Ruth Bell, League of Women Voters, said she is concerned about public input in this issue. She asked that once the committee proposal is crafted, that opportunities for public comment be considered.

Mr. Preston Lewis, Alderman for Maumelle, said he feels very positive about the working relationship between North Little Rock and Maumelle. He said this is a matter of sustainability and there are many inequities that need to be resolved. He said that he sees four options: 1.) make no change; 2.) create a county-wide district; 3.) make small changes on the margins; or 4.) take bold steps to provide local control and local participation.

Special Committee

Chairman Barth recommended that the special committee meet on May 13 at 1:00 p.m. for a committee work session and public comment. He clarified that a report is due to the State Board in June. However, the committee may need more time to construct a proposal. Committee members said that once a proposal is drafted an adequate public comment period would be provided.

Ms. Zook said this work should not interfere with the current efforts of districts to improve, pass a millage increase, and/or work for unitary status.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Deborah Coffman.



Dr. Jay Barth, Chair