

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Paducah, Kentucky
SPECIAL MEETING
November 16, 2020

A special meeting of the Board of Education of the Paducah Independent School District was held in the Seminar Room of the Innovation Hub, 500 S. 25th Street, Paducah, Kentucky, on Monday, November 16, 2020 at 5:00 p.m.

NOTE: due to the COVID-19/Coronavirus pandemic, this meeting was closed to the public and live-streamed online.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Felix Akojie, Carl LeBuhn, Mary Hunter Hancock; James Hudson Janice Howard

Others Present:

Donald Shively, Superintendent (virtual)

Lisa Chappell, Secretary

William Black, Instruction/Assistant Superintendent

Amie Tooley, Special Programs

Dale Weaver, IT

Troy Brock, DPP

Nicholas Holland, Attorney

Wayne Walden, Community Relations

After the roll call, it was established that a quorum of Board members was present.

ORDER NO. 180

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was presented. The motion was made by Dr. Hudson and seconded by Mrs. Howard that the Board concur with the recommendation of the superintendent and approve the agenda as amended. The roll was called and all members present voted "yes".

Working Session:

Opening statement from the Board read by Dr. LeBuhn:

"The Paducah Board of Education recognizes the deep hurt and broken trust that was expressed in our community's recent dialogue about our Superintendent, Dr. Shively. The board acknowledges that healing and recovery will take time and will involve many steps. We are committed as a Board to a deliberate, thoughtful, and comprehensive approach. As an elected body in a community where we all also reside and raise our families, the Board felt there was a need to set aside time for expression, time for listening, time to begin to process, and time to initiate dialogue. To facilitate this, an e-mail and phone number was created to send input directly to the Board. We value this community feedback greatly and are taking your concerns to heart. We have spent hours engaging with teachers, staff, students, and leaders in our community. The first part of tonight's working session has been set aside to provide the public additional time for us to hear direct comments from those who would like to be heard. Following these public comments, Dr. Shively has been asked to update the public on what he has been learning and internalizing as a result of numerous interactions over the past few weeks. Following Dr. Shively's comments, the Board will present a summary of communications it has received."

Public Comments were made by the following regarding their concerns with the recently surfaced 2002 photo of Shively dressed in blackface that went viral on Oct. 20, 2020. They joined the meeting virtually to show their support for Dr. Shively or to share their frustration.

Amina Johnson

Janice Crawford

Martha Emmons (NAACP rep)

Shirley Massie (NAACP rep)

Kim Ford

Anne Bidwell

Melanie Nunn

Randy Wyatt

Malinda Jones

Sara Evitts

Whitney Cassity-Caywood

Scott McKeel (Mr. Weaver read his comment to the Board due to technical difficulty)

Tera Martin

Andiamo White

Update from Dr. Shively: Dr. Shively apologized and expressed appreciation for the meetings and dialogue he has had over the last 4 weeks. Shively provided a statement to those attending. He outlined the steps he has taken since the photo came to light and shared

his appreciation for those who have accepted his apology. He also encouraged those who do support him to refrain from being critical of those that are still hurting because of the photo.

He said, "I chose to get into education because it's about helping others, and you dedicate your professional life to doing that. Now, with what's happened, what has come to light, the choice that I made, to see how it could hurt people and destroy trusts that you've built, it's just heartbreaking. I am personally grateful to the students, employees, parents, and community members who have accepted my apology. I want to say thank you." Shively continued, "Let's not be critical or condescending to those that have shared hurt and anger and don't support my leadership at this time or maybe ever going forward."

In closing, Shively said he is committed to continuing the dialogue for however long is necessary. He once again apologized for the pain, anger, and loss of trust that his actions have caused.

"It's heartbreaking for me as a person, as an educator, to have these conversations but I think they have the potential to help others. I'm going to continue to have this tough dialogue and to listen to what's needed. That's where my heart is." he said.

Dr. Shively stated that he has spent nearly 100 hours in conversations about the incident with groups, schools, and students.

Update from the Board: Mary Hunter Hancock gave an overview of the input the Board has received from community, staff, and parents.

"Before providing a little more information summarizing the responses we have received thus far, I do want to take just a second to provide a little more context to this summary. For those of you who do not know me, my name is Mary Hunter Hancock and I made the decision to volunteer and run for this School Board position because I have three children in the Paducah City School System. Like you, I wanted to be involved with the decisions that will impact my children's education. One of the things that led me specifically to the decision to run for election was the reality that there was a limit to the impact of my voice as a parent. That's frustrating, and I understand that. I'm making this point because I remember feeling like there were things I wanted to see the school system do that I simply was not authorized to change. Many of you here tonight no doubt feel like you are correct and that the Board's only alternative is to take the action you suggest. But we can't do that because there are just too many opinions that range from one end of the spectrum to the other. I wanted to offer these comments because they frame the summary of the emails we have received. I can tell you that we received some really thoughtful emails and messages and I am personally anxious for the board to further address some of these opinions. To date, we have received 139 messages, and of those many suggested removal of Dr. Shively and consequences for his actions, many supported retention of him and his current position, and a few offered other opinions that didn't fit quite so neatly into one of those categories. Finally, before I turn the floor back to Dr. LeBuhn, I want to offer one more very personal note. This situation does not come with a perfect solution. No matter what happens, some group is going to take the position that the action taken or the decision made was not the correct one. As we continue to discuss this my sincere hope for everyone is that we can continue to consider only the best interest of our students."

Dr. LeBuhn closed with this statement:

"We thank those who have offered public comment tonight. Comments we have received as it pertains to Dr. Shively directly will be anonymously shared with him in executive session under personnel during our regular board meeting to follow. This will be our first opportunity to discuss recent events and share all of this information with him as a Board of Education. As a result, there will not be any immediate action after tonight's executive session.

In addition, the Board wants to take this opportunity to deepen the dialogue on racial equity, and it wants to effectively partner with the community to improve our programs and to improve student achievement. We want to stress that community partnership is critical to further development and implementation of our equity initiatives. During our scheduled board meeting to follow we want to start with an initial review of our existing equity programs. We are exploring options for an external review of our district as it pertains to equity and also exploring options for technical support and further policy development.

In usual circumstances the conversation, planning, and implementation of initiatives like these take much time and effort. We are not in a normal time, however. We are in the middle of a pandemic that is having a severe impact on our community and our instructional programs. We request your patience and understanding as we move forward. Please trust that we will work with you and will work tirelessly to make the best decisions possible for the students of Paducah Public Schools."

ORDER NO. 181

ACTION TO ADJOURN

The motion was made by Mrs. Hancock and seconded by Dr. Akojie that the meeting be adjourned. The roll was called and all members present voted "Yes." The meeting adjourned at 6:37 p.m.

Chairman

Secretary

The requirements of KRS 61.810, 61.815, 61.820 and 61.823 were complied with relative to the foregoing meeting.