



“State of Alabama, Proclamation by the Governor dated March 18, 2020

Section III. Open Meetings Act:

- A. Notwithstanding any provision of the Open Meetings Act, members of a governmental body may participate in a meeting – and establish a quorum, deliberate, and take action – by means of telephone conference, video conference, or other similar communications equipment if:
 - 1. Any deliberation conducted, or action taken, during the meeting is limited to matters within the governmental body’s statutory authority that is (a) necessary to respond to COVID-19 or (b) necessary to perform essential minimum functions of the governmental body; and*
 - 2. The communications equipment allows all persons participating in the meeting to hear one another at the same time.**
- B. Governmental bodies conducting a meeting pursuant to this section are encouraged, to the maximum extent possible, to use communications equipment that allows members of the public to listen to, observe, or participate in the meeting.*
- C. No less than twelve hours following the conclusion of a meeting conducted pursuant to this section, a governmental body shall post a summary of the meeting in a prominent location on its website – or, if it has no website, in any other location or using any other method designed to provide reasonable notice to the public. The summary shall recount the deliberations conducted and the actions taken with reasonable specificity to allow the public to understand what happened*
- D. Nothing in this section shall be construed to alter, amend, or modify any other provision of the Open Meetings Act, including the notice requirements found in section 36-25A-3 and the enforcement, penalty, and remedy provisions found in section 36-25A-9. Any action or actions taken in violation of paragraph A will be deemed invalid.*
- E. To the maximum extent possible, the terms used in this section shall have the same meaning as the terms defined in section 36-25A-2 of the Open Meetings Act.”*



Per the Proclamation by the Governor, below is a summary of the deliberations/actions taken on September 14, 2020. The minutes will be officially approved on October 19, 2020.

**Special Called School Board Meeting
09/14/2020 05:30 PM
Meeting Summary**

**Dothan City Board of Education
ZOOM MEETING DUE TO COVID-19
1665 Honeysuckle Road
Dothan, Alabama 36305**

Attendees:

Voting Members

Mr. Mike Schmitz, Chair – Present
Mrs. Brenda Guilford, Vice Chair - Present
Mrs. Amy Bonds, Board Member – Present
Mr. Franklin Jones, Board Member - Present
Mr. Chris Maddox, Board Member – Present
Mr. Brett Strickland, Board Member – Present
Mrs. Susan Vierkandt, Board Member – Present

Non-Voting Members

Dr. Phyllis Edwards, Superintendent – Not Present
Mr. Kevin Walding, Board Attorney – Present

**Call to Order
Moment of Silence
Pledge of Allegiance**

Approval of Agenda and Proposed Agenda Modifications

Motion to approve the Agenda and Proposed Agenda Modifications. Motion made by: Mrs. Susan Vierkandt, Motion seconded by: Mr. Brett Strickland, Voting: Mr. Mike Schmitz – Yes, Mrs. Brenda Guilford – Yes, Mrs. Amy Bonds – Yes, Mr. Franklin Jones – Yes, Mr. Chris Maddox - Yes, Mr. Brett Strickland – Yes, Mrs. Susan Vierkandt - Yes

Board Comments – None at this time.

Executive Session – Legal Matter (if needed) – The Executive Session was not needed.

Addressing Resignation of Superintendent

Motion to Address the Resignation of Dr. Phyllis Edwards on this day September 14, 2020. Motion made by: Mrs. Brenda Guilford, Motion seconded by: Mrs. Amy Bonds

Amend the motion to accept the Resignation of Dr. Phyllis Edwards as Superintendent of Dothan City Schools on this day September 14, 2020. Motion made by: Mrs. Brenda Guilford, Motion seconded by: Mrs. Amy Bonds, Voting: Mr. Mike Schmitz – Yes, Mrs. Brenda Guilford – Yes, Mrs. Amy Bonds – Yes, Mr. Franklin Jones – Yes, Mr. Chris Maddox - Yes, Mr. Brett Strickland – Yes, Mrs. Susan Vierkandt - Yes

Mr. Mike Schmitz read Dr. Edwards' resignation letter as follows into record:



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1665 Honeysuckle Road
Dothan, AL 36905

334-793-1397

www.dothan.k12.al.us

Dr. Phyllis A. Edwards
Superintendent

Mike Schmitz
Chairman

Brenda Guilford
Vice-Chair / District 1

Franklin Jones
District 2

Susan Vierkandt
District 3

Brett Strickland
District 4

Amy Bonds
District 5

Chris Maddox
District 6

*Dothan City Schools
mission is to prepare all
students for the choices
and challenges of the
21st Century (the future).
Our goal is to prepare all
students to participate
productively and
responsibly in a rapidly
changing society.*

TO: Dothan City School Board Members
FROM: Dr. Phyllis Edwards, Superintendent *Dr. Phyllis A. Edwards*
DATE: September 8, 2020
SUBJECT: Resignation

I have been in Dothan City Schools for 2.5 years. I came here without knowing anyone or asking to bring in anyone along with me. When I arrived in Dothan, there were many issues and imminent fires to put out. I took each issue, reviewed concerns from many sides and took action.

I also shared a plan with the Board of my work for the first 100 days. Each Board Member was apprised of any steps I planned to take to review the state of the school system. Over the first few months, a detailed review of the budget, building issues, instruction, materials, personnel, policies and operational concerns was accomplished. As a Board, you heard the details at public meetings along the way.

Throughout the summer of the first year and into the fall, you and the community, received public updates. I also reached out to each of you to discuss items, concerns and, prior to every Board Meeting, placed calls to answer your questions.

In the fall of 2018, there were many public hearings to review details of the information gathered, I presented to many groups and answered questions. Ultimately, I presented to the Board four options with pros and cons, to restructure the school system. I repeatedly answered questions, and also said that it was the choice of the Board and I would carry out the will of the Board.

In January of 2019, my staff and I began to plan forward for the move. All the time, continuing to work to review and fix things that had been left to decline for many years. In the years since I arrived in the system, we revised the Code of Conduct, tightened discipline procedures, revisited the entire Board Policy book and brought it to you for action. We reviewed and worked the budget, in the first year, having to cut a number of positions due to loss of students before I arrived.



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Personnel issues were addressed. Many key employees did not have evaluations before I arrived. Principals did not believe they had the right or support to evaluate their teachers and support staff. We did not have instructional materials and did not have a plan to meet the needs of students. Our books were old and our media centers left to vanish. This work required constant attention to staff and increased professional development and coaching.

In the buildings, I found massive problems in lack of air conditioning, air quality issues, no fencing, and ADA issues such as schools without ways for children with physical disabilities to enter certain buildings. A plan was prepared and provided to you. Immediately, the work began. Now, just 2.5 years later, all schools have new or repaired roofs, HVAC issues at the schools with the biggest issues have been replaced and two of the schools have elevators going in as well as chair lifts and appropriate front entrances; as per OCR requirements. Dothan Prep, formerly Dothan High School, is almost completely redone with new classrooms, new HVAC, new outside and revived campus. All schools, through the contract with Trane, have received new lighting fixtures. All schools received new roofs or had major roof issues fixed.

Over the late spring and summer of 2019, the entire system was reordered. Many did not think it could be done and there was continued opposition from some, but many in the community came around us to assist and be part of the change. I am especially thankful for the churches and service groups as well as WIRED for all the assistance and good work. The majority of the planning and detail was accomplished by me and a few key staff. The opening was relatively smooth and any issues were addressed very quickly. Principals took ownership of their schools and some began new assignments.

In the 2.5 years, the system has been brought up to a quality level and had the virus not hit, I believe we would have seen major changes in student achievement.

Teachers have received raises or a thank you bonus for the first two years. Teachers received spending cards, which I was told when I arrived, were not to be allowed and could not be done. They were done and this year, will be provided again.

Staff and professional development opportunities were increased. Each elementary school chose a signature or theme and teachers were trained throughout the summer. Even this summer, with all the issues about the virus; our teachers are participating and getting great benefit from training on virtual instruction from SREB. Our system is being used as a model for others that SREB works along side of in a professional capacity.



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When we reorganized, the high school went to a 7A school. The Dothan City School Wolves had a good first season with packed stadiums once again. The high school students joined together from two schools and were model students. Academics, extra-curricular and a focus on CTE were on full display. We were fortunate to have great partners join with us; such as Southeast Health for our medical program. We have had gains that we can address this last school year; there were more students involved in the Career Technical Courses, we focused on the student taking the AP classes and worked hard to ensure that they took the AP tests and our graduation rate is up.

Our discipline results improved as more Principals focused on the Code of Conduct and were consistent. We also infused more officers into the schools; even at the elementary levels as safety and concern about school shootings were a major focus. We added social workers and this year, will add more nurses and a Coordinator for Mental Health.

Our budget is stable even though we continue to have the lowest millage rate. The consolidation allowed me to put the dollars into the right areas, and to focus appropriately on the schools and student achievement.

During the spring and summer, as the pandemic hit, the entire Central Office team, sprang into action and our plan was developed and was detailed and comprehensive. We delivered packets to students in the spring and teachers stayed in touch. We found a way to do graduation without causing the infection rate to rise and stay within constantly changing guidelines and orders.

Our plan for reopening was written and provided to the state. We posted every communication on-line and I also gave interviews and provided weekly virtual messages to parents and the community. We are the only system in the area that fed our children throughout the spring and summer. We are the only ones that provided testing for our employees two times and will continue to offer this throughout the fall.

As school approaches, I cannot state clearly enough the massive amount of work and many hours that have gone into the development and implementation of offering a dual approach and choice. Parents were asked for their choice, we did a survey, we got the signups out, we have offered devices and hot spots and countless meetings have taken place to schedule both virtual students (3000) and brick and mortar students into classes. All the while, we are keeping a close eye on the class sizes.



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Many health and sanitation materials have been ordered. Equipment has been ordered and delivered to schools as well as masks and thermometers. Principals and staff have called parents and reached out to them. There will be a virtual run through this Wednesday. As a matter of fact, there were a series of videos to explain how virtual worked. Parents who signed up several months ago received a call from their Principals and then the virtual teachers. Over 1500 chrome-books were provided to parents and I believe Dothan City is one of the only systems that has provided chrome-books and hot spots, if needed. Even as I write this memo, I am working with the Technology Director and Principals to take chrome-books from the schools and give them to the students.

While all this has been going on. I have dealt with serious decisions related to infection. I make each call and decision very carefully, getting as much information as possible and taking into account the effect on students and teachers. We have been very careful with our staff and as accommodating as possible, because none of this is anyone's fault and we need to treat our people fairly.

You have just had another budget presented to you, and for the last two years, you have an unqualified audit. The Dothan City Schools now meet state law by having over one month of backup for our system. I could also go into the targeted, positive changes in our technology. There is more to do in replacing old servers but we are planning for that change. You also know that the entire Human Resources' platform was changed and is now current and the Finance Department is working to change their platform. We also changed banking services, which was quite a bit of work to shift over.

In 2.5 years, I have given my best to you and the students of this school system. I want nothing but to see you succeed. As we move into another unprecedented season and one that we have no knowledge on how to specifically address, it will be critical that the Board has a quality trust and level of confidence in the Superintendent. I understand that times change and may necessitate a new leader, one that shares the Board's vision for success and matches the desires of the community.

For this reason and for some that will remain unstated, I intend to tender my resignation to the Dothan City School Board. Please let me know who I should deal with to iron out the details. I ask that you allow me to tell my key staff before this goes public. God Bless you all and thank you for the opportunity to serve the Dothan City School System.



Mr. Franklin Jones stated I am always concerned on the order of business, not discussing good name, we are just discussing the resignation correct. Mr. Mike Schmitz stated yes sir. Mr. Franklin Jones stated I do not want things said that will tarnish her good name. We have a policy about discussing good name and character in an open session. Are we safe? Mr. Kevin Walding, Board Attorney, stated the good name and character does not apply to an employee that files an economic interest. We could not discuss her good name and character in a closed session. Mr. Franklin Jones stated we lost our focus a few weeks ago, I have great concern, we were distracted by this invisible plague. We lost sight of our first obligation of student achievement. We should have been concerned with getting our students back in school. We should not ever lose focus on our students. I just hope we do not lose the focus about our children and the work our staff has done, a place to go to school and get an education. It has been an awesome task this spring and summer. I think if we are not going to support a policy we put on the books we should remove the policy from the books. The other thing is confidentiality. There is nothing confidential in Central Office and that includes us as a Board. I do not understand how this is happening all the time, people calling me and telling me something, there is no confidentiality. Dr. Edwards has done a lot of work for our children.

Mrs. Susan Vierkandt stated I want to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Edwards for her unwavering commitment for our students, her vision, the path to fill that success, equity, accountability, professionalism, stewardship, work ethic, and courage. Together under Dr. Edwards' leadership we have achieved more in 2.5 years than in 15 years, there is much to be done and fine-tuned. I am grateful for her rolling up her sleeves and doing it.

Mr. Brett Strickland thanked Dr. Edwards for the work she has done and stated I am looking forward to our future.

Mrs. Brenda Guilford stated I would like to thank Dr. Edwards for the service she provided for our system. I am sad to make a change, to look at finding someone to replace anyone but it is something I am used to. Let's move forward. Thank you for your service.

Mrs. Amy Bonds stated I agree with Mrs. Guilford and went on to thank her for hard work for our school system especially during this time with the unprecedented virus. Everyone worked around the clock to make it the best. I am glad we were able to feed the students throughout the summer.

Mr. Chris Maddox stated I echo what the others have said and ready to move forward.

Mr. Mike Schmitz thanked Dr. Edwards and Steve, her husband, and I appreciate you.

Mr. Mike Schmitz stated we need a motion to appoint Dr. Dennis Coe as acting Superintendent. He has been a superintendent, teacher, worked for the Alabama State Department of Education and is currently the COO and will step into the Acting Superintendent role.

Motion to appoint Dr. Dennis Coe as Acting Superintendent effectively immediately. Motion made by: Mr. Chris Maddox, Motion seconded by: Mr. Brett Strickland, Voting: Mr. Mike Schmitz – Yes, Mrs. Brenda Guilford – Yes, Mrs. Amy Bonds – Yes, Mr. Franklin Jones – Yes, Mr. Chris Maddox - Yes, Mr. Brett Strickland – Yes, Mrs. Susan Vierkandt - Yes

Mr. Mike Schmitz stated I think this Board has done a great job. I have the greatest respect for this board and their commitment.



New Business

- A. Board approved Board Meeting(s) to be held by Zoom Webinar until further notice:
- i. Thursday, September 17, 2020, 2:00 PM - School Board Work Session/Special Called School Board Meeting
 - ii. Monday, September 21, 2020, 5:00 PM - Regular School Board Meeting
- B. Schedule of School Board Meetings

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn. Motion made by: Mrs. Susan Vierkandt, Motion seconded by: Mr. Chris Maddox, Voting: Mr. Mike Schmitz – Yes, Mrs. Brenda Guilford – Yes, Mrs. Amy Bonds – Yes, Mr. Franklin Jones – Yes, Mr. Chris Maddox - Yes, Mr. Brett Strickland – Yes, Mrs. Susan Vierkandt – Yes