

Horry County Board of Education Technology Committee

Minutes

Monday, April 18, 2016

4:00 PM at District Office, Four Mile Road, Conway, SC

Board Members Present: Ray Winters, Committee Member; Sherrie Todd, Committee Member, Joe DeFeo, Board Chair; and Holly Heniford, Board Member

Staff Members Present: Dr. Rick Maxey, Superintendent, Edward Boyd, Charles Hucks, Edi Cox, Mary Anderson, Kenny Generette, John Gardner, H.T. Lee, Daryl Brown, Carolyn Chestnut, Boone Myrick, Dottie Brown, Teal Harding, Sie Gilbert, Beverly Pilkey, Jeanie Dailey, Elissa Blosser, Judy Shelley, Ashley Gasperson, Tammy Brown, Jill Erwin, Ebony Livingston, Stephanie Yancey, Meagen Cox, Meaghan Quillen, Holly Barnes

Twenty principals, several school staff and community members were present. Three members of the news media were also present.

Welcome

Mr. Winters called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m. He explained that Ms. Morreale, Committee Chair, would not be in attendance due to a death in her family. Mr. DeFeo stated that he was attending the meeting representing Ms. Morreale.

Approval of Agenda

Mr. DeFeo moved to approve the agenda. Mr. Winters seconded. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. DeFeo made a motion to approve the March 7, 2016 minutes. Mr. Winters seconded. Motion carried.

Personalized Digital Learning (PDL) Sustainment through End of Penny Sales Tax (2024) and Afterward

Discussion was held on how Personalized Digital Learning (PDL) would be sustained after the end of the penny sales tax in 2024. Edward Boyd shared a handout on the PDL refresh cycle planned through 2024. He stated that \$9.1 million was allocated each year from the penny sales tax for capital projects. That amount consolidated all technology hardware and PDL into an annual budget. We initially budgeted \$600 per device, and allowed for a growth in student enrollment each year without altering the annual \$9.1 million revenue stream. PDL implementation began with the middle school in the first year, high school second year, and elementary schools the third year. The fourth year no devices would be purchased to allow for network refresh servers, etc. This refresh cycle would repeat through 2024.

Mr. DeFeo asked if taxes for debt service would go up above 24 to 35 mills if the penny sales tax was not renewed by voters before 2024. John Gardner responded that it would depend on our next building program. He stated that we would probably be looking at a minimum of 28 mills if the penny sales tax was not renewed. Mr. DeFeo stated that 28 mills would be a bare minimum and if we had to build four new schools in that time frame that would change dramatically.

Recommendation to Purchase New Devices from Middle School Grades 6-8 and Move Middle School iPads to Elementary Grades 3-4

Mr. Winters stated that one suggestion on the devices for middle schools would be to purchase Chromebooks which would be more aligned to a notebook computer and be more durable than the iPads and less expensive. He asked if Chromebooks had been looked into as a possibility for middle schools and passing the iPads down to the grades 3 and 4. He stated that the elementary grades had less wear and tear and the device life expectancy would result in a longer life cycle.

Middle school grades are scheduled to look at refreshing devices for the 2017-18 school year on the four-year cycle. Elementary grades 3-4 have not yet received PDL devices.

Dr. Maxey stated that once he became aware of Ms. Morreale's recommendation, he had conversations with staff members to see if this recommendation would mesh with plans that were in place and if there are any issues with the current model of the iPads and their ability to accommodate Apple operating system upgrades. He stated that he expected that there would be problems extending the functionality of the current middle school iPads.

Mr. Boyd stated that the iPads would be four years old next year, and that should be the last year that the middle schools were to use those devices. If we push the iPads down to the elementary grades, the next time the elementary devices would be refreshed would be in the summer of 2019. This means that those devices, which were to last 3-4 years, would now need to last for 6-7 years before they could be replaced. There are concerns about functionality and upgrades to the system beyond that.

Charles Hucks stated that durability is one issue and another would be that while Apple generally doesn't tell you what is going to happen until a new version is released, our sales representative and engineer feel the current major release is the last one that will work on those iPads. If things continued the way they have up to this point, sometime during the expected use, the devices would not be able to upgrade to the latest version of IOS. Mr. Hucks said we do know that every year the way that we manage and administer the iPads, the way we set them up, and the way iTunes accounts are created has drastically changed. It has been painful each year to have a totally different implementation process and management capability, every year it has gotten much better. The improvements have been extensive each year and we expect the same thing to continue. It would hamper our use if we were not able to take advantage of the upgrades.

Mr. Defeo stated that school districts across the country have gone totally away from iPads and in the lower grades purchased Hewlett Packard or Samsung tablets for probably less than half the price of an iPad. He stated that these district feel the Windows based tablets are far more functional than iPads. He asked if there is a reason why we need to stick with an iPad that cost \$600 and not look at what these other districts are purchasing.

Mr. Hucks stated that there is a device selection process involving stakeholders from all levels. Because technology constantly changes, we were not tying ourselves to a device forever. For example, with the middle school, those devices were to be used for four years. At the end of that cycle, we would go through the selection process again to see if that is the device we wanted to continue to use. We have one more year with these devices at the middle school level, and every year we learn and change and each year there are new features and capabilities available.

Mr. DeFeo stated that the problem is that there is one year left. If we go out now and buy new iPads, then we have started a new four-year cycle. Mr. DeFeo shared that he would prefer that the lower grades receive the iPads. He said that there are a lot of options such as waiting a year before doing anything in third and

fourth grades. He said that if we put iPads in every grade, something else will not get done. He stated that when the decision was made to reduce millage to 10 mill, the Board was not told about PDL. After the millage was reduced, the Board was presented with PDL. He does not feel that there are enough votes to support raising the millage. We are dealing with the funds we have now and every decision that is made could affect something else.

Mr. Winters shared that as a parent he sees more and more coming home that requires Google classrooms and Google docs and this is difficult on an Apple device.

Dr. Maxey, stated that in addition to the issues to hardware issues, when a shift is made to a new device, it is important to allow time for teachers to receive professional development. He shared that he would be concerned with the number of teachers who have invested time preparing lesson and using the iPad for instruction. If stakeholder input recommends going in a different direction, he wants to make sure that we have a transition time built in for teachers.

Sherrie Todd asked if we will have the money to sustain the devices. Mr. Boyd stated that we have \$9.1 million each year for the PDL project.

Searchable Database on Board Motions

Mr. DeFeo informed the committee that a searchable database on board motions is required by Board Governance.

Mr. Hucks stated that all members of this committee should have received an email from him today with a link to the interface for the database. The data from a 2006-12 spreadsheet. This data is now in a web interface and is searchable. Data from 2013 to present will be obtain and updated in the interface. Any new data will include which Board members were present and how they voted on each item. Mr. Hucks asked the committee members to look at the interface and offer feedback. At this point, the interface has been shared with the Board Technology Committee. Once this committee has had a chance to see and respond, the interface will be shared with the rest of the Board.

Questions from the floor

Ms. Jane Pearce, parent from Aynor Elementary School, asked if the third and fourth grade receive iPads what happens to the excess iPads based on the fact that there are more middle school students than in third and fourth grade combined. Mr. DeFeo stated that there are a lot of options such as putting them down to the lower grades or the Board could decide to sell them through public auction. Mr. Hucks stated until we knew how long we would be expected to work in that configuration, the decision could not be made. If the decision of the board is to move iPads down to third and fourth grade and use them for three more years, we would need all of the extra iPads to get us through that time frame. Ms. Pearce stated that she hates to see this implementation held off for another year as she has seen the benefits of the PDL in her children, particularly her older child. She stated that she hoped we would continue the selection process and that the elementary students would have a newer model. Mr. DeFeo stated that he had had more feedback from parents against the elementary distribution that he had for it. He also stated that the district had not been able to provide any data which supports that the PDL has helped students. Mr. DeFeo asked Mr. Hucks to research which tablets other districts are purchasing.

Another question was asked about when a decision would be made. Mr. DeFeo stated that the decision should be made at the next committee meeting. Discussion followed about having enough time to train teachers. Mr. DeFeo asked the question as to when teachers are trained. Dr. Maxey stated that middle school teachers

had iPads a semester before the students received their device. They became comfortable with the device and received staff development. Mr. DeFeo stated that he would have a problem with students receiving Chromebooks at this time for use next year in middle schools. He also stated that he had a problem with the fact that we didn't purchase Chromebooks three or four months ago and move the iPads down. He stated that he really had a problem with purchasing new iPads. He also shared that he did not agree with the selection process that was used last time and that there should be a more professional approach next time. He stated that we need to talk with other school districts to see what they had chosen and why.

Discussion was held about the next meeting date, but no decision was made.

Adjournment

Mr. Winters adjourned the meeting at 4:51 p.m.