

MEETING SUMMARY

ACADEMIC FACILITIES OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Tuesday, August 21, 2018

1:30 P.M.

Room 151, State Capitol

Little Rock, Arkansas

Senator Jane English, the Senate Co-Chair of the Academic Facilities Oversight Committee, called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

**SENATE MEMBERS OF THE ACADEMIC FACILITIES OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE IN ATTENDANCE:**

*Senators:* Jane English, Senate Co-Chair; Linda Chesterfield; Jim Hendren; Bart Hester; and Larry Teague.

**HOUSE MEMBERS OF THE ACADEMIC FACILITIES OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE IN ATTENDANCE:**

*Representatives:* Bruce Cozart, House Co-Chair; Jana Della Rosa; Grant Hodges; and Dan Sullivan.

**OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN ATTENDANCE:** *Senators:* Jonathan Dismang; and Joyce Elliott. *Representatives:* Andy Davis; Dan M. Douglas; Jon S. Eubanks; Lane Jean; Reginald Murdock; Aaron Pilkington; Johnny Rye; James J. Sorvillo; and Nelda Speaks.

Minutes:

Without objection, the minutes of January 23, 2018 were approved as written.

Exhibit:

Exhibit C – 01/23/2018 Minutes

Overview of the Statutory Responsibilities of the Academic Facilities Oversight Committee

Presenter:

**Mr. Isaac Linam**, Staff Attorney, Bureau of Legislative Research, was recognized. At the request of Senator English, Mr. Linam reviewed the Committee's powers and duties, as found in statute text. He reminded the Committee that academic facilities and their condition was a big part of *Lake View*; and that this is very much an adequacy committee. He went over some themes that came out of *Lake View* related to facilities:

- 1) it is the Committee's responsibility to know the state of academic facilities in Arkansas. A system must be in place to assess and evaluate those facilities;
- 2) there must not be a disparity between rich districts and poor districts. A caveat to that is that once facilities get to adequacy, it is constitutionally allowed for the district to use its own local funds to go beyond adequacy;
- 3) facilities must be substantially equal. If poor districts cannot afford to participate in state programs and cannot remedy inadequate facilities, the state has the duty to provide them;
- 4) in assessing facilities and whether or not they are in an adequate state, a good rule of thumb is to ask if those facilities are negatively impacting learning. If they are, then that facility has a problem that needs to be addressed; and
- 5) the funding program should be based on need.

Review and Discussion of the Final Report of the Advisory Committee on Public School Academic Facilities

Presenters:

**Mr. Jim Alessi**, Chairman, Advisory Committee on Public School Academic Facilities, was recognized. Mr. Alessi gave a quick overview of the Committee, including membership and schedule of meetings. He stated the Committee is proud of the report which resulted from diverse input.

**Dr. Charles Stein**, Vice Chairman, Advisory Committee on Public School Academic Facilities, was recognized. Utilizing a PowerPoint presentation, Dr. Stein said the report is a summary of twelve years of lessons learned. He discussed Goals/Objectives; Processes-Wealth Index Funding; Processes-Project Categories; Funding-Approved Projects-Prioritization; Wealth Index; Committed State Financial Participation; and Funding-Annual Budget.

Contributor to the Discussion:

**Mr. Brad Montgomery**, Secretary, Advisory Committee on Public School Academic Facilities, and Director, Division of Public School Academic Facilities and Transportation

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- which districts the superintendents who sat on the Committee came from,
- whether safety recommendations had been taken into consideration in the report,
- arriving at an estimated annual budget of \$90 million,
- breakdown of federal, state, and local funding,
- impact of local property taxes, and
- benefits of proposed wealth index to poor school districts.

**Mr. Shane Broadway**, Vice President for University Relations, Arkansas State University System, and **Mr. Bill Stovall**, Executive Director, Arkansas Community Colleges, were recognized, and presented a comprehensive historical perspective of the current facilities wealth index.

Issues Included in the Discussion (continued):

- understanding state of facilities of school districts around the state to accurately determine funding,
- sustaining the public partnership,
- doomsday clause provision regarding adequacy,
- continuing to fund less than the need, and
- facing the challenge that inequity will never be overcome.

**Dr. Janet Schwanhauser**, Executive Director of Finance, Bentonville School District, was recognized, and provided opinions on the proposed wealth index formula.

Issues Included in the Discussion (continued):

- options for housing classrooms in schools when space is limited,
- building new schools in Bentonville,
- how and why certain superintendents were selected to serve on the Committee,
- any rationale based on having to change the size of a school,
- advantages of present formula to growing districts or any other districts in particular,
- basis for creating the current plan,
- consideration for separation between warm, safe, and dry and making an allowance for districts that are having the challenge of ongoing construction,
- incentive for school districts to show equal effort; calculating the effort into the formula,
- availability of five different versions of the wealth index,

- justification for using relative median income in the formula when it is not used in any other formula,
- possibility of using NSLA funds, and
- finding a data set that is broken out by school district and conforms to the boundaries of a district.

**Mr. Andrew Bagley**, President, Board of Directors, Helena-West Helena School District, was recognized. Mr. Bagley used the situation in Helena-West Helena School District to illustrate why the proposed change in the wealth index calculation is needed.

**Ms. Elizabeth Johnson**, Superintendent, Lee County School District, was recognized. Ms. Johnson discussed the reality of the situation in the Lee County School District, the deteriorating facilities, and the hard times the district has faced. She said the district has a difficult time passing any millage (*the county has the lowest millage, 28.3, in the state*), so is not a source for additional money. She said schools are old; children are not warm, safe, and dry; and, there are no businesses in this primarily farming area to provide financial support. She stated the proposed recommendations in the report would benefit the Lee County School District.

**Dr. Karen Walters**, Superintendent, Bryant School District, was recognized. Dr. Walters expressed concerns about what is being proposed in the report, and the impact on school districts.

PowerPoint Presentation:

Academic Facilities Oversight Committee

Exhibit:

Exhibit D – Report of the Advisory Committee on Public School Academic Facilities

Handouts:

Handout 1 – Academic Facilities Oversight Committee

Handout 2 – Wealth Index and three School Districts

Review of the Facilities Recommendations Contained in the Preliminary Report of the Arkansas School Safety Commission

Presenters:

**Dr. Cheryl May**, Chair, Arkansas School Safety Commission, was recognized. Dr. May, on behalf of Governor Hutchinson, presented *Exhibit E – Preliminary Report of the Arkansas School Safety Commission*, a comprehensive set of recommendations for schools, with a focus on prevention, on protection, on mitigation, on response, and on recovery. She said the final report of findings and recommendations shall be submitted to the Governor no later than November 30, 2018.

**Mr. Brad Montgomery**, Secretary, Advisory Committee on Public School Academic Facilities, and Director, Division of Public School Academic Facilities and Transportation, was recognized. Mr. Montgomery, who chaired the Physical Security Subcommittee, discussed the Physical Security section of the report.

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- ⇒ adding costs of security to the \$90 million estimated annual budget,
- ⇒ preparing the physical environment of all schools,
- ⇒ school districts paying for school safety, and
- ⇒ timelines for getting all schools protected.

Exhibit:

Exhibit E – Preliminary Report of the Arkansas School Safety Commission

Next Scheduled Meeting:  
*Date, time, and location TBD.*

Adjournment:  
The meeting adjourned at 3:54 p.m.

*Approved: 09/24/2018*