

TAMPA BAY AREA COALITION

Of

School Administrator Associations

Minutes of December 2, 2009 Meeting

The 43rd. Bi-Monthly meeting of the Tampa Bay Area Coalition was held on Wednesday, December 2, 2009, at the **Gary Adult High School Campus located at 5101 North 40th Street, Tampa, Florida 33610.** The luncheon meeting began at 12:00 Noon and ended at 2:00 PM.

Ten Coalition members districts were present: Dody Sapp from Volusia County, Bob Clark from Orange, John Weant from Charlotte, Dr. Neriah Roberts from Polk, Ed Stickles from Lee County, Terry Aunchman and Rob Aguis from Pasco, Peggy Johns from Pinellas, Marjorie Ebersbach from Brevard, Melodie Deeds from Sarasota representing school level administrators, and Dr. John Miliziano and Dr. Ken Allen from Hillsborough. Guest speakers were: Juhan Mixon, FASA's lobbyist. Wendy Dodge, FASA's Legislative liaison from Polk County, and Larry Carmichael, Legislative Liaison for the Florida Retired Educators Association. Also present as guests were: Tempress Solomon, HASA's President, Scott Howat Lobbyist from Orange, and Connie Milito Lobbyist from Hillsborough. Richard Wells from Seminole, Dough Berger from Sarasota representing district level administrators, David Underhill from Manatee, and Jim Knight from Hernando County were not able to attend.

Rob Aguis, Coalition Secretary reviewed the minutes of October 14, 2009. Minutes were approved with no corrections. Dr. Neriah Roberts, Coalition Treasurer, presented the financial report dated 12/12/2009 stating that as of this date the Coalition's fund balance was \$8,090.85 plus a check submitted today of \$249 for Polk County dues making a grand total of \$8,339.85. Dr. Roberts pointed out that 13 of the Coalition members had paid their annual dues for 2008 – 2009. As of today only one district has not paid their annual dues. Motion was made, seconded and unanimously approved as presented.

Dr. Miliziano distributed the Agenda, the minutes of the last Coalition meeting, and the treasurer's report. Also distributed was FASA's 2010 Legislative platform and the January 10, 11, 12, 2010 Legislative Days Agenda. Guest speaker, Larry Carmichael, distributed two informational items: "November 2009 State Board Information" and a news article about Florida legislator Mike Fasano titled "Fasano: Goodbye pensions, hello savings."

Juhan Mixon and Wendy Dodge reviewed the status of FASA's five legislative priorities that were recommended by the Coalition at the October Coalition meeting:

- Changing the Class size Amendment to School Wide Averages.
- Delay Additional Changes to High School Graduation Requirements.
- Protect the Florida Retirement System.
- Increase and Stabilize Revenue and School District budgets.
- Return Control of School Start Date to Local Elected School Boards.

The following points were expressed by Mixon and Dodge regarding the above legislative priorities:

1. Representative Will (Bill) Weatherford is very much interested in sponsoring a constitutional amendment that would bring "Class Size Modification." Mr. Weatherford has secured the services of Ron Sox Communications to develop the campaign necessary to get the job done. Having a rally in Tallahassee by school administrators is one possible consideration for bringing attention to the Class Size Amendment issue. In order for this to succeed we will need the support of superintendents. It would also be helpful if administrators could take paid leave to attend the rally. A date when school is not in session is being searched so it will be more workable for administrators to travel to Tallahassee.

2. Last year Senator Stephen Wise sponsored the class size modification amendment but it failed to get any traction in the House. This was because Mr. Wise had attached a sales tax increase to the amendment. This year, Senator John Thrasher may co-sponsor Weatherford's amendment in the Senate.

3. Senator Mike Heridopolos and Senator Don Gates, two very important and powerful senators, appear to be in favor of modifying the Class Size Amendment. Their support will go a long way in getting Representative Weatherford and senator Thrasher's amendment on the ballot.

4. Senator Michael Bennett has filed an amendment to repeal the Class Size Amendment all together. This will probably get little support.

5. The Florida PTA has not yet taken a position on the Class Size Amendment initiative but have set March 25, 2010 as a date to have a Rally in Tally to promote school funding.

It was reported that a very important step has been taken that will be needed to advance any legislation on DROP. Senator Jerry Ring has authorized an actuarial study to be done to determine the cost of allowing everyone in the Florida Retirement System (FRS) to be able to DROP under the same rules that teachers are allowed to DROP. This study would also evaluate the actuarial cost of giving

FRS employees who die on the job with no dependents, a sum of money that would go into their estate.

Regarding the graduation requirements issue, Representative Erick Fresen and Senator John Trasher have agreed to file a Bill that would give schools three to four years to get caught up with all the mandates now on the books before additional reforms are legislated. Senator Nancy Detor is also planning to file a standards Bill.

As for the school starting time, nothing has been done so far but some legislators will probably bring this issue up again during the 2010 session.

Larry Carmichael assured us that the Florida Retirement Trust fund is actuarially sound. At one point the fund's value had dropped to \$79 billion, but in recent days the fund has recouped much of its losses and is now fully vested with over \$112 billion.

Sydney P. Freedberg, St. Pete Times reporter, has written various articles intimating that there is fraud in the Florida State Board of Administration (FSBA), the Board that manages the FRS Trust Fund. Larry said this is absolutely not true and that this reporter and the St. Pete Times may be motivated by their desire to bring change in the FSBA. Mr. Carmichael shared the following interesting points about the FRS Trust Fund:

1. The FSBA is expected to achieve annual investment return of 7.5 % overall in investing assets of the Retirement System Trust Fund.
2. In order to achieve this kind of return, the SBA must invest in some high yield/ high risk ventures. By policy mandate, 5 % of the assets are to be invested in "strategic" or "high yield" activities.
3. Throughout the country, 68 % of all benefits received by retirees in state pensions plans is derived from trust fund investment earnings.
4. The remaining 32 % comes from employer/employee contributions.
5. 14 % of FRS members have elected to participate in the optional plan called defined contribution.

Mr. Carmichael said that Representative Fasano is still trying to pass legislation that would mandate that all new FRS employees would have to Join the defined

contribution plan after January 1, 2011. Even though it appears that Fasano is picking up some support for his proposal, Carmichael believes that this Bill will not pass any time in the near future.

The following items were discussed during Round Table:

1. Ed Stickles asked Dr. Miliziano to talk with Jim Warford about the possibility of FASA coming up with some new and innovative ideas on recruiting new members. Stickles also asked if there was going to be a meeting of local district associations during legislative days in Tallahassee to discuss previous suggestions of dividing the state into regions and having representation on the FASA Board.
2. Terry Aunchman distributed the results of a survey he conducted regarding local school boards, from the coalition member districts. support of the “Class Size modification” initiative.
3. Peggy Johns reported that her district was in the process of hiring an Executive Director.
4. John Miliziano distributed a summary of all 14 Coalition Association members information sheets that were filled out at the October meeting. A cover page profiling Coalition Membership was also provided.
5. Margie Ebersbach gave out an email update that she periodically sends to all her members. Margie also shared a number of activities that her association is involved in to create interest and involvement.
6. FASA is supporting Bill Munford for the Florida Senate. Mr. Munford was the superintendent of Leon County and is now serving as the Executive director of the Florida Superintendents Association. Associations with PACs are asked to endorse and provide financial assistance to Mr. Munford.

Please NOTE that all past minutes of the Tampa Bay Area Coalition meetings, Coalition’s Constitution and Bylaws, and much more, are archived in HASA’s Web Site www.hasaonline.com

The next Coalition Luncheon meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 3, 2010. Lunch from 12 Noon to 12:30. Meeting 12:30 to 2:00 PM . Please mark your calendars.