



**Needs Assessment Committee  
Minutes  
October 25, 2007  
8:30 a.m.**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, October 25, 2007**

**Shelby County Administration Building  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room**

**Committee members present:**

Nisha Powers, Chairman  
Cato Johnson, Vice-Chairman  
Nick Clark, Vice-Chairman  
Scott Fleming, Secretary  
Jay Weatherington  
Commissioner Mike Ritz  
Commissioner Sidney Chism

**Committee members absent:**

Patrice Robinson, President MCS  
David Pickler, Chairman SC Schools  
Aubrey Howard

**Non-Voting Members Present:**

Grace Hutchinson

**Others Present:**

Carolyn Staskiewicz, DeJong, Inc.  
John Zeanah  
Skip Jones  
Paula Lewis

Susan Roakes  
Ethele Hilliard  
Stephanie Jones

**1. Update on Legal Issues – Skip Jones**

Chairman Nisha Powers called the meeting to order at 8:45 a.m. Chairman Powers asked Skip Jones, Asst. County Attorney for an opinion in changing the by-laws regarding the required quorum to transact business for the Needs Assessment Committee.

Skip Jones, Assistant County Attorney suggested that an item be put on the agenda for discussion at the next meeting seeking to change the by-laws regarding a quorum and have the full Committee vote on this.

Nisha Powers explained that the Needs Assessment Committee had received a letter from Dr. Steven Bares, Board Chairman of the Memphis Academy of Science and Engineering requesting the Committee to consider recommending capital funding to their Charter school. She requested an opinion from the County Attorney regarding this issue.

Skip Jones presented the legal opinion on this issue which states that capital funds are not available to charter schools and would violate state law if given to them. The Charter schools are separate legal entities and are not eligible to receive county funds. The state statute states that the local board of education shall allocate one-hundred (100%) of the state and local education funds to the charter school on the per pupil expenditure of the local education agency (School Board).

Nisha Powers – Asked Skip to help her draft a letter to Dr. Bares relating this. This should be very judicial due to the fact that this will set a precedent for other charter schools coming to the Committee.

Skip Jones – The Committee should also include the County Attorney's opinion in the response.

**Motion:** Motion was made by Cato Johnson to accept the recommendation from the Assistant County Attorney to respond to the Charter School. Second by Jay Weatherington.

**Action:** Motion approved.

## **2. Approval of the minutes – September 6, 2007**

**Motion:** Motion by Scott Fleming, Secretary to accept the minutes as written. Second by Commissioner Mike Ritz.

**Action:** Motion approved

## **3. Update by Consultant – Carolyn Staskiewicz, DeJong, Inc.**

Carolyn Staskiewicz - According to the last demographic report which was completed in May, 2007, the County is increasing students, the City is decreasing and they are actually about evened out. Growth in the county was about 1.8% last year and the decline in the city was -.7%

Nick Clark – The census projects a decrease in Shelby County between 2005 and 2010. There is out migration taking place and that is exceeding our birth rate. Out migration of where has not been addressed.

Commissioner Ritz – According to a report that he received from Planning and Development, building permits have fallen off dramatically. A copy of the report was distributed to the Committee.

Nick Clark –The presentation from DeJong is very informational and should be placed on our website and also e-mailed to the Committee members. One major question is how do we determine the required circumstances that require the building of a new school or the redistricting of our current student population to schools that have available capacity.

Nisha Powers – Just from the questions asked in Commissioner Ritz's letter, it seems that we definitely need the services of a consultant and need to have a work session

with a sub-committee or the committee as a whole to set out the scope of works that needs to be done by the consultant.

Commissioner Ritz – We should encourage the two schools systems and the consultant to get together and answer these questions. This Committee's charge is to decide what the best solution is to solve these growth problems.

Scott Fleming – We are going through an RFP process but thanked Carolyn for the hard work and the detailed PowerPoint presentation. This county has enough schools to support the number of students; but how do you understand from a cost and educational standpoint how to spread out the students into the schools we have?

Carolyn Staskiewicz - That's a very difficult question. Improving school facilities and improving programs at the under utilized schools would help to draw some of the students back to those schools. Getting the two school districts to work together to ultimately make this happen is the biggest challenge.

Cato Johnson – Recommend a sub-committee of this group to meet and come up with the scope of services for the consultant and make sure that all of the issues are put on the table.

Scott Fleming suggested that the committee of the whole work on this. Paula will set up a work session for this in the near future.

Commissioner Ritz – In regards to the new Ethics Ordinance, we don't want DeJong to be involved in the RFP process as far as setting the scope of services if that would make her ineligible to bid.

Skip Jones – If the consultant prepares the RFP, they would not be allowed to bid on it. Chances are that there are a large number of RFP's relative to this on the internet that would assist you.

Nick Clark – One of the outcomes should be the creation of a report that evaluates the capital funding that has been recommended by this Committee and the outcome. We need to come up with a strong set of recommendations on how to address the school boundary lines.

#### **4. Update by MCS and SCS**

John Zeanah was present but stated that they had not been able to present their report to the City School Board and had been advised not to present anything to the NAC that they had not seen. No one from the Shelby County Schools was present.

Nisha Powers – Asked Grace to draft a letter from her, at the request of the Committee, for a copy of all school agreements, including Southwind, Dexter and Cordova and formal capital requests from both school systems.

Commissioner Ritz – Stated he would like for the two school systems to get together and answer these questions without the consultant but doesn't know if that will happen. The best way to get Commissioners approval is to get both of the systems together.

Commissioner Chism – Agrees that the parties need to get together. We probably need to start looking at legislation to try and get the formula changed. Not certain if that's the right road, but it needs to be looked at.

**Motion:** Motion to adjourn by Cato Johnson. Second by Scott Fleming

**Action:** Meeting adjourned at 9:55