

File



MINUTES
LOCAL EDUCATION COMMISSION
FEBRUARY 26, 1965

The Local Education Commission met Friday, February 26, 1965, at 2 P. M. in the Board Room of the Fulton County Administration Building with the following members present:

Mr. P. L. Bardin	Mrs. Allen Ritter
Dr. Rufus Clement	Mr. Kenneth Stringer
Mr. Alan Kiepper	Mr. William Teem, III
Dr. John Letson	Mr. Fred Turner
Dr. James Miller, Jr.	Dr. Paul West
Mr. Thomas Miller	

Dr. Rufus Clement was introduced and welcomed as the new member of the Commission.

Minutes of the December 11, 1964, meeting were read and approved.

Mr. Stringer presented the bill from Dr. Truman Pierce for consultant services and expenses from July 1, 1964, through January 1, 1965, which totaled \$2,585.60 (\$2,400 consultant services, \$185.60 expenses). Mr. Stringer moved that the bill be paid. Mr. Fred Turner seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Mr. Bardin briefly reported on a letter from Representative Jack Etheridge concerning the Interim Report. He also read a portion of the letter from Mr. Leonard Robinson expressing apologies for being absent as much as has been necessary and suggesting that the Commission recommend that the present Fulton County and Atlanta Schools be divided into two equal districts.

Mr. Turner expressed disappointment that the Commission had received only two letters since the approval of the Interim Report. He said he had hoped that there would be considerably more interest in the work of the Commission than the two letters reflect.

Mr. Kiepper stressed the importance of completing the report of the Commission in time for the legislators of Fulton County and DeKalb County to become thoroughly familiar with it before the first meeting of the next General Assembly. He stated that his experience has been that legislators do not have time for very many meetings and discussion periods after the General Assembly convenes.

Dr. Letson reported that Mr. Ed Meade, Jr. from the Fund for the Advancement of Education had been contacted to ascertain interest in financing the current study of the Local Education Commission. It was Mr. Meade's opinion that the foundation would not be interested in such a project. No formal request has been made but could be if the Commission desires.

Mr. Bardin reported that Dr. Pierce's original contract expired in January of 1965, and recommended continuing it. Mr. Thomas Miller moved that Dr. Pierce's services be continued until the first meeting date of the 1966 General Assembly at a fee not to exceed \$3,000 plus expenses. The motion was seconded by Mr. Kenneth Stringer and passed unanimously.

It was agreed that if Dr. Pierce's services are needed beyond that date this could be arranged by mutual consent.

Mr. Bardin stated that during the past month or so some questions and points have been raised concerning whether the Commission should continue with the same course of action. There seems to be considerable agreement that, if voted on today, the voting public would turn down the proposal to combine the two systems. This raises questions concerning how the Commission should proceed. He then suggested that the Commission deviate somewhat from earlier plans and develop only a broad general outline for combining the two systems. This skeleton outline will be presented to the representatives as soon as this session of the General Assembly is over. Suggestions from the representatives will be included in the final draft of the report of the Commission.

Mrs. Ritter asked what has happened to cause the Commission to consider deviating from its previous position. It was pointed out that the people must decide whether the systems will be combined and, currently, it is believed that they would defeat such a proposal. Also, funds to finance an elaborate study have not been forthcoming; some teacher groups are speaking out against combining the systems; and, the amount of work involved in developing a comprehensive detailed outline would be somewhat meaningless unless there was some assurance that the plans could be implemented. It seems best to get approval of the idea before some of the specifics are developed. For example, to draft all of the bills required to merge the respective retirement systems would be an unnecessary expenditure of funds and energy unless agreement had been reached that the two systems would be combined.

Mr. Turner pointed out that we need to discuss the entire issue with teachers in both systems so that they will be well informed. Dr. Letson stated that before these discussion groups can be meaningful, certain questions must be answered. For example, it should be determined if adequate finances will be available on a long range basis to operate a combined system equal to or better than what each system now has.

Dr. West said that in his discussion with County teachers he had focused attention upon the need of combining the two systems, the need for additional finances and the point that the City was not trying to usurp the County's prerogatives. Also, he had pointed out that it would require several years to develop all the details for combining the systems into an entirely new system. One system would not be absorbed into the other.

It was agreed that a skeleton report should be developed which would outline the steps to be taken to combine the two systems and provide adequate information necessary to make intelligent decisions. This report should anticipate pertinent questions and attempt to answer them. For example, the report should state that the pension plans currently in operation are not actuarially sound. If the systems combined, the retirement benefits for any teacher will not be reduced because of joining the two systems. Other points which must be presented pertain to the salaries, financing the new system, additional non-ad valorem taxes, time tables for certain phases of the program to be completed, the selection of Board Members and other pertinent information.

After this report has been completed the Commission will review it and make suggestions. Then the report will be reviewed by the two Boards of Education and by the representatives from Fulton and DeKalb counties. Suggestions from the various groups will be incorporated into the final draft of the Commission's report.

Mr. Fred Turner then made the motion that the skeleton outline with appropriate information be developed and presented to the Commission for approval and to the two Boards of Education and the representatives from Fulton and DeKalb counties for suggestions. The motion was seconded by Mr. Teem and passed unanimously. Mr. Teem's suggestion that the report also show the cost for operating a combined system for a period of time, the cost for operating the two systems separately for the same period of time and the combined cost of operating each system separately was accepted.

Mr. Bardin discussed a letter from Dr. Jerry Miller requesting that a talk outline concerning combining the two systems be developed. Mr. Alan Kiepper stated that all of the pertinent decisions of the Commission to date were included in the Interim Report which he had used as a basis for speeches.

Dr. Pierce summarized his interpretations of the decisions made during the meeting. They are as follows:

- a. The earlier decision of the Commission in favor of a single school district is unchanged but procedures and next steps are to be modified according to the discussion today,
- b. A skeleton plan for combining the two school systems should be developed which will give attention to the many vital questions which should be answered before the voters can make an objective decision on the issue, and
- c. This plan will be reviewed by the Commission, the boards of education, and the members of the General Assembly from Fulton and DeKalb counties. Their suggestions will be sought and given consideration in the final report of the Commission.

The meeting was adjourned at 4 P. M.

ECH:cw
March 4, 1965

Recording Secretary

Approved by: _____

Chairman