

**Minutes
State Board of Education Special Committee
for the Pulaski County Boundaries Study
Friday, February 13, 2015**

The State Board of Education Special Committee for the Pulaski County Boundaries Study met Friday, February 13, 2015, in the Auditorium of the Department of Education Building. Chairman Jay Barth called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m.

Present: Dr. Jay Barth, Chair; Sam Ledbetter; Diane Zook; and Kim Davis

Work Session

Review the Charge of the Committee

Chairman Barth said on January 28, 2015, the State Board of Education passed a motion to establish a State Board committee charged with studying the appropriate school district lines within Pulaski County, taking into account communities of interest, student demographics, facilities, and property tax base with a report due back to the State Board no later than the June 2015, regularly scheduled meeting. State Board Chairman Sam Ledbetter appointed Dr. Jay Barth as chair. Committee members include Dr. Barth, Mr. Ledbetter, Ms. Zook, and Mr. Davis.

Department General Counsel Mr. Jeremy Lasiter said as a general matter, there are two broad ways in which the State Board of Education may change the boundary lines of a school district.

Mr. Lasiter said the first way, and the way you see most often, is through Ark. Code Ann. § 6-13-1414. That statute allows for the State Board of Education to consider a petition from a local board of directors of any school district that seeks an adjustment or change of boundary lines between its school district and an adjoining school district. Under Ark. Code Ann. § 6-13-1414, the Board may not order any change in school district boundaries that would hamper, delay, or in any manner negatively affects the desegregation efforts of the public school districts of the State.

Mr. Lasiter said the other way is more indirect. Under Arkansas laws related to the standards for accreditation, fiscal distress, academic distress, and facilities distress, the Board may consolidate, annex, or reconstitute a school district. In the Board order of consolidation or annexation, the Board may also include a provision that establishes the boundary lines of the new school districts.

Mr. Lasiter said Arkansas law states that the Board may not order any annexation or consolidation that hampers, delays, or in any manner negatively affects the desegregation efforts of a school district or school districts. Prior to entering such an order, the Board would also be required to get an advisory opinion from the Attorney General's Office concerning the desegregation issue.

Mr. Lasiter said with regard to Pulaski County, the Pulaski County Special School District remains under court supervision with regard to five areas in its desegregation plan: Discipline, Facilities, Staffing, Student Achievement, and Monitoring. Pursuant to an order issued in the early 2000s in the desegregation case, before taking any action relative to the boundaries of the Pulaski County Special School District, the Board would have to petition the presiding federal court for permission to do so. That order required any party that wanted to seek a change in the boundaries of the PCSSD to provide the court with a detailed feasibility study and specific data sufficient to allow the court to conduct an evidentiary hearing to determine whether the boundary change would substantially impact the student populations of each district and if such a change would better meet the educational needs of the students in the districts involved.

Dr. Barth said he understood that Central Arkansas Planning had mapped Pulaski County previously during the detachment process for the Jacksonville/North Pulaski School District. He said he would contact the organization for access to the maps for the next committee meeting.

Committee members discussed inviting the superintendents from the four districts in Pulaski County to provide their perspective on the current boundaries. The members also discussed inviting public comment at a later meeting.

The committee agreed to meet each month following the Friday State Board meeting with the understanding that a report is due back to the State Board by June 11, 2015. Due to a previous scheduling conflict, Dr. Barth suggested the committee select an alternative date in April.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:12 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Deborah Coffman.



Dr. Jay Barth, Chair