

VIRGINIA: AT A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE DINWIDDIE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS ON MARCH 6TH, 1977 AT 7:10 P. M.

PRESENT: L. A. HODNETT, CHAIRMAN ELECTION DISTRICT #2  
A. S. CLAY, VICE CHAIRMAN ELECTION DISTRICT #4  
M. I. HARGRAVE, JR. ELECTION DISTRICT #3  
T. J. LEFTWICH ELECTION DISTRICT #2  
G. S. BENNETT, JR. ELECTION DISTRICT #1  
  
W. C. KNOTT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS  
EDWARD B. TITMUS  
OSCAR W. EPPS  
HARRY L. CLAY, JR.  
JOHN Y. RICHARDSON

At the request of M. I. Hargrave, Jr., the Board of Supervisors agreed to meet in Special Session inviting the School Board to meet with them to discuss the School Board's action of not reappointing T. W. Newsom as Superintendent of Schools.

IN RE: DISCUSSION OF SCHOOL BOARD'S ACTION REGARDING SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT

Mr. Hargrave directed the following remarks to the entire School Board:

I have several concerns in regard to the school board's apparent recent action. I only know what I read in the paper??

I have, though, one primary concern. That is, that the people in the school system and all across the country are once again split wide open and have formed battle lines. I do not believe any good can come of a win/lose situation such as this. It is destructive to the very cause for which I entered into county government. That is why I felt so strongly the need to have all of you hear my thoughts.

I am most interested in the education system of this country. I am interested that we conduct all our county business in an efficient effective manner. We cannot do this with great numbers of people pulling in different directions.

I'm a young squirt in many of your eyes, sometimes I may appear too soft - for I have a philosophy that there are many ways to do any job and it best be left to the last person in an organization with the authority and ability to do it. There are many small things that are better done in a lesser manner than to squabble over how to do them. However, I also realize that the boss is finally responsible for all his people's actions. I know this, for I have worked for over half my life - and at all levels. I have now nearly 250 people working for me - I think I have as good a feel for people and people problems as any of you here.

In your apparent opinion we have a leadership problem in the school system.

In my opinion we may have leadership problems. In it the boss's greatest responsibility of all is to support his people when they are right and to correct, counsel, or discipline his people when they are wrong - only in that way can a leader function effectively and maintain total credibility - I didn't say be liked - he may be hated, but he will be credible. He must be strong to develop strong effective subordinates.

I apologize if I anger you, but when did you last stop to realize that you are the boss - and when did you last apply these leadership principles.

I feel we have a problem also - I just feel the problem may begin at the very top.

I do not mean to sound vehement, but I have said what I really feel. I feel to do less would not be honest with the stakes as large as they are.

We have a county to heal, if it is possible.

I have other remarks to make, but I feel they can only be made in executive session - for they relate to individuals.

Upon completion of Mr. Hargrave's remarks he reiterated the fact that these comments were directed at the entire Board and not to any one individual.

Mr. Titmus stated that he would like to read, for the Board of Supervisors, now, the statement he was going to read at the School Board meeting this coming Tuesday, March 8th:

Mr. Newsom, Fellow Board Members, Members of the Press, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I feel that the time has come for me to express my personal opinion and give the reason for my personal vote without committing the rest of the members of the Board in any way. I owe it not only to Mr. Newsom, but to those who have called me and have not received an answer to this point. I know full well that any reason that I give must be able to be backed by facts and adequate proof of statements given.

I have been on this Board longer than Mr. Newsom has been Superintendent of our school system; therefore, I have been a part of each appointment, regardless of my vote. I did not vote for Mr. Newsom in 1970, and the minutes of the meeting should reflect this. My reason for not casting a vote for him at that time was strictly that I wanted another person to assume the position. On that basis, I was casting a vote in favor of the person interviewed and there were many that were most qualified, but strictly for the one I wanted to have the job. Selfish motivation or motivations will ruin any system which you have been appointed to represent.

In 1973 the Board unanimously reappointed Mr. Newsom to be our Superintendent. My feelings at the time were that I had not done justice to Mr. Newsom in the past, and I thought as a Christian it was my obligation to vote for him, work with him, and support him 100 percent, even though I know there were personnel problems in the system. In education, as well as any other business, there is the greatest need to have as few personnel problems as possible. To this end, in both this system and my own business, I work to achieve this. I have stressed this to principals and other personnel in our system, but have not seen success accomplished. Many people have accused me of being a Newsom man--meaning that regardless of what Mr. Newsom may say or do I thought it was right.

I will say that when you are Chairman you must cooperate with the Superintendent, least you fail as Chairman or Board Member. If Mr. Newsom says that I have not cooperated with him in the last four years to the best of my ability, I think he has failed to recognize cooperation.

In Dinwiddie County we have <sup>FILED</sup> filed to have the necessary, again I say necessary, cooperation existing between Superintendent and other administrative personnel. I do not place the entire blame for this failure upon Mr. Newsom's shoulders. There are administrators that have failed to cooperate with him. My sincere feeling is that this condition will never be corrected as long as Mr. Newsom is Superintendent, and it might not be corrected when our new superintendent takes over. However, if we never try we will never know. I will say that after we have received applications, interviewed, and appointed another superintendent if the system does not improve that I will step down not only as Chairman but as a member of this Board.

I must say that Mr. Newsom is one of the strongest men in the field of finance when it comes to the use of the taxpayers dollar that I have ever known and I regret that we will have his loss in this area. He is also one of the hardest workers I have ever seen which I admire in any one; however, I wonder if the willingness to work so hard often makes it difficult for us to adequately delegate responsibility.

This decision was not easy to make. It was certainly one that I knew I had to make if I remained on this Board. If I resigned and did not make the decision and face it head on, I would have been less than a man. I must say that my decision is my own and that no one, not even my wife or closest friends, can assume any part of the responsibility for making this decision. I hope that each and everyone of you can appreciate the position that I am in even if you do not desire to agree with me.

My deepest desire is that the children of this county, even though they do not come from equal environments, may be able to receive an equal education. We have some of the best educators in our country right here in Dinwiddie, but I am also afraid we have some of the poorest. The Superintendent who comes has a great challenge facing him as well as the Board; but may we face it not thinking about whether or not a person working at Southside is the wife of the Chairman--we can't do anything to her because she is Mr. Titmus' wife. If she is not doing her job as she should, let her go home and put someone in her place that can do the job. Look at each individual as to their job performance and not as to who she or he is.

I promise this group that I will vote for the person to be Superintendent whom I feel to be most qualified to fill the position not the one who is a resident of this county unless I know he is the best that I have interviewed.

My prayer to Almighty God is that all will do their very best to make Dinwiddie County School System the best in the State of Virginia and one that all will want their children to be attending.

IN RE: EXECUTIVE SESSION

Upon motion of Mr. Hargrave, seconded by Mr. Leftwich, Mr. Hargrave, Mr. Leftwich, Mr. Clay, Mr. Bennett, Mr. Hodnett, voting "aye", the Board moved into Executive Session at 7:25 P. M. The Board returned to Open Session at 8:05 P. M.

IN RE: ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion of Mr. Hargrave, seconded by Mr. Leftwich, Mr. Hargrave, Mr. Leftwich, Mr. Clay, Mr. Bennett, Mr. Hodnett, voting "aye", the meeting adjourned at 8:05 P. M.

  
LOID A. HODNETT, CHAIRMAN

ATTEST:

  
W. C. KNOTT

