

Memorandum for the Record—11/22/2019

At the Board meeting of 11/21/2019, when the Board was voting on the school attendance areas, a motion (motion #4) failed. Upon its failure, I motioned/called for a recess to allow me the opportunity to consider the impact of the vote failure.

As had happened previously in the evening, when we were presented new information, I requested and was granted a 15 minute recess and review to consider new information. During this earlier time, I took my paperwork of new information with me and retreated first to the Board Planning Room and then to a semi-private space at the desk of one of the Board's administrative personnel to evaluate the information.

With the failure of the vote, I knew that the cascading effects of the vote would be critically impactful to the whole structure of the redistricting plan.

I picked up my packet of information and retreated into the Board Planning Room. Ms. Coombs and Ms. Taj were already in the room. Ms. Taj asked what happened not fully understanding the implications of the motion's failure to pass. I expressed my thinking that the whole elementary plan fell apart. I expressed to both Coombs and Taj that I believed we would have to walk back all of West Columbia. Ms. Taj expressed that we could not possibly do that. I informed her that I believed it was our only option in light of the vote failure. I then set my packet of papers on the far end of the conference table.

At some point, we were joined by Board Administrator Kathy Hanks.

Ms. Taj remarked that only the prevailing side could reconsider the vote. Directing her comments to Ms. Coombs, She pleaded with Ms. Coombs to reconsider the vote.

Ms. Coombs responded that she was being bullied by the left and the right because she was the swing vote [referring, I believe, to the political spectrum].

At that point, I left to return to the dais in order to get additional materials for my consideration. As I left, Ms. Coombs was crying about the situation.

When I returned to the Board Planning Room, the room was filled with Board members and the Superintendent entered expressing that an administrative session could only be called to explain the impact of the moves, but that Board members could not ask questions or deliberate.

At that point, Chair Ellis informed the Superintendent that we were ready to return to the dais and the vote would be reconsidered. Ms. Coombs expressed that she would be bringing the motion #4 up for reconsideration. According to the time stamp on the video recording, the amount of time of the recess was less than four minutes.

I remarked to the Deputy Superintendent that I would like to hear what the Superintendent might have said with regards to the impact, but at that point, the Board and Administration had begun to file into the Board Room.

Chair Ellis reconvened the meeting and inadvertently called it an administrative session. Ms. Coombs brought the motion back up for reconsideration while crying. She also expressed that she did it because otherwise the whole plan fell apart.

At some point later, the Superintendent asked to consult privately with Chair Ellis. At that point, Chair Ellis corrected the record to reflect that an administrative session did not occur.

At no point did a closed meeting occur. Nor did the Board willfully circumvent the sunshine laws or Open Meetings Act.

To my knowledge, the Board did not deliberate on the actions to be taken when we returned to public session, nor did Board members direct Ms. Coombs as to her actions.

My sole intent in calling for the recess was to allow me the opportunity to evaluate the impact that might occur with this unexpected motion failure, given the opposite had occurred in the straw vote 3 days earlier (Monday 11/18/19).