April 16, 2025, Sales Surtax Oversight Committee Meeting

Committee Members Present

Lawrence Dennis, Dan Janson, Cynthia Brown, Dawn Emerick, Wanda Ford, Kay Hawkins, Amy Henderson, Mike Hightower, Ryan Murphy, Stephanie Schaap, Ramon Day, Marion Tischler, Anita Vining

Ex-Officio, Non-Voting Members Present

None.

Call Meeting to Order

Chairman, Lawrence Dennis called the meeting to order at 10:08 AM and gave a welcome message with a quote. He announced there is a Quorum to conduct meeting business.

Approval of the April 16, 2025, Agenda

Chair Dennis made the following recommendation to the committee:

Motion:

That the Sales Surtax Oversight Committee Approve the April 16, 2025, Meeting Agenda as submitted:

Vote Results: 13-0

Motion: Dan Janson

Second: Mike Hightower

Vote: PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

Approval of Minutes: February 19, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes:

Motion:

That the Sales Surtax Oversight Committee approves the February 19, 2025, Meeting Minutes as submitted.

Vote Results: 13-0

Motion: Dan Janson

Second: Mike Hightower

Vote: PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

<u>Approval of Member-to-Member Minutes: February 28, 2025, Meeting Minutes:</u>
Chair Dennis deferred action on voting to approve the February 28th meeting at 10:14 AM for 2 members to have extra time to review the draft minutes.

Motion:

That the Sales Surtax Oversight Committee approves the February 28, 2025, Meeting Minutes as submitted.

Vote Results:

Motion: Dan Janson

Second: None

Vote: NOT PASSED
The committee tabled the voting to approve February 28, 2025, member-to-member meeting minutes to allow a few members extra time to look over the meeting minutes.

Public Comment

Susan Aertker gave public comments regarding a handout that reflects requested information she would like to see on the district dashboard on the DCPS website and commented that the committee has the power to ask for this information. She also spoke about charter school leases, charter schools that will be approved at the May 6th board meeting and expressed the importance of keeping charter schools accountable.

Chair Dennis thanked Ms. Aertker for her public comments and recent emails. He addressed her recent questions and went over information that was shared by the Superintendent at the April Board Meeting. He also addressed her additional email inquiry and went over the research and information from Chief Legal Counsel, Ray Poole, and announced that Chef Financial Officer, Ron Fagan, who was in attendance during the meeting, was researching the answers to Ms. Aertker's questions and would follow-up. Ms. Marion Tischler also thanked Ms. Aertker for the information shared at each meeting.

At the conclusion of Public Comments, Kay Hawkins, Chair Dennis, Marion Tischler, Dan Janson, Ryan Murphy and Mike Hightower held discussions about recent legislative bills and Ms. Tischler made a request that the committee receive more frequent legislative updates from the district at future meetings. Chair Dennis announced that the District's Director of Governmental Relations, Korney Wesley, would be speaking during governance to provide the committee with a legislative update.

Mr. Janson asked Mr. Poole if the senate and house bills fall under the scope of the Sales Surtax Oversight Committee – Mr. Poole answered he will look back at the bills and confirm his answer that it does apply to the scope of the committee.

Ramon Day, Mike Hightower, Kay Hawkins, Marion Tischler, and Dan Janson asked for additional information about charter schools and their reporting, the sales-surtax funding regarding charter schools and the districts compliance. Topics included: eligibility to receive capital outlay funds, how the district tracks and reports these findings, and is the district in compliance with the referendum.

Chair Dennis allowed the district's Director of School Choice, Eugene Hays, to address the committee regarding these questions. Mr. Hays provided the steps that he follows to ensure sales-surtax dollars provided to charter schools are approved based on the states guidelines following capital outlay. In his review process, leases, property tax records, sun biz reports, and all documents are pulled and provided to the state with his findings outlining any concerns for a specific charter school if there are findings. Mr. Hays explained, once these reports and findings are turned in for review to the state, the decision that is made to determine eligibility to receive capital outlay funds is not made at the district level and is decided by the state after their review is complete.

Wanda Ford arrived at 10:40 AM

<u>Approval of Member-to-Member Minutes: February 28, 2025, Meeting Minutes:</u>
Chair Dennis revisited voting action to approve the February 28th meeting at 10:14 AM after the 2 members had time to review the draft minutes from this meeting.

Ms. Tischler made a motion to amend language on the first page of the meeting minutes under the second item.

Tischler – first page 2nd item – suggesting a manner in which information is reported – to report progress reporting in specific areas by district level.

Motion:

That the oversight committee approve to amend the minutes on page-one under the second item to specify that the district's progress reporting should occur in a manner that provides progress information through specific areas by district level.

Vote Results: 13-0

Motion: Marion Tischler

Second: Raymond Day

Vote: PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

The Chairman then called for a vote by the committee to approve the amended February 28, 2025, meeting minutes.

Motion:

That the Sales Surtax Oversight Committee approves the February 28, 2025, Meeting Minutes as amended and submitted.

Vote Results: 13-0

Motion: Dan Janson

Second: Mike Hightower

Vote: PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

Ramon Day and Mike Hightower addressed the Chairman about the concerns and requests regarding information provided to the committee and the request for the CSI Division report.

Dan Janson called for a point of order and pointed out that that would need to be discussed under Governance to stay in compliance with the meeting agenda. Mr. Dennis announced that during governance he would be addressing the concerns from the member-to-member meeting as well as involving district staff to provide

Items to be Discussed

2024 Annual Report

The Chairman reviewed the steps the committee needs to take to finalize the 2024 Annual Report and opened the floor for discussion:

Committee Member Discussions:

Mr. Dennis opened the floor to the committee to share their recommendations and hold discussions to narrow down what items should be included in the report.

The recommendations that were captured for discussion included:

- That the district expands the committee to include a charter school representative
- That the district maximizes non-profit partnerships to close budgetary gaps regarding resources because of the services these organizations offer
- The committee requests that the associated builders and contractors become an included seat on the committee and the representative be a licensed general contractor.
- That the progress report information be displayed by type of project by district, safety, renovation, and consolidation.
- That the oversight reporting should be provided through an executive summary and that the district should consider the district dashboard and have the community test the dashboard to see if it is user friendly.

The oversight committee provided their recommendations in writing to Ms. Mihalik, Coordinator to the Chief of Staff, to record and update the approved recommendations that were narrowed down in their discussions. The Chairman then called for a vote from the committee to approve the 2024 draft Annual Report.

Motion:

That the committee approves the 2024 draft annual report recommendations as submitted by the committee:

Vote Results: 13-0

Motion: Ramon Day

Second: Mike Hightower

Vote: PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

The Chairman called for a vote from the committee to approve the 2024 Annual Report as amended, to be published to the Duval County School Board and the public.

Motion:
That the committee approve the 2024 Annual Report with the committee's recent changes and updated recommendations; and that the report be published publicly and sent to the Duval County School Board.

Vote Results: 13-0

Motion: Ramon Day

Second: Mike Hightower

Vote: PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

Governance:
Chairman, Lawrence Dennis, gave the committee insights on the historical context of the Oversight Committee since its inception when voters approved the half-penny sales-tax and some historical content on the work and goals set forth through the work of the committee. He also introduced Chief of Staff, Michael Ramirez, and Executive Director of Professional Development, Zeina Spaulding, and opened the floor for them to address the committee and hold conversations regarding committee member feedback.

Mr. Dennis announced that he would like to have some of the conversations held in a different setting to help cut down some of the details between the members and staff during the regular meetings. He mentioned that this may be through subcommittees or another outlet that district staff could support. He then handed the floor to Chief Ramirez and Dr. Spaulding, so they could begin an activity with the committee to capture their feedback.

Discussions included:
Chief Ramirez addressed the committee regarding the vision and mission from district staff and the Superintendent to better support the needs of the oversight committee. Chief Ramirez noted that the Governmental Liaison, Kortney Wesley, can update the committee before we conclude today's meeting regarding current house and senate bills. Chief Ramirez handed the floor to Dr. Spaulding.
Dr. Spaulding led the committee through an activity that allowed time for individualized feedback regarding the following topics:

- What is currently working for the committee – What should be continued?
  The committee documented individual remarks on this question and held discussions amongst the group to narrow down their findings.

Feedback included: The committee gave positive feedback about support of the Superintendent, Chief of Staff, and Cabinet level personnel, transparency, community representation, the dashboard, and conversations between members and district staff taking place during the meetings so information is from the source of the staff members handling these areas.

- What changes would you like to see?

The committee documented individual remarks on this question and held discussions amongst the group to narrow down their findings.

Feedback included: dashboard access for all technological abilities, school board member attendance requirement for at least one meeting, SAC and PTA members should be on the committee and not on a rotation by membership, representative from a charter school be added to the committee, request a member of the Duval Delegation be in attendance at meetings, there needs to be working subcommittees from the Sales Surtax Oversight Committee, dashboard updated frequently if it is not in real time, better visualization of the continuation of projects, how are the projects benefiting students right now, training for new members on the dashboard, follow-up regarding the status of the committee's understanding, clarity on the authority of this group and its purpose,

The chairman paused activities to make a motion to the committee to extend the meeting time so there would be enough time complete the activity and receive some additional updates.

Motion:
That the Oversight Committee vote to extend the meeting to 12:15 PM, so they could complete all items of business.

Vote Results: 13-0

Motion: Dan Janson

Second: Ramon Day

Vote Results: PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

The committee continued discussions regarding the questions from the activity and Dr. Spaulding captured the groups feedback regarding the changes the committee provided. Dr. Spaulding announced that she would be compiling all the feedback from the activity and will report these takeaways back to the Chairman and district staff and this will result in actionable items that can support next steps in implementing these proposed changes into future meetings and the work of the oversight committee. Chief Ramirez concluded the activity by thanking the committee for this information. He announced that Kortney Wesley was able to join the meeting and is here to update the committee.

Chief Ramirez introduced the district's Director of Governmental Relations, Kortney Wesley, who provided the committee with an update about the specific Senate and House bills that were discussed at the start of the meeting. Topics that were discussed included: parent involvement in charter school conversions, idea of job engine charter schools', House Bill 123, Senate Bill 140, Bill 1708, and other factors and bills that are all connected but will not become a factor in changes until the bills are passed.

Mr. Dennis made a motion to the committee to move the May 21, 2025, regular meeting from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. due to a conflict in his schedule.

Motion:
That the Sales Surtax Oversight Committee votes to move the time of the May 21, 2025, regular meeting from 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM and last until 1:00 PM.

Vote Results: 13-0

Motion: Kay Hawkins

Second: Dan Janson

Vote Results: PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

Before the conclusion of the meeting, Megan Mihalik, Coordinator to the Chief of Staff, presented the approved 2024 Annual Report to the committee for a final review of the items provided by the committee earlier in the meeting in writing. Ms. Mihalik gave the committee time to review each item, hold discussions, and ensure that the language in the report captured the items voted and approved of by the committee correctly.

Ms. Tischler asked that on the agenda for the next meeting on May 21st that the oversight committee receive a legislative update.

Mr. Ramon Day made a motion to the committee regarding a request for new information and a specific format to be displayed on the district dashboard.

Motion:
That the committee vote for the District Dashboard to track and display all expenditures in detail in CSI Division format to include the total budgeted amount, the amount expended to date, the amount remaining to be expended, and the remaining funds available to complete the project. Each line item will be the CSI Division.

Vote Result: 2-10

Motion: Ramon Day

Second: Mike Hightower

Vote Result: NOT PASSED

Mr. Janson and other members of the committee asked to have more time to research the CSI Division format and gain a better understanding before voting. Mr. Day asked to make a follow-up motion to keep this request alive and allow the committee time to receive more information about this topic before voting.

Motion:
That the motion regarding the CSI Division format be tabled until May 21, 2025, regular meeting to allow the committee time to receive and review additional information before voting on the original motion.
Vote Result: 12-0

Motion: Ramon Day

Second: Dan Janson

Vote Result: PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

On behalf of the committee, Mr. Dennis thanked the school board members that attended the meeting today.

Next Meeting Date:

Chair Dennis advised the next meeting date for the Sales Surtax Oversight Committee will be on Wednesday, May 21, 2025, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Adjournment

Chair Dennis made the following motion to the committee:

Motion:

To adjourn the Sales Surtax Oversight Committee Meeting.

Vote Results: 13-0

Motion: Ramon Day

Second: Dan Janson

Vote: PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

The meeting was adjourned at 12:18 p.m.

Minutes were taken by Megan Mihalik, Coordinator to the Chief of Staff.

These minutes were approved at the September 17, 2025, Sales Surtax Oversight Committee Meeting.

***** In order to comply with the Americans with Disability Act, some attachments are not viewable here. To receive any attachments or presentations, please email Megan Mihalik, Coordinator to the Chief of Staff, at mihalikm@duvalschools.org*****