

MINUTES

Financial Emergency Board
Glades County School District
Union County School District
9:15 a.m., Wednesday, April 29, 2026
Online via TEAMS

Vickie DePratter, Chairman
Randy Beach
Kathy Sneads

Chair DePratter called the meeting to order at 9 a.m. and thanked the members of the board and superintendents from Glades County School District (Glades) and Union County School District (Union) for participating in the meeting. The Chair advised the public that they would have the opportunity to provide comments.

The chair recognized Superintendent Ripplinger to introduce Union's staffing plan.

1. Union – Consideration of District Staffing Plan

Superintendent Ripplinger provided an overview of the district's staffing plan for 2026-27, highlighting the planned reductions in the number of positions. He noted that the district had 353 positions at start of 2025-26, with the exception of noted vacancies. Those vacancies will not be filled in 2026-27, the positions highlighted in yellow are eliminated reduced from 353 positions to 316. Superintendent Ripplinger specified that the reduction is in the number of positions, not employees (since some employees may hold more than one position. The staffing plan includes a reduction of 37 positions:

District level – 3
Transportation – 2
Food Service – 8
Non-Instructional Aids – 4
Non-Instructional Clerical – 4
Instructional – 15
Custodial – 1

Member Beach asked whether the projected savings of \$1.1 million included only salaries. Superintendent Ripplinger confirmed that the projected savings of \$1.1 million was only for salaries and clarified that there would also be savings from benefits, which he estimated would be an additional \$220,000 in savings.

Chair DePratter asked how the plan aligns with class size requirements. Superintendent Ripplinger responded: Grades 3 and under, 20 students per class; grades 4-8, 25 students per class; grades 9-12, 27-28 per class. He also clarified that rather than providing the maximum ratio at each level, they are leaving opportunity for approximately one enrollment per class to accommodate additional enrollments during the year.

Chair DePratter asked whether there were any issues in the proposed plan relating to out-of-field teachers? Superintendent Ripplinger indicated that there were only a few issues in the current year, and the district is working towards full compliance.

Chair DePratter asked what the timeline is for required reappointments? Superintendent Ripplinger responded that the timeline (for notifying staff regarding reductions) will start after today. Reappointments must be by May 15, 2026.

Chair DePratter confirmed that Superintendent Ripplinger estimates the savings from the staffing plan to be approximately \$1.5 million.

Chair DePratter asked whether the proposed master schedule Union submitted follows the staffing level indicated in the proposed staffing plan. Superintendent Ripplinger confirmed it does.

Chair DePratter asked the members if they felt the board has enough information to vote on the plan, and the members agreed.

Chair DePratter provided an opportunity for public comment. No public comments were offered.

Member Sneads moved to approve Union's staffing plan.

Member Beach seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

Chair DePratter recognized Superintendent Ripplinger to address the board on the status of the district's insurance policy renewal and the options the district is reviewing.

2. Union – Consideration of District Health Insurance Plan and Related Proposed Expenditures

Superintendent Ripplinger explained that the district is currently moving toward their re-enrollment period. They were initially informed that insurance rates were going to increase 50% but after more discussion with their insurance agents, the quote was reduced to a 35% increase. They have requested a further rate decrease from their current

agent. The district has also been talking with FLEHT as well. He noted that timeframes are very short due to open enrollment beginning. The district is requesting to move forward with a participation agreement with FLEHT. The district currently pays approximately \$1.1 million, so a 35% increase would be \$350k, and the district cannot afford that increase. The School Board had a workshop on this, and they are moving toward FLEHT depending on the board's action today.

Chair DePratter recognized Brian Burch to address the potential renewal of the district's current Florida Blue insurance policy.

Brian Burch indicated his agency is trying to get the best rate they can for the district. He noted the historical relationship, indicating that the district had only a 7.8% increase on average in recent years, which he indicated was a good average for the market. They are trying to get a better rate. They do base the risk assessment partially on the district itself, but also partly from the larger group. The only way they can move forward is to try to negotiate lower rate, and they need as much information as possible to negotiate.

Member Sneads asked who is part of the risk group. Mr. Burch responded that it is the Florida market segment groups based on entities of 51-500, so the risk group is based on like-size group claims for similar size entities across the whole state, with some regional factors figured in.

Member Sneads asked what the overall increase was for the market for Blue Cross in Florida. Mr. Burch responded that he would estimate 10 – 12 % (with outliers) based on his clients.

Member Sneads asked whether the district's claims experience justified the rate increase for the district being so much higher than the average. Mr. Burch answered it was based on the most recent 12-15 months of claims and that the historical claims would be the factor causing the increase. He noted there was a 97% medical loss ratio.

Chair DePratter asked what the stop loss limit is. Mr. Burch responded that because the district is on a fully insured plan, there is a built in stop loss, which he called pooling. It is set at \$180,000.

Chair DePratter asked whether there were any options provided that would increase that limit to help with the renewal. Mr. Burch responded that the limit was not adjustable.

Chair DePratter noted that the participation rate by employees appeared to be low. The District responded that the low participation was caused by several factors including the cost and the fact that many employees obtain their insurance through their spouses at lower cost.

Chair DePratter asked the district whether they had considered a competitive bid for the insurance. The District responded that they did not because in years past, when they have gone out to bid, but they have not been viewed favorably by the vendors. They were also taken by surprise at the large increase in the renewal price.

Chair DePratter then recognized Ted Roush and Derren Bryan to address the board regarding the services that FLEHT can offer the district.

Ted Roush indicated that FLEHT is a service of FADSS, with 20 school districts participating. FLEHT brings districts together to access the markets as a group. FLEHT works with districts to take them through the process of transitioning from fully insured to self-insured. Small districts cannot withstand the volatility of self-insurance on their own, so the group allows reduction of volatility. Union is not able to go through a self-insured model at this time. So, FLEHT is offering a participation agreement for FLEHT to be the agent of record to go to the marketplace through the Trust to obtain a policy for the district. The district will pay a capitalization fee of \$10,000, after July 1, 2026. They will pay five monthly installments of \$2,000 each.

Derren Bryan indicated that the ask of the board today is to allow the district to sign the participation agreement with FLEHT.

Chair DePratter asked whether there is time to obtain quotes in time to have open enrollment before employees leave for summer.

Derren Bryan indicated that would be the goal, but FLEHT cannot promise. They will also be working with Florida Blue, so renewal may still be an option.

Chair DePratter asked what kind of support FLEHT would provide to assist the district with the open enrollment platform?

Derren Bryan responded that FLEHT is not an agent, and the district would handle their own open enrollment platform.

Union confirmed they can handle the open enrollment. If they have to switch policies, help would be appreciated, but currently the process happens smoothly.

Chair DePratter asked Burch whether the renewal rate with Florida Blue would still be available if the district chose FLEHT. Mr. Burch confirmed that the current offer would still be on the table.

Chair DePratter asked FLEHT whether the goal is to move towards self-insurance by 2026-27. Ted Roush responded that 2026-27 is possible, but if not it might roll to 2027-28. He also noted the potential savings of being self-insured.

Member Beach asked how many Blue Cross plans are offered to employees now?

Union responded there are six plans: two are grand-fathered. Four plans are available to all new employees. The plans have different levels of quality.

Member Sneads asked for clarification regarding the cost of FLEHT, aside from the \$10,000 fee. Ted Roush clarified that there would be no additional cost to the district up until the point they become self-insured inside of FLEHT.

Mr. Burch indicated that John Harrison, the district's current agent of record, is not tied to just Florida Blue, and that he is seeking other quotes for the district.

John Harrison indicated that as a local agent, his firm would be able to work on additional quotes for the district.

Chair DePratter asked the members if they had any questions on this agenda item.

Member Beach sought confirmation as to the action requested by the district.

Chair DePratter asked Derren Bryan for confirmation that the district sought authority to make FLEHT and Alliant their agent of record and that they would remain fully insured for at least one full year, possibly two. Mr. Bryan confirmed this was correct.

Member Sneads sought clarification on the immediate cost to the District.

Ted Roush indicated the district would pay a one time capitalization fee of \$10,000 after July 1, if they are able to bring a solution to the district that saves them money. The \$10,000 would be paid in five monthly installments of \$2,000 each. When they become self-insured under FLEHT at a future date, there would be a per-member fee assessed as part of the Trust. He also noted that district superintendents sit on the trustee board.

Chair DePratter asked whether the self-insurance fees are based on the number of employees or the number of plan members. Mr. Roush confirmed that it is based on the number of plan members, and not the number of employees.

Chair DePratter asked Superintendent Ripplinger what direction the District wanted to go in with respect to the insurance.

Superintendent Ripplinger advised that district employees wanted to maintain a quality healthcare plan that is economically feasible. He acknowledged that Mr. Harrison had served the district well for many years, but in light of the proposed increase, the district

needs to have other options, therefore, the district wants to sign the agreement with FLEHT.

Member Sneads commented to both Union and Glades that Jackson County had transitioned to self-insurance many years ago, and that had been a very successful program. Jackson was able to make this transition without hiring any additional staff, and the workload was manageable.

Chair DePratter commented that the fact of remaining fully insured at this point will make the transition easier.

Member Beach commented that at the prior meeting, the district had indicated they needed to pay for the increased cost of the insurance due to Affordable Care Act requirements, however, Member Beach indicated that is not the case in his experience. There are two penalties under the ACA. To avoid the larger penalty, the district only has to offer minimum essential coverage, and the smaller penalty is incurred where you do not offer affordable healthcare to an employee. That smaller penalty only applies where an employee obtains a government subsidy on the marketplace. Member Beach noted that the risk of incurring small penalties does not require the district to pay all of the increased cost. He noted that the district's collective bargaining agreement does not require that the district increase their contribution. So, the district does not need to absorb the increase.

Chair DePratter asked FLEHT whether they will work with the district to determine that the district and employee contributions to meet ACA requirements. Ted Roush confirmed that they will. He noted that they currently have the least expensive plan for the employees. FLEHT may also offer a direct primary care option.

Chair DePratter called for public comment on the insurance issue.

John Harrison commented that he did not see the reason to change agent if district is staying fully insured.

It is noted that an attendee raised their hand indicating their desire to provide public comment, however, they were apparently unable to unmute to do so. The Department confirmed that there was no technology issue on the Department's side preventing the attendee from commenting.

On conclusion of public comment, Member Sneads moved Union proceed with participation agreement with FLEHT. Member Beach seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

Chair DePratter then recognized Superintendent Ripplinger for the next agenda item, consideration of the District's Line of Credit and establishing controls on its use.

3. Union – Consideration of Continuing District's Line of Credit and Establishing Controls on Use

Superintendent Ripplinger indicated that the district has established a line of credit that assists with cash flow. He requested that the district be allowed to maintain it. He noted under the terms of the line of credit, they have to have it paid off at the end of the year.

Member Beach indicated he had no issue with continuing the line of credit since it is already established. He noted that if the district actually uses it, they would have to come before the board.

Chair DePratter confirmed for the record that they are not authorized to access the line of credit without approval of the board.

4. Union - Consideration of Immediate Needs and Next Steps

Chair DePratter asked Superintendent Ripplinger whether he had any immediate needs that he would like to bring to the board's attention.

Superintendent Ripplinger asked for clarification on the impact of the Financial Emergency Board to the district's collective bargaining agreement and the upcoming negotiations. For example, he asked whether automatic step increases are impacted.

Chair DePratter indicated that the Board will seek clarification from the Department's General Counsel, but in the meantime, the district should continue with negotiations, but will need board approval prior to signing a new agreement.

Chair DePratter asked the district what the timeline would be for the collective bargaining negotiations. Superintendent Ripplinger indicated the negotiations would begin in mid- to late May.

Chair DePratter indicated she was not aware of anything that would suspend the collective bargaining agreement, but the Board will obtain clarification from the General Counsel's office.

Member Beach noted that the current collective bargaining agreement expires this year.

Chair DePratter then recognized Superintendent Barfield to introduce the Gade's staffing plan.

5. Glades – Consideration of District Staffing Plan

Superintendent Barfield noted that she was joined by several members of school board and financial staff. She introduced the district's director of Human Resources, John Millay to present the district's staffing plan.

John Millay indicated that at this time, they are not able to trust the data in their system to analyze trend data, so they are using a zero based approach. Being fiscally sound and protecting instructional programming are the most important factors in determining staff reductions. The district projects up to 50 new students, but they are not counting those for planning purposes. May 4 is deadline for reappointments under their collective bargaining agreement. They already started to advise roughly twelve staff of their non-renewal, and they also have some retirements. He advised that the staffing formula that was used for the plan matches the state-required class sizes: K-3 is 18, grades 4-8 is 22, and grades 9-12 is 25. The district also has to account for duty-free lunch, electives, etc. Since they are small, they do have some offerings with smaller classes.

As to the formula, they are trying to follow the class size requirements, with a few offerings to meet graduation requirements and the like. There may be a small deviation from the formula (1-2 positions). Total reductions result in \$1.38 million in savings.

Superintendent Barfield noted that the staffing plan did not include Charter school staffing since they are not employees of the district.

John Millay indicated that there is a new charter approved for grades 6-12 starting in 26-27. District estimates 35-50 enrollments for the new charter school, but the charter school estimates hundreds.

Member Beach noted that the food service fund has been operating at a deficit, but the district staffing plan appears to have no cuts in foodservice. He asked whether the district has completed any kind of analysis of meals served by service hour compared to other districts.

The district responded that for 2025-26 they are running under-budget for Food Service.

Superintendent Barfield indicated that the inability to speak to the history of the food service expenditures is because of the finance office issues. They don't believe the deficit numbers are accurate, but can't confirm.

Member Beach and Chair DePratter noted the audited financial information indicated the food service deficit.

The district responded that they are still having trouble getting solid financial data, but the food service appears to be under budget.

Member Beach acknowledged the difficulty in determining the accurate financial picture when they did not have a CFO who was doing their job, but it is important to make sure that the food service is not draining the General Fund.

Chair DePratter indicated she is trying to determine the reliability of the staffing plan spreadsheet and the salaries. She asked the district whether they had matched the individual staff with the Master Schedule to verify there is no one that does not have a full class. The district responded that they had done so and had determined that in the High School, there are instances where the classes are not full, but they have added duties to make sure each teacher is fully engaged. The district is still in the process of matching individual staff to the positions allocated according to the formula.

Chair DePratter asked whether the staffing plan that was submitted was final and ready to be approved.

The District responded that they are nearing completion.

Member Sneads noted that for West Glades Elementary's 2026-27 staffing plan, there are currently 43 teachers, but the formula generates 33 positions. The District responded that they are currently reviewing that plan and will have a final plan next week. It is possible that the plan will have additional reductions next week.

Member Sneads suggested that when applying the formula they could round down when the fraction is .3 or below.

Chair DePratter commented that the district had indicated they had notified the teachers of non-renewal.

Superintendent Barfield confirmed they had notified some staff yesterday and one today.

Chair DePratter asked the district when the district is required to notify instructional staff.

Superintendent Barfield indicated the deadline was May 4, 2026.

Chair DePratter confirmed that the district has no bargaining agreement for non-instructional staff.

Member Beach asked for clarification on three positions identified as supervisors, and the District provided clarification that the positions related to Information Technology (IT), MIS reporting and one position that was grant-funded.

The district also clarified the merging of the Director of Student Services and Director of Special Education positions.

Chair DePratter asked the district to resubmit the staffing plan spreadsheet, with each of the tabs completed with solid numbers for salary and fund source, so the Board can see what will be paid from general revenue or federal sources.

Member Sneads requested that the plan also be updated relating to the staffing for West Glades, K-8 school.

Chair DePratter commented that the Board needs the spreadsheet to be cleaned up before the Board approves the plan.

The members discussed whether they are approving the formula or the plan.

Chair DePratter noted they need to know the dollar impact.

The District advised they will have the final plan with estimated savings very soon.

Chair DePratter asked whether they have to obtain school board approval for the staffing plan. John Millay indicated they do not.

Member Sneads indicated she is comfortable with the formula, and pleased with the progress on the plan, but does not want to impede the collective bargaining agreement.

Chair DePratter confirmed that the district will not fill vacancies at this time.

Chair DePratter sought public input regarding the proposed staffing plan. No public comments were offered.

Member Sneads moved to approve allocation formula and proceed to meet their collective bargaining agreement, knowing that no vacant positions will be filled. Member Beach seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

Chair DePratter noted that the Board needs the clean up on the spreadsheet quickly. The members also discussed the need to know how the Master schedule classes align to the formula.

Superintendent Barfield acknowledged that the district will clean up the spreadsheet with the funding source and will submit the revised plan.

The members discussed how to provide information on how the staffing plan matches the allocations. The District noted they are not able to input the 26-27 Master Schedule yet. Member Beach recommended a spreadsheet for this purpose.

Chair DePratter noted that the next item on the agenda are Glades' outstanding or unpaid obligations.

6. Glades – Discussion of Outstanding Obligations Due

Chair DePratter noted that at the Board's initial meeting, Superintendent Barfield was asked whether the amounts owed to the district's charter school had been paid, and she indicated she would verify. Chair DePratter requested a status update.

Superintendent Barfield acknowledged that the charter school has not been paid.

Chair DePratter asked how much is owed. Superintendent Barfield responded that about \$1 million was now due.

Chair DePratter asked whether the FDOE made aware of that when the district's request for assistance was made. The district confirmed the amounts owed to the charter school was included in the request for assistance.

Chair DePratter asked whether this means the district has received the payment from the state (as part of the assistance that has been provided).

Member Beach noted that the district has a timeline to make payment after receipt by the state and asked whether the charter school has been seeking payment.

The district's Finance Secretary noted that the district was not certain what amounts were due, but have now confirmed that they have not received FEFP since December. They did not pay the charter school for January, February, or March because they were waiting on the third calculation. They are in the process of verifying payment and they are now in the position of being able to make payment. The amount paying today is \$237,000 times three (each month). Also, some other amounts are due in other fund sources, including capital outlay. They owed the district from last year's figures. They are not deducting that amount so they can keep the numbers clear.

The charter school is owed \$237,000 per month for January through March, and then the same amount for April, May and June depending on final calculations. The charter school

owes \$218,577 from the prior year's fourth calculation, but the district is not deducting that amount to keep the payments clean.

Member Sneads noted that the district needs to put a receivable on the books for \$218,577.

Chair DePratter indicated the Board requests the payment detail by revenue source showing and the payments made and amounts owed to the charter school.

Chair DePratter indicated she was concerned about how this will impact the June 30 balance.

Deputy Commissioner Suzanne Pridgeon verified that the state support estimate did account for the \$1 million owed to the charter school.

Chair DePratter indicated the next agenda item is discussion of the accounting system in Glades.

7. Glades – Discussion of Accounting Software

Chair DePratter recognized member Randy Beach to advise the board regarding resources that may be available pertaining to transitioning from Quickbooks to Skyward.

Chair DePratter reported having reached out to NEFEC regarding resources available, but indicated she has not heard back.

Member Beach reported that there is a retired consultant available to assist the district in transitioning payroll from Quick Books into Skyward. He recommends that the district do that.

Chair DePratter noted that the NEFEC agreement does include the business side of Skyward. She asked the district whether their staff has had conversations with NEFEC to get support transitioning payroll to Skyward.

Superintendent Barfield indicated there were prior discussions, but due to the finance office difficulties, it was not done. The Superintendent previously asked NEFEC what she can do to help her staff. NEFEC told her that Skyward was not set up correctly.

Chair DePratter indicated the need to confirm that the NEFEC agreement includes payroll and what modules are covered under the agreement with NEFEC.

District staff indicated that parts of Skyward are used for payroll, but there are parts of the process that have to be input from other systems. They have tried to work with

NEFEC, but the codes for the positions, etc., need to be input correctly. They are using workbooks to upload information from Quickbooks into PAC.

Member Beach suggested that Chair DePratter talk with NEFEC to get clarification on the extent to which the district can and has used the payroll features. Chair DePratter indicated she will follow up with them to try to gain clarification.

Superintendent requested a conference call with NEFEC, but Member Beach advised that due to her experience, his preference would be for Chair DePratter to have the direct communication with NEFEC.

Chair DePratter indicated the next item on the agenda was consideration of any immediate needs and discussion of next steps for Glades.

8. Glades - Consideration of Immediate Needs and Next Steps

Chair DePratter asked Superintendent Barfield whether she had any immediate needs that she wanted to bring to the board's attention.

Superintendent Barfield did not raise additional issues. She did confirm that the Human Resources data is in Skyward, so they will be able to use Skyward on the Human Resource side (not payroll).

9. Final Comments and Discussion

Chair DePratter then offered an opportunity for public comment on any item on the agenda. No public comment was offered.

The next meeting was set for May 8, 2026, at 9:15 a.m. Another meeting is tentatively scheduled for May 12, 2026.

The meeting was adjourned.