

**Urban/Rural Committee Meeting  
South Broward High School, Hollywood  
Oct. 6, 2009**

**Committee members in attendance:**

Rick Williams, Port St. Joe High School  
Bob West, Bishop Kenny High School  
Elijah Bell, Jay High School

**Committee members absent:**

State Representative Marti Coley, Marianna  
James Harris, private citizen

The meeting convened at 4:30 p.m. Rick Williams welcomed everyone and stated the purpose of the committee and this meeting. The committee members introduced themselves to the public. Mr. Williams also stated that the committee is here to listen more to the schools rather than share info. Elijah Bell said that there are many differences between the panhandle and South Florida, therefore will look forward to hearing the challenges that are unique to the area. Bob West mentioned that larger communities have different problems, but there are always issues coming forward in large and small communities, and at public and private schools.

**Cheryl Golden**, athletic director and head of GMAC for Miami-Dade County, talked about the Florida Equity Act – the strong-armed portion of Title IX legislation. Private schools don't have to adhere to equity rules for participation. Public schools can't try out more than a certain number per sport, unlike private schools. One of the public schools in Miami-Dade County has a student population that is 65% female, which means at least 60% of the student-athletes must be female. That school will never be in compliance. State and Federal funds can be withheld because of these issues.

Mr. Bell said that many schools have the same types of problems, but that female participation in sports is greatly encouraged at his school, even without budget cuts or quality of competition.

**Damien Huttenhoff**, Director of the Broward County Athletic Association, said the problems stem from the haves and have nots, not urban and rural. Broward County as a whole cut 615 games out of schedules for its public schools in 2009-10, saving about \$300,000. Mr. Huttenhoff has no issue with kids going to private schools. "Scholarships" and hardship monies are an issue. The days of being able to match private schools dollar for dollar are over. And what reason do kids have for crossing county lines to go to school? Private schools have kids that come from other counties all the time.

Mr. Huttenhoff also believes that if a school continues to win its district over and over again, move the school into the next classification up. He also mentioned that the FHSAA got it right with the term "immigrants." These are students that are eligible for an education and not athletics, and that helps.

Mr. Williams brought up articles written about kids getting injured due to mismatches when teams are randomly paired or paired by local rivalry means. That answered Mr. Huttenhoff's question about haves and have nots.

At that time Mr. Huttenhoff believes that the FHSAA should have more of a presence politically in Tallahassee, and that the FHSAA should be more a regulatory agency instead of a punitive one. The FHSAA has to find ways to enhance athletics more. Mr. Huttenhoff and Ms. Golden feel that local decision-makers know what's best for each district. With budget crunches, there shouldn't be cross-county travel and teams of different sizes should be in the same class and district due to geography. Mr. Huttenhoff brought up the local conference idea and they suggest the FHSAA look into it.

**Adam Winters**, athletic director at The King's Academy, says even private schools are hurting with enrollment numbers and finances. Most private schools do their best to get things right. Don't blame the whole private school constituency for some bad apples. Go after the schools that break the rules. The transfer policies in place are good and are helping keep some schools honest. Also, the idea of having local conferences might be a good one.

Mr. West said conferences could backfire as some schools can be excluded in certain ways. People must be careful when dealing with districts and conferences.

Ms. Golden then stated that there should be transparency in eligibility. If a student is ruled not eligible at a public school, that student then transfers to a private school and is eligible all of a sudden and gets to play right away. There's no transparency between the public and private schools. Some private schools do what they want to get a team fielded.

Mr. West acknowledged that there is a certain population that just doesn't follow the rules. We have an obligation to uphold higher standards. We have to be our own watchdogs. There's not enough people at the FHSAA office to police everything that goes on within the state. People have to step up and name names if they have to. Many schools at these meetings feel there should be harsher penalties for schools when caught. Ms. Golden said it would affect schools more when state series playoffs and other more valuable items are taken away instead of monetary penalties.

**Carlos Barquin**, athletic director at Belen Jesuit, said the rules are there to be enforced. His school has had the same economic impact as everyone else. His school participates in fundraisers, so that helps a bit. And there are no minor sports. Sports like tennis or golf should get the same treatment as all the others. The only sports that get cut at Belen Jesuit are the ones where there are not enough student-athletes to field a team.

**Joel Furnari**, athletic director at South Dade High School and a member of the FHSA Board of Directors, said things he has heard have changed in his 36 years on the job. He likes what Mr. Huttenhoff said about the FHSAA being more political and that it should be more involved with these issues on a state level. Grades for eligibility are ridiculous. Regular attendance and monitoring of the students will result in the good grades. Just telling someone to get a 2.0 will have them go out and just get a 2.0. Athletics is the biggest dropout prevention there is. Tallahassee should know this, and Dr. Dearing is the absolute right person at the FHSAA to make this happen politically.

**Mark Schusterman**, athletic director at Gulliver Prep, echoed the sentiments of Mr. Huttenhoff regarding the FHSAA being more political. We need to keep kids in school. Saw it first-hand when living in Philadelphia. There was a time when high school athletics was cut down to almost zero and crime amongst youth went way up. Mr. Schusterman also likes heavier sanctions for schools caught doing illegal actions.

**Larry Brown**, athletic director at Flanagan High School, wonders if the Urban/Rural Committee is just a code name for public/private. What does urban/rural even mean? It should more accurately called boundried vs. non-boundried. A public school that draws its students from the surrounding neighborhood shouldn't have to play any non-boundried schools like magnet programs, charter schools, private schools, and others. It's not a level playing field.

Mr. West explained the urban/rural concept when it comes to not be allowed to draw from surrounding communities. Drawing from 800,000 people in a larger urban area is different that drawing from 7,000 people in a whole section of a smaller county. Mr. West also mentioned that Broward County isn't a school choice district like some others are. With some counties being choice districts and others that aren't, that might not work with conferences and could be exclusionary for some schools.

Dianne Sanzari, athletic director at Coral Springs High School, wants the FHSAA to restrict student movement. Students should not be allowed to transfer for athletics after the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Ms. Golden feels the legislature will find ways to allow students to transfer around and trump the local or FHSAA rules when it is their child involved.

The athletic directors feel the FHSAA should push for all of the counties to be choice counties, or have none of them do that. That will level some things out. The challenge for the FHSAA is to get continuity through the state. Maybe push for an independent school association. Private schools are the haves, and the have nots will work it out in their own association.

Mr. Brown asked what the ultimate goal of this committee was. Mr. West stated that everything mentioned in these meetings will be discussed in Gainesville as part of a workshop and then the ideas are presented to the Representative Assembly for change. Everything heard here gets passed on to the people that need to hear it. There is no one subject that is more important than others.

Mr. Bell mentioned that times have changed. Before it was our parents that said if we were eligible to play sports or not. We must now find solutions to the problems that have arisen over the last few years. We can make our state and association better. Once it's a level playing field, things will be better. It will happen in Tallahassee.

Mr. West stated that this was an enlightening experience. The answer is not separation, but new rules and regulations need to be put into place.

Mr. Williams thanked South Broward High School. He mentioned that when we attack the more dominant issues head on, the rest of the issues will fall into place as part of a domino effect. Other issues should be resolved from the main ones getting solved.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 pm.