

**Urban/Rural Committee Meeting
Section 1 East Meeting (Oak Hall School)
Oct. 13, 2009**

Committee members in attendance:

State Representative Marti Coley, Marianna
Rick Williams, athletic trainer
Bob West, Bishop Kenny High School, Jacksonville
Elijah Bell, Jay High School, Jay
James Harris, private citizen

The meeting convened at 4:30 p.m. Representative Coley welcomed everyone to the meeting. She stated that she is addressing level playing field for rural and urban schools. She suggested a need for a fact finding committee and explained concerns addressed at other meetings.

Elijah Bell, from Jay High School, thanked everyone for coming and doing something that can benefit everyone.

James Harris, stated that he enjoys being on the committee.

Rick Williams, athletic trainer, stated that he listens to issues as they pertain to safety and health-related issues.

Bob West, Bishop Kenny High School, shared that he has been able to hear different opinions between urban and rural communities.

John Trainer, Headmaster at Bolles High School, agreed that the member schools all want a fair and level playing field and the advantages and disadvantages with urban and rural schools. He also stated that international students could open the door for abuses and believes some advantages and disadvantage could occur. He addressed myths he has heard about private schools:

1. Don't suffer under enrollment borders and compared his school to public schools with home school students and magnet schools when the margin in enrollment isn't different
2. Private schools have more money:
 - Bolles is 30% less than public schools in the state
 - Coaches are paid equal to or less than public schools

He also stated that while there are abuses on public and private sides, there are not many differences other than dues are used to pay investigators and it's good to level the playing field.

Bob West, said he heard in Fort Lauderdale they are limited in terms of neighborhood schools (choice of school). In Duval, Bishop Kenny draws from all over the city and has heard recruiting concerns could be a real issue. He shared that it should be a greater penalty when it occurs (from public).

John Clifford, Athletic Director at P.K. Yonge, said he is trying to figure out what's going on because the urban/rural problem deals with 1A schools. He expressed that P.K. Yonge is a 2A public school and the history as he knows it deals with the panhandle schools wanting to secede from FHSAA in 2003 and be put in district with two other schools but couldn't schedule games in the north. Now P.K. Yonge coaches make less. He explained that their current districts include schools from Jacksonville and Tallahassee and his concern are that they don't get to have a consideration with proximity and wants to understand how the redistricting occurred.

Representative Coley stated that schools were content with their districts until the redistricting.

Bob West said there is a committee where many felt it was inequitable and tried to take into light the concerns from city to city.

John Clifford asked why urban and rural is two football districts? He commented that he doesn't see it in other sports. He also asked why historically was 2B in football but now in lower league it also has a brutal travel schedule?

Representative Coley said she will address the reclassification as it falls in realm of when redistricting occurred as to what happened.

Fran Vandiver, coach at P.K. Yonge, said P.K. Yonge has one school in school district with three schools and they have always played little schools around Gainesville. Vandiver indicated that they never got acknowledgement of appeal letter for redistricting and how valuable is the input? Vandiver also shared that the district is an all private school with no rivalries is a huge deficit and would like to know what geographical premise was used. Vandiver then stated that it cost over \$6,000.00 to travel to away games.

Elijah Bell sympathized that redistricting and classification will be addressed to the Board of Directors and that their concerns aren't falling on deaf ears.

James Harris Stated that this situation (reclassification/redistricting) will be dealt with.

Rick Williams wants to know a possible solution.

John Clifford asked why are schools in district for girls volleyball not the same as football? Why schools were 2B and are now 1A?

Fran Vandiver asked why aren't we using the same districts for all our sports?

Representative Coley asked if the classifications were the same for all sports. Mr. Clifford replied, "No."

Fran Vandiver asked why urban/rural is only in football.

Representative Coley said the concerns have grown over the years.

David Halter, Athletic Director at Bell High School, was concerned about districts in football and that he made the decision to be independent. He stated that 9 team districts in all its sports (for example, 2A and 1A in football). He also stated that things change and wanted to know what keeps home education students from changing schools every year? Halter then noted that in softball districts, over half the schools don't have junior varsity teams. Halter expressed his respect for schools who are building their programs through middle and junior varsity teams and that it would be nice if classification system was the same the whole way through and he wants a level playing field as well. Halter also explained that football doesn't run their programs and each sport supports itself. Halter was concerned that some kids can't afford travel ball. He expressed that the FHSAA should look for teams schools can be competitive against in the 1A football classification.

James Harris commented that new schools are being built in larger areas and not sure why things here are changing so much without new schools opening.

Mike Maloney, Athletic Director at St. Joseph Academy said his school went independent in football instead of playing 1A. He said there was a 100-student difference in population in between small and largest schools in 1A.

Rick Williams asked if the difference in numbers were based on percentage would the equity be better. He questioned if it would make it easier for St. Joseph Academy to play football if there were fewer than nine teams in a district.

David Halter expressed that the bowl game helps and gives their kids something to play for.

Jeff Malloy, Athletic Director at Oak Hall thanked everyone for attending, and asked the committee to take into consideration the issues with schools in the panhandle that are unique circumstances to the panhandle. Malloy was supportive of what Recruiting Taskforce did. He stated that most schools welcome the investigators that they keep focusing membership money towards schools that don't stay within framework of FHSAA rules. Malloy explained that he saw great change with how the FHSAA did business about two years ago and took into consideration of stakeholders. He explained that the reclassification and big decisions made by the FHSAA Board of Directors were made too quickly, and he wasn't surprised at the amount of problems caused by the decision. Malloy said it would be nice to see FHSAA go back to how it used to be with a few months to think about a decision instead of deciding quickly. Malloy stated that private school stakeholders were never consulted regarding reducing number of games. Malloy noted that the FHSAA should have to go through channels to get things voted on and only eight on Board of Directors were school-based.

Bob West said the trend in the Association for a number of years was a feeling of representation from everyone, not a few. West expressed that FHSAA needs to be represented by everyone and that all voices need to be heard and until that happens, mistakes and bad decisions will happen.

Mike Posey, Athletic Director at North Florida Christian went to Marianna meeting and shared his concerns with football with regards to travel and not playing local teams and asked to be redistricted. Posey recommended a break down of football:

- District by district, and by enrollment.
- Address safety every Friday night
- Played schools before that were larger and the same size
- Baseball and Softball brackets are set up so the rural schools play each other in the first two rounds of the playoffs
- Would like to not travel as far in football and would like to start playing rivals again
- Asked if this is an urban/rural issue or classification issue
- The FHSAA has policies in place and they need to be enforced

Rick Williams asked Mr. Posey what is the definition of urban and rural?

Mike Posey responded that rural counties have 75 thousand or less and rural cities have 25 thousand or less. He clarified that the information was taken from MyFlorida.com. He stated the definition that the state of Florida uses is what was stated previously.

Rick Williams is trying to look at every component for urban/rural.

Mike Posey stated that his school is tuition driven and have 16 high schools to compete with for students in Tallahassee. Posey also expressed that changes that have been made were knee-jerk reactions and said the FHSAA needs to study this carefully because there are a lot of schools that play baseball that don't play football.

Representative Coley asked how many counties does he draw students from?

Mike Posey responded with three and they are at the north tip of Leon County.

Jim McKenzie, Vice Principal at the Rock School is a 1A private school in Gainesville. He stated that they don't compete in full-range of sports and that no one is zoned for his school. McKenzie shared that they work hard to draw students to their school because fees paid by parents fund the school. McKenzie explained that they are a K-12 school and they don't get money from the county, they are tuition driven but that they do have an international program and student athletes. McKenzie also shared that they work hard to comply with FHSAA rules and wanted to know what concerns were addressed?

Representative Coley asked how many International Students make the basketball team

Jim McKenzie responded that three or four last year and said he has just as many international student's that don't participate in sports that do and they have won and lost against schools in the panhandle.

James Harris expressed one of his concerns he's had because some schools in Orlando are church schools that play good basketball for a few years and then leave because of faith-based schools that pop up and go away.

Jim McKenzie explained that a school has to be accredited in order to be in the FHSAA.

Representative Coley shared that the international student issue has been heard at every meeting and the committee has also heard of schools with only international students with regards to leveling the playing field and that should be considered also.

Justin Harden, Athletic Director at The Rock asked if is this a rural/urban issue or private/public issue. Harden explained that public schools face the same financial difficulties as private schools. He also asked if there was talk about splitting the public and private schools into two Associations.

Representative Coley said that idea had been brought up.

Bob West said he was asked to serve on the committee by the Executive Director. West stated that he heard about urban schools and the difficulty they had and that was why the committee was formed. West explained the last thing he'd like to see is any type of split He stated that he chooses to be private and he doesn't have to belong to the Association. West explained that a division would make more inequity and travel problems. West suggested fighting forward and if you don't get a response keep fighting for one. He also suggested schools to make a stand and complain. West explained that there are answers for the problems and they have to be addressed by the Association. West recommended that schools have to work together to make a better Association and splitting is not a solution and won't solve problems.

Justin Harden asked is it being discussed and doesn't want a knee-jerk reaction. Harden was concerned it would create travel concerns and not to be petitioning for it.

Mike Maloney asked if the Florida Legislature was going to get involved in a split of public and private schools.

Representative Coley stated she has saved a bill slot and hopes the Legislature doesn't need to get involved.

Mike Maloney asked the Florida Legislature to stay out of it.

John Trainer thinks a split would be an absolute disaster.

Representative Coley stated it is not the aim of this committee.

Richard Gehman, Headmaster at Oak Hall shared that he worked in a state with a split among its high school Association and found that recruiting was remarkable and they had two separate governing bodies. He also indicated that there is a potential for Florida to work together and that the member schools can do a better job than most states.

Representative Coley explained that dividing is not the answer and member schools/FHSAA need to address concerns and fix the issues. Coley also shared that she has heard that penalties need to be more strict and maybe follow NCAA rules.

Rex Morgan, Athletic Director at Arlington Country Day stated they don't want to follow NCAA rules.

Jeff Malloy recommended that reviews of schools should continue, that it keeps people honest.

Closing Thoughts/Remarks

Elijah Bell thanked everyone for coming and that the Association is not looking to go public and private.

James Harris thought there was good input and thanked everyone.

Bob West also thanked everyone and expressed that Jeff Malloy was an advocate on the Board of Directors and that there are solutions and said the committee will find them because they are the membership.

Rick Williams added that the comments heard here echo comments from other meetings regarding classification, the transfer rule and recruiting.

Representative Coley thanked everyone for sharing their ideas and stated that the committee has listened, taken notes and thanked everyone for their input and feels the committee will make it better for students.