

Bus drivers meet with Superintendent to discuss request for pay increase

By Dee Ann Campbell
The Choctaw Sun

BUTLER – Superintendent of Education Sue Moore met with local school bus drivers last Wednesday to discuss their ongoing request for a pay raise and how it relates to financial issues now affecting the school system.

“I wanted you to come here today because at the end of 2006, you had questions with no answers to those questions,” Moore told the drivers. “I value you, and when you have questions, I want to address those concerns.”

Over the past four months, the drivers have met on several occasions to discuss their need for a pay increase and any options they might have to garner such raises. In their original request last September, the drivers discussed with former Superintendent Randy Boggs the possibility for a raise that would base their salary at \$15,000 – a raise that the drivers say was promised to them at that time.

Choctaw County’s drivers are paid on an increasing scale relative to their years of experience. The newest drivers earn a beginning salary of \$9,974, while the highest paid and longest serving drivers earn \$14,704.

Moore explained to the drivers that, although their beginning salaries may be lower than the salaries in other counties, the majority of the surrounding counties do not offer a pay scale that increases with years of service.

Drivers in Marengo County are paid a set salary of \$12,021. In Washington County, they receive \$12,484, and Clarke County drivers earn \$12,328. According to the Alabama Department of Education, bus drivers in Alabama earn an average of \$13,422 annually.

During 2005-06, drivers

across the state received cost-of-living raises of 6%. In 2006-07, the raise was \$1000 or 5%, whichever was greater, depending on pay schedule.

However, with county drivers still asking for answers about a raise that they say was promised to them by the previous administration, Moore stated that she did not intend to ‘sugar coat’ the issue. Instead, she said, she wanted to let them know just where they stood in their pursuit of a pay increase.

“I don’t know what was promised to you before,” Moore said. “I can only tell you about the present and talk about what may happen in the future, and I believe the more you know, the more you will understand. For the last 5 years, we’ve not been financially secure. This is a school system, but it’s also a business. We must run it in a way that is financially secure.”

“I asked that we have this meeting after we had put together the Recovery Plan,” Moore added, referring to the proposed plan to bring the system into compliance with state law regulating financial security. “We are not in good shape. The state is recommending that we have a plan that will bring us closer and closer to getting in good shape. It will take everyone working as a team.”

Moore went on to explain that funds are brought into the system through a variety of sources, with those funds designated for particular uses.

“The state says we can use certain funds for certain things,” she told the group. “Like the bond issue – it will be designated for certain things.”

Moore told the drivers that the state is in the process of approving a 7% pay increase for all school personnel, with the drivers included in that increase. But any raises over

and above that amount would not be possible given the current financial position of the system.

“Everything looks good for that 7% raise next year,” Moore stated. “That won’t do anything for you this year. But if you were to get another raise, it would come through local funds, and we just don’t have it to give.”

In regard to the Transportation Department in particular, Moore explained that funds coming into that department from the state do not even meet the expenditures that are already necessary.

“We had to move \$153,000 from local funds to the transportation department this year just to pay what has to be paid from that department,” she explained.

Financial Officer for the system Seketha Mitchell offered more explanation about the Transportation Department budget.

“Part of the problem was gas prices,” she clarified. “The cost of fuel has gone way up, and that has been a large part of the expense for that department.”

According to a breakdown of the transportation budget for Fiscal Year 2007, total allocations for the department were \$1,555,176. Expenditures were broken down as follows: Salaries/benefits – \$1,220,516; Purchased services – \$78,650; Vehicle Supplies – \$233,694; Service of vehicles – \$212,296; dues/fees – \$20.

But one bus driver still had questions about those expenditures.

“When we see the money that is spent from the transportation department,” said the driver, “it bothers me because I know what I make each month. What bothers us is that when they hired an assistant mechanic, he was supposed to be hired at bus drivers’ pay, but

according to the paper he makes \$19,000.”

Transportation Director Edward Dubose responded that the mechanic was never intended to be hired at bus driver’s pay. His pay, Dubose stated, was set at \$19,000.

Mitchell added that the salaries for the transportation department alone total over \$1 million annually, leaving only just over \$300,000 for all other expenses within the department, including fuel. She also offered to print for the drivers a complete copy of the budget and expenditures for the Transportation Department.

“We go over all of this whenever the decision needs to be made about giving raises,” Moore added to Mitchell’s statements. “If the transportation department was fully funded and the money was there, I would love to see you get a raise.”

“Why hasn’t a bus driver been included on the financial committee?” asked a driver.

“If you want to put together a Transportation Planning Committee, that would be a great idea,” agreed Mitchell. “There was already a salary committee that met to discuss salaries.”

Moore added that she intended to look at the salary committee to ensure that the group contained representatives from throughout the school system.

The drivers questioned Moore about the possible construction of a new bus shop and the amount of funding that would take from the budget.

“That money would come from the Capital Plan for construction,” Moore responded. “We need to amend that plan because I don’t see a bus shop on there. But that money would come from another source. It would not come from the same place that your salaries come from.”

“Do you think we need to contact our legislators to see if we can get more funds into transportation?” asked a driver.

“It is always a good idea to talk to your legislators,” Moore answered.

“The governor is in agreement to give a 7% pay raise for teachers and support personnel,” interjected Alabama Education Association Uniserve Director Cynthia Older. “That means that raise includes you.”

Moore assured the drivers that, although she could not promise them a raise this year, their jobs were considered vital to the system.

“I know how important your job is,” Moore assured the drivers. “It’s the safety of the children. Not giving you a salary increase is not because we don’t appreciate the job you do. Parents send to school the best they have – their children. As a bus driver, you have a route, and you serve all the children on that route. If there is a problem or a concern, we have a chain of command – go to Mr. Dubose and the principal. Then if you can’t get it resolved, I’m here. My door is always open.”

“On the other hand,” she continued, “I want you to work with me to get these children to school, get them to school safely and on time. I know you’ve been doing that job.”

(ED. NOTE: In light of recent issues regarding the financial situation of the Choctaw County School System and in an effort to help the public better understand the sources of funding and expenditures for the system, the Sun is putting together a breakdown of funding sources and the designated uses of those funds. Watch for that report in an upcoming issue of the Sun.)

The Sun... Home Folks serving Home Folks. We're your only HOME OWNED newspaper!

ATTENTION Worthless Check Writers

The District Attorney's Worthless Check Unit is conducting a BAD CHECK ROUNDUP. The roundup will continue through March, 2007. Any person with outstanding checks are advised to take care of them at once. There will be NO agreements and NO extensions in these cases.

Beginning April 2, 2007, the Check Units along with the sheriff's deputies will gather ALL outstanding warrants and conduct a raid to arrest and jail as many of these individuals as possible.

If your name is listed on these ads that will be published YOU NEED TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR DEBT NOW! Payments can be mailed to Spencer B. Walker, District Attorney, Worthless Check Unit, P.O. Box 850, Grove Hill, AL 36451 or you may visit the DA's office. Remember, the grace period ends March 30th pay your outstanding debt now and avoid the embarrassment of being arrested and having to pay high court costs!

Jami Paul Courington W/F, Jackson, AL
Latrina Natosha Hodges B/F, Sweet Water, AL
Jerome Jackson B/M, Jackson, AL
Jamel Palmer B/M, Thomasville, AL
Daphne Pettus W/F, Coffeeville, AL
Tammy Jo Presley W/F, Butler, AL
Jessica L. Skinner W/F, Toxey, AL
Peter Sullivan, Jr. B/M, McIntosh, AL
William R. Whitfield W/M, Grove Hill, AL
Bonita M Williams B/F, Mobile, AL
Corey A. Wimbly B/M, Leroy, AL
Cleon Abrams, Sr., B/M, McIntosh, AL
Brandie Shae Abston W/F, Mobile, AL
Joseph Anthony Abston B/M, Jackson, AL
Chicquetta Dixon Adams B/F, Magnolia, AL
Darryl Keith Adams B/M, Mobile, AL
Glenda Faye Adams W/F, Eight Mile, AL
Nashid Ahmad B/M, Birmingham, AL
Donna Marie Alexander B/F, Jackson, AL
Martha Pennington Alexander B/F, Tuscaloosa, AL
Carla Waite Andrews W/F, Millry, AL
Arthur James Allen B/M, Dixon Mills, AL
Hasty Allen, Jr. B/M, Thomasville, AL
Tommy Lee Allen B/M, Uniontown, AL
Frederick Anderson B/M, Thomasville, AL
James M. Anderson W/M, Wagarville, AL
Rena Mae Anderson B/F, Gilbertown, AL
Carla Waite Andrews W/F, Millry, AL
Kristina Leann Andrews W/F, Camden, AL
Sidney E. Andrews W/M, Millry, AL
James E. Andry B/M, Mobile, AL
Gary L. Anthony W/M, Decatur, AL
Misty L. Armstrong W/F, Creola, AL
Thayalan Asokumar O/M, Silas, AL
Dawnette Yasele Austin B/F, Camden, AL
John Paul Averette W/M, Marion, AL
Bobby Ann Bailey B/F, Arlington, AL
Dexter Key Ball B/M, Anniston, AL
Christy Lairson Banks W/F, West Blockton, AL
Jocelyn M Banks B/F Thomasville, AL
Rosette C. Barganier B/F, Montgomery, AL
Lois Hamilton Barley W/F, Mobile, AL
Randal Ray Barlow W/M, Frisco City, AL
Timmie Terrell Barnes B/M, Calver, AL
Mitchell Joe Barrett W/M, Livingston, AL
Jacqueline Myrtis Battle, F, Thomasville, AL
Juanitha D. Bayles B/F, Birmingham, AL
Tammy C. Beck W/F, Denham Springs, LA
Thomas Denise Beckham B/F, Whistler, AL
Michael Andrew Bivens B/M, Citronelle, AL
Janie B. Black W/F, Butler, AL
Randel Blackwell W/M, Peterman, AL
Patrick L. Blakely B/M, Butler, AL
Donald Ray Blanks B/M, Mobile, AL
Bessie Blount B/F, Pine Hill, AL
Minnie Claire Blount B/F, Pine Hill, AL
Nancy Carol Blount B/F, Montgomery, AL
Eddie Boggs, III B/M, Mobile, AL
Alida M. Bohannon W/F, Butler, AL
Barbara Lee Bonner B/F, Headland, AL
Beverly Pugh Bonner B/F, Silas, AL

James Ryan Booth W/M, Leroy, AL
Sharon Denise Boudreaux W/F, Thomasville, AL
Brena Minter Boulter B/F, Thomasville, AL
George Cougar Bowers W/M, Pennington, AL
Capri Frontese Boykin B/F, Jackson, AL
Deborah Louise Bragg W/F, Bremen GA
Lacedric Devon Bragg B/M, Wagarville, AL
Mary Huggins Bragg B/F, Leroy, AL
Rev. Tommie Brantley B/M, Ozark, AL
Jerry Dewayne Bray W/M, Northport, AL
Cora Lee Bridges B/F, Arlington, AL
Ernest Sullivan Brown B/M, Frisco City, AL
Lamark Demeteris Brown B/M, Pritchard, AL
Wanda Denise Brown B/M, Mt. Vernon, AL
Tanja Rena Bullard B/F, Monroeville, AL
Leonard Bumpers B/M, Jackson, AL
Michael Robert Burk W/M, Chatoam, AL
William Russell Burnett, Jr. W/M, Thomasville, AL
Angela Keathley Busby W/F, Brewton, AL
Christopher J. Busby W/M, Chatoam, AL
Martin Miller Busby W/M, Needham, AL
Darryl Tyrone Bush B/M, Butler, AL
Frederick Percy Butler B/M, Mobile, AL
Catherine Byrd W/F, Bay Minette, AL
Donald Stephen Cade B/M, Leroy, AL
Rhonda S. Caldwell W/F, Gilbertown
Douglas Edward Calhoun B/M, Fulton, AL
Sabrina S. Calhoun B/F, Montgomery
Tara Lee Carney W/F, Monroeville, AL
Brandi Elizabeth Carpenter W/F, Danville, AL
Marita Shancee Carter B/F, Dothan, AL
Aaron Roudolph Chaney B/M, Mexia, AL
James Edward Chancey W/M, Wagarville, AL
Tammy Sue Chancey W/F, Wagarville, AL
Larry Donell Chaney B/M, Mobile, AL
Deandra A. Chapman, Thomasville, AL
Leonora Rochelle Chapman B/F, Grove Hill, AL
Rechandra Latoria Chapman B/F, Jackson, AL
Trenesa Renee Chapman B/F, Mt. Vernon, AL
Siominia Anastasia Cherry B/F, Butler, AL
Jason William Chretien W/M, Butler, AL
Sherry Lynn Clarke B/F, Gainesstown, AL
Shellica M. Cobb B/F, Jackson, AL
Dorothy Tamara Coker B/F, Silas, AL
Ricky Bernard Cole B/M, Magnolia, AL
Melissia Shron Collins B/F, Tuscaloosa, AL
Yvette Nelson Smith Conner W/F, Nauvoo, AL
Larcella Copeland B/F, Lisman, AL
Thomas William Copeland W/M, Needham, AL
Mary Evi Corley B/F, Camden, AL
Bryan Wayne Covington W/M, Fruitdale, AL
Lorrie Adams Covington W/F, Fruitdale, AL
Merita Guy Cox W/F, Leroy, AL
Paul Dean Cox W/M, Butler, AL
Roosevelt Cox, Jr. W/M, Leroy, AL
Tonya Clements Coxwell W/F, Millry, AL
Josette C. Craig B/F, Millry, AL
Gina Cranford W/F, Millry, AL
Andy Crawford, Jr. B/M, Thomasville, AL
Barbara Westbrook Crawford B/F, Jackson, AL
Linda Ruffin Crawley B/F, Butler, AL

Jennifer Barnett Creel W/F, Prattville, AL
Raven L. Creer B/F, St. Stephens, AL
Arsie Monique Creighton B/F, Jackson, AL
Calvin L. Crenshaw B/M, Atmore, AL
Luther Crowell, Jr. B/M, Jackson, AL
Eddie Mae Cunningham B/F, Jackson, AL
Barbara Ann Curry W/F, Frankville, AL
Janice Curtis W/F, Axis, AL
Tony Brown B/M, Thomasville, AL
Harold Bernard Daffin B/M, Leroy, AL
Daniel Keith Dailey W/M, Camden, AL
Curtis Lee Daniels B/M, Millry, AL
Vanessa Elaine Darrington B/F, Jackson, AL
William Tell Davidson W/M, St. Stephens, AL
Caleb John Davis W/M, Sylvan Springs, AL
Tishana Deanne Davis B/F, Jackson, AL
Vicki Arnett Davis B/F, Jackson, AL
Willie J. Davis B/M, Whatley, AL
Johnny Marshall Dees W/M, Evergreen, AL
Brenda L. Deese W/F, Chatoam, AL
Nicholas DeLaGarza, Jr. W/M, Foley, AL
Moris Dier Dement W/F, Jackson, AL
Doris D. Denson B/F, Leroy, AL
Peggy I Dickinson B/F, Jackson, AL
Melissa Renay Dix W/F, Jackson, AL
Arzabrial Domonique Dixon B/M, Lisman, AL
Debbie Ruffin Dixon B/F, Lisman, AL
Regina Lynn Dixon B/F, Grove Hill, AL
Chip Dodgen W/M, Fairhope, AL
Norma Waite Downing W/F, Millry, AL
Lisa Andrews Downs W/F, Grove Hill, AL
Trisha M. Drake B/F, Sunflower, AL
Denise Angelique Drinkard W/F, Demopolis, AL
Sandra Bozeman Drummond W/F, Fairhope, AL
James Edward Dubose B/M, Jackson, AL
Michael Dubose B/M, Vinegar Bend, AL
Christopher Lee Dunagan W/M, Jackson, AL
Sandy Gail Dunagan W/F, Jackson, AL
Mary E. Dykes W/F, Toxey, AL
Timothy J. Eastmon M, Linden, AL
Kathy Curtis Eddie B/F, Lisman, AL
Lena Clark Edmonds W/F, Pine Hill, AL
Cheryl Denise Edwards B/F, Ward, AL
Kizzie Lee Edwards B/F, Thomaston, AL
Richard R. Edwards W/M, Orange Beach, AL
Willie Milton Ervin B/M, Leroy, AL
Karen B. Etheredge W/F, Leroy, AL
Donna Kay Etheridge W/F, Dixon Mills, AL
Denise L. Evans, F, Thomasville, AL
Ladadria Oliver Evans B/F, Jackson, AL
William Jake Fendley W/M, Thomasville, AL
Marquise Savoy Faggart B/M, Eight Mile, AL
Mary Thomas Ferrell B/F, McIntosh, AL
John G. Firth M, Jackson, AL
Douglas Antonio Fitch B/M, Birmingham, AL
Frederick Wade Flowers M, Silverhill, AL
Chiarotte C. Fluker B/F, Butler, AL
Djuanella Clary Ford W/F, Linden, AL
Phyllis Wallace Ford B/F, Birmingham, AL
Herminia D. Fourcault W/F, Jackson, AL
Theowanda Latrice Foxx B/F, Jackson, AL

Misty Bickham Gamble W/F, Camden, AL
Sonya Marie Wilson Gardner W/F, Eight Mile, AL
Tammy Beech Garrell W/F, Leroy, AL
Erin Alexandria Garmeson W/F, E. Brewton, AL
Jessica Lorin Gartman W/F, Jackson, AL
Linda Dunn Gartman W/F, Leroy, AL
Lorraine S. Gates B/F, Thomasville, AL
Mary Louise Gates B/F, Lower Peachtree, AL
Sherry Miller Gates W/F, Linden, AL
Wesley Kyle Gates W/F, Thomasville, AL
Lisa Chapman Gerald B/F, Jackson, AL
Berlinda Ann German B/F, Pine Hill, AL
Latoya Denis Gibbs B/F, Monroeville, AL
Glenda L. Gildersleeve B/F, Dixon Mills, AL
Robert Lee Gilmore B/M, Camden, AL
Leslie Dawn Goodson F, Butler, AL
Betty McMichael Gorham W/F, Anniston, AL
Matthew Clark Gortman B/M, Jackson, AL
Bobby Clark Graham B/M, Mobile, AL
Ulisses Fernandez Grant B/M, Dixon Mills, AL
Tracy L. Grantham W/F, Mobile, AL
Claudette Knotts Graves W/F, Eight Mile, AL
Iia Marisa Gray B/F, Chatoam, AL
Debra Hicks Green W/F, Pine Hill, AL
Janis Johnson Grice B/F, Millry, AL
Deborah Ann Griffin B/F, Thomasville, AL
Robert Shannon Griffin W/M, Frisco City, AL
Eudora Lucrecia Grooms B/F, Camden, AL
Mornique Tamiko Gulley B/F, Mt. Vernon, AL
Deborah J. Gunnels W/F, Pennington, AL
Bonnie Guy W/F, Leroy, AL
Jeremy Keith Guy W/M, Theodore, AL
Stephanie Bates Guy W/F, Mobile, AL
Melinda Macleod Ham W/F, Semmes, AL
Shanna Canard Hanna F, Thomasville, AL
Michael Harbin B/M, Lisman, AL
Joseph J. Harmon B/M, Jackson, AL
Leola Denice Harmon B/F, Frankville, AL
Brenda Lee Harris B/F Sweetwater, AL
Theresa Steele Harris B/F, Ward, AL
Wanda Kay Harris W/F, Vinemont, AL
Willie Clarence Harris B/M, York, AL
Lewis Edward Harvison W/M, Ward, AL
Tony Theron Hataway B/M, Pine Hill, AL
Neil Allen Hayes W/M, Leroy, AL
Mark Heard B/M, Demopolis, AL
Persephone Heaven B/F, Thomasville, AL
Ricky Donnell Henderson B/M, Thomasville, AL
Cynthia Denise Hendrieth B/F, Camden, AL
Brenda Faye Lewis Henry B/F, Thomasville, AL
Gwendolyn Marie Henry B/F, Camden, AL
Alanstuvio Hicks W/M, Millry, AL
Christopher D. Hill W/M, Double Springs, AL
Michael Jerome Hill B/M, Greensboro, AL
Cherlinda Laoria Hope B/F, Thomasville, AL
Christy Angel House B/F, Arlington, AL
Dean Howard W/M, Leroy, AL
Patty Carpenter Howard W/F, Tibbie, AL
Brenda Joyce Howell B/F, Leroy, AL
Martha D. Huckabee W/F, Mt. Vernon, AL
Casandra Jones Judson B/F, Sweetwater, AL

Edd Bailey Hudson B/M, Butler, AL
Marion Hudson B/M, Sweetwater, AL
Marshall Lee Hunter B/M, Faunsdale, AL
Queen Ethel Hutchins B/F, Livingston, AL
Betty M. Jackson B/F, Butler, AL
Bonita F. Jackson B/F, Jackson, AL
David Michael Jackson W/M, Sterrett, AL
Larry Lamart Jackson B/M, Gainestown, AL
Lesley George Jackson, Jr. B/M, Jackson, AL
Minnie Williams Jackson B/F, Thomasville, AL
Shawntae Monique Jackson B/F, Leroy, AL
Tywan Marquill Jackson B/M, Monroeville, AL
Kenneth L. Jacobs B/M, Chatoam, AL
Alesia Yvonne Jenkins B/F, Atmore, AL
Cliton Tirone James B/M Thomasville, AL
Edwardo Caterly James B/M, Mobile, AL
Melissa Jodi James W/F, Loxley, AL
Rhonda Ann James B/F, Gainestown, AL
Tiffany Marcia James B/F, Thomasville, AL
Ynetta Bennett James B/F, Camden, AL
Paula Elaine Jenkins W/F, Kennedy, AL
Roy Lee Jenkins B/M, Camden, AL
Linda Lewis Jimmerson W/F, Butler, AL
Anthony Lorenzo Johnson B/M, Gilbertown, AL
Coretta S. Johnson B/F, Pine Hill, AL
Cynthia Denise Johnson B/F, Whistler, AL
Elijah John Johnson, Jr. B/M, Fulton, AL
Milroy Davis Johnson B/F, Pine Hill, AL
Moneta Katina Johnson B/F, Frankville, AL
Thomasia Evon Johnson B/F, Thomasville, AL
William Adolph Johnson, III W/M, Wagarville, AL
Debbie S. Johnston W/F, Deatsville, AL
Derric George Jones B/M, Demopolis, AL
Leann Mae Jones B/F, Lisman, AL
Matthew Franklin Jones W/M, Jackson, AL
Reefua Lamont Jones B/M, St. Stephens, AL
Robert Darnell Jones B/M, Northport, AL
Tifanie Renea Jones B/F, Pine Hill, AL
Adrinne Leshay Jordan B/F, McIntosh, AL
Virgile Chadwick Jordan W/M, Brewton, AL
Heather Ann Jordan W/F, Livingston, AL
Marcus Devan Jordan B/M, Butler, AL
Melissa Ann Jowers W/F, Sweetwater, AL
Precious Delyn Kelley B/F, Butler, AL
Matthew Charles Kemp W/M, Mobile, AL
Carmen Rhone Kennedy B/M, Dickinson, AL
Christi Megginson Kennedy W/F, Prattville, AL
Bridget Rollins Killingsworth W/F, Selma, AL
Sharon Diane Killepatrick B/F, Thomasville, AL
Sharon Diane Kible Kim B/F, Mobile, AL
Lucille Arvie Kimble B/F, McIntosh, AL
Bonita Westfield Kinder B/F, Jackson, AL
Christopher B. King W/M, Aliceville, AL
Daniel Wayne King W/M, St. Stephens, AL
Lee Daniel King B/M Greensboro, AL
Brad Kirk W/M, Thomasville, AL
Stephanie Dawn Kirk W/F, Thomasville, AL
Gail Skelton Kirkham W/F, Sweetwater, AL