

GEORGIA HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

MINUTES

RECLASSIFICATION COMMITTEE

March 4, 2019

A working meeting of the Reclassification Committee of the Georgia High School Association was called to order at 10:00 a.m., on March 4, 2019, at the GHSA office in Thomaston, Georgia, by Glenn White, President.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Vice President Lisa Moore Williams. The invocation was given by Associate Director Carror Wright. Roll call by Media Director Steve Figueroa showed the following: Present - 16; Absent - 0

Gary Long	Dexter Wood	Britt Adams	Jasper Jewell	Donnie Drew
Greg Tillery	Curt Miller	James Jackson	Myron Newton	Glenn White
Earl Etheridge	Jim Finch	Shawn Peek	Jesse Crews	Lisa Moore Williams
Josh Matthews - sub				

Note: There was no agenda for this working meeting and no votes were taken on any proposals.

After President White called the meeting to order, several members of the committee raised the issue that there had not been an election for Chairman in recent memory. After some discussion and agreement that this had not been done, White threw the floor open for nominations.

Crews nominated Etheridge for chairman, but did not receive a second. Jewell then nominated Miller for chair and received a second from Jackson. Miller was elected by a voice vote.

Finch then nominated Jewell to be the recorder and received a second from Adams. Jewell was confirmed by voice vote.

Miller then assumed the role of chairman and, after brief introductory remarks, called upon Executive Director Robin Hines to present the proposal from the GHSA office for a return to six classifications.

Hines made it clear that the GHSA office would support whatever plan the Reclassification Committee ultimately settled on, but he pointed out several unintended consequences that member schools have complained about under the current seven-class format. Travel and time out of class has been mentioned often, as well as difficulty finding schedules with the smaller region sizes. Also the extra playoff bracket with seven classes spreads the pool of qualified officials very thin in the opening rounds of the playoffs.

Hines mentioned that moving from a four-year reclassification cycle back to two years seemed to be something everybody agrees on, but noted that it is a constitutional change and will require two votes.

Hines then talked about the “multiplier” suggested in the GHSA proposal that would affect all GHSA member schools. He pointed out that whether the committee settled on six classes or seven, the issue of the multiplier would still have to be addressed under either system.

After Hines outlined the six-class proposal, Miller asked for comments and there ensued a lively discussion both pro and con about going to six classes and about the specifics of how the multiplier should work. Some of the highlights are listed below.

Adams: Having seven classes has given us the flexibility to play some nearby schools in other classes without having to travel far. But I understand there are differences in travel issues in other parts of the state.

Long: I polled some of the “bubble” schools that would go up from what is now 6A into the new largest class under the six-class program and they are 100% opposed to it. It doesn't affect my schools, but it would some others. As for

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the multiplier, the feeling is overwhelmingly that the private schools should have the same zone as the public schools and the city schools should have the city limits.

Jewell: I am not necessarily opposed to the six class plan, but I would love to see some sort of mock-up with teams in regions to see what it looks like.

Crews: The six-class plan shows the number of Class A schools going from 20% of the membership to 28%. Most of the folks in Class A are concerned about who would be coming down into the class.

Finch: I could tell you six or seven if I could see what it actually looks like both ways. It would be easy then. Also, I have people saying the multiplier should be anywhere from 1.5 up to 4.0. Many feel like we have an unlevel playing field when it comes to private and city schools.

Long: I think the multiplier should apply to all schools equally. When you say that no school can be moved out of Class A or up into the biggest class because of the multiplier, those schools don't have to worry about the multiplier. I think it should move you where it moves you. And if it moves you two classes up, you should go two classes up.

Miller: I would like to shift gears on you a little bit. When I was put on this committee, I was thrilled to be able to put schools in regions. But now that I know a little more about it, I favor the idea of the GHSA office putting the teams in the regions. They are the only ones who don't have a school to protect.

Crews: When people put us on this committee, they expect us to do things. People are going to call you and ask for things, sure. But I feel like it needs to be done by us.

White: I'm OK with the office putting the pins in the maps and placing teams in regions as a starting point. But I do not think the GHSA office should have the final decision. That should be this committee.

The discussion then turned to possible legislation that would force the GHSA to separate all member schools with fewer than 640 students into regions that did not contain both public and private schools. Part of the GHSA office proposal separates all Class A schools into public regions and private regions with no mandatory regular-season play and with separate playoff brackets of 32 teams each. It does not meet all the requirements of the pending legislation, but ticks many of the main boxes.

Another proposal was presented by Etheridge in which the Class A schools stay in the regions they are in now, are allowed – but not required – to play each other, and are separated for the post-season.

Miller then asked if there were representatives of member schools in the audience who would like to comment. The highlights of those comments are below:

A representative of Bowdon HS said: I think the office proposal would head this legislation off.

A representative of Trion HS said: If you don't address this, it may be addressed for us.

Miller then said that the main duty of the committee at this point was to "hear folks out." We want to make an informed decision. The process needs to be fair. To that end, he asked if there were any other comments from the audience.

A representative of Northside HS said: Travel is a huge issue for us with seven classes. We've lost 60% of our athletic budget trying to find games because our region is so small. And our kids are out of class all the time in the spring. It's a nightmare. If you've got schools all around you that you can play, that's great. But it's not like that for us.

A representative of Ware County HS said: I've been AD for 14 years and have been through several reclassifications, but this is the worst situation we've been in because our region is so small. It just cost me \$5,600

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and a meal to get a fifth home football game. I've spent \$42,000 since we went to seven classes just to have a home schedule.

A representative of St. Pius said: We're in a five-team region and have to travel from metro Atlanta all the way up to Toccoa. And having to find six games is tough.

Board of Trustee member Steven Craft was in the audience and said: There are a lot of differences between schools in metro Atlanta and those outside. We're not going to fix travel for everybody. But, if you stay with seven classes, you have to figure out a way to balance the size of the regions better. There should be no four-team or five-team regions. Nobody wants to have so many teams they have to subdivide, but these very small regions are a real problem for many schools.

Miller then said: I would like to get back to the multiplier. There are many questions to answer. Are we going to look at athletes only? What about kids of anybody who teaches in the school system, even the feeder schools? Are we going to exempt them?

Peek: I think you need to look at when they entered the school. If they entered in the fifth or sixth grades, I don't think they were recruited for athletics.

White: As long as you show me a way for the school to appeal, I am OK with having a multiplier. But I don't think it should be cut and dried. There should be an appeal where a school can show they are not even able to win in the class they are in, much less a higher one.

Wood: I've been at Buford for 24 years. When I first got there, Buford wasn't a big issue. But with the way our community supports us and with the growth we have experienced and the facilities we have, we do have an advantage over some schools. But if we implement a multiplier, I think it's important to spell out what the appeal criteria is going to be. When we went to the system we have now, there was no written criteria for appeals so nobody really knew what was going to be used to make a decision.

Miller: We're not going to rush into a decision. We don't even have to finalize anything at the April meeting if we are not ready. We don't get the new numbers until November, so we have time. I want to thank everybody for coming today and for speaking your minds.

The committee then set the date of March 18 at 10:00 a.m., for their next working meeting.

Motion by Crews, second by Finch to adjourn the meeting.

MOTION Passed (unanimously)