

Fulton County Schools, Annexation and De-annexation Position (October, 2015)

Fulton County School System is in a unique position as it relates to annexation and de-annexation. First, we border the City of Atlanta and the Atlanta Public Schools so annexations have an effect on the service area of the school system.

Second, there is a current lawsuit filed by the City of Atlanta that will affect which school system Fulton students may attend. The timing of this lawsuit comes while a petition for Annexation into the City of Atlanta is pending which would impact two school buildings and approximately 1,700 students. Under current law, the Fulton County School System was not required to receive notice of this proposed annexation, nor were they offered the opportunity to provide an impact statement. This has caused substantial uncertainty and anxiety within the affected communities.

The outcome of the lawsuit is uncertain so we would request that the Georgia General Assembly intervene in order to provide certainty for the parents, students and taxpayers who may be affected. We would request that the General Assembly place a moratorium on proposed annexations affecting large numbers of students of the Fulton County School system until the lawsuit is resolved and until the General Assembly has time to consider any amendments to the annexation laws which it deems necessary.

Fulton County is the first large system which has chosen the Charter System operating model and its taxpayers have spent a tremendous amount of resources to create an environment where students, parents, teacher and interested parties have a stake in the governance and curriculum of each individual school. This entire process would be disrupted if those students are sent to other schools.

Annexations like the one proposed would also affect the feeder patterns and disrupt students as they graduate through the school district. This will have a negative impact on student achievement. Likewise, if the school buildings are annexed into the City, the Fulton County school district would need to relocate approximately 1,500 students. There is insufficient school capacity to accomplish this without building new facilities. Not only would this be disruptive, it would be very costly to taxpayers who have already paid for facilities for these students.

We would respectfully request that the study committee consider the following policy considerations:

Fulton County Schools believes current statutes should be amended to require that school districts be given;

- 1.) Advance notice of a proposed annexation and time to analyze the effect of that annexation on the school district;**
- 2.) Ability to provide an impact statement prior to any public hearing on proposed annexations, and;**
- 3.) Upon the showing of substantial impact to the operation of the school district, the ability to object to the annexation.**