

**Jackson County Board of Education
Minutes of Regular Meeting
Sylva, North Carolina**

398 Hospital Road, Sylva

September 22, 2020

6:00 p.m.

The Jackson County Board of Education held their regular session on Tuesday, September 22, 2020, at 6:00 p.m., in Sylva, North Carolina. Due to N.C. Governors Executive Order 121, the meeting was conducted using video and telephone conferencing to limit the number of people present for the meeting. The following members were present via telephone and/or online platform:

Alison Laird-Large, Chairperson

The following members were present:

Elizabeth Cooper, Vice-Chair
Margaret McRae
Wes Jamison
Abigail Clayton
Chris Campbell, School Board Attorney

Also present were Dr. Tony Tipton, Interim Superintendent; Jacob Buchanan, Assistant Superintendent; Dr. Kevin Bailey, Personnel Director; Jeremiah Jackson, Chief Technology Officer; and Cora Fields, Board Assistant.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Alison Laird Large called the business meeting to order.

Mrs. Laird Large led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Upon a motion by Mrs. Elizabeth Cooper and seconded by Mr. Wes Jamison, the board voted unanimously to approve the Agenda.

OPEN SESSION FOR PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

CONSENT ACTION AGENDA

Action: *Upon a motion by Mrs. Elizabeth Cooper and seconded by Mrs. Abigail Clayton, the board unanimously approved the consent action agenda:*

- A. Open Session Minutes of Regular Meeting of August 25, 2020.

B. Open Session Minutes of Special-called Meeting on September 1, 2020.

INFORMATION AGENDA

A. **Agenda Item:** Superintendent's Report

Presenter: Dr. Tony Tipton, Interim Superintendent

Dr. Tipton reported on the following items:

1. As an educator, it was exciting last week to walk around our schools and see students and teachers working together in the classrooms.

- I believe, it is because everyone has worked together in following social distancing, wearing of masks, and washing their hand often that we were able to return to school this week.
- I want to say thank you to our staff, students, and parents for making our return from virtual to our A-B schedule possible. Now, with Governor Coopers announcement that we can move from Plan B into Plan A with our PreK – 5th grades, we understand that we cannot let our guard down.
- Later tonight, I will be presenting the school board with a plan for moving our PreK – fifth grades back into our schools on Plan A. Monitoring our numbers and following our social distancing rules will become even more important.
- As of today, JCPS has **reported 4 total cases of COVID 19**. Three students, no staff, and one non-staff athletic worker. Contact tracing is being done with these three students by the health department. I want to remind everyone, just because our numbers are down, we must not let our guard down.
- I heard someone say, “We may be tired and want to be through with COVID, that does not mean that COVID is tired and through with us.”
- Everyone must remember to stay away from large groups, to follow the social distancing guidelines, wear a mask, and wash hands often. We have the ability to keep our schools open and our students safe.
- Moving forward, we will continue to work in partnership with the Jackson County Department of Health.

2. An example of working together, currently Mr. Buchanan is working with the Jackson County Health Department to schedule flu shots for our staff. The flu shot will be more important this year than ever.

3. On other news, I want to thank Jason Watson, our Director of Maintenance, and some of his guys for working on the grounds around this building. They are not through, but they have greatly improved the looks to the entrance to the Central Office.

4. The iPads we ordered arrived last week. It was heartwarming to see most of the central office staff in the board room, working on an assembly line getting them ready to be sent to schools.

B. **Agenda Item:** Declared Surplus

Presenter: Mr. Jacob Buchanan, Assistant Superintendent

Mr. Buchanan presented the following item as declared surplus to be sold on govdeals.com:

1. 2007 Chevy Trailblazer 1GNDDT13S072176564 - #8002

C. **Agenda Item:** Return to A/B Schedule

Presenter: Mr. Jacob Buchanan, Assistant Superintendent

Mr. Buchanan provided an update on the return to the A/B student schedule. He informed the board that face-to-face is going well. He said that the Administrators, Support staff, School Nutrition staff, Bus Garage staff and Teachers are all doing an amazing job with the continually changing situation. Mr. Buchanan said that it is like the first day of school all over again and he is grateful to have students back in the classrooms. He said that he has received positive feedback and support from our community. Mr. Buchanan thanked the Great Smokies Health Foundation for their generous \$2500.00 donation which was used to purchase thermometers. He said that JCPS is doing well because of three things: Amazing Kids, Amazing Staff, and a Great Community. Mr. Buchanan stated that we need to remain diligent with social distancing, wearing masks, and hand washing, and hope for a vaccine soon.

D. **Agenda Item:** Instructional Update

Presenter: Mrs. Angie Dills, Chief Academic Officer

Mrs. Dills presented the following information:

- Currently in Week 6; Very nice to see students faces and have students back in school for in-person learning
- Challenges: internet connectivity and remote learning engagement
- Regularly scheduled District Leadership Team meeting on Sept. 3 then
- On Tuesday, September 8, the Curriculum & Instruction Dept. along with Dr. Tipton and Mr. Buchanan spent the day at NCCAT with our principals and assistant principals. This was an all-day Problem/Solution/Planning Work devoted specifically to the challenges that have been brought to us by COVID-19. We looked at topics such as teaching face to face students via A/B schedule, teaching remote only students, planning time, technical support, professional development and looked at possibility of district remote only teachers. We also reviewed busing and our health and safety protocols. It was a day well spent to work out lots of issues and brainstorm solutions.
 - As part of that day, we spent a large portion of time broken up into elementary and secondary groups looking at the possibility of establishing district remote only teachers. We have done this in some schools where our numbers indicate a need for one teacher to be devoted solely to our online students. The elementary work group decided that it would be harder to establish this and saw many obstacles; after careful review, we saw that it most likely would not work for them. Our secondary work group decided that it would be good to look at this for second semester; we spent another morning on the 10th looking more in depth on how that might work. So, more information will be forthcoming on that end as to how that will work out. Fortunately, with secondary we get a little bit of a reset at Christmas break to make this work in the spring for our core classes.
- iPads—550 came in last week and the CO team worked hard to get those unboxed, formatted, with covers and ready to go. Those should go out this week for K-2 students.

- Curriculum & IT are working on a joint project for a how-to for parents/care givers on this new device, should go out on Remind and Social Media this week as devices come home.
- Reminder that aside from COVID related school situation (A, B, or C) we still have remote learning days in the calendar as mandated by general statute as well as times when we might be able to utilize remote learning due to inclement weather or teacher workdays.
- Utilize online platforms for intervention and enrichment.
- Currently in the process of reminding families that no matter the status of school openings or the status of any remote days in the calendar that student accountability is different than last spring. Students will be held accountable for standards mastery as well as grading. Last spring as a reminder, students received either a PC19 or WC19. We do not have that flexibility in grading this year so we are reminding students to be engaged in their work either on-site or off-site.

E. **Agenda Item:** Local Testing Report 2020 - 2021

Presenter: Mr. Adam Holt, Director of Testing and Accountability

Mr. Holt updated the board that there will be no additional assessments required this school year. JCPS will administer the Federal and State required testing, and that no waivers are coming for this years testing and assessments, as we experienced last year.

F. **Agenda Item:** Internet Security Update

Presenter: Mr. Jeremiah Jackson, Chief Technology Officer

Mr. Jackson shared the following information with the board:

- Each year staff participate in a yearly required training and this year we added some technology sections to this training that included good password management and how to recognize phishing emails. Our cyber insurance provides us an excellent training tools that we used for this.
- We have recently implemented Microsoft Advance Email Threat Protection to block malware, viruses and phishing attempts. JCPS utilizes an intrusion protection firewall to block known exploits to protect our users and servers. We are implementing Two-factor Authentication for school administrators and those with access to sensitive and personally identifiable identification data. A new password policy was developed in the spring and is now being implemented.
- The technology staff has been working diligently to remove all Windows 7 from our network. We are mostly complete with this project. Windows 7 became end-of-life this year and stopped receiving security updates.
- Students and staff who decide to bring personal laptops and phones must connect to the Bring-Your-Own-Device (BYOD) network where we can ensure that our JCPS owned machines are safe.
- No network can ever be completely safe, however, JCPS is committed to staying diligent where security is concerned.

G. **Agenda Item:** School Nutrition Update

Presenter: Mrs. Laura Cabe, School Nutrition Director

Mrs. Cabe provide an update on School Nutrition. She said that the USDA and Department of Defense are providing fresh fruits and vegetables to help sustain farmers. She thanked the Maintenance Department for help with delivering food supplies to the schools. Ms. Cabe informed the board about new food sealers that have been received and will be used to pre-portion food items in a safe and effective manner. Ms. Cabe said that the summer feeding program, which provides meals for children 18 years and younger, has changed lunch pick-up times to 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Beginning October 5th, Pre-K through 5th grade will be returning to class four days a week and her staff are getting ready for this change, and the food sealers will help with meal preparation. Ms. Cabe stated that they will again be able to accept cash and checks and will begin selling snacks.

H. Agenda Item: Jackson County Youth Basketball

Presenter: Mr. Wes Jamison, Board Member

Mr. Jamison presented checks in the amount of \$1000.00 each to Smoky Mountain High School, Cullowhee Valley Elementary School, Fairview Elementary School, Scotts Creek Elementary School, Smokey Mountain Elementary School and Jackson Community School on behalf of the Jackson County Youth Basketball organization.

I. Agenda Item: Budget Update

Presenters: Mrs. Kristie Walker, Chief Financial Officer, Mr. Jacob Buchanan, Assistant Superintendent and Mr. Mike Wike, CPA of Anderson, Wike and Smith, PLLC

Mrs. Walker provided an update on the 2020-2021 budget. She informed the board that finance is coding all items that have been purchased with COVID money and that FEMA funds may be coming soon. Ms. Walker stated that some items in the budget are uncontrollable such as Health Insurance and Retirement rates. To offset these items, we have reached out to the county to cover the costs of these items and that a decision will be made the beginning of next year. Mr. Buchanan added that we do not anticipate any layoffs for support staff or bus drivers, and that there are no worries about the budget.

J. Agenda Item: Unaudited Financial Summary

Presenter: Mrs. Kristie Walker, Chief Financial Officer

Mrs. Walker presented the Unaudited Financial Summary as of September 22, 2020.

ACTION AGENDA

A. Agenda Item: Superintendent Search Timeline

Presenter: Mr. Christopher Z. Campbell

Mr. Campbell presented a timeline for the Superintendent search, beginning in November with the position posted by November 16, 2020. Mr. Campbell stated that the application deadline will be set for January 11, 2021, with interviews and the selection process to take place in February and March 2021. Contract negotiations and designations of official start date will take place in April 2021 with a start date no later than July 1, 2021. Mr. Campbell asked for board approval of this timeline.

Action: *Upon a motion by Mrs. Elizabeth Cooper and seconded by Mrs. Abigail Clayton, the board voted unanimously to approve the Superintendent Search Timeline.*

B. Agenda Item: 2020 – 2021 Budget Resolution

Presenter: Mrs. Kristie Walker, Chief Financial Officer

Mrs. Walker presented the 2020-2021 Budget Resolution and asked for board approval.

Action: *Upon a motion by Mrs. Elizabeth Cooper and seconded by Mrs. Margaret McRae, the board voted unanimously to approve the 2020-2021 Budget Resolution.*

C. Agenda Item: Plan A for PreK through 5th Grade

Presenter: Dr. Tony Tipton, Interim Superintendent

Dr. Tipton presented the following plan:

Based on Governor Coopers announcement this past Thursday, we have been working on developing a plan that would move Jackson County Public Schools into alignment with Plan A for pre-K – 5th grade.

In Jackson County the Health Department reports that as of Monday, they had 15 people in isolation. Jackson County Public Schools reports 3 students and no staff member with Covid-19 since we began this school year. We currently have a non-staff person that works with the Smoky Mountain High athletic department. The health department is conducting tracing with three students.

Under Plan A schools must still follow specific guidelines, such as:

1. Continue to wear masks.
2. Continue to wash hands often.
3. It is highly recommended that we continue to follow six feet separation while in school.
4. It is still required that we follow Plan B while on school buses.
5. We must still offer total remote learning for parents that continue to request that option for their children.

I worked with the elementary school principals in developing this plan. I want to say that our principals could not have been more accommodating towards the best interest of our students.

We had to maintain a deadline for parents wishing to leave full time remote learning and return to face to face learning. The principals must have a number to base their assignment of students in classrooms to maintain the state mandated class size in mind.

With the above guidelines in mind we have developed a plan we believe works for everyone. The major points of our plan are:

1. Beginning Oct. 5th Pre-K-5th will start attending school four days a week for face to face instruction.
2. This will require the school board approving a calendar change.
 - a. Currently, October 5th is scheduled to be a staff development day. This plan asks that day be moved to Wednesday, October 7th. That will allow students to come to school four days instead of three. Wednesday the 7th will remain a mandatory workday and teachers will be able to have remote learning that day.
3. Recently we asked parents to let us know if they want to remain on remote learning or return to school at the beginning of the second nine weeks.
 - a. Now under Plan A we will bring back to school on October 5th the students that were on total remote learning but have decided to return to school for face to face learning.
 - b. Since we have grades Pre-k -8th in our buildings, we will also bring the students in grades 6-8 that were on total remote learning that wish to change to face to face back on October 5th.
 - c. To minimize students changing back and forth between remote and face to face, we are requesting parents decide now for the entire school year. We understand various family circumstances may change between now and June which may require a change in this option. We will address those situations on a case by case basis if they occur. Additionally, state directives placed into action through the Governor's office and/or NCDHHS may require us as a district to revisit this option.
4. Plan A means we will no longer offer an A-B schedule in Pre-k – 5th grades.
5. Middle school students will still be on an A/B schedule. As I have mentioned, those who are requesting to leave remote and come back as face to face learners the second nine weeks can come back October 5th.
6. Wednesday will continue to be a remote learning day, currently we still have a large number of families requesting to remain on remote learning. Our staff members have tried to meet all our student's needs. However, our teachers simply cannot have school five days a week full time and still offer quality remote learning at the same time.
7. Social distancing of six feet is still expected whenever possible.
 - a. Our practice will be to continue six feet distancing whenever possible in all grades, when not possible, we will do the best we can in grades pre-k -5th grades.
 - b. In an attempt to minimize exposure, we will implement or continue cohort teams, for teachers and students. This means we will keep students in the same small group whenever teachers are doing group activities, such as reading groups. Much like we have been doing with our athletic teams, working in "pods."
8. Schools buses will remain under the social distancing guidelines we are currently following.
9. Everyone in the school building is still required to wear a mask and wash their hands often.

Dr. Tipton asked for board approval to the above listed plan.

Action: *Upon a motion by Mrs. Elizabeth Cooper and seconded by Mrs. Abigail Clayton, the board voted unanimously to approve the Plan A for Grades Pre-K through 5th Grade.*

D. Agenda Item: 2020 – 2021 School Calendar Amendment

Presenter: Dr. Tony Tipton, Interim Superintendent

Dr. Tipton presented the amendment to the 2020-2021 School Calendar and asked for board approval.

Action: *Upon a motion by Mrs. Elizabeth Cooper and seconded by Mrs. Abigail Clayton, the board voted unanimously to approve the 2020-2021 School Calendar amendment.*

E. Agenda Item: Mountain Park Urgent Care & Walk-in Agreement to use Blue Ridge School

Presenter: Mr. Jacob Buchanan, Assistant Superintendent

Mr. Buchanan presented the Mountain Park Urgent Care and Walk-in Agreement to use Blue Ridge School for COVID-19 testing and asked for board approval.

Action: *Upon a motion by Mrs. Elizabeth Cooper and seconded by Mr. Wes Jamison, the board voted unanimously to approve the Mountain Park Urgent Care & Walk-in Agreement to use Blue Ridge School.*

F. Agenda Item: Memorandum of Understanding between BREC and SCC 2020-2021

Presenter: Mrs. Angie Dills, Chief Academic Officer

Mrs. Dills presented the updated Memorandum of Understanding between Blue Ridge Early College and Southwestern Community College for 2020-2021 and asked for board approval.

Action: *Upon a motion by Mrs. Elizabeth Cooper and seconded by Mrs. Margaret McRae, the board voted unanimously to approve the MOU between BREC and SCC for 2020-2021.*

G. Agenda Item: Teacher Assistant Tuition Assistance Award Memorandum of Agreement

Presenter: Dr. Kevin Bailey, Executive Director of Human Resources

Dr. Bailey presented the updated Teacher Assistant Tuition Assistance Award Memorandum of Agreement for 2020-2021 and asked for board approval.

Action: *Upon a motion by Mrs. Elizabeth Cooper and seconded by Mrs. Abigail Clayton, the board voted unanimously to approve the Teacher Assistant Tuition Assistance Award Memorandum of Agreement for 2020-2021.*

CLOSED SESSION

The board unanimously approved a motion by Mrs. Elizabeth Cooper and seconded by Mr. Wes Jamison, to enter into closed session pursuant to G.S. 143.318.11 for the following purposes: under subsection; (a) (1) to prevent the disclosure of privileged or confidential personnel information pursuant to G.S. 115C-319-32 and (a) (3) to discuss matters protected by attorney-client privilege.

Upon a motion by Mrs. Elizabeth Cooper and seconded by Mr. Wes Jamison, the board voted unanimously to return to open session.

OPEN SESSION

Action: *Upon a motion by Mrs. Elizabeth Cooper and seconded by Mrs. Abigail Clayton, the board unanimously approved the consent action agenda:*

1. Draft Closed Session Minutes for Special-called Meeting on June 11, 2020.
2. Draft Closed Session Minutes for Regular Meeting on June 23, 2020.
3. Draft Closed Session Minutes for Special-called Meeting on July 7, 2020.
4. Draft Closed Session Minutes for Special-called Meeting on August 4, 2020.
5. Draft Closed Session Minutes for Regular Meeting on August 25, 2020.
6. Draft Closed Session Minutes for Special-called Meeting on September 01, 2020.

PERSONNEL ACTION AGENDA

Action: *Upon a motion made by Mrs. Elizabeth Cooper and seconded by Mrs. Margaret McRae, the board voted unanimously to approve the personnel agenda as recommended by Dr. Bailey. The board unanimously approved the following recommendations:*

Employee Recommendations:

1. Berryhill, Suzanne – Teacher, SMHS
2. Copeland, Timmy – Bus Driver, SMHS
3. Davis, Trisha – Temporary CNA, SCES
4. Fritts, Kristin – Teacher, CVES
5. Graning, Evelyn – Bus Monitor, SMHS
6. Haigler, Melissa Bus Monitor, SMHS
7. Hall, Sarah – Bus Monitor, BRS and BREC
8. Hansen, Debbie – Support Teacher Assistant, FES
9. Hardy, Kara – HR and Finance Administrative Assistant, Central Office
10. Kirkman, Susan – Part-time School Nutrition Bookkeeper, Central Office
11. Lee, Carol – Bus Monitor, SMHS
12. McCall, Kristina – Bus Monitor, BREC
13. Naegler, Charae – Bus Monitor, SMHS
14. Pippio, Michelle – Temporary CNA, JCS
15. Powell, Daniel Brady – Bus Driver, CVES
16. Price, Danny – Part-time Custodian, SMHS
17. Reep, Madison – Afterschool Assistant, FES
18. Smithdeal, Erica – Bus Monitor, BRS and BREC
19. Taylor, Penny – Temporary CNA, JCEC
20. Williams, Joshua Shane – Bus Monitor, SMHS
21. Woodring, Leah – Temporary CNA, SMES

Employee Resignations:

1. Provost, Michelle – Head Coach District Middle School Cross Country, SMHS
2. Fry, Eric – Bus Driver, FES

3. Holt, Krystle – Teacher, SMHS
4. Ratcliffe, Nicholas – Technology Technician III, Central Office
5. Sikes, Mekayla – Afterschool Teacher, CVES

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The next regularly scheduled business meeting of the Board of Education is October 27, 2020, at 6:00 p.m., at the Board of Education Administrative Office, 398 Hospital Road, Sylva, North Carolina.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no objection, Chairperson Alison Laird Large adjourned the meeting at 7:35 p.m.

Alison Laird Large, Chairperson

Dr. Tony Tipton, Secretary