

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

398 Hospital Road, Sylva

November 16, 2021

5:45 p.m.

The Jackson County Board of Education met in regular session at 5:45 p.m. on Tuesday, November 16, 2021, at the Board of Education Administrative Office Board Room, 398 Hospital Road, Sylva, North Carolina. The meeting was conducted using video and telephone conferencing to limit the number of people present for the meeting. The following members were present:

Alison Laird-Large, Chairperson
Elizabeth Cooper, Vice Chairperson
Wes Jamison
Abigail Clayton

The following member was present via telephone and/or online platform:

Margaret McRae

Also present were Dr. Dana L. Ayers, Superintendent; Jake Buchanan, Deputy Superintendent; Teri Walawender, Human Resources Director; Ashley Leonard, Board Attorney; Graham Maney, Technology Technician; Sarah Wooldridge, Human Resources Coordinator; and Cora Fields, Board Assistant.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Alison Laird Large called the business meeting to order.

CLOSED SESSION

The board unanimously approved a motion by Mrs. Elizabeth Cooper and seconded by Mrs. Abigail Clayton, 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.

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

1. Draft Closed Session Minutes for Regular Meeting on October 26, 2021.

Upon a motion by Mrs. Elizabeth Cooper and seconded by Mrs. Abigail Clayton, the board voted unanimously to convene open session.

CALL TO ORDER – REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING

Chairperson Alison Laird Large called the regular business meeting to order.

The students from Blue Ridge School and Early College led the Pledge of Allegiance via video.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Upon a motion by Mrs. Elizabeth Cooper and seconded by Mrs. Abigail Clayton, the board voted unanimously to approve the Agenda.

CONSENT ACTION AGENDA

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

- A. Open Session Minutes of Regular Meeting of October 26, 2021.

INFORMATION AGENDA

- A. **Agenda Item:** Superintendent's Report
Presenter: Dr. Dana L. Ayers, Superintendent

Dr. Ayers reported on the following items:

1. I am excited to share the highlights of the last few weeks in JCPS. We've been busy and focused on student success from all aspects including social, emotional and academics.
2. Last week, JCPS saluted our employees who are veterans. There are 15 employee veterans across the district that have served in a variety of military roles and locations. We honored them with a special luncheon and billboard displays around Sylva. Look for those veterans' names along with "then and now" photos. Though all of our veterans did not wish to be publicly recognized, we acknowledge their sacrifice.
3. Our instructional focus across the district is noteworthy. In my weekly school visits and classroom stops, I see students engaged, rigorous lessons being taught and a variety of learning opportunities for our students to THRIVE!
4. Another positive to brag about is our low COVID positivity rate; it is less than 0.1%. There are only three active cases in JCPS as of this afternoon. Our safety precautions are obviously making a difference in keeping students in school. Since children ages 5-11 are now eligible for the COVID vaccine, some JCPS schools, along with local churches and the recreation center, are sites for the *optional* family vaccination clinics. Again, these clinics are after school hours and completely optional. As of today, more than 100 pediatric doses have been administered. Please know that at no time have I had any planning or initiative discussions to mandate COVID vaccines for students.
5. On that note, in July, the BOE gave me the authority to make decisions about mask requirements during indoor athletic and extracurricular events. Currently, all spectators who attend JCPS indoor athletic and extracurricular events are required to wear a mask. Our COVID data is showing success so I am beginning to relax these restrictions. Effective tomorrow, November 17th, the mask REQUIREMENT for indoor athletic and extracurricular events will be lifted. I

STRONGLY ENCOURAGE athletes, performers and spectators to wear a mask while indoors on our campuses but it is no longer a mandate as of tomorrow.

6. On the athletic front, we have wrapped up our fall sports seasons and are beginning our winter sports seasons. I am proud of all our student athletes and teams across the district. Well done and I am anxious to attend basketball games, wrestling matches and other winter events!
7. Lastly, I want to share a statement crafted by the JCPS Board of Education and I to address Critical Race Theory.

Critical Race theory continues to be a topic that solicits a range of emotions and questions from stakeholders in our community. JCPS has shared the statement below over the past several months. However, both the Board of Education and I wish to share additional information.

"In regards to CRT, Jackson County Public Schools will teach the standards as required by the NC Department of Public Instruction. We will teach history in an unbiased and factual manner. Most importantly, we will follow the NC curriculum standards for social studies and history to ensure JCPS students receive appropriate, standard-aligned instruction."

Additionally, our values in JCPS are clearly stated and shared:

- Safe and Inclusive Environments
- Respectful and Nurturing Relationships
- High Expectations
- Continuous Growth and Improvement
- Partnerships with Families and Communities

These values and our drive to provide unbiased instruction to students means that we are teaching students to be kind, respectful and inclusive of all people regardless of race, ethnicity or gender. We are not teaching students to demoralize, judge or degrade each other based on past historical incidents.

8. I echo the sentiments shared earlier by BOE chair Ali. The genuine support for students and staff in JCPS is unmatched. We have an incredible community who desires for our school system to THRIVE! For that I am grateful.

B. Agenda Item: OSHA Emergency Temporary Standard Update

Presenter: Mrs. Teri Walawender, Human Resources Director

Mrs. Walawender shared information with the board concerning the implementation of the OSHA Emergency Temporary Standard. The standard would have required all state employees to have a current COVID 19 vaccination or be tested weekly. She said that there is a stay in place and implementation of the standard is pending until litigation is resolved.

C. Agenda Item: Equity Plan Update

Presenter: Mrs. Teri Walawender, Human Resources Director

Mrs. Walawender reviewed the Equity Plan for the 2021-2022 school year with the board. She said that the growth data is not available from the state at this time. She said that HR will continue to monitor licensure data to ensure all teachers are fully licensed.

D. Agenda Item: Unaudited Financial Summary

Presenter: Mrs. Kristie Walker, Chief Financial Officer

Mrs. Walker presented the Unaudited Financial Summary as of October 26, 2021.

OPEN SESSION FOR PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mrs. Fields read the instructions for Public Comments to the board.

Board Assistant, Cora Fields, read the following public comment:

On Tuesday, November 16, 2021, at 3:08 p.m. I received the following written public comment via email from Mr. Keith Blaine:

“Hi ALL - CRT is more than curricula you teach, but the pedagogy or lens through which it is taught. Implementing Social Emotional Learning (SEL) opens up the teacher's ability to impart their cultural views on students, contrary to their parents' beliefs system and moral convictions. I do not support implementing SEL in the Jackson County Public Schools. I believe it is the parents' responsibility to help their child(ren) with social and emotional development and not the Public School system.”

ACTION AGENDA

A. Agenda Item: Budget Resolution Update

Presenter: Mrs. Kristie Walker, Chief Financial Officer

Mrs. Kristie Walker informed the board that the North Carolina state budget is nearing approval from the Governor. She said that a Budget Resolution will be brought to the board at the December meeting

Action: *No Action Taken.*

B. Agenda Item: 2020 – 2021 Financial Statements

Presenter: Mr. Mike Wike, Anderson, Smith

Mr. Wike presented the 2020-2021 Audited Financial Statements. He noted that JCPS had added \$190,000.00 to the fund balance and the audit showed a clean opinion in all four areas observed. Mr. Wike 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 2020 – 2021 Audited Financial Statements.*

C. Agenda Item: Review Mask Mandate

Presenter: Dr. Dana L. Ayers, Superintendent

Dr. Ayers reviewed the current JCPS mask policy that requires all students, staff, and educational visitors to wear masks when indoors. She said that the JCPS COVID numbers have remained low as a result of masking, social distancing, hand washing, and good custodial practices. As required by the Department of Public Instruction the board will review COVID procedures monthly.

Action: *Upon a motion by Mrs. Elizabeth Cooper and seconded by Mr. Wes Jamison, the board voted unanimously to approve the Mask requirement for all students, staff, and educational visitors in grades PreK through 12, regardless of vaccine status.*

- D. **Agenda Item:** BOE Meeting Location for the remainder of 2021-2022 School Year
Presenter: Dr. Dana L. Ayers, Superintendent

Dr. Ayers requested the board change the location for the December 14, 2021 and the remainder of the Board of Education meetings from the schools to the Central Office Board Room 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 Central Office location for the December 14, 2021 meeting and the remainder of BOE meetings for the 2021-2022 school year.*

- E. **Agenda Item:** Policy Updates
Presenter: Jake Buchanan, Deputy Superintendent

Final Reading:

1. Remote Participation in Board Meeting (2302)
2. Employee Dress and Appearance (7340)

Updates:

1. School Assignment (4150)
2. Unsafe School Choice Transfer (4152)
3. Student Behavior Policies (4300)
4. Student Dress Code (4316)
5. Visitors to the Schools (5020)
6. Community Use of Facilities (5030/9035)
7. Distribution and Display of Non-School Material (5210)
8. Use of Student Transportation Services (6320)
9. Transportation Service/Vehicle Contracts (6340)
10. Planning to Address Facility Needs (9000)

Mr. Buchanan presented two new polices for final reading and updates to the ten policies listed above 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 final reading and updates to the policies listed above.*

- F. **Agenda Item:** Field Trips
Presenter: Dr. Dana L. Ayers, Superintendent

1. FES, Grade 4 – Ripley’s Aquarium of the Smokies, Gatlinburg, TN, 04-28-22 to 04-29-22, TT7219.

Dr. Ayers reviewed the above listed field trip 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 above listed field trip.*

- G. **Agenda Item:** JCEC Athletics
Presenter: Dr. Dana L. Ayers, Superintendent

Dr. Ayers requested the board permit the students from Jackson County Early College be allowed to participate in NCHSAA athletic programs with Smoky Mountain High School. She said that including these students will not change the NCHSAA division and the change would be effective for the 2022-2023 school year. Dr. Ayers asked for board approval.

Action: *Upon a motion by Mrs. Elizabeth Cooper and seconded by Mrs. Abigail Clayton, the board voted unanimously to approve JCEC student participation with SMHS in NCHSAA athletic programs beginning with the 2022-2023 school year.*

H. Agenda Item: ESSERS Proposed Amendment

Presenter: Dr. Dana L. Ayers, Superintendent

Dr. Ayers presented a request to amend ESSERS funds to provide a \$2000.00 Retention Incentive to all JCPS personnel employed as of Nov. 16, 2021. She said that this incentive still needs state approval and will be paid out in January 2022. She asked for board approval pending state approval.

Action: *Upon a motion by Mrs. Elizabeth Cooper and seconded by Mrs. Abigail Clayton, the board voted unanimously to approve the \$2000.00 Retention Incentive for all JCPS personnel employed as of Nov. 16, 2021, pending state approval.*

PERSONNEL ACTION AGENDA

Action: *Upon a motion made by Mrs. Elizabeth Cooper and seconded by Mr. Wes Jamison, the board voted unanimously to approve the personnel agenda as recommended by Dr. Dana Ayers. The board unanimously approved the following recommendations:*

Employee Recommendations:

1. Brooks, Beth – Data Manager and Bookkeeper, SMES
2. Chastain, Michelle – Custodian, Bus Garage
3. Cook, Hailey – Tutor, SMES
4. Corallo, Adam – Maintenance, Central Office
5. Dall, Jenniffer – Afterschool Tutor, SMES
6. Davis, Janet – EC Teacher Assistant, SMHS
7. Evans, Kayla – School Nutrition Assistant, CVES
8. Forseca, Amanda – Afterschool Tutor, JCEC
9. Freesman, Jillian – Afterschool Tutor, CVES
10. Greene, Heather – Homebound Teacher, BRS
11. Hall, Autumn – Substitute Bus Driver, SMHS
12. Hall, Madelyn – Afterschool Assistant, CVES
13. Houser, Avery – Afterschool Assistant, CVES
14. Hummer, Suzanne – Afterschool Tutor, SMES
15. Jamison, Charity – Afterschool Tutor, SMES
16. Joyner, Alexandria – Afterschool Tutor, CVES
17. McGaha, Herold – Custodian and Bus Driver, SMHS
18. McNab, James – Afterschool Tutor, SMES
19. McRae, Steven – Director of Mental Health – Project Activate Coordinator, Central Office

20. Payne, Brittany – Instructional Coach, FES
21. Price, Danny – Custodian, SMES
22. Pruett, Tonya – Afterschool Tutor, SMES
23. Sandoval, Jesus – Custodian and Bus Driver, SMES
24. Serio, Lisa – Purchasing Specialist, Central Office
25. Setzer, Ronald – Bus Driver, FES
26. Smyrl, Joshua – Homebound Teacher, CVES
27. Stewart, Jessica – Afterschool Tutor, SCES
28. Sutton, Kelli – Student Success Coach, JCS
29. Todd, Marissa – Student Support Specialist, JCEC
30. Verrault, Gina – Afterschool Tutor, SCES
31. Volk, Amanda – Tutor, SMES
32. Waldroup, Elizabeth – Bus Driver, SMHS

Employee Resignations:

1. Nicholson, Rachel – Instructional Support Assistant, CVES

Staff, Non-Staff and Returning Coach Recommendations:

1. Callaway, Molly – Head Coach Girls’ Basketball, SCES - New Staff
2. Chastain, Crystal – Head Coach Girls’ Basketball, CVES - New Staff
3. Collins, Todd – Head Coach Boys’ Basketball, CVES – New Non-Staff
4. Courteney, Mackenize – Assistant Coach Girls’ Basketball – New Staff
5. Doolittle, Hannah – Assistant Coach Cheer, FES – New Staff
6. Graham, Kendra – Assistant Coach Swim, SMHS – New Non-Staff
7. Irons, Clinton – Head Coach Boys’ Basketball, SCES – New Non-Staff
8. Melvin, Casey – Head Coach District Men’s Basketball, SMHS – Returning Non-Staff
9. Miller, Scott – Assistant Coach Boys’ Basketball, SMES – Returning Staff
10. Mulligan, Tyler – Head Coach District Women’s Basketball, SMHS – Returning Staff
11. Parris, Jaydon – Assistant Coach Boys’ Basketball, CVES – New Non-Staff
12. Parris, Natalie – Assistant Coach District Women’s Basketball, SMHS – New Non-Staff
13. Porter, William – Assistant Coach Boys’ Basketball, SCES – Returning Staff
14. Pressley, Jenifer – Assistant Coach Girls’ Basketball, CVES – New Non-Staff
15. Russell, William – Head Coach Middle School Boys’ Basketball, BRS – New Non-Staff
16. Scifers, Jonathan – Assistant Coach District Wrestling, District – Returning Non-Staff
17. Scifers, Jonathan – Assistant Coach Wrestling, SMHS – Returning Non-Staff
18. Sharpless, Reuben – Head Coach Girls’ Basketball, SMES – New Non-Staff
19. Sutton, Trevor – Head Coach Boys’ Basketball, SMES – New Non-Staff

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The next regularly scheduled business meeting of the Board of Education is December 14, 2021, 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 7:25 p.m.

Alison Laird Large, Chairperson

Dr. Dana L. Ayers, Secretary