

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

100 Smoky Mountain Drive, Sylva

December 13, 2022

6:00 p.m.

The Jackson County Board of Education met in regular session at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, December 13, 2022, at Smoky Mountain High School, 100 Smoky Mountain Drive, Sylva, North Carolina. The following members were present:

Elizabeth Cooper, Chairperson
Wes Jamison, Vice Chairperson
Abigail Clayton
Kim Moore
Dr. Lynn Dillard

Also present were Dr. Dana L. Ayers, Superintendent; Jake Buchanan, Deputy Superintendent; Teri Walawender, Human Resources Director; John Henning, Board Attorney; Jeremiah Jackson, Chief Technology Director; and Cora Fields, Board Assistant.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Elizabeth Cooper called the business meeting to order.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

The Smoky Mountain High School Show Choir sang the National Anthem and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Principal Evelyn Graining welcomed everyone to SMHS and introduced Ty Dengler who spoke about the SMHS Robotics program.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Dr. Ayers recognized Mrs. Alexis Allred, for her selection as the Beginning Teacher of the Year and presented her with a certificate of recognition.

Dr. Ayers recognized Ms. Stacey Cherry, SMHS EC Teacher, nominated for the “Tell Me Something Good” ECAC Award Winner.

Dr. Ayers recognized Brianna Bryson, SMHS 12th Grade, and Jaxon Cooper, FES 7th Grade, winners of the Superintendent’s Holiday Card artwork for 2022. Ms. Bryson created the cover artwork and Mr. Cooper created the inside cover artwork.

CONSENT ACTION AGENDA

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

- A. Open Session Minutes of the Special-Called Work Session of November 8, 2022.

Action: *Upon a motion by Mr. Wes Jamison and seconded by Dr. Lynn Dillard, the board unanimously approved the consent action agenda:*

- B. Open Session Minutes of Regular Meeting of November 15, 2022.

INFORMATION AGENDA

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

Dr. Ayers reported on the following items:

1. Here we are in the final two weeks of the fall semester and anticipating a well-deserved break. Our high school students begin their exams on Friday, December 16th and conclude next week. All schools will have an early dismissal on Thursday, December 16th to begin the Christmas break.
2. This month has been a whirlwind of activity as we approach the end of the semester. Our winter sports teams are in full swing and our choral and band programs across the district have put on incredible performances. I am so pleased with the growth of our middle grades band programs too!
3. We had our second round of K9 sweeps on Monday, November 28th at two campuses. These were very successful sweeps that interrupted the school day for only a brief amount of time. I am grateful for the support of our Jackson County Sheriff's Office who responded to my request and made these K9 sweeps happen. They will continue regularly at our school campuses.
4. Earlier this month, we received exciting news that has already been shared with our community. JCPS was awarded another grant to continue with my goal of preschool expansion. For the 2023 school year, we will open a second preschool classroom at Smokey Mountain Elementary School. Dogwood Health Trust approved the grant I submitted for more than \$142,000. Our growth in preschool classrooms is outstanding...moving from three to eight classrooms in under two years. What a service we are providing for our children and families.
5. We are wrapping up this semester and I am immensely proud of our students and staff! The preparation for exams, end of the grading period and other activities can be a stressful time but students and staff are modeling success and perseverance.
6. Lastly, a sincere thank you to staff, students, families, and community members in Jackson County. I believe we are a blessed school system and it is because of the support that is the highest of expectations here.
7. I hope all of our students and families enjoy the Christmas break which is December 23-January 6th. Students return to school on Monday, January 9th.

B. Agenda Item: Middle School Athletics

Presenter: Dr. Dana L. Ayers, Superintendent

Dr. Ayers presented information concerning the challenges the district has faced to provide staffing and facilities for both school-based athletics and middle school athletics concurrently. Dr. Ayers stated that the board is in the fact-finding phase and no action will be taken on this issue until the January 24th BOE meeting. MS Athletic Director (AD) Pam Shuler, SMHS AD Adam Phillips, and SMES AD Mary Bumgarner provided information to the board about the existing programs.

C. Agenda Item: Parent Organizations

Presenter: Kristie Walker, Chief Financial Officer

Mrs. Walker provided the current list of parent organizations to the board.

D. Agenda Item: Unaudited Financial Summary

Presenter: Mrs. Kristie Walker, Chief Financial Officer

Mrs. Walker presented the Unaudited Financial Summary as of November 15, 2022.

OPEN SESSION FOR PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mike Fox – Drugs in Schools – "I appreciate the time to address the board on this with my thoughts on this. I've been a pastor for 28 years and I've been the Chaplin at the hospital. I tell you this because if you're not aware of this and now this is in our schools and if you say we have no problem, you need to visit the schools. I have two young children, I came through this school system, my children came through it. We've got a good school system, but we do have a problem. We have a problem in every school, not just at the Community School, not just other schools, it is in every school in this community. And the response on this is a week ago we had an overdose, if you're not aware of this, I can tell you all about it. It happened a week ago Monday, it happened other than in the bathrooms, it happened in the gymnasium, there were two students and one teacher in the gymnasium, and we had a child overdose. We've got a problem and it needs to be addressed. It is not just the Community School where we have the problems. I have talked to students, and I encourage this board to get out into the schools and talk to the teachers and talk to the students. Because they'll tell you, there are students in the high school, they're in the locker rooms and they're taking drugs. They're doing it in the lunchrooms, they're doing it in the gyms. And for years we tried to say we don't have a problem. We have a student who almost died. It took three shots of NARCAN to bring her back to. I've been a pastor for 28 years. I've set at the hospital with too many children dying and at the jail. I've seen students graduate from this school and become members of Jackson County jail. We've got a problem. We need to address it. And I want to commend this board who've done a great job of trying to protect our kids from shooters and I hope you put this much effort into trying to protect our children from the drugs. Because they are coming in vapes, they are putting heroin in vapes and they're putting meth in vapes, they're putting fentanyl in vapes. The THC that going in vapes is poison and it's going to kill our students. And most of you either have children or grandchildren and if it's one of your children, you'd be just as vocal as I am. And I hope and pray that we don't bury them. And if you want more information, I'd be happy to talk with you one on one because I have a passion for our children. Thank you for your time."

Trevor Sutton – Middle School Sports – “Thank you for having me. My name is Trevor Sutton and I’m the head basketball coach for the boy’s team at Smokey Mountain Elementary School. These young men that are standing here in front of you are all here on a voluntary basis. They are here because they want to be, they were not coerced to come, they were not commanded to come. They are here because they want to be. They want to bring to the attention of the board the importance of school-based sports and what it means to them. To let them show that they have a voice. They are going to use me tonight as their voice. But I wanted to use them to bring a face to the children that will be affected by these decisions. But I wanted you to see these children and who it will affect. We range from 6th graders to 8th graders standing before you here on the stage. Before I get done, I have some letters in my jacket that some of them have wrote they would like to give to the board. There are copies for the board members, Dr. Ayers and Mr. Buchanan. I’ll give those to you after if that’s okay. I want to touch on the fact that school-based sports, I want to go back to what Mr. Phillips addressed earlier with the money that goes into the coaching and the coaches, I think I can probably speak for the coaches that are sitting here tonight, that it’s not about the money. We’ve not here to make money. I’m not here really to even teach the boys about basketball, it’s a plus, it’s fun to get to play sports. It’s fun to get to teach them how to play the sport. I’m here to help young men or these boys become young men. I’m here to help guide them to go on the right path in life, to help them to stay away from drugs, to work hard, a good work ethic. I feel overdressed tonight. I think my guys may be overdressed as well, but I find that a positive and what we are pushing at Smokey Mountain Elementary. And not just our boys’ team, our girls’ team, as a community, this school, what it means to our team, what it means to our parents. There are parents here tonight that have players on the school teams, that I know if we go to look to pull these school teams away from these children, there are 12 to 15 positions available on two teams in District Sports. 12 to 15, I have 16 just on my team, not all here tonight. I just want to thank you for the opportunity to be here and to remember these young men when this decision comes up in January, when you go to talk about school sports. I got to come back to coach for two years. I came through 8th grade at Smokey Mountain Elementary. I learned a lot of life lessons from a female basketball coach, my favorite coach, when I went to SMES. I am set to paving the way for life lessons that these young men will carry with them for the rest of their lives. It’s not just about how these boys have affected my life, my assistant coaches life, and everybody around them. Thank you board for your time.”

Clinton Irons – Middle School Sports – “Good Afternoon board members. I am Clint Irons, head basketball coach at Scotts Creek and Molly Calloway, she’s the head Girls Basketball coach. Pretty much Trevor has said everything that I had in mind to say. Not once have I heard anybody mention academics. At Scotts Creek me and Molly pushed that. I’ve benched several players already this season, which we’re in by the way. I set my All-Star player in the past couple of games that has scored 20 plus points, on the bench, because one he was low on his grade, two, he missed practices. I would rather lose a game, so my boys will respect me and do good with their academics. I don’t think this group will be as firm as we are. It’s personal to us. Me and Trevor battled out just the other day. Travis Russell is setting right there from Blue Ridge. Excellent Coach. We all think the same way. We take pride in our boys, and we take pride in walking down the hallways. I got these jerseys for our school this year. It’s all about pride. It’s more personal at the school level than District. When they go to district, you pick 15 players out of 4 to 5 schools. That’s not right when you have so much other talent walking the halls. What are those other kids going to do. They’re going to get into drugs, they’re going to get into some kind of mischief. Their grades are going to drop, and I don’t like it. It’s pretty much a volunteer basis for us. We don’t do it for money. We do the extra-long hours because we want to be there. We want the kids to learn

and it's about respect. Molly, do you have anything to say? You said it all. I'm not going to take any more of your time. I'll let somebody else come up here. I appreciate your time and thank you."

Travis Russell – Middle School Sports – "I appreciate you guys giving me the opportunity to speak tonight. From the very first time I got here I've heard that this is not about money. But when the first couple of people got to speak, and when we listen to your guys, it has a lot to do about money. Like these other coaches said, we don't do this for money. If this was about money, we wouldn't be doing it. It sounds a lot like we're trying to pad it. The district teams, to make those teams look a lot better. I've got nothing against district teams. I coached the middle school boys' team at Blue Ridge. I learned a lot about having district team. I learned a lot about having a middle school team. Like these other coaches said, if you have district teams, you have a select few they get to make those district teams. A select few. A lot of that has to do with who are the coaches and who does your dad know. A lot of it has to do with how good you are. So, what you got a couple of district teams, you got 30 kids between four, five or six schools, how many kids would that mean would not get to play ball. What do you think that they're going to sit at home and play video games, they're going to hang out on their phones, they're going to get into drugs. They're going to do things that they should not be doing. When they play sports, they learn how to be young men and women. We teach them hard work ethic. We teach them sportsmanship. They've got to have the grades to play ball. It isn't all about athletics, it's about academics as well. If we can get a grant of \$142 thousand dollars for a preschool class, can we not get one to help out with the other problems you guys are talking about? For bus drivers, coaches, and referees? I know if we do away with middle school sports, I know you guys will save a lot of money on coaches, referees, diesel, bus drivers, the works. Is it about the money? Or is it about these kids up here? A lot of times the only fun these kids get to have is playing sports. A lot of times their home life is terrible. But they get a break from that when they get to play sports. They get to hang out with their friends. They develop a camaraderie, a brotherhood, a sisterhood. You guys are saying this is for the kids. If this is for the kids, then how can we even consider telling 100 plus kids sorry you're not good enough to make the district team. But don't worry there is rec ball. They don't want to play rec ball. The kids that want to play rec ball, play rec ball. Once these kids reach a certain age, they want to represent their school. And if they want to represent the district, that's fine too. It sounds like the adults are trying to make it easier on themselves. So they can spend a few less hours organizing a schedule, finding a referee. There's plenty of coaches, there's referees, there's bus drivers. I don't understand where you're coming from. I heard everything you have to say. And again, I believe that if we were trying to do away with middle school sports it to pad the District sports to make those teams look better. It's not just about those kids. It's about all these kids from other schools that I've been coaching for 10 years now. I've coached basketball, football, baseball, soccer when they were little because I don't know nothing about soccer. I've coached wrestling, and those kids right up there, there's kids that I've coached that I love, and they all go to different schools, and I love them all. We should love all these kids and we should do what's best for all these kids. And it's not just the district teams. Thank you.'

Nancy Sellers – School Procedures and Policies – "My name is Nancy Sellers and I am here to address a very sad situation that happened at Blue Ridge School regarding pornographic texts that was sent to some sixth graders. And I was wondering what kind of school policy do we have to try to handle this type of situation when it occurs. And I'm wondering what kind of state statute is followed. And I'm also wondering, why is someone, if you receive a text that's inappropriate, why you are automatically considered to be guilty. That's kind of what happened. And why isn't the perpetrator of sending the text held accountable. And the ones who forwarded the text to young

children who had absolutely nothing to do with it. I think some sort of policy needs to be set up for this. Showing why we need to keep sports and activities in the schools because you see what the drugs and this kind of thing what happens to kids if they have time on their hands. I'm wondering also why only some of the phones are confiscated from your children. This was in the sixth grade class with sixth graders. Their phones were confiscated from some of the kids and some of the kids left their phones at home, so nothing was ever asked for them to bring their phones to school to check and see, to follow through on what was going on. Only a few of the children, the ones who happened to bring their phones to school. And then I'm wondering when you talk to the kids about something like that shouldn't their parents be present. These are 10, 11, and 12 year old kids, wouldn't you want to be there with your child if they were being talked to about something like this? I would want to. Some kind of policy needs to be set about that. And some sort of an explanation about why this situation was handled the way it was needs to be given to parents other than being told that it's child privacy. It was a child who sent it. I'm up here because I want some kind of policy be set about an appropriate way to handle this. And I thank you for your time."

Kendra Pressley – Middle School Sports – “Thank you guys for your time tonight. I appreciate you listening and hearing the detail about the discussion that has happened so far because that really helped inform what I was going to say. I see where you guys have trouble. It's got to be an impossible decision to make. I see the value of district sports. I have a niece who played district volleyball this year. It was amazing to watch. I also have a fourth grader who I want to make sure that Elementary sports are still there, or Middle School sports are still there when she gets there in two years. I've seen it all happen so much faster. I see how much it affects down here. But what I'm asking is that you don't forget about the other school of this county. That there is another school, who are they going to play if you guys go to all district. Where are we going to have to travel to. Our kids late at night go to Rosman, go to Franklin to play other teams, because there's no one left in our county to play. And I've heard about rec league teams, well directly in Cashiers doesn't offer nearly as many sports the Sylva rec league. There's no rec volleyball in Cashiers, so we have to travel down here. So if you get rid of middle school sports, we're going to be traveling down here even for rec league. That's not a substitute for our kids that are 40 minutes down the mountain. I appreciate you guys really considering this. Just don't forget that there's a whole other school that's involved in this and your decision of that. Last but not least at Blue Ridge gym there are four side goals that have been condemned and cannot be let down which limits the amount of practice that can be done in the gymnasium. So if you guys could either look into fixing those or removing a condemned item in our gym. Thank you.”

ACTION AGENDA

A. Agenda Item: Budget Amendments

Presenter: Mrs. Kristie Walker, Chief Financial Officer

Mrs. Walker presented budget amendments to the Capital Outlay Fund, Federal Grants Fund, Other Specific Revenue Fund, and the State Public School Fund and asked for board approval.

Action: *Upon a motion by Mr. Wes Jamison and seconded by Mrs. Abigail Clayton, the board voted unanimously to approve the budget amendments to the Capital Outlay Fund, Federal Grants Fund, Other Specific Revenue Fund, and the State Public School Fund.*

B. Agenda Item: 2021-2022 Financial Statements

Presenter: Andy Deal of Anderson, Smith and Wike CCP

Mr. Deal presented the 2021-2022 Financial Statements and as an unmodified report and asked for board approval.

Action: *Upon a motion by Mr. Wes Jamison and seconded by Mrs. Kim Moore, the board voted unanimously to approve the 2021-2022 Financial Statements.*

C. Agenda Item: Student Wellness Survey and MOA with Mountain Projects

Presenter: Mrs. Laura Cabe, School Nutrition Director

Mrs. Cabe presented a request from Mountain Projects to conduct a student wellness survey and a Memorandum of Agreement asked for board approval.

Action: *Upon a motion by Mr. Wes Jamison and seconded by Mrs. Abigail, the board voted unanimously to approve the Student Wellness Survey.*

Action: *Upon a motion by Mr. Wes Jamison and seconded by Mrs. Abigail, the board voted unanimously to approve the Memorandum of Agreement.*

D. Agenda Item: Policy Updates

Presenter: Jake Buchanan, Deputy Superintendent

Updates:

1. School Safety (1510/4200/7270)
2. Code of Ethics for School Board Members (2120)
3. Board Member Opportunities for Development (2123)
4. Technology in the Educational Program (3220)
5. Extracurricular Activities and Student Organizations (3620)
6. Children of Military Families (4050)
7. Age Requirements for Initial Entry (4100)
8. Immunization and Health Requirements for School Admission (4110)
9. Assignment to Classes (4155)

Mr. Buchanan presented updates to the policies listed above and asked for board approval.

Action: *Upon a motion by Mrs. Wes Jamison and seconded by Mrs. Kim Moore, the board voted unanimously to approve the updates to the policies listed above.*

PERSONNEL ACTION AGENDA

Action: *Upon a motion made by Mr. Wes Jamison and seconded by Mrs. Abigail Clayton, 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. Benitez Repreza, Evelyn – Instructional Support Assistant/Afterschool Director, CVES

2. Berry, Gareth – Custodian, FES
3. Cherry-Beck, Kim – Instructional Support Assistant, CVES
4. Cooper, Laura – EC Teacher, SMHS
5. Cunningham, Britney – Substitute EC Bus Monitor, CVES
6. Douglas, Elizabeth – Instructional Support Assistant, SCES
7. Farmer, Tina – Substitute Bus Driver, BREC
8. Holt, Adam – Substitute Bus Driver, District
9. Jamison, Charity – Tutor, SMES
10. Marshall, Joan – Substitute School Nutrition Assistant, District
11. McGoldrick, Kandace – EC Teacher Assistant, SCES
12. McNider, Dena – School Nutrition Assistant, FES
13. Miller, Ashley – Substitute Bus Driver, FES
14. Miller, Emma – Homebound Teacher, FES
15. Monteith, Nathan – Teacher Assistant, SMES
16. Moody-Bumgarner, Mary – Athletic Director, SMES
17. Reece, Gretchen – Substitute Bus Driver, CVES
18. Reece, Gretchen – Substitute EC Bus Monitor, CVES
19. Watson, Josh – Substitute Bus Monitor, CVES

Employee Resignations:

1. Busby, Beau – Bus Monitor, CVES
2. Lynch, Julie – School Nutrition Assistant/Head Cook, FES
3. Patten, Daquan – Lab Facilitator, SMHS
4. Stephan, Heather – Teacher, SMHS
5. Ware, Paula – Pre-K Teacher Assistant, BRS

Staff, Non-Staff and Returning Coach Recommendations:

1. Beddingfield, Breyden – Head Coach Men’s Basketball, CVES – New Non-Staff
2. Bell, Tasha – Head Coach Cheer, SMES – Returning Staff
3. Graham, Kendra – Assistant Coach Swim, SMHS – Returning Non-Staff
4. Miller, Scott – Assistant Coach Men’s Basketball, SMES – Returning Staff
5. Moody-Bumgarner, Mary – Assistant Coach Cheer, SMES – Returning Staff
6. Sharpless, Reuben – Head Coach Girl’s Basketball, SMES – Returning Non-Staff
7. Sutton, Trevor – Head Coach Men’s Basketball, SMES – Returning Non-Staff
8. Woodring, Leah – Head Coach JV Cheer, SMHS – Returning Staff

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The next regularly scheduled business meeting of the Board of Education is January 24, 2023, at 6:00 p.m., at Smokey Mountain Elementary School, 884 US Highway 441 North, Whittier, North Carolina.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no objection, Chairperson Elizabeth Cooper adjourned the meeting at 8:45 p.m.

Elizabeth Cooper, Chairperson

Dr. Dana L. Ayers, Secretary