



Minutes  
School Board Meeting  
Greene County Schools  
County Meeting Room  
January 10, 2024

Members Present: Mr. Brooks Taylor, Member; Ms. Rebecca Roach, Member; Ms. Kelly Greer, Member; Ms. Cherish Alberts, Member; Dr. Andrea Whitmarsh, Superintendent; Ms. Rhonda Houchens, Clerk.

Dr. Whitmarsh called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. in the School Board Office Conference Room.

Mr. Taylor made a motion to move into closed session in accordance with Virginia Code section 2.2-3711(A)(1) to discuss assignment, appointment, and performance of specific officers, appointees, or employees of the Board; and pursuant to Virginia Code section 2.2-3711(A)(7) probable litigation; and pursuant to Virginia Code section 2.2-3711(A)(8) to receive legal advice. Ms. Roach seconded. All Ayes, motion carried.

Mr. Taylor made a motion to reconvene in open session in the County Meeting Room. Ms. Roach seconded. All Ayes, motion carried.

Dr. Whitmarsh called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the County Meeting Room and opened the floor for nominations for position of Chair for the Greene County School Board.

Ms. Greer made a motion to nominate Mr. Taylor as School Board Chair. Ms. Alberts seconded.

Dr. Whitmarsh asked if there were any other nominations. No other nominations.

Dr. Whitmarsh asked all in favor for Brooks Taylor to serve as Chair of the Greene County School Board. Please vote in the affirmative. All Ayes, motion carried.

Dr. Whitmarsh congratulated Mr. Taylor.

Ms. Alberts made a motion to nominate a slate of officers:

School Board Vice-Chair: Becky Roach  
Clerk of the Board: Rhonda Houchens

Deputy Clerk: Dr. Kyle Pursel

Blue Ridge Virginia Governor's School Representative: Kelly Greer

PREP Representative: Becky Roach

PREP Alternate Representatives: Brooks Taylor, Kelly Greer, Cherish Alberts, and Cara Bickers

Ms. Greer seconded. All Ayes, motion carried.

Mr. Taylor requested a motion to approve the Schedule of Regular Meetings for Calendar Year 2024.

Ms. Roach made a motion to approve the Schedule of Regular Meetings for Calendar Year 2024. Ms. Alberts seconded. No discussion. All Ayes, motion carried.

Mr. Taylor requested a motion for the VSBA Code of Conduct for the School Board for 2024.

Ms. Roach made a motion to approve the VSBA Code of Conduct for the School Board for 2024 as presented in the packet. Ms. Greer seconded. Mr. Taylor stated the Board will certify by roll call vote: Ms. Greer, Ms. Roach, Ms. Alberts and the Chair all vote Aye, motion carried.

Mr. Taylor stated that Ms. Bickers is not in attendance. She is dealing with some family issues.

Dr. Whitmarsh added that Ms. Bickers is our new Monroe School Board Representative. Her daughter is in the ICU. She really wanted to be here but needed to be with her family tonight.

Mr. Taylor stated: The Board will certify by roll call vote that to the best of each member's knowledge only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements and identified in the motion to convene in the closed meeting were heard, discussed, or considered.

Ms. Greer – certified

Ms. Roach - certified

Ms. Alberts - certified

Mr. Taylor - certified

Mr. Taylor requested a motion to approve the agenda.

Ms. Alberts made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Ms. Roach seconded. No discussion. All Ayes, motion carried.

Mr. Taylor invited everyone to join in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Taylor stated there were no closed meeting actions.

Mr. Taylor requested a motion for the consent agenda:

11-1528 December 6, 2023 Meeting Minutes

11-1529 December 8, 2023 Expenditures

11-1530 December 12, 2023 Expenditures  
11-1531 December 28, 2023 Expenditures  
11-1532 Monthly Finance Report  
11-1533 Field Trip Requests  
11-1534 Enrollment  
11-1535 Staff to be Approved List  
11-1536 Religious Exemptions  
11-1537 Mileage Reimbursement Rate Calendar Year 2024

Ms. Alberts made a motion to approve the consent agenda items 11-1528 to 11-1537 as presented. Ms. Greer seconded. No discussion. All Ayes, motion carried.

Mr. Taylor stated it was time for first public comment on matters not listed below on agenda. Mr. Taylor opened the floor for public comment.

There were no public comments at this time, so Mr. Taylor closed public comment.

Ms. Kristie Spencer presented action item #11-1538, Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) Update. Ms. Spencer shared this item was presented last month as an information item however for the new board members she provided a quick review. Ms. Spencer shared the changes from last year's plan, additions, completed items, and modified items. Ms. Spencer recommended to approve the plan as presented and then the plan will go to the county to be approved and then it will be rolled over into the Capital Improvement Plan for the County. Ms. Greer made a motion to approve action item #11-1538, Capital Improvement Projects Update as presented. Ms. Roach seconded. No discussion. All Ayes, motion carried.

Dr. Andrea Whitmarsh presented information/action item #11-1539, Social Media Resolution. Dr. Whitmarsh shared this item is for information and action. It is a resolution, and I'm recommending that the board adopt this resolution to join litigation against social media companies. The resolution is on the screen and in your packet. School Boards nationwide are joining litigation against several social media companies. As of December 1, 2023, there were over 400 school divisions nationwide that have initiated suit against social media companies. Numerous Virginia division have engaged legal council and soon will be filing suit. The companies who are defendants in the litigation include: Meta (owner of Facebook and Instagram), Byte Dance (owner of TikTok), Snap (owner of Snapchat), and Google (owner of YouTube). Social media companies have developed products designed to promote compulsive and excessive use by school-aged children. Evidence exists to prove that these companies are aware of and intend to design products to addict school- aged children. The U.S. Surgeon General issued an Advisory in 2023 which reported that up to 95% of youth ages 13-17 report using a social media platform, with more than a third saying they use social media "almost constantly" and nearly 40% of children ages 8-12 use social media even though the commonly required minimum age on most platforms is age 13. Peer reviewed scientific literature confirms that the compulsive and excessive use of social media platforms have significantly contributed to a crisis in the mental and physical health of

America's school-aged youth as evidenced by increased anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, eating disorders, harm caused by online bullying, impairment of self-control and regulation, and sleep deprivation. The damage to students' mental health and physical well-being shows up in our schools every day and we are left to respond to consequential behaviors that disrupt the learning environment and require school-based interventions. The purpose of this litigation is to hold social media companies accountable for this harm. We were asked by our legal counsel Rodney Young, who is associated with two national law firms with significant experience in this type of litigation. Participation as a plaintiff will not cost the division anything unless money is recovered in the litigation. The attorney team advances costs associated with the litigation and attorneys' fees are paid on a contingency basis, meaning only if money is recovered. Staff, being someone in the school division, like central office, will occupy no more than 10 hours of total time in assisting with a discovery questionnaire and looking at how Greene County Schools and students have been impacted. This is a low risk high reward opportunity for the school division to obtain funding but also to share the negative consequences of social media on our youth. Dr. Whitmarsh asked the board for support in a form of approving this resolution.

Mr. Taylor asked if there was anyone that wanted to speak in public comment on this resolution.

Mr. Taylor closed the floor.

Mr. Taylor asked for a motion.

Ms. Greer made a motion to approve information/action item #11-1539 Social Media Resolution as presented. Ms. Alberts seconded. No discussion.

Mr. Taylor spoke in favor of the resolution.

Ms. Alberts spoke about how much it impacts the students in the classroom. The level of addiction and inability to not be on their cellphone and unable to let it go for 50 minutes to one hour that they are in class, is very impactful. I hope this litigation will make a difference.

Mr. Taylor spoke about TikTok (not calling them out) the information in that short amount of time makes the children's attention span shorter. They are used to seeing something for 30 seconds at a time and moving on. Makes it harder for the teachers to lay out a 45-minute presentation and try to take it all in.

Mr. Taylor called for a vote. All Ayes, motion carried.

Dr. Pursel presented information/action item #11-1540, Construction Management. Dr. Pursel shared he was presenting for information and action item pertaining to Construction Management Services for the GCTEC Addition. The current facilities GCTEC no longer meet the needs of the number of students and the number of requests they have for our programs. The division is outgrowing the current facility and needs to provide adequate space for our programs and our students and to allow flexibility within

our programs. With ESSER funding and state construction grant funding, specifications were submitted to and approved by the Department of Education to provide an addition to the Greene County Technical Education Center. He provided where we have been timeline and where we are now timeline. He provided information on why we want Construction Management Services (CM @ Risk). He shared we need to be done by September 30, 2024 so the funds must be encumbered by then. Construction will take place adjacent to an occupied building with students in the building. We don't necessarily have the staff that has the expertise to supervise the complexity of this project such as this. Early involvement from CM will streamline processes, getting permits, value of engineering. Throughout this process our legal council reviewed the contracts and made provisions and they have been approved by our legal counsel. Dr. Pursel shared his recommendation is for the Board to authorize the Chair to execute the contract for Construction Management Services for the Greene County Technical Education Center addition provided the terms discussed are satisfied.

Dr. Whitmarsh noted like Dr. Pursel stated the majority of this is paid for by ESSER Funds which expire in September but the balance will be paid for by State Construction money that we received. There is no local money going towards this project.

Ms. Greer asked if it was going to be achievable to finish by September 30<sup>th</sup>. Dr. Pursel responded yes, they do.

Mr. Taylor stated that this is for accountability also.

Mr. Taylor asked if there was anyone that wanted to speak in public comment on Construction Management.

Mr. Taylor closed the floor.

Mr. Taylor asked for a motion.

Ms. Alberts made a motion to approve information/action item #11-1540, Construction Management as presented for the board to authorize the Chair to execute the contract with Lantz Construction for Construction Management Services for the Greene County Technical Education Center addition provided the terms discussed are satisfied, based upon the finding that the nature of the work is such that the best interests of the School Board require awarding this contract. Ms. Greer, seconded. No Discussion. All Ayes, motion carried.

Ms. Patricia Demitry presented information item #11-1541, WMMS School Spotlight. Ms. Demitry welcomed everyone and introduced her administrative team that was with her, Mr. Walsh and Mr. Ulrich. Ms. Demitry shared it is a pleasure to share with you an update on the WMMS Dragons. Approaching this presentation, we grounded ourselves in the districts Strategic Plan Impact 2027. Our core values as a school align with the divisions desire to make a meaningful and positive change in our staff and students lives. Ms. Demitry shared the new daily bell schedule that aligns with the WMHS

schedule, academic achievement, achievement gaps and student engagement and outcomes. Mr. Walsh spoke about safe and supportive schools and the new 2023-24 reset and how it works. He shared other initiatives and the different levels in the behavioral matrix. Mr. Ulrich shared information on Exceptional Workforce that included new moto, survey results, fun nights and tailgates. Ms. Demitry shared connections and partnerships with our community, club day choice menu and WMMS Extra Curricular Programs.

Dr. Whitmarsh presented information item #11-1542, FY2025 Budget Presentation. Dr. Whitmarsh stated she was going to share information on what we know as we are working through the FY2025 budget process. As we move forward we will have additional information from the state and locality as well as more information on requests. Dr. Whitmarsh shared a budget is a moral document and should reflect our vision, mission statement and strategic plan Impact 2027. The budget is a reflection of our goals for the school division. VA code mandates that it is the duty of the Superintendent to prepare a budget with an estimate of the amount of money deemed to be needed to support the school division. This is commonly referred to as a needs-based budget. The numbers reflect preliminary, broad estimates and are to illustrate potential revenue and expenditures only. Dr. Whitmarsh also shared the budget calendar timeline with a work session on January 24<sup>th</sup>, public hearing on February 7<sup>th</sup> and budget adoption on February 28<sup>th</sup>. Dr. Whitmarsh gave an overview of FY2025 Influencing Factors – Enrollment – our current ADM in the fall was 2732 and FY2024 budget planning was ADM of 2762. For FY2025 we are using the state ADM Projection 2702. This is the first year of the new biennium and our VRS rate will change from 19.17%, the VRS ratified rate is 16.42% and the Governor’s proposed rate is 17.78%. Effective 7/1/2024 there is also a rate separation for the VRS Hybrid Plan. Employers will need to make matching Defined Contribution Hybrid Plan contributions of 1%-3.5% dependent on the employee elections. Local Composite Index - this is the first year of the new biennium and the LCI changed to .3411 from .3505. The Composite Index determines a school division’s ability to pay education costs fundamental to the commonwealth’s Standards of Quality. It is calculated using: true value of real property, adjusted gross income and table retail sales. Each locality’s index is adjusted to maintain an overall statewide local share of 45 percent and an overall state share of 55 percent. Operating Expense – fuel rates have decreased based on current market value. We are not currently on a contract but the county is working to establish a contract with a provider. We may have some changes in utilities but any fluctuations will be offset within the existing budget structure. Building insurance is expected to remain flat. Other economic factors – social security payments increased 1/1/2024 = 3.2% and the current inflation rate is 3.1% . Dr. Whitmarsh shared the results from the budget survey.

Dr. Whitmarsh stated we always base our initial information on the Governor’s released budget. The Governor’s budget was released in December as well as the caboose budget. The Caboose budget is released at the same time as the Governor's proposal for next year but they are two separate budgets. The caboose budget is \$334,000 less than the current school system’s approved budget. The caboose budget also includes All in Virginia, compensation supplement funding and state construction carryover funding. GCPS’s approved FY24 state funding is \$26,718,723 including state construction carryover and supplemental appropriation funding based on 2762 ADM. Final payments will be adjusted based on March ADM, current Fall ADM 2732. The state’s projection for FY2025 ADM 2702 and the state budget

of \$29,035,641. The funding in the Governor's FY25 proposal includes a 1% one-time bonus for SOQ positions. No salary increases. We were funded in FY2023 \$1,716,894 in State School Construction Grant and we locally carried that over each year and a portion of that will be used for the Tech Center addition. In the FY2024 budget we also have All in Virginia per pupil funds in just over a million dollars to last for three years. We will receive the money this year and we will carry it over for three years.

For the Federal FY2024 Budget we have budgeted \$3,070,000. Actual FY2023 was \$3,124,867 with a difference of \$54,867, basically because Federal School Nutrition Funding. FY2025 Estimate Funding \$3,070,000. Dr. Whitmarsh shared guidelines of federal revenues. Federal funds are targeted and specific. We are told how much money we are going to get and we have to apply for it. Every expense has to be reimbursed. Dr. Whitmarsh shared the federal COVID Pandemic Related Funding ends effective September 30, 2024. This includes American Rescue Plan ESSERIII, Before and After School, Summer School, and Unfinished Learning. All expenditures under these funds must be obligated by September 30, 2024. In this year's budget we have over two million dollars allocated for those funds. This includes positions as well as projects at the Alt Ed Building and the Tech Center.

Dr. Whitmarsh shared the local funding county fund amounts for the last three years. Other funds are comprised of funds from sources such as rents, regional programs, insurance payments, insurance settlements, sale of equipment or the miscellaneous revenue. FY23 actual for the category is \$197,826. Dr. Whitmarsh noted the increase from FY22 to FY23 difference to cover 7% raise for employees as well as the addition of some programs and from FY23 to FY24 the increase was due to 5% raise as well as a 9.9% health care benefit cost increase.

Dr. Whitmarsh stated VRS rates are changing for FY25. They still have to be adopted by the General Assembly. She reviewed the rates for FY2024 the total employer rate of 19.17% and then the FY2025 Governor Proposed Rate of 17.78 % and FY2025 VRS Board Approved Rate of 16.42%. We have to factor in the split for the Hybrid employees. Estimated health insurance increase projection is 3.5% with a cost increase of \$160,000.

Dr. Whitmarsh shared a FY2024 By Expense Type chart and a personnel vs non-personnel chart. ESSER funds are budgeted in materials and supplies and purchase services.

Dr. Whitmarsh shared the FY2025 current requests submitted are approximately \$867,000.

Dr. Whitmarsh stated keep in mind the Governor's budget proposal did not include money for a raise. It included a 1% bonus which would cost about \$252,800 for all our employees. The state would contribute \$147,281 of that. If we were to give a raise: 1% is \$291,367, 2% is \$582,734 and 3% is \$874,100. Keep in mind public schools are dealing with a staffing shortage. Dr. Whitmarsh shared details of nationwide shortages. The VA Department of Education is working on reducing barriers for those wanting to enter the teaching profession. There are more openings than there are people to fill them. Dr. Whitmarsh shared the next steps and timelines for the local and state budget process.

Mr. Taylor stated it was time for public comment on information items. Mr. Taylor opened the floor for public comment.

Mr. Jack Morris spoke in favor of strength and conditioning classes to be added to the high school and middle school. He shared statistics and reasons why strength and conditioning classes are so important and needed.

Mr. Robert Hamblin, a parent of two boys involved in sports, spoke in favor of strength and conditioning classes. He spoke in favor of Jack Morris.

Mr. Taylor closed public comment.

Dr. Whitmarsh presented the Superintendent's Report item #11-1543, Superintendent's Update. Dr. Whitmarsh welcomed the new board members. She thanked the middle school staff for their presentation. In early December we shared FY2025 budget priorities with our stakeholders. We continue to receive feedback through the budget process. Dr. Whitmarsh shared great things are happening in Greene through various gifting programs such as Toy Gift, Holiday Helpers, Star Tree, and others this past holiday season. Greene County Public Schools provided gifts to over 600 Greene County students and their families. WMHS held their third annual Holiday Teen Maker Market Dec. 9 - we appreciate everyone who came out to support our teen makers and Feeding Greene. RES celebrated their 25th birthday and were joined by some original teachers, teaching assistants and bus drivers. Nathanael Greene began their Career Kids program in December. This program provides students with the opportunity to assist with jobs around the school such as front door greeters, flag duty, and lunch PE helpers. The RES Robotics team competed in states in December. While they didn't advance, they learned a lot, had a good time together and all have set goals for the future. The William Monroe High School Robotics team competed in the Mechanicsville Mayhem Qualifier in December, proving they are one of the best teams in the Chesapeake region (Virginia, Maryland and DC). Although the team didn't make it past the semifinal round, they have been a show of force this year. The team is ranked fourth out of 94 regional teams and has posted the second highest score across all matches played in the region this year. WMHS senior Keyry Rodriguez was elected Jobs for Virginia Graduates (JVG) state vice president. WMHS honored alumna Sam Brunelle December 18th and unveiled her Team USA and McDonald's All-American jerseys in the Dragon's Lair. Several GCTEC Automotive Technology students recently earned their National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence Entry Level Credential in Brakes. These certifications can help students land jobs in the career fields they desire most. There is no school on Monday in observance of Martin Luther King Jr Day. There will be a budget work session on Wednesday, January 24<sup>th</sup>. Our next regular meeting is Wednesday, February 7<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Taylor welcomed board member comments.

Becky Roach thanked everyone for coming out tonight. Ms. Roach stated she is looking forward to the addition to the GCTEC. Hopefully it will be completed in August. She thanked the middle school for their presentation. She was glad to hear baseball and softball will be starting up at the middle school and theatre. She spoke about the number gifts that were handed out. She thanked everyone for coming out this evening.



Ms. Alberts thanked the middle school staff for their presentation. She stated it's wonderful to see faces that she knew and specifically she misses the faculty student sport events. She thanked Mr. Hale, CBS 19 and Pam Collier. She thanked the student for courageously talking. Thanks to Lowes and Corner Store for their support. She thanked Ms. Mack, all the supporters, the high school for the cup and Ms. Woods class for gifts in December. She thanked Mr. Taylor, Ms. Roach, Dr. Whitmarsh and Ms. Houchens who have been amazing support in teaching us all the things we don't know. She thanked all the students that inspired me to do this.

Ms. Greer stated she is grateful to be here and the opportunity to serve the community in this way. I can see on the horizon some really tuff things coming. I encourage people to complete the survey. Thank you for those that came out for public comment. The middle school spotlight was great. She spoke about the openness to look at and reflect on what may not be working and be willing to change. I hope that is something I can do on the board as well. If I make a mistake I can change and make it better. Thank you for being vulnerable in that way. Thank you Dr. Whitmarsh for the budget presentation and helping us understanding this second language.

Ms. Alberts wanted to congratulate the middle school on their absenteeism improvement. From 30% to 14%. That's impressive.

Mr. Taylor thanked the fellow board members for appointing him as chairman. He welcomed the new members and thanked them for stepping up to be on the board. He stated we are praying for Ms. Bickers' daughter and her family. He thanked the presenters and said the GCTEC addition is exciting. He thanked those that came up and spoke. He thanked everyone for coming.

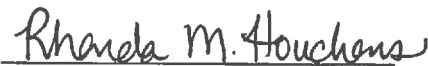
Mr. Taylor requested a motion to adjourn.

Ms. Alberts made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Roach seconded. No discussion. All Ayes, motion carried.

Meeting ended at 8:32 pm.



Chair



Clerk

