

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

398 Hospital Road, Sylva

January 23, 2024

6:00 p.m.

The Jackson County Board of Education held their regular session on Tuesday, January 23, 2024, at 6:00 p.m., at the Board of Education Administrative Office Boardroom, Sylva, North Carolina. The following members were present:

Elizabeth Cooper, Chairperson
Wes Jamison, Vice Chairperson
Abigail Clayton
Kim Moore

Also present were Dr. Dana L. Ayers, Superintendent; Jake Buchanan, Deputy Superintendent; Teri Walawender, Director of Human Resources; Ashley Leonard, School Board Attorney; and Cora Fields, Board Assistant.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Elizabeth Cooper called the business meeting to order.

Chairperson Elizabeth Cooper led the Pledge of Allegiance.

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 RECOGNITION

Dr. Ayers presented Certificates of Recognition to the following: Rebekkah Watkins, for earning her Doctorate Degree from Appalachian State and Braden Teeters, SMHS Senior, for his internship with the JCPS Technology Department.

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. Draft Open Session Minutes of Regular Meeting of December 19, 2023.

INFORMATION AGENDA

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

Dr. Ayers reported on the following:

1. What a wild start to the second semester we have had! The Christmas break was much needed but resuming school has been haphazard, at best. Mountain winter weather is unpredictable, but our team has done an incredible job in making calls that protect students and staff. Thank you to students, staff and families who have endured the inconsistency of the first two weeks of this semester.
2. There are many considerations that go into making a weather call for school. I am in frequent early morning communication with several people including Todd Dillard, Jackson County Emergency Management Director, JCPS Transportation Director, Josh Francis, leadership team members, DOT staff and surrounding school superintendents. On potential inclement weather days, staff are checking roads as early as 3:30 am and throughout the morning. We monitor weather apps and road conditions while continuing to communicate with everyone involved. We consider the amount and type of precipitation, temperature, road temperatures and wind speed/gusts. It is also crucial to plan for dismissal and the fact that bus drivers will not return from their routes until nearly two hours after dismissal. My decisions for weather calls encompass my desire to keep my staff safe as well as students.
3. As a result of the inclement weather we have already experienced, February 19th, which is on our school calendar as an optional workday, may become a student day. This will depend on the weather in the coming few weeks. A final decision for this as a make-up day will be made no later than Friday, February 9th to give families sufficient time to plan.
4. In extracurricular activities, we are wrapping up the winter sports season over the next couple of weeks and looking ahead to spring sports. We have had some huge successes at both the middle and high school levels with our teams. Auditions for the spring SMHS musical are taking place and our band and choral students are planning for spring concerts.
5. Next, I want to take a moment to recognize our Board of Education members. January is School Board Appreciation Month. Please join me in honoring those who serve on our school board: Chair, Elizabeth Cooper, Vice Chair, Wes Jamison, Abigail Clayton, Kim Moore and Dr. Lynn Dillard. The dedication of board members to students and the community makes our schools places where all children can discover their interests and prepare for their future. We are grateful for their focus on making education a priority for students and families along with supporting the needs of staff. Thanks to their efforts, Jackson County Public Schools is a great school system to attend and be employed. Each school provided a small prize for our Board members to show their appreciation for their efforts!
6. I'd also like to give a shout out to our BOE attorney, Ashley Leonard, who was recently named a partner with Campbell Shatley Law. Ashley is a valuable asset to our board of education. We are very proud of her!
7. In closing, I want to bring your attention to the upcoming Board of Education elections. Chair Elizabeth Cooper will not be returning, and Vice Chair Wes Jamison's seat is up for reelection. In Jackson County, Board of Education members are elected in the primary on March 5th. Early voting February 15 through March 2 and there are four candidates for the two available seats. Do your research and go vote for the candidate that you feel is best. Every vote counts!

B. Agenda Item: Facility Needs Update

Presenter: Mr. Chad Roberson, ClarkNexsen and Jake Buchanan, Deputy Superintendent

Mr. Buchanan introduced Mr. Chad Roberson with ClarkNexsen. Mr. Roberson presented the results of the Facility Needs study that analyzed the space utilization at each Jackson County Public School. The analysis compared the number of students per space profile utilizing the DPI site and building tool.

- C. **Agenda Item:** Fairview Road Sidewalk Feasibility Study
Presenter: Kristy Carter, Traffic Planning and Design Inc.

Ms. Carter presented preliminary results of the Fairview Road Sidewalk Feasibility Study that was requested by the Jackson County Commissioners request. Based on information presented by ClarkNexsen, the study, TPD will reassess areas that will be impacted by proposed construction on the Smoky Mountain High School campus.

- D. **Agenda Item:** Unaudited Financial Summary
Presenter: Mrs. Kristie Walker, Chief Financial Officer

Mrs. Walker presented the Unaudited Financial Summary as of January 23, 2024.

OPEN SESSION FOR PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Rick Harrison spoke about the High School Head Coach. Mr. Harrison asked the board to consider the profound impact this position has on the students and the culture of the school when deciding on a new head coach. He asked that the scope be expanded to include more subjective criteria when making the selection.

Mrs. Gayle Woody spoke to the board about a Thank you to Coaches. She said that she has attended many sporting events and has an appreciation for all coaches. She wanted to express her thanks to the coaches for their positive impact on students.

ACTION AGENDA

- A. **Agenda Item:** Budget Amendments
Presenter: Mrs. Kristie Walker, Chief Financial Officer

Mrs. Walker presented the budget amendments to the Federal Grants Fund and 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 Federal Grants Fund and State Public School Fund.*

- B. **Agenda Item:** Purchase Activity Bus
Presenter: Mr. Josh Francis, Transportation Director

Mr. Francis presented the bid for the purchase of a new 72 passenger Activity Bus for SMHS 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 purchase of a new Activity Bus for SMHS.*

C. Agenda Item: 2024 – 2025 School Calendar Approval

Presenter: Dr. Dana L. Ayers, Superintendent

Dr. Ayers presented two 2024 – 2025 School Calendar options. Option A has a student start date of August 14 and offers more balanced semesters and staggered start for kindergarten students. Option B has a student start date of August 19 and complies with the state statute and mandated start date. Dr. Ayers made a recommendation to adopt Option A asked for a motion and board approval.

Action: *Upon a motion by Mr. Wes Jamison and seconded by Mrs. Kim Moore, the board voted unanimously to approve the Option A School Calendar.*

D. Agenda Item: Policy Updates

Presenter: Mr. Jake Buchanan, Deputy Superintendent

Mr. Buchanan presented the following Board Policy update and asked for board approval:

1. Election of Officers/Organization of Board (2200)

Action: *Upon a motion by Mr. Wes Jamison and seconded by Mrs. Abigail Clayton, the board voted unanimously to approve the updated policy.*

CLOSED SESSION

The board unanimously approved a motion by Mr. Wes Jamison 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.

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

OPEN SESSION

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

A. Closed Session Minutes of Regular Meeting of December 19, 2023.

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. Ayers. The board unanimously approved the following recommendations:*

Employee Recommendations:

1. Alexander, Trevor – Teacher, SMES
2. Bowers, Brittany – Teacher, FES
3. Buck, Bailey – School Nutrition Assistant, BRS
4. Cass, Seraphim – School Nutrition Assistant, BRS
5. Crisp, Meredith – Afterschool Tutor, FES
6. Davidson, Hannah – EC Bus Monitor, CVES
7. Gates, Melody – School Nutrition Assistant, SCES
8. Gonzales, Magdalena “Ruby” – School Nutrition Assistant, SMHS
9. Harrill, Leroy – Teacher, CVES
10. Israel, Jordan – Teacher, CVES
11. King, Morgan – Afterschool Tutor, SMES
12. Miller, Robert – Custodian and Bus Driver, CVES
13. Moreau, Ami – Purchasing Specialist, Central Office
14. Nytko, Emily – EC Bus Monitor, CVES
15. Potthoff, Allison – School Nutrition Assistant, SMHS
16. Sutton, Alexis – Afterschool Assistant, CVES
17. Tallent, Natasha – Teacher Assistant, SMES
18. Tidwell, Wendy – Afterschool Tutor, SMES
19. Warrick, Randy – Custodian and Bus Driver, SCES
20. Watkins, Rebekkah – Homebound Teacher, BRS and BREC
21. Youman, Erika – Teacher Assistant, FES

Employee Resignations:

1. Beck, Paula – School Nutrition Assistant, SMHS
2. Brindley, Richard – Teacher, Athletic Director, and Head Coach Football, SMHS
3. Donatelli, Donna – School Nutrition Assistant, CVES
4. Hines, Millie – Payroll Specialist, Central Office
5. Martin, Candy – School Nutrition Assistant, FES
6. Miller, Carly Danielle – Teacher, CVES
7. Thompson, Alyssa – School Nutrition Assistant, FES
8. Watty, Andy – School Nutrition Assistant, SMHS
9. Whitaker, Stefanie – Afterschool Assistant, CVES

Employee Separations:

1. Cope, Brandon – School Nutrition Manager, FES

Staff, Non-Staff and Returning Coach Recommendations:

1. Blanton, Morgan – Head Coach Varsity Softball, SMHS – Returning Non-Staff
2. Brown, Megan – Head Coach Women’s Track, SMHS – Returning Staff
3. Capps, Zeb – Head Coach Men’s Golf, SMHS – Returning Staff
4. Ellenburg, Jeremy – Head Coach Varsity Baseball, SMHS – Returning Staff
5. Eyler, Jim – Assistant Coach Men’s Tennis, SMHS – Returning Non-Staff
6. Hawk, Derrick – Assistant Coach Varsity Baseball, SMHS – Returning Staff
7. Hill, Melissa – Head Coach JV Softball, SMHS – Returning Staff
8. Long, Aaron – Assistant Coach Women’s Basketball, SMES – New Non-Staff
9. Macke, Stacy – Head Coach Men’s Golf, SMHS – Returning Staff

10. McElroy, Craig – Head Coach JV Baseball, SMHS – Returning Staff
11. Melton, Dustin – Head Coach District Softball, SMHS – Returning Non-Staff
12. Mulligan, Tyler – Head Coach Men’s Tennis, SMHS – Returning Staff
13. Nicholson, Rachel – Assistant Coach Varsity Softball, SMHS – Returning Non-Staff
14. Poindexter, Holden – Assistant Coach Varsity Track, SMHS – New Non-Staff

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The next regularly scheduled business meeting of the Board of Education is February 27, 2024, at 6:00 p.m., at the Board of Education Administrative Office, 398 Hospital Road, Sylva, NC.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no objection, Chairperson Elizabeth Cooper adjourned the meeting at 8:06 p.m.

Elizabeth K. Cooper, Chairperson

Dr. Dana L. Ayers, Secretary