MINUTES OF
THE WILSON COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL MEETING
July 29, 2021

The Wilson County Board of Education held a Special Meeting on Thursday, July 29, 2021, at 6:00 p.m. in the Administrative Offices, 113 N. Tarboro Street. Chairman Dr. Christine Fitch called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. with the following members present:

Dr. Christine L. Fitch, Chairman
Henry E. Mercer, Vice-Chairman
Velma Barnes
Beverly Boyette
Blake Boykin
Rhyan Breen
Debora Powell
Dr. Lane B. Mills, Secretary

Ms. Barnes participated in the meeting offsite using the Zoom video conferencing platform. The other Board members participated in the meeting at the Administrative Offices.

The meeting was televised on Spectrum and Greenlight Channel 22; and livestreamed through the Wilson County Schools (WCS) YouTube Channel. The public could also view the meeting through links on the WCS Facebook, Instagram and Twitter pages and the WCS website.

Others present were Associate Superintendent Dr. Cheryl Wilson, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources Dr. Norris Parker, Assistant Superintendent of Administrative Services Dr. Ben Williams, Director of Public Relations Amber Lynch, Wilson County Health Director Teresa Ellen, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent and Board Clerk Linda Horrison, as well as Board Attorney Brandon McPherson and *The Wilson Times* Reporter Drew Wilson.

After calling the meeting to order, Dr. Fitch asked for approval of the agenda. Ms. Powell made the motion, seconded by Mr. Mercer, that the Board approve the agenda as presented for this Special Meeting today, July 29, 2021. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0.

Dr. Fitch led the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by a moment of silence.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss an action item for Strong Schools NC Public Health Toolkit (K-12) and personnel matters.

Under Strong Schools NC Public Health Toolkit (K-12), the Administration shared a presentation on the toolkit. The presentation is attached. Ms. Ellen provided an update on COVID-19.

Ms. Ellen shared the following information:

- Currently, 48% of the county's population has received one dose of the vaccine and 38% of the population is fully vaccinated.

- She advised that 4% of the county's 12-17 year-old population has received at least one dose of the vaccine for a total of 1,243. The 12-17 year old's make up 8% of the county's population. That age group has made up about 20% of the vaccines administered on any given day.
- A total of 67 people have registered for the vaccination clinic that is scheduled on July 30 for WCS staff and students who are 12 or older. Of the 67, all are students with the exception of six or seven adults.
- There has been an increase in hospitalization.
- The county has not suffered any deaths since June 1.
- The Delta coronavirus variant is more contagious as the original COVID-19 strain. One person with the Alpha variant of the virus could spread it to three people and with the Delta variant, one person could spread it to at least six people.
- The CDC has recommended masking for all staff and students in grades K-12 since students are not social distancing when classrooms are full.

The Board discussed staff and K-12 students wearing masks. The Administration and Ms. Ellen answered questions from the Board members. Dr. Mills shared that expectations with the principals are that the district is open for school with face-to-face instruction. Based on recommendations from Ms. Ellen, the Administration supports the following:

- Follow the guidance from the Strong Schools NC Public Health Toolkit K-12
    - Require masks for K-12 students and staff indoors
    - Athletics
        - Masks required for indoor sports
        - Masks optional for outdoor sports
    - Follow all protocols for:
        - Handling cases
        - Cleaning
        - Transportation
    - Revisit guidance provided by the NC Health and Human Services as changes are introduced
    - Revisit local process in October

Dr. Fitch shared that the toolkit removes offering remote learning while students are being quarantined. Dr. Wilson shared that the district will ensure remote learning is happening in those situations and teachers should be ready to teach hybrid in the event a classroom is quarantined.

Mr. Breen shared that his children will be wearing masks to school, but he would like the Board to consider making masks optional. If conditions change, the Board could then make masks mandatory.

Ms. Barnes shared that after listening to the CDC, she would like to see masks required for K-12 students to prevent the transmission.

Mr. Mercer agreed with Ms. Barnes and was in favor of requiring masks as recommended. He shared that the reason the district has seen a low number of COVID-19 cases is due to cleaning and precautions that are being taken.

Ms. Powell shared that the Delta coronavirus variant is more contagious and she would like for the district to continue to follow safety measures and protocols. She shared that masks should be required for K-12 students.

Mr. Boykin agreed with Mr. Breen and shared that the majority of the people in his district want masks to be optional.

Ms. Boyette shared that the district's goal should be to have students in the classroom learning. She is concerned with teachers teaching face-to-face and virtual students at the same time. She shared that masks should be optional for K-5 students and that masks for K-2 is a big concern because they are soft spoken and it is hard to hear students reading when they are wearing masks. She shared that in grades 6-12, she didn't have a preference but if masks were required, students who were vaccinated should not have to wear one. She also shared that when riding the bus, everyone should wear masks.

Mr. Mercer made the motion, seconded by Ms. Powell, that the Board accept the recommendation of the Administration to require masks for K-12 but to also, according to the recommendation made, do a revisit of the local process in October or at such time when necessary. The motion passed 4-3, with Ms. Boyette, Mr. Boykin, and Mr. Breen casting the dissenting votes.

At 7:38 p.m., Ms. Boyette made the motion, seconded by Mr. Mercer, that the Wilson County Board of Education go into closed session to consider confidential personnel matters as provided in N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(6), and N.C.G.S. Section 115C-319 through 321; and to consult with the Board of Education attorney and preserve the attorney-client privilege as provided in N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(3). The motion passed unanimously, 7-0.

At 8:14 p.m., Ms. Boyette made the motion, seconded by Mr. Breen, to reconvene to open session. The motion passed unanimously, 6-0. Ms. Barnes was not feeling well and did not return to open session.

Reporting from closed session, Ms. Boyette made the motion, seconded by Mr. Mercer, to approve the personnel recommendations as presented by the Administration. The motion passed unanimously, 6-0.

ACTION ITEMS

The Board approved the following certified positions.

Administrative

Rollins, Joshua-Assistant Principal (Vinson-Bynum Elementary)
Shackleford, April-Principal (Lucama Elementary)

INFORMATION ITEMS

The Board received the following personnel list as information.

Administrative - Transfers

Baker, Olinka-Assistant Principal (Barnes Elementary)
Carter, Antonnia-Assistant Principal (Fike High)
Carter, Kelly-Assistant Principal (Forest Hills Middle)
Charles-Dixon, Samantha-Assistant Principal (Beddingfield High)
There being no further business at 8:15 p.m., Ms. Boyette made the motion, seconded by Mr. Mercer, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously, 6-0.

Dr. Christine L. Fitch, Chairman

Dr. Lane B. Mills, Secretary