Minutes
School Board Meeting
Greene County Schools
County Meeting Room
November 13, 2024

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

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

Ms. Roach made a motion to convene in closed session:

- pursuant to Virginia Code section 2.2-3711(A)(1) to consider and discuss assignment and appointment of specific officers, appointees, or employees of the Board and

- pursuant to Virginia Code section 2.2-3711 (A)(2) to discuss matters involving the application of policy to a student that will involve the disclosure of information contained in the student's education records.

Ms. Bickers seconded. All Ayes, motion carried.

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

Mr. Taylor called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. in the County Meeting Room.

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. Bickers - certified
Ms. Alberts – certified
Ms. Roach – certified
Mr. Taylor – certified

Mr. Taylor requested a motion to approve the agenda.

Ms. Roach made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Ms. Bickers 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:

11-1689 October 9, 2024 Meeting Minutes
11-1690 October 7, 2024 Expenditures
11-1691 October 10, 2024 Expenditures
11-1692 October 21, 2024 Expenditures
11-1693 October 25, 2024 Expenditures
11-1694 October 31, 2024 Expenditures
11-1695 Monthly Finance Report
11-1696 Field Trip Requests
11-1697 Enrollment
11-1698 Staff to be Approved List

Ms. Roach made a motion to approve the consent agenda items 11-1689 through 11-1698 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.

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

Ms. Brunelle presented action item #11-1699, Capital Improvement Plan. Ms. Brunelle stated she was presenting the update Capital Improvement Plan as an action item. She stated last month Ms. Spencer presented this as an information item but we had not received all the financial numbers for the paving projections. Those numbers have been updated in your packet.

Ms. Greer made a motion to approve updates to the action item #11-1699, Capital Improvement Plan as presented. Ms. Bickers seconded. No discussion. All Ayes, motion carried.

Dr. Whitmarsh presented information/action item #11-1700, Students on the School Board. Dr. Whitmarsh shared that in September the board adopted a policy to add student representatives to the School Board. She stated that tonight Mr. Wimmer is here to share about the selection process as well as to present the proposed student's members for the Greene County School Board for the 2024-2025 school year. Mr. Wimmer shared the process for picking our two nominees for students on the school

board. The application included checking students for good standing, writing sample, letter of recommendation and interview. Mr. Wimmer shared the two nominees were Olivia Shifflett and Tyler Crenshaw. Mr. Wimmer shared Olivia was unable to be here tonight but he did share a video of Olivia Shifflett. Mr. Wimmer then introduced Tyler Crenshaw who spoke to the board.

Ms. Alberts made a motion to approve Olivia Shifflett and Tyler Crenshaw as student representatives to the Greene County School Board for the 24-25 school year. Ms. Bickers seconded.

The board members spoke in favor of this motion.

All Ayes, motion carried.

Mr. Taylor welcomed comments for Students on the School Board.

No public comments.

Dr. Whitmarsh presented information/action item #11-1701 FY25 – Budget Update. Dr. Whitmarsh shared FY25 is the fiscal year we are in. Mid-year we are going to make a change to our budget. FY25 budget begins July 1, 2024 and ends June 30, 2025. Dr. Whitmarsh stated everything we do is aligned with our Strategic Plan – Empowering our community's children for life-long success and our budget should always reflect our priorities and core values. Dr. Whitmarsh shared the FY25 budget process and shared she didn't get calculation tools until later in the month. The Board of Supervisors approved the appropriation last night on November 12. Dr. Whitmarsh shared the changes and additions from the previous budget. We did receive an additional $339,332 in compensation. The budget we approved had money in there for a 1% bonus for everyone and we gave a 3% raise. We received 1.2 million in at-risk students. The At-Risk funding provides a variety of purposes but it is targeted for the prevention, intervention and remediation to serve students that educationally at-risk. The additional monies that we are receiving are not just for anything they are for specific purposes. She shared a comparison chart for the adopted budget and the proposed budget. Dr. Whitmarsh shared that you will see the difference is not only with state funding but when we went to the county last night we asked them to lower the county funding to use by $254,000 which is the increase they had granted us this year because we were receiving the additional monies. What that means is we will hold funding from FY24 to FY25 from the county as we discussed previously we thought that was the right thing to do. Dr. Whitmarsh stated she recommend to amend the proposed budget to included the additional funding which will make the budget amount $53,911,690.

Mr. Taylor opened the floor for public comment.

There were none so Mr. Taylor closed the floor for public comment.

Ms. Roach read the following:

I have a personal interest in the School Board's budget by virtue of my husband's employment by the School Board and the salary scales included in the budget. However, as the spouse of a teacher at GCPS, I am a member of a large group of individuals in the community who are affected by the School Board's budget and I am able to participate in discussions and votes on the budget fairly, objectively, and in the public interest.

Ms. Bickers made a motion to adopt the amended FY2025 budget in the amount of $53,911,690 based on the supplemental appropriation of $1,540,207 in additional state funds provided in the final state budget. Ms. Roach seconded.

The board had discussion.

All Ayes, motion carried.

Dr. Pursel presented information item #11-1702, Cell Phone Policy. Dr. Pursel presented a draft of the personal electronic device policy for information and then action item at the December meeting. Dr. Pursel shared a timeline of events beginning with July 9, 2024 with the Governor's Executive Order 33 through January 2025 implementation of new cell phone plan. He then shared where we started, where we are now and where we are headed. Included in the presentation were charts for US Emergency Department visits for self-harm, US teen suicide rate, daily time with friends, percent US anxiety prevalence. Dr. Pursel shared keys points of policy change. Dr. Pursel shared the different ways the schools are communicating and how devices should be off and away during the school day. Dr. Pursel stated the draft policy is in the packet. He shared some key points: how we started off and away and now it's off and away all day which includes lunch and it includes high school. The other big change is off and away and not near body. Off the body of the student. On buses to and from school devices may be used as long as it's not disruptive or a distraction. Dr. Pursel shared the Executive Order, guidance for cell phone education as well as the draft policy is included in the packet.

Ms. Brunelle presented information item #11-1703, Transportation Update. Ms. Brunelle stated she was providing a spotlight on the transportation department. Ms. Brunelle shared the transportation department follows Impact 2027. For culture of excellence we have qualified drivers, daily routes making sure they are safe, efficient and ridership expectations, fleet of 49 regular buses and 9 special education adaptions and 7 buses for after school activities and field trips. For Safe, Supporting and Caring Schools we are using stop arm cameras, school zone updates, and the fleet has air conditioning, cameras, Here Comes the Bus system and Synovia Tracking. For Resource Stewardship Ms. Brunelle shared number of drivers, number of vehicles in fleet, and maintenance. For Connections and Partnerships Ms. Brunelle shared the transportation department participated in the parade of lights, stuff the bus for school supplies and provided hurricane relief. For Exceptional Workforce Ms. Brunelle shared the transportation office staff, bus drivers and assistants, car and van drivers, maintenance staff. Ms. Brunelle shared the VDOE Pupil Transportation Optional Assessment.

Ms. Brunelle presented information item #11-1704, Athletic Facility Update. Ms. Brunelle provided a presentation regarding artificial turf and natural grass. The presentation included the benefits, pros and cons, surface impacts, usage, repair, renovation, up-keep, and aesthetics.

Dr. Mitchem presented information item #11-1705 Holiday Assistance Efforts. Dr. Mitchem and Ms. Thomas provided the history of Toy Lift and Toy Gift. They shared this year 915 students were identified along with a calendar of events beginning with the Toy Gift on December 6th. Information for the Holiday Assistance Program and The Toy Gift Program was shared.

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

Mr. Taylor stated no one signed up and no one wanted to speak so he closed the floor for the second public comment.

Dr. Whitmarsh presented the Superintendent's Report item #11-1706, Superintendent's Update. Dr Whitmarsh welcomed Tyler and Olivia. Dr. Whitmarsh shared the state released preliminary accountability calculations for the new model utilizing last year's data. Our calculations were in alignment with the expectations this was for information purposes based on the scores that Dr. Payne shared at our June meeting. The Tech Center Project cement slab pour will take place Saturday. The WMHS Cross Country Relay Team received a second place at the Ragged Mountain Cup and Panorama Farms the highest finish in school history for this event. We have two runners Samantha Nitzsche and Elizabeth Keller will be heading to VA Tech on Saturday to compete in the State Competitions. Wyatt Morris won second yesterday in the Central Virginia Area Tractor Driving Competition and will be moving on to the State Championship in April. We had lots of Veteran Day celebrations in our schools on Monday. It was great to honor those who have served our country. We had monster mash and trick or trunk at the high school and Nathanael Greene Schools were a huge community success. The Blue Ridge board meeting will take place on Wednesday, December 4th. There will also be a PREP Meeting December 4th at 9:00 am. As a reminder we have partnered with The Cook Center to provide our community with free access to mental health resources through parentguidance.org the online platform led by licensed therapist, offers courses, professional support and a safe community for parents to learn how to support their children and address mental health concerns. There will be no school November 27-29 for the Thanksgiving Holiday. We wish everyone a Happy Thanksgiving. Our next board meeting will be Wednesday, December 11th. We will have a public hearing at that meeting on our budget priorities.

Mr. Taylor welcomed board member comments.

Ms. Greer shared that today is world kindness day. She hoped everyone was practicing kindness to each other and ourselves. She thanked everyone that spoke. She spoke about the Toy Gift Program and is grateful for that program. Ms. Greer shared she got to tour the Academy and it was really neat and she thinks they did a great job. She congratulated the student athletes and competitors. She also echoed the parent resource The Cook Center and encouraged everyone to use that.

Ms. Bickers shared her thoughts and feelings about the Toy Gift Program. She stated what you are doing for these children is unbelievable and the effort and time it takes. She thanked them. Ms. Bickers said she appreciated Ms. Brunelle's presentations. She spoke regarding Dr. Pursel's presentation on the cell phone policy. She said Mr. Wimmer did an excellent job getting the students that were interested and wanted to be on the school board. She said she was excited to work with Tyler and Olivia moving forward. Congratulations to all the students.

Ms. Alberts shared she is excited to have Olivia and Tyler as student representatives. She thanked all the people that were here and all the extra time they put in. She thanked the Toy Gift people. She congratulations to the Transportation Department for the high kudos from VDOE that was really great.

Ms. Roach stated she was excited to have Tyler and Olivia on board. She spoke about the cell phone policy and she is supportive. She spoke about the transportation department. Ms. Roach spoke about the Athletic Fields and would like more information on it. She said the holiday programs are amazing and would like to follow-up with you on the dates when help is needed. She thanked everyone for coming out.

Mr. Taylor thanked Tyler for being there and also to Olivia. We are excited.

Mr. Crenshaw expressed his gratitude to everyone on the board. He spoke about the Toy Gift program and he is looking forward to being a liaison for the student body and trying to voice their concerns as well as things that are happening in the broader sense.

Mr. Taylor spoke about the cell phone and stated he supports it. He stated he applauded Governor Younkin and his wife for stepping up to the plate on this and moving forward. He spoke about the athletic fields, funds and grants. He hoped everyone gets a good break and be grateful for everything we have. Happy Thanksgiving and have a good night.

Mr. Taylor requested a motion to adjourn.

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

Meeting ended at 9:09 pm.

Chair

Rhonda M. Houchens
Clerk