

# Jasper County Charter System Board Bullets

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Highlights of the Jasper County Charter System Board of Education Meeting held on Tuesday December 17, 2024, 6:00PM, at the Jasper County High School Auditorium

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Mr. Schilling called the meeting to order and welcomed all present.

- The agenda was approved with a modification to add enter and exit executive session.
- Opening ceremonies were held
- There were no public comments.
- The Mission and Vision Statements were read by Mr. Schilling
- The Jasper County High School Cross Country Teams were recognized by the Board for their region championships and their participation in the GHSA State Championship meet. Coach Ashley Clegg, along with assistant coaches Ryan Warnock and Karen Hays, presented the entire men's and women's team comprised of 39 runners total. Each member received a certificate and it was noted the individual accomplishments of those placing in the top ten at the regional championships. The members receiving recognition for this achievement are as follows:

**Girls Individual accolades:**

Colbie Ramsey: 3rd in Region  
Chloe Key: 6th in Region  
Kylie Robinson: 7th in Region  
Taryn McCart: 8th in Region  
Allison Gonzalez: 10th in Region

**Boys Individual accolades:**

Roswell Goolsby: 2nd in Region  
Andrew Smith: 4th in Region  
Aiden Bramlett: 5th in Region  
Carson Clark: 9th in Region  
Daniel Mendoza: 10th in Region

It was also noted the men's team placed 12<sup>th</sup> and the women's team placed 9<sup>th</sup> at the state meet.

- The Board recognized Dr. Tyson Harty along with students Haley Hubbard and Reese Byrd for their submission of "Our School, Our Story, Go Canes!"

To the Georgia School Board Association (GSBA) Student Video Contest. The video placed second for the state and was recognized at the GSBA winter conference awards ceremony on Friday, December 13<sup>th</sup>. The program also received \$500 from GSBA for their efforts. Board member Towonder Dennis, also a JCCS Alumni, was a cast member in the video.

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a3My2PI8UY0>

- The Board recognized the Jasper County High School Technology Student Association (TSA) for their 1<sup>st</sup> place effort in the Electrathon electric vehicle race on Jekyll Island as part of the TSA Fall Leadership Conference. Driver Isai Lugo completed 91 laps in 60 minutes in a field of 16 cars, built and driven by high school students across the state. His crew was headed by pit boss Ransel Hidalgo, and included Eli Tinney, Aliza Perkins, Francisco Lopez, and Brody Hilliard.
- Mr. Garland recognized retiring Board members Mr. Bill Schilling and Ms. Erin Lynch for their years of service to the Board of Education. Ms. Lynch served on the Board for 12 years with the majority of the time assuming the role of vice-chair. Mr. Schilling served on the Board for 8 years and served as chairman for 7 of 8 years. Each member was presented a plaque for their service to the Board of Education.
- There were no public comments
- Ms. Sheila Pounds, JCHS School Governance Team (SGT) Chairman, and JCHS Principal Jim Strength provided a detailed presentation to the Board. In their presentation, they highlighted a variety of academic and athletic accomplishments. Recommendations were made to purchase new curriculum/textbooks for students as many of the current resources are outdated. In terms of safety, a School Resource Officer was recommended by the team as well. A transition program for 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> graders is a goal of the team as well. Mr. Strength spoke of a variety of methods to achieve the goal.
- Ms. Rhonda Ballard, JCMS School Governance Team (SGT) Chairman, and JCMS Principal Dionka Jackson provided a detailed presentation to the Board. In their presentation, they highlighted a variety of academic and athletic accomplishments. Recommendations were made to purchase new math curriculum as English Language Arts received new curriculum this year.
- Rodney Smith, President of SmithBuilt Construction, provided the Board with final bids for the Jasper County Pre K classroom addition. The scope of work includes 2900 square feet of additional space consisting of two classrooms to be added in the back of the existing facility along with enclosing the corridor between Jasper County Pre K and Jasper County Primary School. The two classrooms will be devoted to serving students in the special education

program and provide additional space for indoor physical education activity. The corridor will provide access to the main hall of the Jasper County Primary School in a manner that will allow students to be protected from weather and significantly reduced exterior threats to students and staff. The total bid placed the projects price at \$896,853.

Mr Garland reminded the Board the local capital projects fund will cover the cost of the project. He reminded the Board this project was initiated due to the significant increase in student population with our students that qualify for services. Currently, services are provided in various office spaces and parts of existing classrooms. He noted with overall growth in the student population, the need for additional classroom space was essential across the system. The Board unanimously approved the project. The project is slated to be completed in the early summer of 2025 in order to serve students at the beginning of the 2025-2026 school year.

- Next, Mr. Smith presented final bids for the Washington Park Elementary School classroom addition along with additional parking and road to accommodate the potential of removing all traffic backup during the morning and afternoon drop-off and pick-up times from Highway 212. The project will provide approximately 18,000 square feet of classroom space while renovating 2,700 square feet of existing storage into additional space for administrative and clerical personnel while providing a new nursing station to serve the school. Also, with new construction, replacement of the current sewer lift system, a new data switch to provide technology for additional classrooms. Bids received for the total scope of work at the site totaled \$8,599,702.

Mr. Garland noted the project was possible through the recent Special Provisional Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) renewal of 20-23 million dollars. The project, slated to be ready for students at the beginning of the 2026-2027 school year, will allow the system to move the current 6<sup>th</sup> grade to Washington Park from Jasper County Middle School. The Board unanimously approved the bid.

Construction for both projects is slated to begin in January/February 2025.

- Tom Owens of Raymond James Financial Services provided the Board with a resolution for the sale of 20 million dollars in bonds to fund the Washington Park and Jasper County High School Projects. The Bonds will require a 15-year payment schedule, ten years at approximately 2.9 million per year with the last five years being significantly reduced to approximately 1.25 million per year. Mr. Garland noted current SPLOST revenues coupled with the surplus left from previous collections should allow the system to make the payments without placing stress on the financial condition of the system. He also stated the last five years are structured for the Board to consider at the time a one-time payment to end the debt. He based the projections on little financial growth with the economy but noted how the SPOST revenues have doubled during the last few years from the previous project. Also, he stated the remaining debt to the

previous project of the High School Athletic Complex has been consolidated into one payment with the new financing to provide a clear obligation for future considerations. Mr. Owens noted the bond offering was competitive due to the fiscal health of the school system. The true interest cost of the financing was 3.53%. The Board unanimously approved the resolution and agreement.

- The November 2024 Financial and Expenditure Report was presented.
- The Board approved the bid from Micro Technology Consultants (MTC) in the amount of \$1,504 to replace the phone system throughout the district.

Originally 18 bids were reviewed and narrowed to 4 for consideration based upon the request for proposal provided by the system.

Cara Bockholt, Technology Director, explained how replacement of the current phone system and moving to a Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP) model would initially eliminate approximately \$5,000 per month in cost and provide an uniform system of telecommunication platform. Currently, the system is being served by three providers. She also explained how recent phone outages coupled with poor response to repair time by the current vendor led to the decision in moving forward with consolidation of telecommunication platforms. She also noted the backup Internet services provided by Connexon is up and running therefore reducing connectivity issues due to lack of Internet.

- Mr. Garland provided an additional detailed overview of HB 581 “Save our Homes Act” and the potential impacts on the school system. From the November meeting, Mr. Garland stated HB 581 provides a statewide "floating" homestead exemption that will limit annual assessment increases on a homesteaded property to the rate of inflation. A rate of inflation based on the consumer price index shall be set annually by the Georgia Department of Revenue. Home assessment increases will be limited to this rate of inflation, with any excess being offset by the homestead exemption. This statewide exemption can be used in addition to other homestead exemptions that are not base year value exemptions. If another base year exemption exists locally, the exemption of greater benefit to the homeowner shall be provided. The base year assessed value for a home will be initially set at the 2024 value of a home and resets whenever a home is sold or receives a substantial property change.

He stated that he has communicated with the Jasper County Tax Commissioner and the Chief Appraiser to obtain information regarding current assessments in order to provide the Board real examples of how the decision could impact the school system and taxpayers in the county. He presented the total tax digest is made up of 10,493 total parcels of property within the county. 3,406 parcels are currently considered for homestead exemption (32.46% of Total Parcels). 297 parcels are considered commercial, business or other (2.83% of Total Parcels). Of the properties considered for homestead exemption, 1,316 parcels that are under

Homestead Exemption and valued under \$200,000. Even though approximately  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the total parcels are under exemptions, the value is approximately  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the total digest. The total digest last year was approximately \$865,000,000.

Mr. Garland then stated the current homestead exemptions for Jasper County residents were \$16,000 for senior citizens and \$8,000 for others. In the law, Mr. Garland explained homeowners under the current exemption could only receive the lowest possible scenario of the two and property owners not under the current homestead exemption would not receive the benefits of the new law.

Next, two examples were provided of a homestead valued at \$325,000 with an increase in appraisals value of 5% and 10% compared with applying the new calculations under the law using the consumer price index forecasted to be at 2.7% for the measure provided by a presentation at the Georgia School Board Association fiancé workshop held in November. He clarified the 2.7% index was merely a projection and was not a final index number.

In an increased appraisal value of 5% compared to the new formulas. The existing homestead exemptions is less than the new guidelines would provide. With the calculations, a senior citizen under homestead exemption would pay \$45.17 less annually on education property taxes while a regular homestead exemption would pay \$2.78 less annually property taxes when compared to the new exemption.

In an increased appraisal value of 10% compared to the new formulas. The existing homestead exemptions is less than the new guidelines would provide. With the calculations, a senior citizen under homestead exemption would pay \$40.95 less annually on education property taxes while a regular homestead exemption would pay \$83.35 less annually property taxes when compared to the new exemption.

He explained the calculations were to show how a higher appraisal value would be provided a larger savings to taxpayers under the new guidelines if approved if the mileage rate at its current value of 13.25 mils. Any rollback of the mileage rate would provide additional savings as well when comparing the two models for exemptions.

Next, the Superintendent explained how the property digest has more than double since 2019 in the county due to new homes and increased appraisal values of existing homes.

The concerns from many school districts deciding to “opt out” are that revenues may fall short of meeting the needs of local school districts. Also, the House Policy and Budget Office has confirmed local 5 mil shares from each district will be calculated from the appraised digest before exemptions are calculated. “Based upon the law, the system will have to find a way to make up between the actual digest value and the “new” exemption values. He stated in order to offset a

significant reduction in revenue with the new law, the options to maintain services at the current level would require increase mileage rates. Garland noted while actual mileage rates have decline from 17.99 in 2019 to 13.25 based upon the Board recognition of increased valuations of existing homes and new homes added to the digest. “We have attempted to achieve a balance with understanding the desire of lowering taxes while accommodating the needs of the system due to student population growth.” He noted there are currently 2770 student enrolled with the system PK-12 and the system is planning for 2850 students to be enrolled next year opening day. He noted this year’s budget planning was for 2775 students.

After the detailed presentation, he recommended the Board agree to go through the process of opting out of the new legislation in order to provide the new Board to hear concerns during the three required public input meetings. Also, this will allow the new Board to review educational legislation introduced in the general assembly during the upcoming term and how additional new laws could impact systems financially. Garland also mentioned consideration of how the potential impact of federal funding being currently discussed would impact the system.

The item will be placed on the January 7, 2025 meeting agenda for the Board to consider how to proceed.

- The 2024 College and Career Readiness Performance Index results were presented to the Board. Based upon 2024 Georgia Milestones results, Jasper County demonstrated gains in multiple areas as compared to 2023 results.

In the area of Content Mastery, whether students are achieving at the level necessary to be prepared for the next grade, college, or career. This component includes achievement scores in English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies on Georgia Milestones. Jasper County Primary School increased 16.4 points from 2023 (49.6 to 66), Washington Park Elementary School increased 6.4 points (53.7 to 60.1), and Jasper County Middle School increased 2.8 points (50.8 to 53.6). Jasper County High School declined as compared to 2023 results by 2.7 points from 61.5 to 58.8.

In the area of readiness, whether students are participating in activities preparing them for and demonstrating readiness for the next level, college, or career. The indicators for elementary and middle schools include at or above grade-level reading, student attendance, and beyond the core. High school indicators include at or above grade-level reading, student attendance, accelerated enrollment, pathway completion, and college and career readiness. Jasper County Primary School and Washington Park Elementary School were above the state average of 83.2 attaining a score of 84.3 and 84.1 respectively. Jasper County Middle School increased from

79 to 79.4 when comparing 2023 results while Jasper County High School increased 1.6 points from 69.9 to 71.5.

In the area of Closing Gaps, the expectation that all students and all student subgroups make improvements in achievement rates, Jasper County Primary School and Jasper County Middle School were at or above the state averages in the category. Jasper County Primary School attained a perfect score of 100 equaled to that the state score. Jasper County Middle School was 9.2 points above the state average (77.5 to 68.3).

Finally, in the area of Progress, how much growth students demonstrate in English language arts and mathematics and how well English learners are progressing towards English language proficiency. All schools showed a decline as compared to the previous school year. Washington Park went from 83.8 to 83.1, Jasper County Middle went from 87.4 to 80.7, and Jasper County High went from 93.5 to 82.8. Jasper County Primary School did not receive a score.

Mr. Garland proudly noted to the Board and audience that no schools in the system were placed on the Georgia Promise Scholarship School List as defined by the recent Senate Bill 233 Legislation passed by the General Assembly. He explained to make the list, a school would be performing in the bottom 25% of all schools in the state for elementary, middle, and high school comparisons. He also gave recognition to the faculty and staff across the system for their efforts to ensure the students of our system receive a high quality education. “Based on these results, you see achievement, you see increases, you see we are outpacing others when it comes to our mission to educate. The dedication and commitment to providing for students and continued improvement efforts are noted, welcomed and appreciated.”

- The board approved the minutes from the Monthly Business Meeting held on November 12, 2024 and Called Meeting held on December 2, 2024.
- The Board approved the following overnight field trips:
  - Jasper County Middle School FFA Discovery Conference, Covington Georgia, January 24, 2025-January 25, 2025.
  - Jasper County High School FFA Livestock Showcase, Perry Georgia, December 13, 2024-December 14, 2024.
- The Board approved old JCCS band uniforms to be placed as surplus items.
- The Board voted to Enter Executive Session
- The Board voted to Exit Executive Session

- The Board approved the following personnel actions based upon the recommendation by the Superintendent:

### **New Hire**

- a. Patricia Armour, substitute teacher, (effective 1/6/2025).
- b. Marcia Jones, substitute teacher, (effective 1/6/2025).
- c. Jade Massey, substitute teacher/nurse, (effective 1/6/2025).
- d. Brittney Cook, Food Assistant, Jasper County High, (effective 12/9/2024).
- e. Peyton Proctor, Part-Time Attendance, Central Services (effective 1/6/2025).
- f. Toshia Wingo, PEC Teacher, Jasper County High, pending release from her contract

### **Resignation**

- a. Kayla Moses, Paraprofessional, Jasper County Primary (Effective 12/20/2024).
- b. Angela Gordon, Director, Jasper County Virtual Academy, (Effective 6/11/2025).

### **Retirement**

- a. Rebecca Guyton, Teacher, Jasper County Virtual Academy, (Effective 12/1/2024).
- b. Pam Edge, Principal, Jasper County Primary, (Effective 6/1/2025).

### **Transfer**

- a. Anthony Barbera, PEC Teacher, Jasper County High, Transfer to PEC Teacher Jasper County Middle (Effective 1/6/2025).
- b. Megan Henderson, Paraprofessional, Jasper County Primary, Transfer to Central Services Communications (Effective 1/6/2025).

- The Board approved the Superintendents Evaluation for 2024.

OLD BUSINESS: NONE

NEW BUSINESS: NONE

- The Board voted to adjourn at 9:22 PM

Next Meeting Dates:

Whole Board Training, January 7, 2025 @ 2:00 PM

Monthly Business Meeting, January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2025 @ 6:00 PM