

MINUTES  
ASHE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION  
November 7, 2016

The meeting was held as scheduled with all members present. Chairman King called the meeting to order, welcomed those in attendance and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Following a request to move agenda items 4.07, 4.08 and 4.09 to follow closed session, a motion by Vice Chairman Jones and a second by Dr. Beckworth gave unanimous approval to the agenda.

Prior to hearing public comments, the Chairman shared the procedures governing open comments: (1) anyone wishing to speak must sign in; (2) each speaker is limited to a two-minute timeframe; and (3) should any comment require a response, the Board would issue that response at the next regular meeting of the Board. Public comments were then heard. Rev. Sonny Thomas spoke on equal treatment for evangelical Christian students in public schools, stating that he had contacted the National Center for Life and Liberty (NCLL) to voice his concerns. He shared a copy of the correspondence from NCLL with the Board that addressed his three particular areas of concern: (1) the fact that teachers and school administrators are actively promoting the LGBT agenda to all students in classrooms through prominent advertising and promotion of a GSA Club and other LGBT agenda items; (2) the fact that school administrators have denied similar equal access and respect for a student Bible Club; and (3) the fact that school administrators have invited the United Church of Christ, which historically promotes the LGBT agenda, to address school district teachers while issuing no similar invitation to local evangelical Christian leaders. Rev. Thomas stated that the correspondence addresses the legal obligation of the school district to provide legal access to all students under the Equal Access Act and requested that the Board and school administration adhere to the law. Following the comments from Rev. Thomas, Gary Roark, Mark Mallet and John Wheeler spoke in support of Rev. Thomas and his concerns. The Chairman stated that the Board would take their concerns under consideration.

A motion by Vice Chairman Jones and a second by Dr. Beckworth gave unanimous approval to the minutes for the regular meeting of the Board on October 3, 2016.

A motion by Dr. Beckworth and a second by Mrs. Jones gave unanimous approval from Rebecca Ungerer, who is in the process of relocating to Ashe County to allow her daughter to attend school in Watauga County effective immediately following her actual relocation.

A motion by Mrs. Jones and a second by Mr. Williams gave unanimous approval to the request from ACMS Bulldog Choir for an overnight trip to attend the Music in the Parks Festival in Dollywood, Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, May 5-7, 2017. This trip is in conjunction with the request approved at the October meeting from the Ashe County Husky Choir to attend this same event.

A motion by Mr. Williams and a second by Vice Chairman Jones gave unanimous approval to the request from Rho Kappa and its sponsors for an overnight trip to travel to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania and Harper's Ferry, West Virginia, March 28-April 1, 2017. A total of 47 students plan to attend.

A motion by Dr. Beckworth and a second by Mrs. Jones gave unanimous approval to the request from ASU Gear Up for an overnight trip for 13 selected middle school students to attend a retreat at the Blowing Rock Conference Center and Appalachian State University, November 18-20, 2016. Students will be selected by survey.

A motion by Vice Chairman Jones and a second by Mr. Williams gave unanimous approval to the following personnel recommendations.

## **CERTIFIED**

### **Substitute Teachers**

- Addition of Sandra Roten to the approved substitute list

### **Employee Leave**

- Request from Katina Wilcox, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher at Blue Ridge, for family medical leave beginning on December 15, 2016 and ending on February 2, 2017 (FMLA eligible = 12 weeks)

### **Prior approval to employ the following vacant positions**

- Substitute teachers
- Literacy Express project overseer (summer months)
- Literacy Express project overseer assistant (2016-2017)

## **CLASSIFIED**

### **Bus Drivers**

- Resignation/retirement of James Junior Pennington, bus driver at Ashe High, effective January 1, 2017
- Resignation of Brodrick Shepherd, temporary bus driver at Ashe High, effective end of day October 12, 2016
- Resignation of Mark Harless, bus driver at Westwood Elementary, effective end of day October 28, 2016
- Increase in hours for Teresa Mann from part-time bus driver at Ashe High to full-time bus driver at Ashe High effective September 23, 2016
- Reassignment of Erin Greer from substitute bus driver to part-time regular route bus driver at Blue Ridge effective October 17, 2016
- Reassignment of Miranda Brown from substitute bus driver to part-time regular route bus driver at Westwood effective October 24, 2016
- Reassignment of Linda Tucker from substitute cafeteria assistant to part-time regular route bus driver at Ashe High effective October 24, 2016
- Reassignment of Susan Carter from substitute bus driver to part-time regular, morning route only, bus driver at Westwood effective November 3, 2016

### **Bus Driver Substitutes**

- Addition of Susan Carter, Erin Greer, Linda Tucker and Brodrick Shepherd to the approved substitute bus driver list

### **Cafeteria Assistants**

- Reassignment of Mehida Ruth Roark from substitute cafeteria assistant to part-time cafeteria assistant at Ashe High effective October 24, 2016
- Reassignment of Ruby Ham from substitute cafeteria assistant to part-time cafeteria assistant at Westwood effective October 24, 2016

### **Cafeteria Assistant Substitutes**

- Addition of Linda Powers, Carl Witherspoon, Linda Gail Sheets, Angela Ballou and Meng Richardson to the approved substitute cafeteria assistant list

### **Coaches**

- Addition of Kevin Howell as head 7<sup>th</sup> grade boys basketball coach at Ashe Middle to the approved coaches list (filling TBD on August coaches list, paid)
- Addition of Harry Glen Sullivan as head 7<sup>th</sup> grade girls basketball coach Ashe Middle to the approved coaches list (filling TBD on August coaches list, paid)
- Addition of Mike Jones as assistant girls basketball coach at Ashe Middle to the approved coaches list (filling TBD on August coaches list, paid)
- Addition of Bodi Miller as assistant wrestling coach at Ashe High to the approved coaches list (volunteer)

### **Teacher Assistant**

- Resignation of Laura (Cindi) Jones Blackburn, teacher assistant/facilitator for on-line classes at Ashe High, effective October 21, 2016
- Reassignment of Donald Conrad from substitute teacher to teacher assistant/facilitator for on-line classes at Ashe High effective November 8, 2016 through the end of the current school year
- Reassignment of Ruth Blair from substitute teacher to interim teacher assistant at Westwood effective October 17, 2016 (to fill leave of absence for Kim Goodman; undetermined end date at this time)

### **Tutor**

- Reassignment of Laura McMillan from substitute teacher to part-time ESL tutor (16 hours per week) at Mountain View effective October 3, 2016

### **Employee Leaves**

- Request from Bill Howell, custodian at Mountain View, for a medical leave of absence beginning October 12, 2016 through November 4, 2016 (FMLA eligible = 12 weeks)
- Request from Kim Goodman, teacher assistant at Westwood, for a medical leave of absence beginning October 12, 2016 with ending date to be determined (FMLA eligible = 12 weeks)

### **Prior approval to employ the following vacant positions**

- Bus drivers at Ashe County Middle
- Substitute bus drivers
- Substitute cafeteria assistants

The Director of Human Resources Lesia Goodman, who wrote the grant entitled *The Journey to Literacy on the Literacy Express* that was awarded by the Federal Government Department of Education in September, gave an update on its current status. Mrs. Goodman and a team is in the process of designing the floor plan and putting out to bid a mobile unit conducive to providing children access to books, literacy activities and technology. She has also met with the school media and technology specialists to help select the appropriate books and devices to equip the mobile reading lab. The grant award of \$700,000 will pay for the unit, books, technology and staff and is renewable at the end of the five-year grant cycle. The mobile unit will be utilized throughout the county during the summer as a mobile reading lab and during the school year as a reading intervention classroom and lab.

Executive Director of Communities in Schools of Wilkes County Glendora Yarbrough and Student Services Coordinator Jamie Little presented information on the history of Communities in Schools (CIS) to the Board. CIS, a national organization, is about building relationships with students and offers dropout prevention programs and data driven targeted intervention services such as tutoring and mentoring. Ashe

County had previously pursued a Communities in Schools affiliation about five years ago, but the cost was a deterrent at the time because each county had to start its own affiliation. Ashe County now, however, has the opportunity to bring the program to students at no cost to the school system under the umbrella of the Wilkes County affiliate—grants, fundraisers and donors would fund the program. Mrs. Yarbrough explained the need for support and approval from both the Board of Education and the Superintendent in order to move forward. A Task Force comprised of community partners and business owners would meet on November 15 at 6:00 pm to explore the feasibility of such a program should the Board approve this endeavor. The Board unanimously agreed to allow Mrs. Little and Mrs. Yarbrough to pursue the partnership.

Transportation Director Shea Coldiron gave a presentation on the current status of the school system's fleet of activity buses and presented quotes on varying models from Carolina Thomas should the Board want to purchase a new activity bus in the future.

Board member assignments were made for American Education Week November 13-19. The Chairman and Mrs. Jones will attend the staff receptions at Blue Ridge and Ashe Middle on Tuesday, November 15; Vice Chairman Jones and Mr. Williams will attend the reception at Mountain View on Wednesday, November 16; and Dr. Beckworth will attend the receptions for Westwood and Ashe High on Thursday, November 17.

The Superintendent informed the Board of a recent gift to the County of Ashe. Foundation Forward, a non-profit based in Morganton, gifts Charters of Freedom monuments to communities across the country. The Ashe County Courthouse has been selected as the site upon which the monument containing copies of the founding documents as they are displayed at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. will be placed. This will allow access to the Declaration of Independence, U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights to students who, due to logistical or financial concerns, may not have the chance to visit the originals.

The following informational items were shared with the Board.

- Wednesday, November 9—Veterans' Day Program—Westwood @ 10:00 am in the auditorium
- Wednesday, November 9—Veterans' Day Program—Blue Ridge @ 1:30 pm in the gymnasium
- Thursday, November 10—Veterans' Day Program—Mountain View @ 8:15 am in the gymnasium
- Thursday, November 10—Veterans' Day Program—Ashe County High @ 9:15 am in the gymnasium
- Thursday, November 10—Veterans' Day Program—Ashe County Middle @ 1:45 pm in the gymnasium
- Friday, November 11—Veterans' Day—holiday
- American Education Week—November 13-19, 2016
- November 24-25—Thanksgiving holidays—*early release on November 23*
- The next regular meeting of the Board is scheduled for Monday, December 5, 2016, 7:00 pm, at the Central Office annex. This will be an organizational meeting.
- EOC testing—last five days in the semester

A motion at 8:19 pm by Vice Chairman Jones and Mr. Williams gave unanimous approval to taking a short recess prior to going into closed session for the purpose of considering a personnel action that involves an officer or employee of this Board [N.C. General Statute §143.318.11(a)(6)] and real estate [N.C. General Statute §143.318.11(a)(5)]. Closed session began at 8:29 pm.

The Board returned to regular session at 10:32 pm.

A motion by Dr. Beckworth and a second by Mrs. Jones gave unanimous approval to the proposed Merit Pay Bonus Allocation Plan for Non-Educators as presented by Director Lesia Goodman. State Law 2016-94 Section 36.A1 calls for each LEA to approve a local plan to determine the distribution of State funds to state-funded personnel only for the one-time merit pay bonus for non-educators. Each school system must submit its approved plan to the State Board of Education. A copy of the plan is on file in the Office of the Superintendent. This motion also approved payment from Federal, Local or Child Nutrition funds to those employees whose salaries are not state funded.

A motion by Mrs. Jones and a second by Vice Chairman Jones gave unanimous approval to awarding the contract for the land and topographical survey of the Dollar property to low bidder Thomas Herman Company, PLLC, of Ashe County for \$9,350. Four firms were contacted and the following firms submitted a proposal—Appalachian Professional Land Surveyors and Consultants, Watauga County, for \$28,880; Randy Rhodes, Ashe County, for \$15,000; and Thomas Herman Company, Ashe County, for \$9,350. Bill Barr Surveying, Ashe County, declined the request to submit a proposal.

Proposals for architectural services for the design and construction of the middle school closed at 5:00 pm on this date. The Board received two bids—Greene Architecture from Watauga County and OWPR Architects and Engineers, whose home office is based in West Virginia. A motion by Vice Chairman Jones and a second by Mr. Williams gave unanimous approval to awarding the contract to low bidder Greene Architecture at the rate of 5.5 percent of the construction cost. OWPR offered a fee percentage range of 6-8 percent based upon the final building construction cost.

The Highway 221 construction project necessitates the Fleetwood Fire Department vacate its current location. The fire department contacted the Board of Education about relocating the department to the old Fleetwood school site and asked if the Board would be willing to sell the property. A motion by Mr. Williams and a second by Vice Chairman Jones gave unanimous approval to giving an option to the Fleetwood Volunteer Fire Department to purchase the site for \$150,000. This option, however, is contingent upon the willingness of the Greater Fleetwood Preservation Organization to terminate its existing lease with the Ashe County Board of Education. The Board plans to meet with the Greater Fleetwood Organization.

There being no further business, the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 10:38 pm.