

MINUTES
ASHE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
February 3, 2020

Prior to the regular meeting, a reception honoring employee and student recognitions was held in the Commons area of Ashe County High School. Music was provided by the Ashe County High Jazz Ensemble. The order of the agenda was changed to accommodate the large number in attendance—the *Awards and Recognitions* were held in the auditorium beginning at 6:30 pm. All members were present except Mr. McClure who was out of town.

Each February, the Board recognizes the achievements of its employees and students. Human Resource Director Roy Putman, along with other administrators, recognized the following 2019/20 recipients and presented each with a certificate or plaque on behalf of the Board of Education. Comments on the importance of each accomplishment were made.

- Recognition of Ashe High Wrestler Timothy P. for Outstanding Character Award—Coach Adam Elliott
- Recognition of Ashe High students selected for the 2020 ETSU Honor Band—Joey V., trombone; Miguel G., tuba; Emma L., clarinet; Marissa L., flute; Tristan M., flute; Daniel R., trumpet; Macie R., percussion; and Hudson M., trombone—Paula Carlton
- Recognition of Ashe High students selected for the NC Northwest All-District Band—Miguel G., tuba 9-12 Concert Band; Tristan M., flute 9-12 Concert Band; Gabriel F., trumpet 9-10 Symphonic Band; and Kaylee M., flute 9-12 Symphonic Band—Paula Carlton
- Recognition of Miguel G. for composition of an original piece titled *A Christmas Epic* performed by the Husky Vanguard Marching Band at the Holiday Concert—Paula Carlton
- Recognition of winners of the Young Authors Writing Contest sponsored by the Price Reading Council and the North Carolina Reading Association—Madison D., Mountain View; Aubrey C., Blue Ridge; Etta B., Blue Ridge; Skylar J., Blue Ridge; Linken L., Westwood; Sawyer E., Blue Ridge; Jude L., Blue Ridge; Samuel H., Blue Ridge; Isabella H., Mountain View; and William P., Mountain View—Dr. Ellen Pesko and AIG Teacher Julie Little
- Recognition of the Blue Ridge Chess Club as the mid-year winner in the Ashe County Chess Club Tournament—Noah J., Sandra M., River L., Nathan K., John Mitchell A., Caleb J., BJ C. and Jacob D.—Alice Arledge
- Recognition of the Ashe County Drug Free 6th grade poster winners—Laken W., Blue Ridge; Michelle T., Mountain View; and Josephine R., Westwood—Alice Arledge
- Recognition of Ashe County's 2019/20 Oddie Cox Teacher of the Year Award and nominees—Amber Dillingham, Ashe High; Summer Davis, Ashe Middle; Charles Johnson, Blue Ridge; Cynthia Harless, Mountain View; and Callie Lewis, Westwood and Ashe County's Teacher of the Year
- Recognition of Ashe County's 2019/20 Classified Employee of the Year and nominees—Tim Walton, Ashe High; Beth Hodges, Ashe Early College; Christine Richardson, Ashe Middle; Crystal Crouse, Mountain View; David Higgins, Westwood; Carrie Blevins, Early Learning Center; and Robin Scott, Blue Ridge and Ashe County's Classified Employee of the Year
- Recognition of Ashe County's 2019/20 Support/Supervisory Employee of the Year and nominees—Julie Jones, Ashe Early College; Alisa Taylor, Blue Ridge; Lindsey Williams, Mountain View; Amanda Bloomer, Westwood; and Christina Pennington, Ashe High and Ashe County's Support/Supervisory Employee of the Year
- Recognition of Jordan Nemeth, Mountain View, as Rookie Teacher of the Year

- Recognition of Ashe County's 2019/20 Teacher of Excellence for Exceptional Children—Cindy Wells, Blue Ridge
- Recognition of Ashe County's 2019/20 National Board recipient—Kelly Lambert, Mountain View
- Recognition of Ashe County's 2019 North Carolina Council of Teachers of Mathematics Outstanding Elementary Math Teacher—Laura Absher, Westwood
- Recognition of Excellence in Financial Reporting from the National Government Finance Officers Association for the 2018 fiscal year—Amanda Coldiron, Finance Officer; Geneva Spencer, Accounts Payable and Purchasing; Sandy Rhodes, Payroll; and Laken Lyall, Accounting Specialist

Following the Awards and Recognitions, the meeting then transitioned to the media center. Chairman Jones called the meeting to order at 7:23 pm, welcomed those in attendance and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Following the addition of an addendum to personnel, the agenda for the meeting was approved by consensus of the Board.

During open comments, Becky Price expressed that special considerations be made for absences due to snow and ice for students living in the northern part of the county. She also had concerns about the lack of adequate heat on the bus. Cindy Price expressed concerns about the flu epidemic at Blue Ridge. Rose Price expressed concern about her son having test items that have never been taught before, drugs on the bus and at the high school and some students having to take blankets on the bus to keep warm. The Chairman stated that these items would be addressed at the March meeting.

Vice Chairman Beckworth read the response to the public comments made at the January meeting. Mrs. Eldreth questioned why she had not been provided a copy of the response prior to the meeting—she made a motion that Board members be given a copy beforehand, but the motion died for lack of a second. The Chairman stated that in the future all members would receive a copy prior to the meeting.

A motion by Mrs. Jones and a second by the Vice Chairman gave unanimous approval to the Board meeting minutes for the regular meeting on January 13, 2020.

A motion by the Vice Chairman and a second by Mrs. Eldreth gave unanimous approval to the request from Robert and Lindsey Smith, who reside in Ashe County, to allow their son to attend school in Watauga effective the 2020/21 school year.

A motion by Mrs. Eldreth and a second by Mrs. Jones gave unanimous approval to the request from Michelle Oakes, who resides in Ashe County, to allow her daughter to attend school in Watauga County effective the 2020/21 school year.

A motion by Mrs. Jones and a second by the Vice Chairman gave unanimous approval to the request from Kevin and Staci Hining, who reside in Ashe County, to allow their daughter to attend school in Watauga County effective the 2020/21 school year.

A motion by Mrs. Eldreth and a second by the Vice Chairman gave unanimous approval to the request from Ashe High's National Art Honor Society for an overnight trip to participate in the state-wide full-day retreat coordinated by the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh, March 13-14, 2020.

A motion by the Vice Chairman and a second by Mrs. Jones gave unanimous approval to the revisions to Policy 7335/10335 *Employee Use of Social Media* as presented at the January meeting.

A motion by the Vice Chairman and a second by Mrs. Jones gave unanimous approval to the following personnel recommendations as presented by Human Resources Director Roy Putman.

CERTIFIED

Substitute Teachers

- Addition of Jamison Cline, Ann Corley, Ginger Hopson, Lynda Mahaffey and Joseph Taylor to the approved substitute list (prior approval)

Prior approval to employ the following vacant positions

- Substitute teachers

CLASSIFIED

Bus Driver

- Transfer of Gary Hamby from part-time regular route bus driver at Westwood to full-time regular route bus driver at Ashe Middle effective February 3, 2020

Cafeteria Assistant Substitutes

- Addition of Erin Greer to the approved substitute cafeteria assistant list

Coaches

- Resignation of Sarah Houck as assistant softball coach at Ashe High effective January 23, 2020
- Addition of Kristi Powers as assistant softball coach at Ashe High effective for the 2019/20 spring sports season (paid)
- Addition of Michael Elliott as assistant softball coach at Ashe High effective for the 2019/20 spring sports season (paid)
- Addition of Jock Gilley as assistant baseball coach at Ashe Middle effective for the 2019/20 spring sports season (paid - ½ position)
- Addition of Chris Pennington as assistant baseball coach at Ashe Middle effective for the 2019/20 spring sports season (paid - ½ position)
- Addition of Josh Overcash as assistant softball coach at Ashe Middle effective for the 2019/20 spring sports season (paid)
- Addition of David Osborne as head softball coach at Ashe Middle effective for the 2019/20 spring sports season (paid)
- Reassignment of Johnna Church from assistant track coach to head track coach for girls at Ashe Middle effective 2019/20 spring sports season (paid)
- Addition of Tanner Kilby as assistant track coach at Ashe Middle effective for the 2019/20 spring sports season (paid - ½ position)
- Addition of Dawn Richardson as assistant track coach at Ashe Middle effective for the 2019/20 spring sports season (paid - ½ position)
- Addition of Aaron Cronk as assistant track coach at Ashe High effective for the 2019/20 spring sports season contingent upon screenings (volunteer)
- Addition of Mitchell Reedy as assistant track coach at Ashe High effective the 2019/20 spring sports season (paid)

- Addition of Kasee Roberts as assistant track coach at Ashe High effective for the 2019/20 spring sports season (paid)

Prior approval to employ the following vacant positions

- Substitute bus drivers
- Substitute cafeteria assistants

Mike Wike from Anderson Smith & Wike presented the Financial Audit for Ashe County Schools for the year ended June 30, 2019. Professional standards require that the audit firm provide the Board with information about the audit firm's responsibilities under generally accepted auditing standards and *Government Auditing Standards* and OMB Circular A-133. The auditors issued an unmodified, or clean, report on all financial statements, which is the highest level of approval. All four compliance letters received an unmodified rating as well. Title 1 was the major Federal program audited as well as the State Public School Fund program. Mr. Wike also commented that the school system's fund balance is better than many of the school systems across the State. The rise in the costs each year for employee benefits is becoming detrimental to local budgets.

Maintenance Director Jerry Baker reiterated shared quotes from Blue Ridge Electric and Skyline for a proposed project that would reroute existing power and phone supply lines by removing one existing power pole, relocating another pole and burying approximately 580 feet of power wire and cable. The proposed project would allow for the currently constructed practice field to be widened and eventually lengthened without any overhead wires creating an obstruction to a future planned regulation size field. Also, seating options were shared. Option 1 would allow for concrete steps and seating for approximately 102 people. Option 2 would allow for concrete steps and foundation pad with aluminum bleachers seating approximately 153 people. Vice Chairman Beckworth initiated discussion on rerouting the power lines at the baseball and softball fields. In fairness, he felt that if power lines were being removed at the practice field, then the same should be done between the baseball and softball fields. Mrs. Eldreth stated she did not see the need for combining both projects. A motion by Mrs. Eldreth and a second by Mrs. Jones gave a 3-1 approval to rerouting the existing power and phone supply lines for the new practice field and adding concrete steps and foundation pad for aluminum seating. The Vice Chairman voted against the motion.

Additionally, Mr. Baker provided an update on facility issues at the current middle school. The two areas addressed were the school's roof condition and the newly discovered termites. Leaks are occurring due to the silicone base. The termite damage is only cosmetic—there is currently no structural damage. Mr. Baker stated he would be gathering quotes for roof repairs and had received two quotes for potential termite treatment plans. Mr. Baker also stated that he had made County Manager Adam Stumb aware of the issues.

Director of Student Services Jamie Little updated the Board on recent budget concerns and cuts within the Communities in Schools (CIS) of Northwest North Carolina. As a result of those budget cuts, Fawn Roark, Site Coordinator at Ashe County Middle School, was notified on January 16, 2020 that her position would be terminated on January 31, 2020. Mrs. Little asked the Board for permission to reallocate Title IV, Student Support and Academic Enrichment Funds, to employ Ms. Roark for the remainder of the 2019/20 school year. Mrs. Little cited that more than 30 middle school students are currently on Ms. Roark's case load receiving services and support and that it would be a detriment to those students to have this support removed from them at this

point in the school year. Mrs. Little also explained that due to our district receiving the US Department of Education Rural Mental Health Grant, the savings in Title IV funds could be used to employ Ms. Roark for the remainder of the year. A motion by Mrs. Eldreth and a second by the Vice Chairman gave unanimous approval to the reallocation of Title IV funds for this purpose.

The Superintendent and Mrs. Little also informed the Board that CIS is interested in providing afterschool child care effective the 2020/21 school year—concerns regarding this change were expressed by the Superintendent. The Board will be kept aware of the situation.

The Superintendent reported that only five days have been missed thus far for inclement weather.

The Chairman led discussion on the Superintendent search. He shared a copy of a tentative timeline, a synopsis of the position and application procedures, a job description and a sample of a superintendent search staff survey. The application process closes at 5:00 pm on Friday, March 13, 2020. Mrs. Eldreth made the motion that the Board employ a certified superintendent (holds an Ed.S)—motion failed for lack of a second. Vice Chairman Beckworth suggested that the Board meet separately with the principals and the directors prior to the March Board meeting (5:00 and 5:30) to gather input on what traits they would like to see in a superintendent.

The following items of information were shared.

- February 2020—CTE Month
- National School Counseling Week—February 3-7, 2020
- School Bus Driver Appreciation Week—February 10-14, 2020
- The next regular meeting of the Board is scheduled for Monday, March 2, 2020, 6:00 pm, at the Central Support annex.
- Wednesday, March 11—Battle of the Books (BOB)—Grades 6-8, 9:00 am, Ashe High auditorium
- Wednesday, March 11—Battle of the Books (EBOB)—Grades 4-5, immediately following BOB
- DIAL Kindergarten Screenings
- PreK—March 16-19 (M-Th)
- Mountain View—March 24-26 (T-Th)
- Blue Ridge—March 30-April 1 (M-W)
- Westwood—April 6-8 (M-W)
- Monday, April 6, 2020—Board meeting will be held at Ashe County Arts Council beginning at 6:00 pm.

At 9:01 pm, the Board took 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)]. The Board went into closed session at 9:07 pm, approved the closed session minutes, and returned to regular session at 9:09 pm. No other action was taken.

There being no further business, the Chairman immediately declared the meeting adjourned following a motion by the Vice Chairman.