

MINUTES
ASHE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
June 1, 2020

Prior to the regular meeting, the Board met electronically in closed session beginning at 5:30 pm 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 left closed session at 5:50 pm. No action was taken other than approval of the minutes for closed sessions on April 14, 28, 20 and 30 and May 4, 6, 13 and 17, 2020.

The regular meeting was held at 6:00 pm as scheduled with all members present. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting was held electronically and was open to the public. Chairman Jones called the meeting to order—the pledge of allegiance was led by Senior Class President Julia B., who was recently awarded the Morehead Scholarship.

After adding an addendum to personnel, a motion by Vice Chairman Beckworth and a second by Mrs. Eldreth gave unanimous approval to the agenda.

The Board recognized Barbara Heufel, 3rd grade teacher at Mountain View, for receiving the prestigious 2020/21 NC State University Kenan Fellowship sponsored by NC Farm Bureau.

The Board recognized the following as presented by the Human Resources Department for the 2020/21 school year—Teacher of the Year Danny Eldreth, Supervisory Support Employee of the Year Lynette Stallings, Beginning Teacher of the Year Dalton Lewis and Classified Employee of the Year Elaine May.

A motion by Mrs. Eldreth and a second by Mrs. Jones gave unanimous approval to the Board meeting minutes for the regular meeting on May 4, 2020.

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

Vice Chairman Beckworth stated that all members of the Board had taken the superintendent selection process very seriously. He thanked Chairman Jones and fellow Board members for their time and commitment to finding the best candidate to lead the school system. Appreciation was also extended to directors, principals and other employees for their input. Vice Chairman Beckworth said that it was made clear to the new superintendent to take time to become familiar with the school system. A motion by the Vice Chairman and a second by Mr. McClure gave unanimous approval to appointing Dr. Eisa Cox as Superintendent of Ashe County Schools effective July 1, 2020. Employment is subject to a contractual agreement. Comments were then heard from Dr. Cox, who is currently the Executive Director of Programs at Rowan-Salisbury Schools. She shared her educational background and stated that she is looking forward to coming to Ashe County.

A motion by Mrs. Eldreth and a second by Vice Chairman Beckworth gave unanimous approval to the meal prices for the 2020/21 school year as presented by Child Nutrition Director Martha Turner. There was no increase in prices for the upcoming year.

A motion by Mr. McClure and a second by Mrs. Jones gave unanimous approval to the 2020/21-2021/22 Local Plan for Career and Technical Education as presented by CTE Director Earl Pennington. Mr. Pennington gave an in-depth overview of the programming changes in the Carl Perkins Act.

A motion by Vice Chairman Beckworth and a second by Mrs. Eldreth gave unanimous approval to the school acceptance form for a foreign exchange student.

A motion by Mrs. Jones and a second by Mr. McClure gave unanimous approval to an agreement to participate in the NC School Boards Trust Errors and Omissions/General Liability Fund for Fiscal Year 2020/21.

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

CERTIFIED

Coordinators

- Resignation/retirement of Steve Scott, career development coordinator at Ashe High, effective September 1, 2020
- Resignation/retirement of Sarah Blevins, testing coordinator at Ashe High/CSS, effective July 1, 2020

Teachers

- Resignation/retirement of Dianne Brown, elementary teacher at Westwood, effective July 1, 2020
- Resignation/retirement of Diane Bouchelle, Pre-kindergarten teacher at Ashe Early Learning, effective August 1, 2020
- Resignation of Morgan Vasquez as Spanish teacher at Ashe High effective June 5, 2020
- Transfer of Jessica Miller from interim teacher for exceptional children at Westwood to full-time teacher for exceptional children at Blue Ridge effective at the beginning of the 2020/21 school year
- Employment of Dana Henson as teacher at Ashe Middle effective the beginning of the 2020/21 school year
- Employment of Jacob Montgomery as science teacher at Ashe High effective the beginning of the 2020/21 school year—contingent upon employment screenings
- Employment of Charlene Horton as 6th grade teacher at Blue Ridge effective at the beginning of the 2020/21 school year (prior approval)
- Employment of Hanna Mahaffey as school counselor at Ashe Early College effective at the beginning of the 2020/21 school year—contingent upon employment screenings (prior approval)
- Employment of Olivia Woody as teacher at Mountain View effective at the beginning of the 2020/21 school year—contingent upon employment screenings (prior approval)

Employee Leaves

- Request from Katie Absher, elementary teacher at Blue Ridge, for a parental leave-of-absence effective the beginning of the 2020/21 school year and ending on or about October 16, 2020
- Request from Amanda Halsey, pre-school teacher at Ashe Early Learning Center, for a family medical leave-of-absence beginning on October 28, 2020 and ending on January 4, 2021

Prior approval to employ the following vacant positions

- Certified staff to begin 2020/21 school year
- Substitute teachers

CLASSIFIED

Bus Drivers

- Resignation of Gale Elliott, bus driver (part-time, regular route) at Westwood, effective May 29, 2020
- Resignation of Tyler Dillard, bus driver (part-time, regular route), at Blue Ridge, effective May 19, 2020

Child Nutrition Assistants

- Resignation of Jill Phipps, child nutrition assistant at Mountain View, effective end-of-day April 17, 2020

Custodians

- Employment of Charles Rick Ballou as custodian (12-month) at Mountain View effective July 1, 2020
- Transfer/promotion of James McNeill, Jr. from bus driver (part-time, regular route) at Mountain View to full-time custodian (12-month) at Mountain View effective July 1, 2020
- Increase in term of employment of Billy Ham from 10-month custodian at Ashe High to 11-month custodian (40 hour/week) at Ashe High effective June 1, 2020

Prior approval to employ the following vacant positions

- Classified staff to begin 2020/21 school year
- Substitute bus drivers
- Substitute cafeteria assistants

Dr. Kurt Michael and Whitney Van Sant gave an update on the Assessment, Support and Counseling (ASC) services for grades 7-12 for the current school year, highlighting key successes and challenges. Appalachian State (ASU) is a partner in the \$2.5M grant awarded from the US Department of Ed for NC Rural School Mental Health Training. The workforce training pipeline has been expanded and work has begun on training doctoral students in clinical psychology. ASC has served a large number of students, especially those in crisis, before COVID-19 happened. In the last eight years, the ASC program has served 309 students and 433 crisis events.

CTE Director Earl Pennington gave an update on the Nursing Foundations Program, outlining how the Department of Health Science Regulations (DHSR) had approved the adjustment of clinical hours and requirements for the 2020 Spring High School Nurse Aide Training Program. Wilkes Community College and the Ashe Campus of Wilkes Community College has granted the school system access to their state lab located on the Ashe campus beginning May 26 until the five high school students complete their training during the week of June 15.

A motion by Mrs. Jones and a second by Mr. McClure gave unanimous approval to waiving the EKG requirement for Ashe County athletes for the 2020/21 school year as presented by Athletic Director David Koontz. The waiver is a result of the decision by the State Board of Education to grant a one-year extension on athletic physicals that were done between 3/1/2019 and 5/1/2020 due to COVID-19. Mr. Koontz felt it best to waive the EKG requirement to participate in athletics as well since it is an LEA requirement.

Mr. Koontz then gave an update on the COVID-19 return to play policies and procedures based on information received from the North Carolina High School Athletic Association (NCHSAA). He stressed the importance of school personnel to begin preparation for the safety of student athletes and coaches once athletic activities can begin. A copy of the plan was shared with the Board. Mr. Koontz stressed that this is a living document that will likely change as we continue to receive updates from the Governor.

K-12 Curriculum Director Julie Taylor gave an update on writing the plans for summer learning and remote learning and reentry. Each public-school unit was directed to write and submit its plan for a summer learning program to the Department of Public Instruction by June 22, 2020. In addition, each public-school unit was directed to develop a remote instruction plan for the 2020/21 school year and to submit that Plan to the State Board of Education no later than July 20. This plan will provide a framework for delivering quality remote instruction to all students in 2020/21.

Mrs. Taylor then gave an update on the CARES Act application for funding which is in response to COVID-19. The application must include the strategies for which the school system plans to utilize funds as provided by the CARES Act in PRC 163. A description of how each strategy will be implemented, a timeline for providing

services and assistance to students and staff and how the school system intends to assess the effectiveness of each strategy and the impact on student learning is to be included in the plan as well.

Student Services Director Jamie Little gave an update on teaming with the Western Youth Network (WYN) to provide afterschool program services effective the 2020/21 school year. If this partnership comes to fruition, WYN will offer afterschool programming for students at Mountain View, Westwood and Blue Ridge that include tutoring, healthy snacks, physical activity and enrichment and opportunities to increase resilience and social skills. Mrs. Little and the Director of WYN, Jennifer Warren, are still working out the details.

Mrs. Little then gave an update on the *Darkness to Light* online training as required by SB 199 legislation. All school employees are required to complete a sex abuse and sex trafficking training every two years. The first training must be completed by August 2020.

Director of Clinical Services Kelly Welsh from AppHealthCare gave the update on the services provided by the Top Dog Clinic during the 2019/20 school year. The Clinic is a federally qualified health center and recipient of numerous quality awards. Over 87 percent of the middle school student body is enrolled. Prior to COVID-19, there were more than 2,500 clinic visits—18 percent of these visits were for mental health needs. Funding for the Clinic comes from various sources—insurance, fees, Medicaid, State, Federal and Local funding. Telehealth opportunities to respond to student healthcare is being explored.

Child Nutrition Director Martha Turner reported that the current year lunchroom charges are \$14,199—this is significantly higher than last year. Efforts are underway to collect as many of these fees as possible.

Human Resources Director Roy Putman asked the Board to consider adopting Policy 7635 *Return to Work*. The purpose of the policy is to bring employees back to work after a work-related injury or illness as soon as they are medically able in order to enhance the employee's recovery while minimizing the impact of work-related injuries on school system operations. Pursuant to Board policy, action will be taken at the next regular meeting of the Board.

CTE Director Earl Pennington asked the Board to consider revisions to Policy 3460 *Graduation Requirements*. The revisions include the removal of NC Final Exams and credentialing for CTE courses. Pursuant to Board policy, action will be taken at the next regular meeting of the Board.

Superintendent Yates asked the Board to consider adoption of Policy 5071/7351 *Electronically Stored Information Retention* as required by the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. Pursuant to Board policy, action will be taken at the next regular meeting of the Board.

Chairman Jones asked the Board to consider the letter written in support of the Committee for the Lost Province Center for the Cultural Arts applying for a grant to purchase, renovate, repurpose and regenerate the old Lansing School property in order to create a new cultural center in Lansing. A motion by Mrs. Eldreth and a second by Vice Chairman Beckworth gave unanimous approval to providing a letter in support of this endeavor.

Monday, June 29, was established as the date for the June/July meeting. The meeting will be held at 6:00 pm.

Superintendent Yates made the following comments.

- The final selection report for Ashe Early College includes a total of 125 students—15 seniors, 30 juniors, 43 sophomores and 24 freshmen.

- All out-of-pocket expenses to families for the current year school trips—Washington, DC, the Outer Banks, Ro Kappa, the band trip to Louisiana and the trip to Carowinds—were reimbursed in full.
- The Graduation Ceremony is scheduled for Saturday, July 25.
- County Manager Adam Stumb informed the Superintendent that the County had received funding for Coronavirus Relief and that the school system is entitled to \$69,260 of that funding. The school system is to submit a budget on the use of these funds.
- The Board was informed that the County Commissioners had proposed level funding for the 2020/21 current expense and capital outlay budgets.
- The Superintendent recognized the COVID-19 frontline employees responsible for meal preparation and delivery.
- BREMCO is working on burying the power lines at the new athletic field located at the high school.
- The Superintendent designated the first five inclement weather days as remote learning days—teachers will be required to work.

The following informational items were shared with the Board.

- Monday-Friday, June 1-5—required teacher workdays
- Monday, August 3—regular meeting of the Board

The June/July regular meeting of the Board is scheduled for Monday, June 29, 2020, at 6:00 pm and will be held either at the Central Support Services annex or electronically.

There being no further business, the Chairman declared the meeting adjourned at 9:01 pm.