

Wolf Creek Local Board of Education
Special Meeting – June 07, 2021

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The Wolf Creek Local Board of Education met in special session on June 07, 2021 at 7:30 p.m. with the following members answering roll call:
H. Arnold; J. Barnett; R. Doak; S. Lang.

Mr. Adams attended by phone, because he was out of town, but did not vote on any items.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

PUBLIC DISCUSSION

The special meeting was held for public discussion on the Board's consideration of retire/rehire of Mr. Thomas Simms.

Mr. Phil McGraw – Mr. McGraw and his wife have home schooled their children until the 7th grade. They decided to send them to Waterford because they felt the school held the same Christian values as they believed and taught their children. However that changed with the 2021 graduation ceremony when their child was denied the opportunity to walk with his graduating class because he did not agree with the gown choice. Waterford has always prided itself on tradition but that tradition was changed when the school decided to accommodate to one student. We felt that the one student's feelings were considered but our child's belief was not. Our child wanted to walk in the traditional green gown. So he took his brother's gown to the graduation but was met in the commons area of the Cooper by Mrs. Coleman and Mr. Simms and was told that he could not walk with his classmates if he did not wear the graduation gown that was chosen. Mrs. Coleman met with Mr. McGraw's son in private on the Wednesday before graduation to discuss the gown and he was told that if he did not wear the gown that was provided that he could not walk. Mr. McGraw felt his son was lied to about the reason for the changing from the traditional gown. Mr. McGraw felt he and his son was disrespected and lied to about graduation. Mr. McGraw is proud of his son for standing up for his beliefs but is disappointed in the administration for taking the opportunity for his son to participate in the graduation ceremony.

As for the reemployment of Tom Simms I am against this decision. As a parent and also a coach of Waterford High School, I have always felt that Mr. Simms never acknowledge my existence. If I am near, he never acknowledges me. As a football coach, I feel that when football ends and basketball begins, the head games begin. The football athletes have to start choosing which sport to participate in. I feel that when you beat a kid down that you have to bring them back up and encourage them. I do not feel that Tom Simms does that.

Mrs. Carrie McGraw – Mrs. McGraw feels the school district is a small special unique school and was proud to send her kids to Waterford. However her feelings have changed when her son was denied the opportunity to walk with his class at graduation. The decision to change from the traditional gown to accommodate one student and not to consider the whole class was wrong. The students did not even know about the change in the gown until they picked them up. The class was told that if they did not wear the gown provided they could not walk or speak. There are other people that feel the same as us but they were afraid to come to the meeting and speak out against Mr. Simms because they did not want their children to suffer the consequence in the classroom or on the court for their decision to speak their opinion. The country is in a mess and change is coming. The Board will have a lot of hard decisions to make. Thank you for hearing our side. We love this school but be careful on how you handle things in the future and the decision you make. Please hear both sides before a decision is made.

Mr. Neil Huck – I agree with everything that the McGraw's have stated. The Board should have voted on the changing of the graduation gown. I am aggravated on how the situation was handled.

As for the retire/rehire of Mr. Simms, I feel that he never admits that he is wrong. It is always his way or nobody's way. The Board should consider a younger teacher that would benefit the kids.

Mrs. LeAnn Cline – I feel the graduation gowns were a poor decision. The Seniors did not know about the change nor did they have a say in choosing. I have a lot of respect for this school but there was no reason to change because of one child. The tradition has always been green and white but what was chosen was a ridiculous choir gown. I had to encourage my daughter to walk because I did not want her to miss this moment with her classmates. But as soon as the graduation was over she changed to an all white gown (tradition) for pictures. I feel the change from the traditional gowns was poorly handled and should have been voted on by the Board. I looked through the minutes and could not find anywhere where it was discussed. You cannot sneak things through. The Board needs to handle things like the graduation gowns better.

As for the retire/rehire of Mr. Simms, I do not agree that he should be considered. I feel that he has way too much say in the operations of the school. As a basketball coach, I dread when my junior high student hits high school. If Mr. Simms is still coaching basketball when my son is a freshman, I will be here every year speaking out against him and asking you not to hire him as a coach. He needs to respect the community as much as he demands respect from his students and players. Respect means that if he is running a practice and it goes over, he needs to remember the parents that are sitting in the parking lot to pick up their child. I have things to do also and not sit in the parking lot waiting for my child to be released.

Mr. Kenley Schwendeman – I completely agree that this school has great values. I am in favor of the retire/rehire of Mr. Simms. I understand why people get the wrong impression of Mr. Simms. He is tough on kids, with the mindset of it is his way or the highway but it is his way of caring for kids and making them successful. When I was in school, I was heading down a wrong path and Mr. Simms (along with Mr. Powers) took me aside and worked with me to get me back on the right path. Mr. Simms works with kids, in the classroom, to make them successful. A lot of people do not see that side of him. He gives words of wisdom to his students and fellow co workers.

Mrs. Jeanette Starkey – I agree that Mr. Simms demands respect in the classroom. When I substitute for his class, I do not have issues with his class and he has instructions to follow to keep his classes on track. The respect that Mr. Simms demands from his students make an impression on them and they carry that into their future. A lot of kids do not come from households that hold kids accountable for their actions and what Mr. Simms gives in the classroom helps shape them to respectable adults.

Mr. Tyson Powers - The Board has a hard decision to make in the retire/rehire of Mr. Simms. I get along great with Coach. He is at the school every day and is a big part of the leadership at the school. I feel the Board needs to talk to former players and parents of Coach Simms to get a true feeling how the community feels. Current player parents are afraid to speak up against Coach Simms for they feel there will be retribution against their athlete. I know we are here to discuss Mr. Simms's teaching and not his coaching. The thing is, if you are here to change lives then you have the right person, if you are not then the wrong person was hired.

Mr. Tom Tucker – I also was one of those students that started to go down the wrong path in high school but in 1982 Coach Simms took me under his wing in football. Coach does have the mentality of it is his way or the highway but it teaches athletes to respect those that are in charge and their fellow teammates. Tom and I have been good friends for many years and we will continue to be.

Mr. Doug Baldwin – Tom Simms, since 2016, has met all his testing indicators on the State Testing. There are only 2 other teachers in the District that have been able to accomplish this. Throughout the 2020-2021 school year, anyone that was quarantine (in his classes) were invited daily through Google Meets to participate in class. If a student did not participate, Mr. Simms reached out to the parents to make them aware so that the student did not fall behind. Mr. Simms has went above what is required to make sure students completed their work to finish out the school year. He wanted to make sure students finish the work and not get an incomplete.

Mr. Roger Doak – We value the support we receive from the community here in Waterford and tonight has been a great discussion. I understand there are parent here tonight that are upset about the graduation gowns and right now, I don't know how to rectify it. We have learned.

The retire/rehire of Mr. Simms, the community needs to come out and speak for both the good and the bad. The negatives that we have heard tonight are hard to prove. My life has been to investigate and negatives are hard to investigate. During an event that I attended with judges and lawyers I heard nothing but praise about our students in Mr. Simms's class. A judge commented that our students were very respectful and asked good questions. Now that to me makes a statement on what kind of teacher Mr. Simms is.

I also have very strong Christian values and I am willing to die for those values. Mr. Simms has those same Christian values. I encourage anyone in the community that has anything to say to please speak up. This is how this Board makes their decisions and we want to know the good and concerns this community has.

Mr. Phil McGraw – There is a difference between respect and fear. I seen a boy in, during the month of June, crying because he had to choose between basketball and football because he could not make it to everything. Mr. Simms has never acknowledge my existence and he treats certain students differently than others. We are here for the kids. You want people to come and speak out but that is not an easy thing to do, to come to a Board meeting to express your opinion without feeling sibilings will be treated differently.

Mr. Hugh Arnold – Mr. Simms has not had an issue with the number of players coming out for basketball. We could easily weed out the ones we don't want to work with but we don't cut and the coaches take on the challenge to coach those athletes. We had a NCAA Division I basketball player that Mr. Simms worked with to control his temper and steer him from going down the wrong path. There were games that this player would sit out because he did not respect others. Today that person is an outstanding citizen in which, I believe, it partial because of Mr. Simms. The comment that was made that Mr. Simms did not talk to an athlete for weeks, in the classroom, because he did not listen to him in practice, in my perspective is hard to believe. We have such small classrooms that I do not see that happening and that is hard to prove. I believe that Mr. Simms has the qualities that we expect from Wolf Creek.

Mr. Jerry Barnett – Mr. Simms and I have been good friends and church members for a long time. Mr. Simms does have the values that we look for here at Wolf Creek and he cares deeply about the kids and want them to succeed. I have listened to what you all have had to say and thank you for coming in.

BUSINESS & FINANCIAL MATTERS:

RES. NO. 2021-070

Motion by Mr. Lang seconded by Mr. Barnett to approve the attached Professional Agreement with Marietta Health Systems to provide an Athletic Trainer in the amount of \$15,000. General fund will pay the full amount but this is only limited to the 2021-2022 school year.

H. Arnold, yes; J. Barnett, yes; R. Doak, yes; S. Lang, yes. Motion passed.

EMPLOYEES

RES. NO. 2021-071

Motion by Mr. Barnett seconded by Mr. Doak to approve the following supplemental coaches for the 2021-2022 school year, pending completion of all paperwork:

Doug Huffman	Junior High Head Football Coach	\$2,349.00
Gillian (Tess) Teters	Junior High Head Volleyball Coach	\$2,465.00
Laura Antill	Volunteer HS Volleyball Coach	

H. Arnold, yes; J. Barnett, yes; R. Doak, yes; S. Lang, yes. Motion passed.

RES. NO. 2021-072

Motion by Mr. Doak seconded by Mr. Arnold to approve the 15 (fifteen) extended days for Robyn Delany the 2020-2021 school year in the amount of \$3,244.95:

H. Arnold, yes; J. Barnett, yes; R. Doak, yes; S. Lang, yes. Motion passed.

RES. NO. 2021-073

Motion by Mr. Barnett seconded by Mr. Arnold to employ Maredeth Bidwell as High School English teacher with a one (1) year contract beginning with the 2021-2022 school year, pending completion of all paperwork.

H. Arnold, yes; J. Barnett, yes; R. Doak, yes; S. Lang, yes. Motion passed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

RES. NO. 2021-074

Motion by Mr. Barnett seconded by Mr. Lang to adjourn to executive session at 8:33 pm for the purpose discussing negotiations.

H. Arnold, yes; J. Barnett, yes; R. Doak, yes; S. Lang, yes. Motion passed.

Regular meeting called back to order at 9:52 pm by the Board President.

ADJOURNMENT

RES. NO. 2020-075

Motion by Mr. Lang seconded by Mr. Barnett to adjourn the meeting at 9:52 p.m.

H. Arnold, yes; J. Barnett, yes; R. Doak, yes; S. Lang, yes.

Meeting adjourned.

President

Treasurer