

BUNCOMBE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING

4:00 p.m. – Call to Order – Executive Conference Room

(Work Session Updates / Closed Session)

Thursday, February 3, 2022

5:30 p.m. – Minitorium

Broadcast live on BCS Communications YouTube Account

MINUTES

BE IT REMEMBERED: That the Buncombe County Board of Education met in a regular session on February 3, 2022 at 5:30 p.m. in the Minitorium located at 175 Bingham Road, Asheville, North Carolina and streamed live on YouTube, when the following business was transacted.

The following Board members were present:

Ann Franklin, Madam Chair

Peggy Buchanan, Member

Cindy McMahon, Member

Amy Churchill, Vice-Chair

Pat Bryant, Member

Amanda Simpkins, Member

Max Queen, Member

Staff present: Dr. Tony Baldwin, Superintendent; Susanne Swanger, Associate Superintendent; Joseph Hough, Assistant Superintendent; Tonya Robinson, Director of Secondary Education; Jennifer Reed, Director of Elementary & Intermediate Education; Ginny Barrett, Director of Title I; Robert Frisby, Interim Director of Technology; Stacia Harris, Director of Communications; Ben Rickert, Assistant Director of Communications; Tim Reaves, Communications Specialist; Leslie Averill, Scott Emory and Joshua Ponder, Technology Support Specialists; Tina Thorpe, Chief Finance Officer; Lisa Sharpe, Purchasing & Risk Control Officer; Clark Wyatt, Director of Maintenance; Chris Campbell, Attorney and Kim Matthews, Executive Administrative Assistant

MOTION TO CLOSED SESSION

Ms. Churchill made a motion to enter into closed session at 4:43 p.m. and Ms. Buchanan seconded the motion – the motion was approved unanimously.

The Madam Chair will entertain a motion for the Board of Education to enter into closed session pursuant to G.S. 143-318.11 for the following purposes:

- Under subsection (a)(1) to prevent the disclosure of privileged and confidential personnel information pursuant to G.S. 115C-319-321;
- Under subsection (a)(1) to prevent the disclosure of privileged and confidential student information pursuant to 20 U.S.C. 1232g (FERPA);
- Under subsection (a)(3) to discuss matters protected by the attorney-client privilege.

ADJOURNMENT

At 5:29 p.m. Mr. Queen made a motion to adjourn the closed session and Ms. McMahon seconded the motion – the motion was approved unanimously.

WORK SESSION UPDATES

Dr. Baldwin reviewed the recent numbers of staff and students that have been affected by the Covid virus. The Board expressed appreciation for the central office staff and administrators that have subbed in classrooms to keep our schools operating. Dr. Baldwin stated that as the budget process and planning for next year is getting started, a drop in average daily membership will come into consideration as it corresponds to state funding. He said that Mr. Bryant and himself attended the county commissioner's meeting this week in which the commissioner's approved our request for funds for local paid employees, but not for the increase in utility or insurance costs.

CALL TO ORDER

PRESENTATION OF COLORS / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE / ENKA HIGH SCHOOL Instructed by Major Kevin Den Boer U.S. Air Force (retired) and Master Sergeant Douglas Draper, U.S. Air Force (Retired)

MOMENT OF SILENCE

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Ms. Franklin stated that the Information Item, Policy 2302, was being removed from the agenda. Mr. Queen made a motion to approve the agenda and Ms. Churchill seconded the motion – the motion was approved unanimously.

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SUPERINTENDENT'S COMMENTS

- Dr. Baldwin began by recognizing the Mid-Year Graduation Ceremony held on January 30, 2022 at the Thomas Wolfe Auditorium. The one hundred eighty-four graduates represented the highest number for the mid-year graduations since 2015. Dr. Baldwin noted that this continues to represent a good opportunity for those students needing some extra academic time, in addition to, students completing high school graduation requirements early and starting post-secondary plans. This year, Enka High School had the most mid-year graduates at thirty-seven.
- On Tuesday, the Buncombe County Commissioners allocated an additional \$1,641,878 to our operating budget which allowed the salary and benefits of our seven hundred forty-five employees paid from local funds to equate with their state funded peers. It has been noted many times in the past, the requirement to submit a budget request by May 15th to the county conflicts with the later date when our state budget is approved. This school year, our state budget was not finalized until November 18th. BCS is dependent upon a majority of our operating funds coming from the state budget. This timeline requires us to predict by May 15th several non-negotiable increases from the state including salaries as well as retirement and health insurance rates. Cr. Baldwin thanked the commissioners for the additional allocation of these local dollars and adjustment to our original budget request last spring.
- February is recognized as Love the School Bus Month and next week, February 14th through the 18th represents Bus Driver Appreciation Week. Dr. Baldwin recognized not only our highly dedicated drivers and transportation safety assistants across the BCS district but the outstanding support that Transportation Director, David Rhoney and his team of mechanics and staff provide. Daily, the efforts of these individuals keep our two hundred and six school buses running their routes and covering a total of 12,945 miles daily! This year we are averaging 9,268 students being transported to and from school on our buses. Dr. Baldwin urged everyone to take time next week and personally thank our drivers and support staff for the important role they play to safely begin and end each school day for our students. They are truly MVP's within BCS!
- Dr. Baldwin reminded everyone of upcoming important dates this month: Thursday, Feb. 10th is an early release day; the All-County Elementary, Intermediate and Middle School Chorus will perform on Tuesday, Feb. 15th at Brookstone Church beginning at 6:00 pm.: Monday, February 21st is an Optional Teacher Work-Day.

GOOD NEWS

- Special Recognition: Nesbitt Discovery Academy – Graduation Rate
Ms. Swanger recognized the Nesbitt Discovery Academy and Principal Heather Brookshire for their 100% Graduation Rate State-Level Award. Ms. Brookshire thanked her staff and students for their hard work during the last two difficult years and for their tremendous achievement.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- Don Yelton, a resident of Buncombe County, expressed concern that trade work is not promoted in our schools. He also said that students shouldn't be required to wear masks.
- Kim Presley, grandparent of a child in Glenn Arden Elementary School, thanked the board for their hard work in the times we live in, asking the Board to continue to keep mask guidelines in place. Ms. Presley also expressed her views on appropriate reading material and the teaching of history and inclusiveness in schools.
- Shanna Peele, an EC teacher at Woodfin Elementary, thanked the board for keep schools safe, but feels overwhelmed with workloads due to staff shortages and absences. She expressed gratitude for having received a bonus, but feels they are meager compared to what is across the state, especially compared to Asheville City Schools. She asked the Board to increase the retention bonuses.
- Lissa Pedersen, an art teacher in the Erwin District, asked for bonus increases for staff.
- Sara Wilcox, mother in the Reynolds District, thanked the board for their service and spoke about curriculum concerns in the public schools.

CURRICULUM FEATURE

- CTE – "Future Ready Students!"
Taylor Baldwin, Director of Career Technical Education (CTE) presented information to the Board concerning the district goals of the CTE department, the CTE enrollment by school and course offerings found in our schools. Mr. Baldwin highlighted the fact that February is CTE month. He noted the many community outreach projects, fundraisers, CTE competitions and career fairs that BCS students have participated in. Mr. Baldwin also shared information on business opportunity partners that BCS has and how they are working in our community to offer more opportunities to students upon graduation.

ACTION AGENDA

- Budget Amendment #3

Ms. Churchill made a motion to approve Budget Amendment #3 as presented and Ms. Buchanan seconded the motion – the motion was approved unanimously.

- 2022-2023 BCS School Calendar

Ms. Swanger and Mr. Campbell addressed the Board's questions concerning the state's calendar laws that dictate the start and end dates for school systems. Weather waivers would allow a system to start earlier, but Ms. Swanger stated that BCS does not qualify for a waiver for weather reasons.

Mr. Bryant made a motion to approve the 2022-2023 Academic School Calendar as presented and Ms. McMahon seconded the motion – the motion was approved unanimously.

- NCSBA 2022 Legislative Committee

Ms. Churchill nominated Ms. Simpkins to serve on the NCSBA 2022 Legislative Committee and Ms. Simpkins accepted the nomination. Hearing no other nominations, Ms. Churchill made a motion that Ms. Simpkins be recommended to serve as a representative on the NCSBA Legislative Committee and Mr. Bryant seconded the motion – the motion was approved unanimously.

- Consideration of BCS' Return to Learn Plans – Local Face Covering Policies Per Senate Bill 654

Dr. Baldwin reviewed the key metrics surrounding the Covid virus, including the prevalence of the Omicron variant in our state. He compared the positivity rate and level of community transmission to last month's information as well. Information on the number of positive Covid cases among staff and students was also shared. Dr. Baldwin reviewed the current face covering guidelines of other systems in North Carolina that showed an increase in systems requiring masks at this time.

Ms. McMahon made a motion to maintain BCS' current face covering guidelines and Ms. Churchill seconded the motion – the motion was approved unanimously.

CONSENT AGENDA

- Minutes: January 13, 2022 – Regular Meeting Open Session
- Personnel Report with Addendum
- A-B Technical Community College Board of Trustees Reappointment
- Advisory Council Member – Request to Add a Member

Mr. Queen made a motion to approve the items on the consent agenda and Ms. Simpkins seconded the motion – the motion was approved unanimously.

INFORMATION AGENDA

- Finance Reports
- Notification of Informal Construction and Repair Contracts and Change Orders

ANNOUNCEMENTS / FUTURE MEETINGS

- The next Board of Education Regular Meeting will be held on March 3, 2022, with Work Session Updates, and Closed Session beginning at 4:00 p.m. in the Beaucatcher Room and the Open Session beginning at 5:30 p.m. in the Minitorium at 175 Bingham Road, Asheville, NC 28806.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Queen made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:55 p.m. and Ms. Buchanan seconded the motion – the motion was approved unanimously.