

BUNCOMBE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL CALLED MEETING
12:00 p.m. – Work Session – Minitorium
Broadcast live on BCS Communications YouTube Account
Thursday, May 4, 2023

MINUTES

BE IT REMEMBERED: That the Buncombe County Board of Education met in a regular session on May 4, 2023, at 12:00 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
Rob Elliot, Member
Judy Lewis, Member

Kim Plemmons, Member
Amanda Simpkins, Member
Amy Churchill, Vice-Chair

Staff Present: Dr. Rob Jackson, Superintendent; Dr. Jennifer Reed, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum & Instruction; Joe Hough, Assistant Superintendent of Auxiliary Services; Tina Thorpe, Chief Finance Officer, Tim Fierle, Director of Facilities; Clark Wyatt, Director of Maintenance; Tina Jones, Asst. Finance Officer; Carol Edge, Operational Budget Manager; Robert Frisby, Director of Technology; Chris Campbell, Attorney and Kim Matthews, Executive Administrative Assistant

Approval of Agenda – Madam Chair

Ms. Plemmons made a motion to approve the agenda and Ms. Churchill seconded the motion – the motion was approved unanimously.

Opening Comments

Ms. Franklin welcomed everyone and expressed her thanks to staff for the hard work in providing the information that the Board would receive that day.

2023-2024 Superintendent's Recommended Capital Outlay Budget Report

- Joe Hough, Assistant Superintendent
- Tim Fierle, Director of Facilities
- Clark Wyatt, Director of Maintenance
- Tina Thorpe, Chief Finance Officer

Mr. Hough expressed his thanks to the members of the committee who worked together to review the Capital Outlay Fund Budget requests. He described the composition of the team and the areas represented. Mr. Hough also explained the overall capital outlay process for reviewing budget requests and the timeline of the process used by the committee.

Next, Ms. Thorpe described the various sources of capital outlay project funding and what these funds can be used for and how they are approved for usage. Ms. Thorpe also explained how the committee categorized the types of needs and how these needs were prioritized. She further shared with the Board the Article 40/42 sales tax projected revenues for 2023-24 and the total cost of the 2023-24 budget requests - comparing them to the 2022-23 requested amount. Ms. Thorpe then examined the different areas that are proposed for the Article 40/42 allocation. She also noted trends over the last ten years between the dollar amount of request versus actual dollars funded and the number of request versus the number actually funded.

Mr. Wyatt reviewed the life cycle of infrastructure assets for the Board, taking note of the annual spending amount required to maintain these assets. He also shared the unbudgeted immediate and future needs in roofing, electrical and flooring.

Mr. Wyatt then answered questions from board members concerning the timelines and expected completion dates for specific projects listed.

Ms. Plemmons commented on attending one of the meetings of the capital outlay committee and how impressed she was by the group's thoroughness and knowledge to work through a complicated process. Dr. Jackson said that he was also very proud of the team's work and expressed his appreciation for the presence of the principals on the committee. He recognized the large size of BCS' facilities and the expertise it takes to manage them at such a high level.

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2021-2022 Enrollment & Facility Needs Report

- Tim Fierle, Director of Facilities

Mr. Fierle described the purpose of the Facility Needs Report in determining the system's long-term needs and planning to accommodate projected future enrollment. He told the Board that he will present the final report to them at the June 1, 2023 meeting for their approval. Once the Board has approved the report, the system will work to use available funding sources to move forward with the planned projects.

First, Mr. Fierle reviewed student membership and population trends in Buncombe County Schools. He explained how they use projected enrollment trends, population trends, and residential building permits to help guide addressing future school building needs. He also explained how building capacity is determined and utilized based on enrollment. Next, Mr. Fierle reviewed many long-range construction and infrastructure projects and their associated costs. He also shared several school-site advance planning studies that are in process to address identified needs. Mr. Fierle then answered questions from Board members related to specific projects.

Break

Operating Budget 2022-2023 & ESSER Update

- Tina Thorpe, Chief Finance Officer

Ms. Thorpe reviewed the process for planning and developing the 2023-24 operating budget request, describing the budget cycle, challenges that school boards face and the budget development calendar. She shared the enrollment trends that Mr. Fierle had covered earlier, stressing how this impacts the budget. Ms. Thorpe then showed the Board the analysis of where BCS' revenues come from; state, local and federal funds. Next, Ms. Thorpe described the categories where our funding is directed, with the largest portion allocated to personnel needs. She also shared information from the state on teacher pay and on BCS' median and average classroom teacher salaries.

At the end of Ms. Thorpe's presentation, Dr. Jackson provided the Board with three operating budget options for their consideration. Upon the Board's budget option recommendation and subsequent approval at the regular meeting that evening, Dr. Jackson will present the operating budget request to the County Commissioners. The three options were as follows:

Option 1

Based on Proposed House Budget & Salary Study Phase 2 & 3 & Local Supplement Rates Remain the Same

Total Proposed Increase to Local Salary & Benefits \$14,197,963

- Certified Staff – provides step increase + 4.25%
- Non-certified/Classified staff – provides step increase + 4.25%
- Retirement rate increase from 24.50% to 25.0% Hospitalization rate increase from \$7,397 to \$7,654
- Increased Athletic Stipends - \$400,000 + Increased Teacher Substitute Cost - \$450,000
- Salary Study Phase 2 & 3 along with shortfalls in 2022-23 for salary increases state 15.00/hr & immutable cost of operations increases not fully funded by state and county \$5,282,386

Immutable Cost of Operations Request Increase \$3,552,529

- Utility cost increases (electricity 10%, gas 15%, water 7%) - \$460,175
- Property insurance increase (25%) - \$383,404
- Increased cost for contracts/supplies to maintain facilities - \$506,250
- Increased cost for Microsoft EES Agreement (required by cybersecurity insurance) - \$330,000
- Charter Schools share adjustment - \$1,872,700

Request for New Position Increases \$1,798,287

- 4 Counselors - \$456,749
- 7.5 ESL Teachers - \$603,131
- ESL Specialist - \$105,946
- 3 Cybersecurity Technicians - \$238,315
- Assistant Director of Transportation - \$119,146
- Assistant Superintendent - Educational Equity & Support Services + clerical - \$275,000

Total Requested Increase for Option 1 \$19,503,779

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Option 2

Based on all items in Option I + 3.5% Local Supplement Increase to Classified & Certified rates

Total Proposed Increase to Local Salary & Benefits \$20,666,059

- Certified Staff – provides step increase + 4.25%
- Non-certified/Classified staff – provides step increase + 4.25%
- Retirement rate increase from 24.50% to 25.0% Hospitalization rate increase from \$7,397 to \$7,654
- Increased Athletic Stipends - \$400,000 + Increased Teacher Substitute Cost - \$450,000
- Salary Study Phase 2 & 3 along with shortfalls in 2022-23 for salary increases state 15.00/hr & immutable cost of operations increases not fully funded by state and county \$5,282,386

Immutable Cost of Operations Request Increase \$4,232,668

- Utility cost increases (electricity 10%, gas 15%, water 7%) - \$460,175
- Property insurance increase (25%) - \$383,404
- Increased cost for contracts/supplies to maintain facilities - \$506,250
- Increased cost for Microsoft EES Agreement (required by cybersecurity insurance) - \$330,000
- Charter Schools share adjustment - \$2,552,839

Request for New Position Increases \$1,848,045

- 4 Counselors - \$469,730
- 7.5 ESL Teachers - \$620,417
- ESL Specialist - \$109,031
- 3 Cybersecurity Technicians - \$245,120
- Assistant Director of Transportation - \$122,622
- Assistant Superintendent – Educational Equity & Support Services + clerical - \$281,125

Total Requested Increase for Option II \$26,701,772

Option 3

Based on all items in Option I + 7.0% Local Supplement Increase to Classified & Certified rates

Total Proposed Increase to Local Salary & Benefits \$27,090,148

- Certified Staff – provides step increase + 4.25%
- Non-certified/Classified staff – provides step increase + 4.25%
- Retirement rate increase from 24.50% to 25.0% Hospitalization rate increase from \$7,397 to \$7,654
- Increased Athletic Stipends - \$400,000 + Increased Teacher Substitute Cost - \$450,000
- Salary Study Phase 2 & 3 along with shortfalls in 2022-23 for salary increases state 15.00/hr & immutable cost of operations increases not fully funded by state and county \$5,282,386

Immutable Cost of Operations Request Increase \$4,912,910

- Utility cost increases (electricity 10%, gas 15%, water 7%) - \$460,175
- Property insurance increase (25%) - \$383,404
- Increased cost for contracts/supplies to maintain facilities - \$506,250
- Increased cost for Microsoft EES Agreement (required by cybersecurity insurance) - \$330,000
- Charter Schools share adjustment - \$3,233,081

Request for New Position Increases \$1,899,488

- 4 Counselors - \$482,710
- 7.5 ESL Teachers - \$637,702
- ESL Specialist - \$112,117
- 3 Cybersecurity Technicians - \$251,924
- Assistant Director of Transportation - \$126,098
- Assistant Superintendent – Educational Equity & Support Services + clerical - \$288,937

Total Requested Increase for Option III \$33,902,546

Ms. Thorpe and Dr. Jackson answered questions from Board members concerning salaries of certified and non-certified staff, coaching supplements, and proposed increases in the local supplement. Dr. Jackson also addressed questions concerning the request for new positions in BCS.

- Jennifer Reed, Director of Elementary & Intermediate Education

Dr. Reed gave an update to the Board on the use of ESSER Funds. She reviewed funding allotment per the specific budget allocation by amount and funding expiration. Dr. Reed also described the ESSER Steering Committee's process used to determine the allocation of funds; the personnel hired to support the objectives and the budget status of these funds. Highlights were given as to the use of ESSER funds in the system. At the conclusion of Dr. Reed's presentation, she answered questions from the Board concerning staffing positions and how those positions supported the system's Covid recovery efforts.

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Closing Comments

Dr. Jackson complimented the work of staff in compiling the information for the Board. He appreciates the time it takes to research the capital requests and the professionalism in which our staff manages the process and presents the information in a manor that the Board can be informed and understand the needs of our system. Ms. Franklin also thanked the directors and their staff for their hard work.

Rob Jackson, Superintendent &
Ex Officio Secretary

Ann B. Franklin, Madam Chair

Minutes for Approval: June 1, 2023
klm