



Minutes
School Board Meeting
Greene County Schools
County Meeting Room
February 8, 2023

Members Present: Mr. Todd Sansom, Chair; Ms. Sharon Mack, Vice-Chair; Mr. Jason Tooley, Member; Mr. Brooks Taylor, Member; Ms. Rebecca Roach, Member; Dr. Andrea Whitmarsh, Superintendent; Ms. Rhonda Houchens, Clerk.

Member(s) of The Greene County Board of Supervisors Present: Mr. Steve Bowman & Mr. Dale Herring

Mr. Sansom called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. in the School Board Office Conference Room.

Ms. Mack made a motion to move into closed session in accordance with Virginia Code sections 2.2-3711(A)(1), (A)(2), and (A)(29) to discuss personnel matters, student matters, and public contract involving the expenditure of public funds. Ms. Roach seconded. All Ayes, motion carried.

Ms. Mack made a motion to reconvene in open session in the County Meeting Room. Mr. Taylor seconded. All Ayes, motion carried.

Mr. Sansom called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the County Meeting Room.

Mr. Sansom stated: The Board will certify by roll call vote that to the best of each member's knowledge only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements and identified in the motion to convene in the closed meeting were heard, discussed, or considered.

Mr. Tooley – certified
Ms. Mack - certified
Mr. Taylor - certified
Ms. Roach - certified
Mr. Sansom - certified

Mr. Sansom requested a motion to approve the agenda.

Ms. Roach made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Mr. Tooley seconded. No discussion. All Ayes, motion carried.

Mr. Sansom invited everyone to join in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Sansom stated there were no closed meeting actions.

Mr. Sansom requested a motion for the consent agenda:

- 11-1359 January 11, 2023 Meeting Minutes
- 11-1360 January 25, 2023 Budget Session Meeting Minutes
- 11-1361 January 5, 2023 Expenditures
- 11-1362 January 12, 2023 Expenditures
- 11-1363 January 20, 2023 Expenditures
- 11-1364 January 27, 2023 Expenditures
- 11-1365 Monthly Finance Report
- 11-1366 Field Trip Requests
- 11-1367 Enrollment
- 11-1368 Staff to be Approved List

Mr. Taylor made a motion to approve the consent agenda items 11-1359 through 11-1368A and excluding 11-1368B. Ms. Roach seconded. No discussion. All Ayes, motion carried.

Mr. Sansom stated it was time for first public comment on matters not listed below on agenda. Mr. Sansom opened the floor for public comment.

Joshua Alberts shared his wife was a teacher at WMMS and his daughters have attended Greene County Schools. Mr. Alberts shared his concerns regarding discipline and behavior issues in the schools. He stated school resource officers are a good start but suggested adding school security officers also.

Terri Morris Knight shared it was time to make a change. She stated that there was a fear of making central office aware of issues. She requested help be sent to the teachers and suggested central office be moved to the schools.

Michael Bienz shared he was the leader of Restore Greene. He asked the board to share how the public can help moving forward. Mr. Bienz thanked the board members for their service. He would like to know what the next steps are.

Mr. Tooley requested to speak.

Mr. Sansom stated that we should legally follow the agenda.

Mr. Sansom closed public comment.

Dr. Pursel and Ms. Spencer presented information/action item #11-1369, RFP for GCTEC. Dr. Pursel shared the objective of the RFP is to acquire architectural services for the addition to the tech center. To assist with this process, a committee will be formed to review the RFP's that we have received and

then select the best architectural company. The selected company will guide us through the RFP's process for building contractors. Dr. Pursel shared the key dates within the RFP.

Mr. Tooley asked a question regarding funds for the project. Dr. Pursel stated ESSER funds that were applied for and a state grant. Dr. Whitmarsh stated there was money provided in the FY2023 budget for construction which can be carried over until next year.

Mr. Sansom offered public comment on the RFP for GCTEC.

Mr. Sansom closed public comment.

Mr. Tooley made a motion to approve 11-1369 RFP for GCTEC as presented by Dr. Pursel. Mr. Taylor seconded.

Mr. Sansom requested roll call vote:

Mr. Tooley – Aye
Ms. Mack - Aye
Mr. Taylor - Aye
Ms. Roach - Aye
Mr. Sansom – Aye

All Ayes. Motion carried.

Ms. Spencer and Dr. Pursel presented information/action item #11-1370, Alternative Education Facility Contract. Ms. Spencer stated this was an item discussed in closed session. The recommendation is for the board to authorize the Chair to execute the contract with Harrisonburg Construction for construction services for the replacement of Alternative Education Facilities at WMHS.

Mr. Sansom offered public comment on the Alternative Education Facility Contract.

Mr. Sansom closed public comment.

Mr. Tooley made a motion to approve 11-1370 Alternative Education Facility Contract as present by Ms. Kristie Spencer. Mr. Taylor seconded.

Mr. Tooley – Aye
Ms. Mack - Aye
Mr. Taylor - Aye
Ms. Roach - Aye
Mr. Sansom – Aye

All Ayes. Motion carried.

Mr. Midock, Ms. Alicea and Ms. Hirw presented information item #11-1371, School Spotlight – NGES/PS. Mr. Midock shared the outline of the presentation based on Impact 2027. Ms. Alicea shared the goals of exceptional workforce and resource stewardship. Mr. Midock shared the goals of culture of excellence. Ms. Hirw shared the goals of safe, supportive and caring schools. Ms. Alicea shared the goals of connections and partnerships with the community. At the end of the presentation a video of students was shared. Students were asked who is the school board and what do they do.

Dr. Whitmarsh presented information #11-1372, Budget Presentation. Dr. Whitmarsh stated she was presenting the FY2024 budget proposal. Dr. Whitmarsh shared the vision and mission statement and strategic focus for Impact 2027. Dr. Whitmarsh gave an overview of enrollment – for each school since 2013. She also shared economically disadvantage chart, English Learners chart and students with disabilities chart. Dr. Whitmarsh shared information on national teaching staffing shortages and information on non-teaching staff shortages. She shared top 10 critical teacher shortage endorsements in Virginia. Dr. Whitmarsh stated we base our budget on the Governor’s budget that was released in December. On January 27th we received notification that there was an error in the tool and we have less funds than we thought in the Governor’s Budget. It was a sales tax issue. It’s \$443,000 less for FY2024 and \$179,000 less for FY2023. This is due to the calculation error. The Governor’s budget was correct but the way the Virginia Department of Education translated it into a calculation tool there was an error in the calculation tool. Dr. Whitmarsh shared the highlights from the House and Senate Budget Proposals. Dr. Whitmarsh shared the differences in the Governor’s Proposals from FY2023 & FY2024. For Federal FY2023 Budget we have budgeted \$2,080,000 actual FY2022 is \$3,154,422 with a difference of \$1,074,422 basically because Federal School Nutrition Funding. FY2024 Estimate Funding \$3,070,000. Dr. Whitmarsh shared the local county funding amounts for the last three years. Dr. Whitmarsh stated VRS rates remain unchanged for FY2024. Total employer paid over 19% for each employee. Healthcare projection increase 5.5% to 6.5% at a cost of \$230,000 to \$275,000. Dr. Whitmarsh shared results of the budget survey. Dr. Whitmarsh shared the FY2024 budget requests submitted equals approximately \$975,000. Three examples of repurposing positions: grounds technician, data coordinator and work-based learning coach/career counselor. These can be added without adding to the budget. Dr. Whitmarsh gave an overview of the cost for raises based on 3% overall to 10%. The Governor’s Budget included a 1% bonus for all SOQ positions, so in order to give 1% bonus to all full-time employees, the additional amount is approximately \$145,000. Dr. Whitmarsh shared regional salary data for bachelor’s and master’s degree. She shared additional items included in the FY2024 budget are middle school sports, fuel cost increase, school nutrition (which is a wash) and school construction carryover. The debt retirement for FY2024 is \$9,203. Dr. Whitmarsh gave an overview of the FY2024 Proposal spreadsheet. Additional total needed to meet request \$1,363,051. Total of FY2024 proposed budget of \$50,443,102.

Mr. Sansom stated it was time for public comment on the public hearing on FY2024 Budget. Mr. Sansom opened the floor.

Mr. Sansom closed the public hearing.

Mr. Sansom stated it was time for public comment on information items. Mr. Sansom opened the floor for public comment.

Mr. Sansom closed public comment.

Dr. Whitmarsh presented the Superintendent's Report item #11-1373, Superintendent's Update. Dr. Whitmarsh thanked everyone who voiced their concerns tonight. She shared she sees what our kids are doing in our schools everyday and she sees what the very dedicated staff are doing everyday along with stressors are being felt. We have tried to provide supports to deal with stressors with ESSER Funds, Federal Funds, bringing in school psychologist, student success and we can do better and she stated the best path forward is one of shared responsibility. We need to work together and not against one another. She welcomed voices, input and conversation and help.

Dr. Whitmarsh shared the WMMS Choir and piano club was awarded \$933 for instructional materials. The WMHS received \$1,000 grant to purchase upgraded key boards for piano classes. All WMHS students participating in the DECA District Competition received 1st or 2nd place awards and will compete at the state level soon. The high school robotics team received two 1st place awards at First Chesapeake Challenge Tournament in Harrisonburg and will move onto the championship this month. High School student Nick Colvin won 1st place in the auto category at Skills USA at Valley Vo-Tech. The NGPS & NGES SCA donated to the souper bowl food campaign. RES held a teacher and staff appreciation lunch through a partnership at Spring Hill Baptist Church. Student Tucker Shifflett scored his 1,000 point in basketball. Kayden Fix, swimmer, was recognized as student athlete of the week on Channel 19. Dr. Whitmarsh shared this is national counseling week. Give a shout out to school counselors. We have 9 of them. This is school board recognition month. February 20th all schools and offices will be closed for President's Day. School Board will meet on February 22nd to adopt a budget and we will then present our budget to the board of supervisors on March 7th. The next regular board meeting is March 8th.

Mr. Sansom welcomed board member comments and reminded colleagues of what we can and cannot say with some current events.

Mr. Tooley thanked everyone for the gifts and said NGPS and NGES did a phenomenal job with presentation. He thanked Ms. Houchens since it's school board appreciation month. He thanked Mr. Bowman for showing up tonight and happy national counselor's month. Mr. Tooley stated he appreciated parents showing up tonight. He shared majority of students want to be in school and learn and see friends and need to be taught without disruptions or threats. He shared there were several administrators in the room and he commended them. This is more focused on central office who needs to step up and support you all. He stated students have no consequences, the handbook is not followed and parents show up and rules change depending on who it is. We need to be across the board. Cell phone policy at the beginning of the school year was cell phones are not allowed out in school and now select teachers allow them and now we are back to square one. Why does central office not send over designees to these buildings that are seeing increase in calls? How is it possible that every employee is supposed to know a student's IEP. It's impossible. Mr. Tooley stated state code section 22.1-79.4. He

stated they are not getting done. He stated SRO's don't know about this. Teacher's are showing up in fear. How many teachers and administrators have we lost. We need to ask why. Assistant Superintendent I don't know. People need to ask why. Speak to your Superintendent. Ask your Superintendent. The reason I'm livid tonight is because I want every teacher and administrator to know that I have your back. I hope my fellow board members say the same thing. At the end of the day it falls back on our leadership and central office. It's time for a change. It's time for a big change here at Greene County Public Schools and it starts at central office. At what point is it going to take when a disaster, when a child's life being lost, is it going to take before we are going to take serious of Greene County School and the County of Greene. At what point are we going to rely on law enforcement to assist things. Bullet shells in schools and large knives in safes and no one knows where they came from. The time is now.

Ms. Mack stated she doesn't have comments prepared like that but she stated she appreciate Mr. Tooley's comments. She thanked everyone for the school board appreciation gifts. She stated she enjoyed the video. Ms. Mack thanked those that spoke during public comment. She shared our whole board is committed to having a safe place for everyone in the buildings. We stand behind that. She stated we are a public school system and have laws to follow and that's our responsibility as board members. We have to follow our policies and Mr. Tooley highlighted some policies that we need to make sure as a board that our procedures and things are aligned with policies. We make sure our division is following the law. Our administrators are responsible for the primary responses and our role as a board, is to make sure those responses are aligned with our policies and laws we are governed by. She stated she is committed to school's safety and to make sure we are doing everything in our power as a board. Ms. Mack spoke about snow days and would like to have a future meeting to possibly adjust calendar.

Mr. Taylor thanked all the presenters and thanked everyone for the gifts. Mr. Taylor thanked those that spoke this evening. He commended the School Resource Officers. They have CIT training that is important. He thanked the Greene County Sherriff's Office. He shared safety vestibules were installed last year before school started. He shared he believes we have a culture problem that needs to be tackled together. He shared teachers want to teach and parents need to do our best. We need to see what's going to fix this culture problem and get to the bottom of it. He thanked everyone for coming out and be safe going home.

Ms. Roach thanked everyone for gifts. She stated she's looking forward to the Tech Center and Alt. Ed additions. She thanked Nathanael Greene for their presentation. She stated she was for safety for students and staff. She shared she has a husband and children in the school system. Safety is my number one priority. Everyone should be safe. Ms. Roach stated it all starts from the top and what ever adjustments need to be made need to be made now. Teacher's should not feel unsafe and students should not feel unsafe. Something needs to change. We need to support all staff. I encourage everyone to reach out to all of us. If you don't voice your opinion, we can't address them. I would like to ask the board to start doing 2 or 1's with the superintendent once a month so we can be transparent. It's important. She thanked everyone for coming out and she thanked everyone for their voice.

Mr. Sansom thanked the public commenters. He thanked Mr. Bienz for his community service. We are not alone with the struggles of culture. Everyone is fighting a lot of these battles. We are all in this together he stated. We need little grace and understanding for the teammates we have. He stated he loved Ms. Roach's idea regarding communication. That's where the solutions are going to come from. He stated when the team is down or the team is not behind you, you don't get anywhere by pointing fingers at your teammates. He reached out to the Superintendent a few weeks ago with a suggestion on how to address some of these cultural concerns and my idea was to put together an advisory committee to look at policies and regulations to see where we can make changes. We need to take our culture back and we can do this. I understand there are some disagreements about how some incidents are handled that's fair and those are fair discussions. I do know if I call her (Superintendent) about these things at 7 in the morning or 9 at night, I hear the same passion. She is on this team and she is doing the very best, she and everyone in this room is doing the very best they can, we just have to take a look at what we got in the policy and regulation stand point and see if we can improve. That's our job. He would like to thank everyone for coming.

Mr. Tooley stated he would like to respond to that if I can. Talking about an advisory committee I don't think we need to come up with an advisory committee to talk about that. It's not right to say I'm going to shoot up the school and F U all the time. These kids know that and the expectation. We had great expectation about cell phones and that lasted a couple months. Something needs to be done now and the rules need to be enforced. We got a handbook let's start following it. The rules are there. Let's get to work and get things done. Thank you.

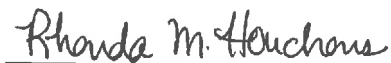
Mr. Sansom requested a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Tooley made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Taylor seconded. No discussion. All Ayes, motion carried.

Meeting ended at 8:36 pm.



Chair



Clerk