

**Minutes  
Transylvania County Board of Education  
January 24, 2022**

INVOCATION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME

BUSINESS ITEMS (including amendments and recissions):

1. Approval of Agenda
2. Public Comment
3. Good News Report
4. Former Students in the Military
5. Consent Agenda:
  - A. Minutes
  - B. Personnel Report
  - C. Appointment of School Treasurer
6. COVID Update and Review of Mask Policy
7. Architect & CMAR Contracts
8. Superintendent's Update
9. Important Dates
10. Other Items
11. Closed Session

The Transylvania County Board of Education met in regular session at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, January 24, 2022 at the Morris Education Center. Ron Kiviniemi led in a moment of silence and Courtney Domokur led the Pledge of Allegiance. Chairman McCoy called the meeting to order, welcomed everyone, and introduced the board members and staff. In addition to approximately 10 guests, the individuals listed below were in attendance.

**BOARD MEMBERS:**

Tawny McCoy, Chair  
Ron Kiviniemi, Vice Chair  
Courtney Domokur  
Marty Griffin  
Kimsey Jackson

**BOARD ATTORNEY:**

Kris Caudle, Campbell Shatley

**MEDIA:**

Jordon Morgan, Transylvania Times

**CLARK NEXSEN ARCHITECTS:**

Chad Roberson

**STAFF:**

Dr. Jeff McDaris, Superintendent  
Kelly Clark, Administrative Assistant  
Dr. Brian Weaver, Assistant Superintendent  
Carrie Norris, Director K-8 Education  
Audrey Reneau, Director, Federal Programs  
Gabrielle Frost, Chief Financial Officer  
Jen Heatherly, Public Information Officer  
Chris Whitlock, Director, Technology Services  
Stephen Shields, Technology Specialist  
Kelly Cook, School Resource Officer  
Greg Bembry, School Resource Officer  
Mike Hall, School Resource Officer

1. **Approval of Agenda**  
ON A MOTION BY MR. KIVINIEMI, SECONDED BY MRS. DOMOKUR, the meeting agenda for January 24, 2022 was unanimously approved.
2. **Public Comment**  
Chairman McCoy reviewed the guidelines for public comment and informed speakers that they would have three minutes each. Excerpts from the speakers' comments are listed below.

**Jami Reese, parent** - I'm missing my son's game to be here. It's a pretty big deal because I make it a point to go to all of my children's activities. The only board meetings I have missed since we started this mask battle is to attend their activities. As important as it is for kids to see their parents on the sidelines, it is more important for them to see us standing up for their rights. My son would like to have the right to breathe freely at school as he does everywhere else in the county. His rights should not end where someone else's begins. I do not give medical consent for Transylvania County Schools to mask my child or perform any other medical interventions. This is well documented on his yearly paperwork. Each of you has a duty to stop this governmental overreach and power. I would not be standing here tonight missing my son's game if that were not true. Each of you also has a duty to speak out against this narrative that if parents disagree with decisions made by school officials, then we are attacking them. Blind allegiance is ignorance. Parenting does not end when our children enter the school doors. If we have questions or concerns, that should be met with applause and understanding. While school may be the safest place for some, that is not the case for the majority. You can't beg for parental participation in one breath and belittle parents' concerns in the other, as I have witnessed by some vocal staff of Transylvania County Schools. The greatest success in this pandemic will occur when we agree to set aside our differences and come together on a common purpose--our children. I have heard many people speak at these meetings who don't have children in the schools being affected. They don't get an opinion. You sent out a survey in November. The majority spoke up in favor of optional masks. We heard there was a petition started to pressure you into an emergency meeting. So just for fun, we started our own. We have as many signatures in half the amount of time. Please keep masks optional and put a stop to the divisive language from pro-maskers that people who disagree are ignorant and want people to die. Our children deserve better than to be blamed for this pandemic [quoted Bible verse]. We do not have to live in fear of death.

**Ann Kimble, parent** - Since the beginning of the school year we have had four kids take their life. We don't need any more of that. We don't need any more challenges between what teachers teach our kids in school and what their parents teach them at home. Children don't need to feel that they are a vector of disease and are responsible for killing grandma or grandpa. When they go out in public they see everybody walking around doing what they choose to do with their options. There is enough research for anyone in this community and any parent to choose to mask or vaccinate their child. That is their choice. But in giving them an overall power over the rest of us who choose to disagree with that, that's an error in equity. We don't need to be putting our kids on the front line. Let them go back to being kids in school, let teachers teach, and please just put this issue to rest.

**Cassie Broshears, parent** - In the last twelve months of attending these meetings I've learned a lot of things that were not on my radar before. Things like bylaws, parliamentary procedures, land sales, traffic impact studies, construction bonds, and bid processes. And one of things I have learned to appreciate is that the board frequently looks for and listens to the experts in those areas. You defer to your attorney for legal considerations, you defer to contractors and architects for cost proposals, and you defer to the county manager for traffic and land use information. You defer to the people who are educated and experienced in these specialized areas--as you should. Which only makes it more puzzling that when it comes to a public health crisis, you make decisions that are in conflict with local public and private health experts. You say on the webpage that you continue to rely on public health officials and engage in the same interagency cooperation that marks any threat response in our area. Last week the numbers showed the highest case count and case positives and quarantines our county has experienced.

Much higher than when you initially approved the universal mask policy. Where is the partnership in ignoring every recommendation from local and state public health experts? Where is the partnership in ignoring the health recommendations that keep kids in school and maximizes in-person learning? I hope you reflect on these questions before you make your decision tonight. Why are you approaching public health policy any differently than any other decision made in our school system? Why are you ignoring the advice of the experts? Why are you ignoring your own data? How can you continue to make these decisions knowing you are ignoring the advice of health care professionals who then have to treat the students and families? It is a betrayal of the partnership. Please do what we already know works to reduce transmission and increase in-person learning. Don't wait until something happens that you won't be able to take back. Asking a child to wear a mask is no different than asking them to wear pants or shoes. Please reinstate universal masking tonight.

**Meredith Licht, teacher** - I would like to ask all of you to thoughtfully reconsider masking for a couple of reasons. We are looking at a 51% positivity rate in our county. That is astounding. In my classroom alone, I have at least one student in every class period who was absent due to quarantine, testing positive, or close contact with a COVID-positive parent or family member. I truly believe if we had not had that godsend of a snow, we would have found ourselves in a very dire situation last week. We might have had to shut down some schools. It has been reported by staff at BMS that before the snow, they were operating on bare bones staffing, such that their principal was serving food in the cafeteria. I commend him for his service, but that is not his job. At BHS, we don't have enough bus drivers because of folks having to be out. Our custodians have been filling in for the bus drivers and students were filling in for the custodians. When we consider the rates of transmission in our county, the extreme transmissibility of this variant, and the well-being of an already overtaxed staff, I ask that you consider reinstating universal masking, at least until the next board meeting when you have to vote again. One last thing to consider. We hear a lot about how people don't wear masks in public and therefore the schools should be no different. Spend all eight hours of your working day in a classroom and you will see it is very different from being in public. In no public place will you be in as close a contact for as long as you are in a classroom. No matter how hard we try, keeping students three feet apart is nearly impossible. I ask that you keep everyone safe during this very uncertain time and reinstate universal masking until the next time you have to vote again.

**Alice Wellborn** - Meredith is right. At Brevard College, everyone wears a mask. At Blue Ridge Community College, everyone wears a mask. I'm not going to try to tell you how to vote on the mask policy. You have access to information and data and recommendations that are not available to me. Instead, I want to talk about the decision-making process. This board has always based its decisions on two basic priorities, student safety and academic excellence. Students must feel safe and protected in their school environment or they cannot learn effectively. Teachers must feel safe and respected in the school environment in order to give their best to students and families. Great learning requires great teaching. Academic excellence requires consistent instruction; strong relationships between teachers, students and families; and ample instruction time. These are the things that have been significantly affected during the pandemic, and our students have suffered for it. I do not expect this board to act on the basis of loud voices, party politics, the opinions of friends and family, feelings, beliefs, or unsubstantiated research. I do expect this board to make rational decisions based on solid information, local and state data, and the recommendations of experts. I expect those rational decisions to prioritize student safety and academic excellence.

**3. Good News Report**

Dr. McDaris recognized the student artwork from Rosman Elementary School that was on display in the board room and thanked School Resource Officers Kelly Cook, Greg Bemby, and Mike Hall for attending the meeting. He reported the following items:

***January is School Board Appreciation Month***

January 2022 marks the 27<sup>th</sup> anniversary of School Board Appreciation Month, a time to recognize the important contributions that school board members make to their communities. As citizens who serve students and educators, school board members face complex and demanding challenges. These last two years have been a testament to not just students' and teachers' abilities to adapt to their constantly changing environment, but also to school board members who devote countless hours trying to make the educational experience the best it can be in a time where normalcy isn't always accessible. Now as never before, these dedicated individuals have been called upon to make the hard decisions as they strive toward the shared goal of helping students, grow, learn, and enjoy their educational experience.

***MLK Day, National Day of Service***

Observed each year on the third Monday in January, Martin Luther King Jr. Day celebrates the lasting legacy of the famed civil rights leader to our country and its citizens. Martin Luther King Day is the only federal holiday designated as a National Day of Service to encourage all Americans to volunteer. Our thanks to the students, staff, and neighbors who worked together on January 17<sup>th</sup> to help improve their communities and commemorate Dr. King's legacy of service.

**4. Former Students in the Military**

The board recognized the list of former students from Brevard High School, Rosman High School, and Davidson River School who are currently serving or have previously served in the U.S. Military. There were no new names on the list.

**5. Consent Agenda**

ON A MOTION BY MRS. DOMOKUR, SECONDED BY MR. JACKSON, the minutes of the December 7 and 20 meetings, the personnel report for January 24, 2022 (attached), and the appointment of Ashlyn Orr as interim school treasurer at T. C. Henderson School of Science & Technology, pursuant to N.C.G.S. 115C-448(a), were unanimously approved.

**6. COVID Update and Review of Mask Policy**

Dr. Brian Weaver presented the latest COVID-19 data for the school system and county. The number of positive cases for students rose by 170 from January 10 to January 24. Positive cases for staff rose by 58 for the same period. There was considerable discussion regarding the data and the difference between quarantine and isolation. Mr. Jackson noted how few people in the room were wearing face coverings and stated that the N95 mask is the only effective one. Mr. Griffin stated that he wears his mask to protect others. *[A guest disrupted the discussion and Dr. McDaris offered to have her removed. Chairman McCoy declined and gave a verbal warning instead.]* After further discussion, ON A MOTION BY MR. KIVINIEMI, SECONDED BY MR. GRIFFIN, the board voted 4:1 to reinstate the mask mandate for students, staff, and visitors in all schools and to revisit the decision at the second meeting in February (FOR: Domokur, Griffin, Kiviniemi, McCoy; AGAINST: Jackson).

Chairman McCoy called for a five-minute recess. *[The same person who disrupted the once began yelling at board members again and was ejected from the meeting.]*

## 7. **Architect & CMAR Contracts**

The board reviewed modified contracts with Clark Nexsen, Inc., and Vannoy Construction that reflect the revised scope of services for the school bond construction projects and would effectuate the construction of the projects without further delay. Chad Roberson, architect, was present to answer questions. ON A MOTION BY MR. KIVINIEMI, SECONDED BY MR. GRIFFIN, the board unanimously approved the amended contracts as presented. The next step would be approval of the amended contracts by the county commissioners. Chairman McCoy read the following statement that that will be shared with the board of commissioners before the joint meeting on January 31.

*Why is the Board approving these contract amendments tonight?*

- *The voters of Transylvania County approved bond funds with the express purpose of renovating the Rosman Middle and High School and Brevard High School campuses.*
- *Due to the pandemic, the costs of construction have increased substantially, and that escalation shows no signs of stopping or reversing.*
- *Every month that goes by is another month lost to increased prices and delayed construction.*
- *We believe Option #1, while not being perfect, does provide the most construction for the money available and there is no reason to delay approval of Option #1.*
- *This vote means that the projects are ready to proceed if and when the county commissioners approve Option #1 by voting for the architect and construction manager contract amendments.*
- *Taxes have been raised since 2019 to pay for these bonds and these projects need to begin.*
- *If we change course and include other schools in the bond projects we must “start over” as a legal matter. That means a new architect and construction manager selection process, the cost of new plans and specifications, the cost of bidding the work and the loss of significant time at Rosman and Brevard while construction costs continue to rise.*
- *We do not believe that “starting over” is realistic or a wise use of taxpayer funds, especially given all the money spent so far.*

*What about other school construction needs?*

- *Again, Rosman Middle & High and Brevard High will be paid for from the bond proceeds.*
- *Currently, there is very little school debt left on the county’s books from prior years and we believe there will be no school debt after the 2022-23 fiscal year.*
- *Thus, the restricted monies from the Article 40 & 42 local sales taxes state lottery proceeds can be used to address other school capital needs.*
- *The combined annual total of restricted sales tax monies and new lottery funds should be in excess of \$1.5 million per year.*
- *In short, a portion of the annual sales tax monies and the current and future lottery funds could be used for new school debt to address the needs at other county schools or using a “pay-as-you go” approach to school projects.*
- *Finally, many of the needs at Brevard involve crucial renovations that must take place. Thus, if monies from the bond issuance are used for other schools, it is likely*

*that more will be taken from the Rosman campus work than from the Brevard campus work to fund work at other schools.*

*What happens next?*

- *First, the school board is asking the County Commissioners to approve the architect and construction manager contract amendments that we approved tonight so that work at Rosman and Brevard High can proceed.*
- *We understand that the County does not intend to vote at our January 31<sup>st</sup> joint meeting. However, our architect informs us that each month of delay will further delay the schedule and push certain early construction activities into the winter months. Therefore, we simply ask for a vote on these contract amendments by the County as soon as possible.*
- *Second, the school board will review all sources of school construction funding with the County in order to develop a long-range funding plan to address other pressing school construction needs.*

*Finally, our vote tonight is NOT a “line in the sand.” We appreciate all that the County does for our schools, and we want to work cooperatively to address all school capital needs. Simply put, we truly feel that Option #1 is the best course of action for our school district and valuable time is slipping away. We respectfully ask for a vote from the County with regards to Option #1 as soon as possible.*

## 8. **Superintendent’s Update**

Dr. McDaris reported that the new House Select Committee, “An Education System for North Carolina’s Future,” held its first meeting. The committee plans to focus on (a) requirements of the standard course of study; (b) outcomes of the standard course of study, including the appropriate metrics; (c) opportunities for students to demonstrate competency at their own pace; and (d) funding and outcomes of current programs, including partnerships with nonprofits, that support the standards and outcomes of sound basic education.

North Carolina’s 2022 primary elections stand a chance of being delayed for a second time--until June--under a bill that passed last Wednesday by the General Assembly. The bill has now gone to the Governor’s desk. The bill would give the legislature more time to redraw the state’s political district maps in case the N.C. Supreme Court rules that the current maps are unconstitutional.

On February 17, the Public School Forum will host its 8th Annual Eggs and Issues. This virtual event includes the release of the Public School Forum’s Top Education Issues for 2022. These are the issues most likely to drive NC policy debate during the upcoming legislative session.

On January 26, the North Carolina Chamber of Commerce will host a webinar on how K-12 education fuels NC’s competitive success. This will involve a conversation with NC Chamber President and CEO Gary Salamido and State Superintendent of Public Instruction Catherine Truitt.

## 9. **Important Dates**

Jan. 31	JOINT MEETING, 6:00 p.m., Commissioner Chambers
Feb. 7	PLANNING/WORK SESSION, 5:30 p.m., MEC

Feb. 21 REGULAR MEETING, 6:30 p.m., MEC  
 Feb. 24, 25 Remote learning days  
 Mar. 7 REGULAR MEETING, 6:30 p.m., MEC  
 Mar. 11 Students dismissed at noon  
 Mar. 14 Teacher workday  
 Mar. 15 Remote learning day  
 Mar. 21 REGULAR MEETING, 6:30 p.m., MEC  
 Apr. 4 REGULAR MEETING, 6:30 p.m., MEC  
 Apr. 8 Students dismissed at noon  
 Apr. 11-18 Spring break  
 Apr. 18 NO MEETING (annual leave day; no students)  
 May 2 REGULAR MEETING, 6:30 p.m., MEC

**10. Other Items**

Mr. Griffin asked whether the teacher and staff pay raises are on track for this month. Dr. Weaver confirmed that the salary increases will be reflected in the January 31<sup>st</sup> payroll.

Dr. McDaris introduced new Chief Financial Officer, Gabrielle “Gabi” Frost. The board welcomed Ms. Frost.

Dr. McDaris requested prayers for the family of Moby Sorrells, who recently passed away. He remarked that Mr. Sorrells holds the record for the most Brevard High School football games attended. Mr. Griffin requested prayers for the family of Darrell Hogsed, former Rosman High School CTE teacher, who has passed away.

**11. Closed Session**

A MOTION WAS MADE BY MRS. MCCOY and SECONDED BY MRS. DOMOKUR to go into closed session pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 143-318.11 for the following purposes: under subsection (a)(1) to prevent the disclosure of confidential student information protected under 20 U.S.C. 1232g; and pursuant to subsection (a)(3) to consult with the board attorney in order to preserve the attorney-client privilege. The motion passed unanimously and the closed session convened at approximately 8:06 p.m. The following board members were present: Tawny McCoy, Chair; Ron Kiviniemi, Vice Chair; Courtney Domokur; Marty Griffin; and Kimsey Jackson. Attorney Kris Caudle was also present in the closed session. ON A MOTION BY MRS. MCCOY, SECONDED BY MR. GRIFFIN, the closed session was unanimously adjourned and the board returned to open session at approximately 8:25 p.m.

There was no further business, and ON A MOTION BY MR. GRIFFIN, SECONDED BY MR. KIVINIEMI, the meeting was adjourned at 8:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Chairman

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Secretary

**PERSONNEL REPORT  
January 24, 2022**

I. ACCEPT THE REPORT OF RESIGNATIONS/TERMINATIONS ACCEPTED/INITIATED BY THE SUPERINTENDENT FROM/FOR THE FOLLOWING PERSONS:

Licensed Personnel

Charles Hale Durant, Media Coordinator, BHS, effective June 2, 2022

Classified Personnel

Amanda Allison, Teacher Assistant, BES, effective January 21, 2022

Jennifer Steele, Office Support, BMS, effective January 21, 2022

Stephanie Wilson, Teacher Assistant, TCH, effective January 14, 2022

II. APPROVE THE EMPLOYMENT RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE SUPERINTENDENT FOR THE FOLLOWING PERSONS:

Licensed Personnel

Michael Luke Coleman, Head Football Coach and Teacher, BHS, effective February 7, 2022

Melony Hipp, Teacher, PFES, effective June 4, 2022

Tysha Owens, Interim School Counselor, RES, effective January 31, 2022 through June 2, 2022

Classified Personnel

Ashley Banning, Teacher Assistant, TCH, effective January 24, 2022

Sharon Briggs, Teacher Assistant, RES, effective January 10, 2022

Margaret Jay, Interim Teacher Assistant, RES, effective January 6, 2022 through June 1, 2022

Shaunna McCall, Teacher Assistant, TCH, effective January 12, 2022

Robert Melton, Distance Learning Facilitator, RHS, effective February 15, 2022

Allison Miller Nicholson, Teacher Assistant, BES, effective January 10, 2022

Ashlyn Orr, Interim Office Support, TCH, effective January 12, 2022

III. ACCEPT THE REPORT OF TRANSFER OF ASSIGNMENT MADE BY THE SUPERINTENDENT FOR THE FOLLOWING PERSONS:

Licensed Personnel

None

Classified Personnel

None

IV. APPROVE THE LEAVES OF ABSENCE RECOMMENDED BY THE SUPERINTENDENT FOR THE FOLLOWING PERSONS:

Licensed Personnel

None

Classified Personnel

None

V. APPROVE THE SUPERINTENDENT'S RECOMMENDATION FOR THE FOLLOWING  
SUBSTITUTE EMPLOYEES:

Substitute Teachers

Thomas Ammons

Suzanne Burnette

Cody Earp

William Ryan Edwards

Nancy Galloway

Heidi Johnson

Substitute School Nutrition Workers

Tara Corn

Tabitha Haney

Brenda Renae McCall