

**Minutes
Transylvania County Board of Education
January 24, 2023**

INVOCATION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME

BUSINESS ITEMS (including amendments and rescissions):

1. Approval of Agenda
2. Closed Session
3. Discuss Search for New Superintendent

ADJOURN

The Transylvania County Board of Education met in special session on January 24, 2023 at 6:30 p.m. at the Morris Education Center. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss confidential personnel matters in closed session and discuss the search for the next superintendent in open session. Ron Kiviniemi led in a moment of silence and Tawny McCoy led the Pledge of Allegiance. Chairman McCoy called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. In addition to approximately six guests, the individuals listed below were in attendance.

BOARD MEMBERS:

Tawny McCoy, Chair
Kimsey Jackson, Vice-Chair
Tanya Dalton
Ron Kiviniemi
Chris Wiener

STAFF:

Dr. Jeff McDaris, Superintendent
Jenny Hunter, Administrative Assistant
Dr. Brian Weaver, Assistant Superintendent
Missy Ellenberger, Director, 9-12 Education
Audrey Reneau, Director, Federal Programs
Ray Owen, School Resource Officer

BOARD ATTORNEY:

Chris Campbell, Campbell Shatley

MEDIA:

Jordon Morgan, Transylvania Times

1. **Approval of Agenda**
ON A MOTION BY MR. JACKSON, SECONDED BY MR. WIENER, the meeting agenda for January 24, 2023 was unanimously approved as presented.
2. **Closed Session**
ON A MOTION BY MRS. MCCOY, SECONDED BY MR. KIVINIEMI, the board voted unanimously to go into closed session pursuant to G.S. § 143-318.11(a)(1) to prevent the disclosure of privileged or confidential personnel information pursuant to G.S. § 115C-319-321. The closed session convened at approximately 6:40 p.m. The following board members were present: Tawny McCoy, Chair; Kimsey Jackson, Vice Chair; Tanya Dalton; Ron Kiviniemi; and Chris Wiener. Board Attorney Chris Campbell was also present for the closed session. BY MOTION MADE BY MRS. MCCOY AND SECONDED BY MR. JACKSON, the board adjourned the closed session and returned to open session at 6:50 p.m.

After a brief recess, the meeting resumed at approximately 7:00 p.m.
3. **Discuss Search for New Superintendent**
CHAIRMAN MCCOY MOVED that the board engage with the process to search for the next superintendent with an intended start date of July 1, 2023. MR. KIVINIEMI

SECONDED. Chairman McCoy opened the floor for discussion. Mr. Campbell distributed a sample timeline, application, and vacancy announcement for review. He recommended posting the announcement as soon as possible because our system will be competing with other NC systems for applicants. Chairman McCoy gave a report from her conversation with the North Carolina School Boards Association. The NCSBA director said they already had some interest in the position and that our system would sell itself. They believe a four month search is sufficient. They also recommended that the board consider working with Campbell Shatley for the search as NCSBA does not have the staff available to do all that needs to be done.

Mr. Campbell reported that his firm provides a “board assisted search.” They are not a head hunting service. They help advertise and guide boards through the process of deciding who they want to interview. They do not vet or exclude applicants. Costs depend on how many background/reference checks the board wants done and whether or not the board wants an attorney to sit in on the interviews. The cost range would be \$12,000 to \$22,000.

Mr. Wiener asked 1) what are the legal ramifications to continue operating the district should the board be unable to agree on a candidate or to find a candidate with whom they cannot negotiate a contract, and 2) what are the requirements for an out-of-state candidate. Mr. Campbell reported that if the board cannot agree on someone, they would need to hire an interim superintendent. This could be a retired superintendent or someone in-house. North Carolina has an alternative process for out-of-state candidates. As long as the person has at least four years of higher level education experience, they do not have to have a NC superintendent’s license

Mr. Wiener asked how to cast the largest possible net for candidates. Mr. Campbell reported that by advertising with NCSBA the posting is automatically advertised across the state and with the national organization. Another resource used often is EdWeek.org. It is not free but many systems use it. Mr. Campbell stated that he would not recommend using indeed.com because that can result in submissions from many unqualified applicants.

Mr. Jackson asked what type of information should be included in the advertisement. Mr. Campbell reviewed the sample application and announcement/advertisement, which may be revised as the board chooses. Once finalized, the ads will be published in professional journals and websites and on the district website. Mr. Campbell recommended not requesting too much information on the application because the board will have to wade through all of it. The application must not contain any questions that violate EEOC requirements. Campbell Shatley has a list of legal “don’ts” that the board can review. He added that his firm can get the ads placed on Monday if the members get their suggestions to the chair and vice chair and authorize them to finalize the ad.

Mr. Wiener expressed concerns that four months is not enough time to get the breadth of candidates the board would want. He feels they will only get candidates who are already familiar with TCS or are not focused necessarily on what is best for students. Mr. Campbell stated that the board could schedule Zoom interviews and narrow the pool down to 4-5 interview candidates very easily. The number of interviews drives the pressure on the schedule. He reported that ten years ago his firm saw 20-30 applicants for each superintendency. Now the pool is typically 12-13 applicants. Fewer people want to be school superintendents these days.

Chairman McCoy reported that during the last superintendent search, Dr. Sonna Lyda announced her retirement on January 12. That board held 10 school and community input sessions, interviewed the top four candidates in April, and announced Dr. Jeff McDaris as the new superintendent in May.

Mr. Jackson asked whether NC superintendents are required to have a college degree and if so, could it be an engineering degree, for example? Mr. Campbell stated that superintendents must have a college degree. It does not have to be an education degree.

Chairman McCoy asked if the application format is standard. Mr. Campbell reported that the current format has been used in over 20 searches. It is designed to help boards hone down the pool of applicants to a manageable number for interviews. It can be revised if the board chooses. Mr. Campbell recommended that the board decide first who they are interested in, check their references, and then interview. It makes for a better process to know as much as possible about a candidate before the interview. He strongly advised not wasting time interviewing those who don't fit the bill.

Mr. Jackson listed some of the things he would like to ask during the interviews. Mr. Campbell cautioned against asking things that by law may not be asked such as marital status, religion, children, etc.

THE VOTE WAS CALLED and Mrs. McCoy's motion passed unanimously. MR. WIENER MADE A MOTION, SECONDED BY MR. KIVINIEMI, for the board to select Campbell Shatley as its superintendent search firm. The motion passed unanimously. MR. WIENER MADE A MOTION to authorize the board chair and vice to finalize the vacancy announcement and application after receiving board member feedback in order to post no later than Monday and that the postings go to the national school board organizations, EdWeek, and other professional sites in order to cast the widest possible net. MRS. DALTON SECONDED, and the motion passed unanimously. Mr. Wiener recommended that the announcement be revised to de-emphasize our district's proximity to Asheville and focus more on Transylvania County.

Mr. Campbell asked the board to consider how it wants to handle listening sessions to solicit community and staff feedback on the characteristics desired for the next superintendent. He advised that this can be a huge time commitment for board members, and some boards choose to split up into smaller teams in order to cover more meetings. Mr. Wiener asked if the board could hold closed sessions with school faculties in order to keep their input confidential. Mr. Campbell advised against that. Mr. Wiener asked if a single staff member wanted to share their concerns with the board privately, could that be done in closed session? Mr. Campbell reported that would not be a permissible topic for a closed session per NC statute. Any staff member may call a board member or members and share their concerns, but if they want the board to consider that information, it cannot be confidential. All of the input will be public.

Board members discussed how best to schedule and divide up the listening sessions in order to reach all areas of the county. It was agreed to schedule a variety of sessions at community centers and schools. Mr. Wiener suggested combining some of the sessions with school board meetings. Mr. Campbell noted that the listening sessions do not have to be livestreamed. The board also discussed having a digital survey for staff and community members with paper copies available if needed. Mr. Wiener recommended having draft survey questions ready for board feedback on February 6. Mr. Campbell stated that he could send the board a sample survey tomorrow.

Chairman McCoy reported that Mrs. Dalton would not be able to attend the February 6 meeting. The board agreed by general consensus to schedule a special meeting on January 30, 2023 at 6:30 p.m. to further discuss dates and locations for the listening sessions, the survey, and other related items.

Mr. Jackson suggested that the board go to afterschool staff meetings to get input from teachers. Dr. McDaris advised that some staff meetings are split up according to duties. Mrs. McCoy recommended setting other times to meet with staff.

Mr. Wiener stated that he would like the listening sessions to be recorded and if possible, to also address the Spanish-speaking community. There was discussion about making the surveys available in Spanish.

By general consensus, the following items were noted for the January 30 agenda: 1) finalize the application and advertisement, 2) discuss and finalize the survey, and 3) schedule faculty and community listening sessions. Chairman McCoy reported that she has consulted with Gabi Juba and Ms. Juba confirmed there are fund balance monies available to pay for the search.

There was no further business, and ON A MOTION BY MR. KIVINIEMI, SECONDED BY MR. WIENER, the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chairman

Secretary