

**Minutes
Transylvania County Board of Education
October 11, 2022**

INVOCATION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME

BUSINESS ITEMS (including amendments and rescissions):

1. Approval of Agenda
2. Appointments to Community Relations Board (*addition*)
3. School Facility Options
4. Board Discussion
5. Date(s) of Next Meeting(s)
6. Public Comment

ADJOURN

The Transylvania County Board of Education met in special session on October 11, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. in the Brevard Middle School Media Center. The purpose of the meeting was 1) to hold a work session for updates and information on school facility options, and 2) to take action on dates and times for future meetings. Ron Kiviniemi led in a moment of silence and Kimsey Jackson led the Pledge of Allegiance. Chairman McCoy called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. In addition to approximately 30 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:

Chris Campbell, Campbell Shatley

MEDIA:

Dan DeWitt, Brevard NewsBeat
Jordon Morgan, Transylvania Times

STAFF:

Dr. Jeff McDaris, Superintendent
Jenny Hunter, Administrative Assistant
Dr. Brian Weaver, Assistant Superintendent
Jen Heatherly, Public Information Officer
Audrey Reneau, Director, Federal Programs
Gabi Juba, Chief Finance Officer
Janette Broda, Director, School Nutrition
Chris Whitlock, Director, Technology Services
Scott Strickler, Principal, BHS
Amanda Lewis, Principal, PFES
Patrick Chapman, Principal, TCH
Jeff Bailey, Principal, BMS
Julie Queen, Principal, RMS
Brent Owens, School Resource Officer
David Wright, School Resource Officer

1. **Approval of Agenda**
MRS. MCCOY MADE A MOTION, SECONDED BY MR. KIVINIEMI, to add "Appointments to the Community Relations Board" as new agenda item no 2. The motion passed unanimously and the agenda was approved as amended. Chairman McCoy announced that public comment would be limited to the topics discussed during the meeting.
2. **Appointments to Community Relations Board**
ON A MOTION BY MRS. MCCOY, SECONDED BY MR. JACKSON, the board unanimously appointed student representatives Chantelle Moll (RHS) and Ryan Merrill (BHS) and re-appointed school board representative Ron Kiviniemi to the Transylvania Community Relations Board.

3. School Facility Options

Chairman McCoy reported that tonight's presentation would be for information and discussion purposes only and that no decisions would be made at this time. Dr. McDaris presented a comprehensive review of school facility options and the pros and cons of school consolidation. The PowerPoint presentation may be viewed at [Facilities Options for Schools](#).

4. Board Discussion

Mr. Griffin stated there is no guarantee that consolidation would create an athletic powerhouse. He feels that most people would want to stay in their communities with friends and family than go to a school in a different community. He stated that he personally prefers smaller schools and feels this should come down to a vote by the people considering how much money each option would cost.

Mr. Kiviniemi reported that his first principalship was at T.C. Henderson Elementary School, which has always enjoyed a huge level of community support. He stated that he has always been an advocate of small community schools and believes that students need to feel they are part of a community. Ultimately, whatever is done will depend on funding from the county. He stated that it is a shame that the current funding structure for North Carolina's schools pits school boards against county commissioners. He added that it would have been within the power of the board of commissioners to meet all of the county's facility needs based on a study done seven years ago. Unfortunately, nothing was done at that time and now the costs have grown astronomically. He agrees that no one wants to pay more taxes. He urged citizens to let the commissioners and the school board members know their preferences and then advocate for those preferences.

Mr. Domokur stated that she had pushed for tonight's meeting because after hearing from some people from the upper end of the county she thought it was important to have this conversation. She reported that she and her family live in Brevard but send their kids to Rosman. She values small schools and small classrooms. If the majority of the community now supports consolidation, she hopes the board would respond to that. She urged everyone to share their input because it will impact their taxes whether they have kids in school or not. She thanked Dr. McDaris for his presentation and the attendees for coming out.

Mr. Jackson stated that he had pushed for this meeting too and was disappointed that more people were not in attendance. He stated that he bleeds blue and white but would support consolidation if it is what the people want. First, it must be the right thing for the students. Second would be the cost--consolidation could approach \$150 million. He reported that he lived and worked in Florida where things were different in that school boards there had taxing authority. He added that the courthouse and Blue Ridge Community College must be addressed also. He stated that he would favor a brand new high school rather than combining BHS and RHS into an existing campus. He feels that lack of meaningful economic development in the county is a big problem. In addition to the high schools, our other schools need about \$35 million to address their facility needs. He feels the board needs input from citizens as to what the majority wants, what they are willing to fund, and how to get it done. He advised that none of it will be cheap and we need to face up to that.

Mr. Domokur stated that the slides did not include RES or TCH and asked Dr. McDaris if they would stay in their current locations. Dr. McDaris explained that because most of the consolidation chatter has centered on the high schools and middle schools, they were the focus of his presentation. He stated that personally, he would not close TCH.

He predicted that if TCH closed, many families in that area would take their children to a charter school in Jackson County. Mrs. Domokur noted that travel time from TCH to RES would be a concern.

Mr. Griffin agreed with Mr. Jackson that turnout for this meeting was disappointing and did not include younger families. He stated that the board needs to hear from parents of elementary-aged children because they are ones that would be most impacted.

Chairman McCoy reported that last night's county commissioner meeting included some discussion about the school board's letter requesting a path forward on the bond. She hopes to receive a response soon. Mrs. Domokur stated that it has been four years since the bond was passed and it is important to address concerns with accurate information. Chairman McCoy reported that none of the people who have approached her have changed their support for the bond. Instead, they want to know why all the delays and when things are going to get going. She emphasized that the board has not moved away from its desire to move forward with the bond and wants to work together with the county to fund other facilities.

Mr. Jackson stated that he has heard more about consolidation in the last 3-4 months than at any other time. He stated that the board should move forward with the bond if possible because the schools need to be maintained. But if the citizens want something else, then the board needs to know.

Mr. Griffin stated that many people think consolidation is cheaper, but tonight's presentation showed that it is not. He believes the board needs to pursue what it can afford through the bond.

Chairman McCoy stated that she is thankful for our district's unique and open enrollment policy that gives families a choice for what works best for their children. She stated that she has heard comments that Rosman does not offer a good education because it is small. She strongly refutes that and gave examples of some tremendously successful graduates from RHS. She stated that as a proud graduate of RHS she knows how much the school means to the community. She stated that the town has even considered what it would take to open a charter school there if RHS goes away. She hopes the county stays the course with two high schools for now. She expressed that she is personally committed to our community schools and wants to keep focus on the bond projects and finding ways to fund our other facilities.

5. Date(s) of Next Meeting(s)

Chairman McCoy reported that the board's next regular meeting on Monday, October 17, conflicts with the Chamber of Commerce's scheduled Candidates Forum. She therefore MOVED that the board change its October 17 meeting to Tuesday, October 18. MR. JACKSON SECONDED and the motion passed unanimously

6. Public Comment

Chairman McCoy reviewed the guidelines for public comment.

Jami Reese - I have heard comments in support of combining the high schools. I have no strong opinion either way, but I do want us to do what is best for children. They deserve the best path forward. Bickering and pointing fingers at the board of commissioners does not help. They were elected by the public. I voted for the bond in 2018. Since then, I have lost confidence in the leadership of the board. Millions of dollars have been wasted on architectural fees. Stop pointing fingers. Teenagers are

concerned about mold and being scared to eat in the cafeteria. They are mostly concerned about the harsh attendance policy. I am concerned about the potential negative effects of the last two weeks. Don't pretend to care about the next suicide attempt.

Chris Wiener - I do know a lot of people who have changed their position on the bond. There is an option that was not offered. We need to re-invite the citizens to a new discussion on the bond. What is best for students is expansion, not consolidation. Retain the existing schools and repurpose them with extra activities. Build a third campus for an expanded CTE program. There is a lot of money in this county. Establish an endowment as a way to fund the schools. Taxation is legalized theft. If we decide on consolidation, we should use all competitions. We should not be afraid of competition. If we're doing things right, competition will drive excellence and not take it away.

Carl Pressley - I am for consolidation. Repairs are just band-aids. Back in 1969, we talked about consolidating in the Cathey's Creek area. It would be a better situation for our kids in the long run. What about our lottery money? Why aren't we getting our lottery money? South Carolina spends a lot of lottery money on their schools. We don't get a dime. The county commissioners have done nothing for this county. They have kicked the can on the courthouse for many years. Tiger/devil or devil/tiger, we will eventually have to consolidate. Now is the time. Talk to our congressmen to get the money for our schools. You should be pushing them.

Chairman McCoy offered an opportunity for anyone else who had not signed up to speak. Mr. Wiener objected, pointing out that the board has not permitted this change in protocol in the past. Chairman McCoy stated that Mr. Wiener was absolutely correct and rescinded her offer.

There was no further business, and ON A MOTION BY MR. KIVINIEMI, SECONDED BY MRS. DOMOKUR, the meeting was adjourned at 7:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chairman

Secretary