

**Minutes
Transylvania County Board of Education
November 15, 2021**

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. Non-Faculty Coaches
6. Proposal to Purchase Board Property for Workforce Housing
7. FY22 Budget Update
8. COVID Update and Review of Mask Policy
9. Superintendent's Update
10. Important Dates
11. Other Items

The Transylvania County Board of Education met in regular session at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, November 15, 2021 in the Brevard High School Auditorium. Ron Kiviniemi led in a moment of silence and Marty Griffin led the Pledge of Allegiance. Chairman McCoy welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order. In addition to approximately 70 guests, the following individuals were in attendance.

BOARD MEMBERS:

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

BOARD ATTORNEY:

Kris Caudle, Campbell-Shatley

SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS:

Kelly Cook
David Wright
Greg Bemby

MEDIA:

Jordon Morgan, Transylvania Times

STAFF:

Dr. Jeff McDaris, Superintendent
Jenny Hunter, Administrative Assistant
Dr. Brian Weaver, Assistant Superintendent
Missy Ellenberger, Director 9-12 Education
Carrie Norris, Director, K-8 Education
Audrey Reneau, Director, Federal Programs
Jen Heatherly, Public Information Officer
Alan Justice, Director, Transportation, Athletics
Chris Whitlock, Director, Technology Services
Blake Tesnow, Technology Specialist
Jenna Sorrells, Assistant Principal, BHS
Mick Galloway, Assistant Principal, BHS

1. Approval of Agenda

ON A MOTION BY MR. GIFFIN, SECONDED BY MRS. DOMOKUR, the meeting agenda for November 15, 2021 was unanimously approved.

2. Public Comment

CHAIRMAN MCCOY MADE A MOTION that due to the number of speakers that had signed up and the different topics indicated, each speaker would have two minutes instead of the usual three minutes. MR. KIVINIEMI SECONDED and the motion passed unanimously. She reviewed the guidelines and informed the assembly that a maximum time of 30 minutes would be allotted for public comment. She warned that anyone causing a disruption would be removed. Excerpts from the speakers' comments are listed below.

Meredith Licht, BHS teacher - Thank you for the hard work and the decisions you have had to make. I too look forward to a time when we don't have to wear masks in schools. But that time is not now for several reasons. It is a very complicated issue that affects education in a myriad of ways. Masks keep kids in schools. Requiring masks for a while longer allows us to see how a mask-optional situation in Henderson County works out and how the vaccines for young kids will impact us. All of the counties around us are in areas of high spread. The most important issue is staff morale. Morale is very negative right now. There are so many ways that masking impacts our daily work.

Cassie Broshears, parent - We are celebrating the availability of vaccines for kids. There is a lot of relief among parents. Children that received their first dose are a month away from being safer. Several people asked last time when we could stop masking. It is when the CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend that we stop masking. Football players, Facebook, and social media should not shape our decisions. I ask you to continue masking until public health officials say it's okay to stop.

Kenley McCarson, BHS freshman - I did not attend school for a year because I did not feel comfortable wearing a mask. School is the only place I have to wear one. *[read Bible verses]*. I don't wear a mask because I have God-given natural immunity. You are trying to scare us into submission. *[read more Bible verses]*. Please stop putting this burden on us. Make masks optional.

Christina Barila, RN - For the past few board meetings, one board member has repeatedly asked the same question--when can we stop wearing masks. I recommend that you ask the experts--the CDC, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the National Association of School Nurses. Follow their guidelines. Facemasks are needed indoors in areas of high transmission. They ALL recommend masks in schools at this time. There are lists of reputable medical sources. Stop asking how long you have to wear masks in school. We don't have the answers. These people have the answers.

Rodney Holcomb - I advocate for the continued use of masks. Rely on the expertise of the CDC and their metrics for guidance as to when we can stop masking. We are entering cold and flu season. Our county still remains in a substantial rate of transmission. This is driven by those who are unvaccinated and refuse to wear masks. Look at the recent transmission of drug-resistant TB in Houston and Dallas. One solution worked and the other did not. I appreciate the pressure the board is under. I think other counties going optional is premature.

Brittani Summey, parent - Mr. Kimsey Jackson, you will be the only board member exempt from my commentary tonight. You others should be ashamed. We the parents say it's time for you to leave your positions. You have proven yourself incapable of doing your duties. Tawny, you have interrupted me on more than one occasion. Mr. McDaris, I would like to know why you don't look at us during public comment. You do not make

eye contact so you do not show respect. Mr. Kiviniemi, you repeat the same thing over and over. Mr. Griffin, you have been seen numerous times without a mask. Practice what you preach. Mrs. Domokur . . . *[Time was called. Chairman McCoy directed Mrs. Summey to wrap up. Mrs. Summey ignored her and continued with her comments. Audience members shouted for her microphone to be cut off; others shouted approval and urged her on. Mrs. Summey refused to yield the podium. A school resource officer approached and took the microphone away from her, after which she exited the auditorium.]*

Heather Blythe, parent - The Rosman football players are my heart! They did wear their masks! *[Mrs. Broshears replied from the audience that she was talking about professional football players in her previous comments].* Oh, okay. How long are you going to make our children wait? Is that really who you are as men and women? The American people have been lied to. It's over when God says it's over. It is selfish and delusional to believe otherwise. Am I fighting for the wrong reasons? Economic experts say to ride the wave. What do parents say to their kids about following the crowd? Fear causes us to . . . *[Time was called. There were catcalls from the assembly. Chairman McCoy gave another warning that disruptors would be removed.]*

Zach Quinn, parent - You guys are a unique set of elected officials. State and federal legislators and county officials must live by the rules they pass. The Sheriff has to follow the same laws as the citizens. School board members make decisions and hand down rules for a group of people they are not connected to. You subject them to mandates you exclude yourselves from. We made you trustees to make decisions for our kids when they are not in our care. You failed to be the wall to protect them. These people are the wall. In future, try not to be hypocrites. Do not pass any mandates.

Dan Courtine, teacher - No matter which side you are on, masks are uncomfortable. The facts are that they do help. When we came back to school unmasked, cases went up. When we mandated masks, cases went down. I know about the hell of losing a loved one. Be thankful that your family has not been through that. It's easy to say faith over fear. There's a whole book in the Bible about wisdom. God calls on us to take care of ourselves and others. If you want to quote the Bible, it says to "take care of the least of these." Rely on science and give us until Christmas.

David Bialac - I am here to object to the proposed workforce housing development. We do need affordable housing. But this would not be one of those places. I have friends making \$48,000 a year who are still having a hard time getting back on their feet in Asheville. Some making \$35,000 a year will have a hard time too. There are lots of barriers. A good location would be the land behind Lowe's. There is more access there to grocery stores and restaurants.

Bill DeLemme - I live on Country Club Road and I am in favor of the proposed housing complex. I am excited about the affordable housing it will provide to hard-working community members. People that work in this community need to live in this community. I have no concerns about it.

Julie Lefler - I am here about the apartment complex. Teachers need affordable housing. I am an advocate for it.

Ann Kimble - The time is now to make masks optional. And get back to what you are supposed to be doing. Let every single parent chose what they want to do.

R. K. Young - I live off Country Club Road. I imagine when you purchased property that if you had to replace that property it could really cost. I hope you will move forward on the project.

3. **Good News Report**

Dr. McDaris reported the following item:

BHS Cross Country Teams Excel at State Championships

The Brevard High School Men's Cross Country team took team and individual honors at the 2A Men's State Championship held on November 6, 2021 in Kernersville, NC. Senior Knox Witherspoon won the men's individual state title, and the Brevard men won their first team title in the school's history. The scoring five included Witherspoon, Townsend Dierauf, Abdi Green, Eli Snowden, and Noah McLauchlin. McLauchlin also won a NCHSAA and NC Farm Bureau Insurance Sportsmanship Award. In the Women's 2A State Championship, Brevard High Junior Lucy Murray won Brevard's first women's individual cross country title since 1997. Murray also helped lead the women's team to a fourth-place finish in the team competition. Congratulations to the Blue Devils!

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. KIVINIEMI, the minutes of the September 20, 2021 closed session, the October 18, 2021 meeting, and the November 1, 2021 meeting; the personnel report for November 15, 2021 (see attached); and the following non-faculty coaches for winter sports 2021-2022 were unanimously approved.

Brevard High

Paul Whitt, Basketball
Connor Heitzmann, Basketball
Kayla Leed-McEwen, Basketball
Tanner Whitman, Wrestling
Jimmy Jones, Wrestling
Ben Morgan, Wrestling

Brevard Middle

Wayne Rundell, Basketball
Insert Winter coaches

Rosman High

Chaz West, Basketball
Kim Green, Basketball
Preston Garren, Wrestling
Cole Combs, Wrestling
Nick Mariani, Wrestling

Rosman Middle

Corey Reid, Basketball
Candace Petit, Basketball
Kyle Cloutier, Basketball
Willow Chance, Basketball

6. **Proposal to Purchase Board Property for Workforce Housing**

Amy Fisher, realtor, urged the board to move forward on the proposal to purchase approximately 7.7 acres of board-owned land adjacent to N. Country Club Road and Gillespie Circle in order to build an 84-unit workforce housing complex. She believes this would be a win-win for the city, community, and school system. Housing is a challenge in this county. Currently the average monthly rent for a one-bedroom apartment is \$1,100 and \$1,850 for a three-bedroom unit. This developer has done many similar projects. These would be attractive, well-kept apartments available in 1, 2, or 3

bedrooms. The site would provide walkability to grocery stores, pharmacies, and downtown.

Mr. Kiviniemi asked about the timeline. Mrs. Fisher reported that the developer needs to make application for funding by mid-January. If the board votes to sell, the proposal would go to the county commissioners for approval. The commissioners have only one meeting scheduled before the deadline. She requested that the board take a vote at this meeting.

Chairman McCoy asked Attorney Caudle to review the necessary legal steps. Mr. Caudle reported that the first steps would be a written offer from Homestead including all terms specific to the process, then a written surplus property resolution. The board would declare the land as surplus property and offer it to the board of commissioners. The property would be advertised for upset bids for 10 days. If none are received, the sale could move forward.

Mr. Jackson expressed concern about the increased traffic that would be created for County Club Road, which is already in poor condition, and the additional wear and tear from construction vehicles. He does not think this is a good deal for the board and he would not consider selling the property for \$650,000. Mr. Kiviniemi stated that he is intrigued by the project, but would need the board to get an independent appraisal if they decide to consider selling.

Mr. Jackson stated that he has looked for other available sites in the area and found that other sites would require more work because there is no infrastructure. Mrs. Fisher reported that they have also looked at other sites, and believe this one is the best. She stated that some people may be picturing drug-infested, low-income housing. This would be affordable housing for people who hold respectable jobs and with whom we interact daily.

Mr. Griffin believes that the board needs more public comment on this issue. He asked how the money would be used if the board sells the property. Dr. McDaris reported that the board could use the proceeds however it chooses. Mr. Griffin asked if the school system has any future plans for the 7.7 acres. Dr. McDaris stated there are no short-term plans. The land has previously been used for Agricultural Education, was considered for the Live Project program, and was also considered by the former Community Land Trust board to build affordable teacher housing. It is unknown at this time if the land would be needed for any future expansion at BHS.

Chairman McCoy agreed that the board needs an independent appraisal and also a traffic study and impact study. She would like to hear from more neighborhood residents. Mrs. Domokur feels the project would be good for the community as affordable housing is a top priority. She asked if the buyer would still be eligible for grants if the board seeks an independent appraisal. Mrs. Fisher stated there would be no issue with an independent appraisal. She remarked that this property is one in ten million. It is next to impossible to find 5+ buildable acres with access to city utilities. She noted that the property behind Lowe's is not for sale, by the way. There are also environmental issues associated with that location.

Regarding community input, Mrs. Fisher reported that the property would need to be rezoned, and as part of that process all interested citizens would be invited to come and speak before the city council. Mr. Caudle informed the board that this type of condition

could be spelled out in a written offer. The rezoning process would occur after the sale. The board could seek community input before declaring the property as surplus.

MR. KIVINIEMI MADE A MOTION for the board to authorize the superintendent and legal counsel to develop a terms sheet in order to receive a written offer on the property and to obtain an independent appraisal. THERE WAS NO SECOND and the motion died.

MR. JACKSON MADE A MOTION to table this issue until the board has an appraisal. THERE WAS NO SECOND and the motion died.

Chairman McCoy asked if having a terms sheet prepared would create any legal obligation on the board's part. Mr. Caudle explained that the board would need a written offer from the buyer with price and terms. That would be brought back to the board along with a surplus property resolution. The board would then determine if it wants to move forward. Chairman McCoy asked if the board would need a traffic study. Mrs. Domokur stated that the city may have done studies on this area before. Dr. McDaris questioned whether any previous studies would be relevant due to the size of the proposed development. Mr. Jackson reported that he had attended a DOT meeting some time ago and the state does not plan to address County Club Road anytime soon.

MR. KIVINIEMI MADE A MOTION to direct and authorize the superintendent to seek a terms sheet and written offer for the property; obtain an independent appraisal; promote public comment for the December 6th board meeting; and negotiate on the board's behalf. MR. GRIFFIN SECONDED. Chairman McCoy clarified that the board would not be authorizing any sale by doing this. Attorney Caudle confirmed, and the motion passed unanimously.

7. **FY22 Budget Update**

Dr. McDaris reported there is a strong possibility of a state budget this week, according to the *Raleigh News & Observer*.

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

Dr. Brian Weaver presented the latest data on COVID-19 cases in the school system. Numbers generally are holding steady or going down. To date, 81.4% of staff have been fully vaccinated. On November 5, 182 staff members received a COVID vaccination booster. On November 12, 148 children (ages 5-11) in our county received their first dose of COVID vaccination. An online survey went out on November 10 to parents and school system staff. Of the 695 responses from parents, most (421) were in favor of making masks optional in schools. Of the 383 responses from staff, most (226) favored optional masks.

Mr. Kiviniemi asked about integrity of the survey results, noting that he had heard from some that the parent survey link had been forwarded to others in the community. Dr. Weaver acknowledged that anyone with a Google email address could access the survey if they had the link. He expressed confidence in the integrity of the staff results because survey access was limited to email addresses within the tcsnc.org domain. For the parent survey, it was impossible to limit access due to the wide variety of parent email domains.

Chairman McCoy thanked Dr. Weaver for his work collecting the COVID data week after week. She stated that she cares about all students and respects all the comments the

board has received regarding low teacher morale. She stated that some feel morale is low because we are doing the same things we have been doing, and we are in a bad time until we can move forward out of this.

MR. JACKSON MADE A MOTION that effective November 29, 2021, all Transylvania County Schools facilities be made masks optional. MRS. DOMOKUR SECONDED.

Mr. Kiviniemi stated that when the board made masks optional on August 9, numbers began to go up right after the “back to school” open houses. One month later on September 7 we had 239 students testing positive and 222 students in isolation for a total of almost 500 kids out of school. On November 15, we had almost the same numbers as we did on August 9 when we went optional.

Mrs. Domokur stated that overall numbers are much lower now than they were in August. She feels we are at the point where our county’s cases have gone down significantly. There are three weeks of school between the Thanksgiving and Christmas breaks, and this is the time to consider optional masks.

Mr. Kiviniemi asked if everyone realizes the havoc it could create with final exams if student quarantines go up during that three week period. Dr. McDaris reported that arrangements would be made for quarantined students to make up tests or receive individual testing.

Mr. Griffin stated that with vaccinations for kids ages 5-11 just starting, he thinks it would be best to give parents who want to get their children vaccinated more time to do so before lifting the mask requirement. Most of the middle school and high school students have had ample time to get the vaccine and a booster. He would support making masks optional for the two older age groups and keeping the mask requirement in place for elementary students until Christmas break.

Mr. Kiviniemi reported that he had visited his doctor today and the doctor encouraged him to continue requiring masks. *[Jeers and catcalls erupted from the assembly. Chairman McCoy gave another warning that those disrupting would be removed. The disruptions continued and several people were escorted out by school resource officers.]*

MR. KIVINIEMI MOTIONED TO AMEND MR. JACKSON’S MOTION to make masks optional for middle school and high school students and continue required masks for elementary school students until the Christmas break. MR. GRIFFIN SECONDED THE AMENDMENT. The amendment failed on a vote of 2:3 (FOR: Griffin, Kiviniemi; AGAINST: Domokur, Jackson, McCoy). The original motion was then passed on a vote of 3:2 (FOR: Domokur, Jackson, McCoy; AGAINST: Griffin, Kiviniemi).

Chairman McCoy reminded everyone that the board will continue to review COVID-19 data and vote on the mask issue each month.

9. Superintendent’s Update

Dr. McDaris reported that the Brevard High School cross country team will be invited to a future board meeting to be recognized for their impressive achievements at the state championships. He reviewed individual times for the Brevard runners and encouraged everyone to go to the NCHSAA website and watch the women’s championship race. He also asked everyone to keep Paul Whitt, BHS men’s basketball coach, in their prayers. He is battling cancer.

10. Important Dates

- Nov. 18 American Education Week Free Thanksgiving Lunch (staff & retirees)
- Nov. 24 Annual leave day (no students)
- Nov. 25-26 Thanksgiving holidays
- Dec. 6 REGULAR MEETING, 6:30 p.m., MEC
- Dec. 20 REGULAR MEETING, 6:30 p.m., MEC
- Dec. 22 Students dismissed at noon
- Dec 23-Jan 3 Christmas break
- Jan. 3 NO MEETING (holiday for staff and students)
- Jan. 4, 5 Teacher workdays
- Jan. 6 Students return from break
- Jan. 17 MLK Day (annual leave day, no students)
- Jan. 18 (Tue) REGULAR MEETING, 6:30 p.m., MEC

11. Other Items

Chairman McCoy noted there would be an update from the NCSBA Annual Conference at the next meeting.

Mrs. Domokur announced that she will not seek re-election after her current term ends in November 2022. She stated that her family’s priorities have changed and they want to focus more on family. She gave a reminder that December 6, 2021 is the first day to file for the 2022 election.

There was no further business, and ON A MOTION BY MR. GIFFIN, SECONDED BY MRS. DOMOKUR, the meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chairman

Secretary

**PERSONNEL REPORT
November 15, 2021**

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

Licensed Personnel

Laura Hall, Reading Specialist, PFES, effective December 17, 2021

Classified Personnel

Samantha Matamoros, Teacher Assistant, TCH, effective December 22, 2021

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

Licensed Personnel

Patricia Sales, Interim Teacher, RHS, effective January 4, 2022 through May 27, 2022

Classified Personnel

Morgan Lytle, Teacher Assistant, BMS, effective November 16, 2021

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

Licensed Personnel

Emily Taylor, from Teacher, RMS, to Teacher, TCH & RMS, effective January 4, 2022

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

Geraldine Dinkins

Substitute School Nutrition Workers

None