

**Minutes
Transylvania County Board of Education
November 20, 2023**

INVOCATION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME

WORK SESSION ITEMS:

1. Approval of Agenda
2. Student Recognitions
3. JMCROTC Presentation
4. Public Comment
5. School Improvement Plans 2023-2024
6. On-Call Service Contracts (*removed*)
7. Cathey's Creek Property (*removed*)
8. January Meeting Schedule
9. FY24 Budget Resolution and Updates
10. Annual Financial Report 2022-2023
11. Closed Session (*moved from Item 14*)
12. Resolutions
13. Setting Agenda for December 4, 2023

The Transylvania County Board of Education held a work session on November 20, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. at the Morris Education Center. Kimsey Jackson led in a moment of silence and JROTC cadets led the Pledge of Allegiance. Chairman McCoy called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone to the meeting. In addition to approximately 55 guests, the individuals listed below were in attendance.

BOARD MEMBERS:

Tawny McCoy, Chair
Kimsey Jackson, Vice Chair
Tanya Dalton
Bryan O'Neill
Chris Wiener

BOARD ATTORNEY:

Kris Caudle, Campbell Shatley

MEDIA:

Nick Haseloff, Transylvania Times

PRESENTERS:

Cadet Captain Browne
Cadet First Sergeant Whitmire
Cadet Sergeant Kingdon
Sergeant Major Lance Oufnac
Senior Marine Instructor Colonel,
USMC, Ret. Scott Blankenship
Shannon Dennison, CPA, Anderson
Smith & Wike, PLLC

STAFF:

Dr. Lisa Fletcher, Superintendent
Jenny Hunter, Administrative Assistant
Dr. Brian Weaver, Assistant Superintendent/HR
Gabi Juba, Finance Officer
Missy Ellenberger, Director, 9-12 Education
Carrie Norris, Director K-8 Education
Audrey Reneau, Director, Federal Programs
Jen Heatherly, Public Information Officer
Mike Kirst, BES Principal
Mick Galloway, BHS Principal
Tammy Deaver, BMS Principal
Barbara Grimm, DRS Principal
Bob Dinsdale, RES Principal
Jason Ormsby, RHS Principal
Julie Queen, RMS Principal
Patrick Chapman, TCH Principal
Brent Owen, School Resource Officer

1. Approval of Agenda

CHAIRMAN MCCOY MADE A MOTION to remove Item 6 (On-Call Service Contracts) and Item 7 (Cathey's Creek Property) and to move the closed session to Item 11. MR. JACKSON SECONDED and the motion passed unanimously. ON A MOTION BY MRS. MCCOY, SECONDED BY MR. O'NEILL, the agenda for November 20, 2023 was unanimously approved as modified.

2. Student Recognitions

Dr. Fletcher introduced the members and coaches of the Brevard High School Volleyball Team and Brevard High School Men's Cross Country Team who won their respective State 2A Championship titles. She noted the very high weighted GPAs for each team. Board members presented plaques and congratulated the students and coaches for their outstanding seasons.

BHS Men's Cross Country

Coaches: Ben Morgan & Jackie Witherspoon

Weighted GPA: 3.7

1. Leo Murray
2. Keaton Campbell
3. Avan Hinkle
4. Max Bailey
5. James Brooks
6. Ezra Stubbs
7. Andy Gorman
8. Noah McLaughlin
9. Dan Burkett
10. Drew Lenze
11. Jude Fowler
12. Ezra Greene

BHS Volleyball

Coaches: Cori Bryson, Rachel Tritt, Caleb Hill, & Nell McMurtry

Weighted GPA: 4.0

1. Julia Trowbridge
2. Kinslee Clark
3. Meleah Foster
4. Rafa Dabao
5. Claire Wilson
6. Ruby Harris
7. Bella Gravley
8. Makayla King
9. Adeline Schultz
10. Emma Powell
11. Ella Scott
12. Morgan Baldrige
13. Gracie Hogsed
14. Megan Pressley

3. JMCROTC Presentation

The Transylvania County Schools Junior Marine Corps Reserve Officer Training (JMCROTC) cadets recently took a trip to the Marine Corps training facility at Parris Island where they had an opportunity to learn about leadership and service and to experience firsthand the rigorous recruit training that shapes the finest U.S. Marines. Accompanied at the meeting by Sergeant Major Lance Oufnac and Senior Marine Instructor Colonel, USMC, Ret. Scott Blankenship, student Cadet Captain Browne, Cadet First Sergeant Whitmire, and Cadet Sergeant Kingdon gave a presentation on the trip and answered questions from the board. Chairman McCoy thanked the cadets for their efforts and plans to serve our country. Mr. Wiener recognized David Baker, a recent graduate of JROTC.

4. Public Comment

Chairman McCoy reviewed the guidelines for public comment.

Alice Wellborn – At the last meeting, Mr. Wiener proposed a resolution in support of Israel in the current Middle East conflict. He did so at the very end of the meeting under an agenda item called “Other Items.” The resolution was not otherwise mentioned on the agenda. He also made a motion with regard to third-party activities in the schools. Again, his motion was made under “Other Items” and was not mentioned in any way on the published agenda. The November 6th meeting was designated as a business meeting during which the board would take action on items already discussed. Mr. Wiener presented two items of new business without any warning to the public or the board at a meeting billed as action on old business only. No new business was on the agenda. Lone wolf actions have no place on elected boards. The board chair and the superintendent set the agenda, not Mr. Wiener. The conflict in the Middle East is an important topic of interest to American citizens, on which most of us probably hold an opinion. It is also a politically divisive topic. It has absolutely nothing to do with the purpose of the board of education, which is establishing policy, setting goals and evaluating the school system’s mission. There should be no vote on this resolution. Mr. Wiener took an opportunity for political posturing rather than attending to appropriate board business. Regarding the second resolution, Transylvania County Schools has several policies in place to manage and monitor parent organizations (policy 5010), school volunteers (policy 5015), and visitors to schools (policy 5020). The responsibility for monitoring and managing third-party activities is strongly embedded in the administrative responsibilities of the superintendent and her administrative staff. Mr. Wiener’s motion is board overreach and smacks of political interference with school system activity. I ask that the board of education stick to its job, which is a big one, and allow others to do their job without interference.

David Borman – At the last meeting, I was shocked to hear vile and hurtful lies about our teachers that this board accepted silently. I want to read you some highlights: “that our schools harbor an active front to sexualize children”, “that our classrooms are a space where people move to groom children so they are more vulnerable to sexual abuse”, “that without the parents’ bill of rights, educators would lead our children toward Nazism”, and “that our schools are hotbeds for an epidemic of sexual confusion authored by Satan.” To imply that our county’s educators are pedophile enablers at best, Nazis or Satanists at worst, is harmful and ridiculous. I didn’t hear one of you support our educators against this slander. I think it is reasonable to ask that these lies about our schools and our teachers be addressed. Is anyone on this board willing to say the obvious, that Transylvania County teachers are not sexual predators, nor are they enabling sexual predators? That our town’s teachers are not pushing a political agenda that ends in Nazism? Your continued silence in the face of this slander speaks volumes. And I’m sure it does to our teachers as well. It matters a lot to me because we are not talking about data points. These are our neighbors, our fellow congregants, and our Little League coaches. So I ask that the members of this board do the following: 1) issue an apology to our county’s teachers and administrators for allowing these lies to flourish in board meetings; and 2) officially state that politically motivated lies about grooming, pedophilia, and ideological indoctrination are not accepted by the board’s facts and will not be taken into account when making policy choices.

Our teachers deserve better than to be slandered for cheap political points, and I hope you will take the opportunity to stand up for them.

Steve Keate – Thanks to the board for approving the implementation of the North Carolina Parents' Bill of Rights. Who would have ever thought that implementing legislation regarding parent involvement in their child's education would be so controversial to some in the community, but it was. Thank you for staying strong and doing the right thing in spite of personal attacks. I also urge the board to follow through on your joint effort with the county commissioners to address necessary facility needs. Parents and taxpayers deserve a plan that addresses known issues, can be implemented in a timely fashion, and be done in a cost effective manner—something previous boards have been unable to do.

Claudia Hawkins – I would like to speak about the resolution and the motion to be considered by the board this evening, both of which have been proposed by Mr. Wiener. First I will address the resolution in support of Israel. The purpose of the local board of education is to oversee the public school system to ensure the best possible education for the children in our community. This includes hiring and evaluating the school superintendent, setting policies, and exercising fiscal stewardship. This resolution does not do anything to further the goal of providing a quality education for our students. Please use your time wisely to address issues within our own school system and not to allow one member of the board to use it as a soapbox for unrelated issues. My comments have nothing to do with agreeing or disagreeing with points contained in the resolution, but only that it is far outside the lane of the school board's duties and responsibilities. Next is the motion to audit third parties. A curious motion, to say the least. There is a lot to unpack in this motion and not enough time to address it all in public comment. The introduction of this motion begs the question, who is the target? There is mention of recent events. In the interest of transparency, which Mr. Wiener purports to champion, let's make it clear what the recent events are so the public can determine the necessity of such an audit process. The audit process for all third parties makes me think of the boss who tries to put in procedures that all employees have to follow because he doesn't have the guts to address the one employee who is causing the problem. The motion is poorly written and lacks definition of key terms. Because of this, implementation of the motion would require a tremendous amount of time for the superintendent and staff to develop the audit process. I urge the board to vote down this motion. And if there is a specific issue from the unnamed recent events, deal with that issue instead of creating an unwieldy process that diverts time and attention from dealing with the real issues that our system faces.

Rodney Holcombe – Regarding the resolution in support of Israel and the motion requiring third-party audits, I would ask for your vote in opposition to both. Truthfully, I am not even sure why they are on an agenda. As to the resolution supporting Israel, it is just confusing as to why the BOE would support that on an agenda when the BOE doesn't support political causes or an endless list of other resolutions that garner public or community support. Regarding the third-party motion, I looked and tried to find what was the trigger for that. What is the problem that is trying to be solved? I couldn't find one, and I thought that it was amazing that it was suggested that we do third-party audits at taxpayer expense with no transparency. As a previous speaker mentioned, we have the Parents' Bill of Rights to depend on. Even though I think it is very poorly named, it clearly outlines a wide variety of methods in which teachers and parents can interact together, and one would assume that the contracts that are signed by the BOE or the superintendent would contain stipulations that third-party vendors would have to meet. It is rumored out in the community that two board members have come to realize that Blue Ridge Health provides services next to one of the schools, and that the concern driving the third-party audits is because Blue Ridge Health provides gender-affirming care and trans care to adults who are 18 years and older. If in fact those rumors are true and that is what is driving this, then that is an attack on transgender individuals. And it is ridiculous because the state of North Carolina has codified in the law that you cannot provide care to anyone under the age of 18 in those circumstances. I suspect that the majority of county residents, like me, would like you all to continue to focus on your priorities, teacher recruitment and retention, improving teacher pay, and

repairing our schools with the funds that were approved almost five years ago. Focus on real priorities and not grandstanding resolutions.

Bennett Greenberg – I come to you today not just as a Jew, but as a father. I speak to you not with anger but with righteous indignation and truth. I am a proud father of an IDF soldier. My daughter is a combat medic and right now she is on the Gaza border as a volunteer because she believes in the sanctity of life and helping those in need. She believes in doing what is right. Hamas turned aid money into weapons of war to use against Israel, the people that are trying to help them, not oppress them. Hamas is pure evil. There is no good to be found there. None. Hamas teaches the Palestinians to hate and destroy anything that is not their version of Muslim. That means Jews, Christians, homosexuals, trans, Israelis, Americans, and yes, even their own people. They preach and teach this to babies, little kids, young adults and everyone everywhere around the world. They went to a music festival and indiscriminately, brutally murdered everyone they could without a care as to their religion or nationality. This is evil incarnate. If you cannot see that the kidnapping, rape, and heinous murder of innocent civilians, the burning and beheading of babies, the annihilation of entire families, all done with joy and pride, and then celebrating and bragging about it on the world stage, is evil, then you don't deserve to sit on this board. It has been six weeks and you have still not condemned evil, so I say shame on you. This is a local matter. This is a school matter. This is a matter of importance to a civilized society. This is our opportunity to teach morality to our children. If you do not condemn this evil right now, what message do you send to our children? Are you trying to encourage children to commit violence? You wonder why a child goes into a school with a gun? By your actions, this is what you are teaching them. This is why we must condemn evil now. If you do not condemn evil, then what have you taught our children? What example have you set? Shame on you. The Jewish people believe that the cornerstone of Judaism is to make the world a better place. That is what I am asking of you today, to make the world a better place. Stop worrying about political agendas and political backlash. Stop worrying about your future and start worrying about our children's' future. Will you stand up for righteous indignation or kowtow to the fear of social pressures? The world is a dangerous place, not just because of the people that do evil, but because of those who refuse to condemn it. You think you have no skin in the game, you sit here in your comfy chairs while my daughter and the innocent people of Israel are having bombs dropped on them, every day. Condemn evil now.

5. School Improvement Plans

Director Carrie Norris gave an overview of the School Improvement Plans for 2023-2024 being presented as first-read information. Principals presented at-a-glance summaries that highlighted 3-4 major goals, implementation strategies and measurements for their schools and answered questions from the board. Board members expressed confusion that the at-a-glance summaries did not exactly match the in-depth plans they had received in their packets. Mrs. Norris explained that each principal had been asked to focus their presentation on a few major goals for their respective school. Additionally, the wording in the summaries and the wording in the plans may differ somewhat because certain indicators and interventions can exist under multiple NC Star goals.

The board took a brief recess at 8:10 p.m. Chairman McCoy called the meeting back to order at 8:20 p.m.

Mrs. Norris offered to send the at-a-glance summaries to the board members to help clear up any lingering confusion. Mr. Wiener asked how parents are approached to serve on the School Improvement Teams. He recommended that every parent be invited in order to solicit a larger cross section. Approval of the School Improvement plans will be scheduled for the regular meeting on December 4

6. **January Meeting Schedule**

Dr. Lisa Fletcher recommended that the board hold only one meeting in January due to the New Year's holiday on January 1. The meeting would take place on Tuesday, January 16 due to the MLK holiday on Monday, January 15 and would be a combination business meeting and work session. There was consensus agreement for the recommended change. The board will vote on the schedule change at the next regular meeting.

Mr. Wiener asked for clarification on consent agenda procedures. Attorney Kris Caudle explained that the board will be asked to decide at the end of a work session which outstanding action items can go on the consent agenda at the next regular meeting and which items should be separate agenda items. If all board members do not agree for an item to go on the consent agenda, it will be a separate agenda item. Mr. Wiener asked what happens if a member changes their mind between meetings. Mr. Caudle reported that the member can make a motion at the start of the next regular meeting (during approval of agenda and before the agenda is approved) to remove an item from the consent agenda. If the motion receives a second and a majority vote, the item may be removed from the consent agenda and placed as a separate agenda item at that time. Once the agenda has been approved, a majority would be needed to change it.

7. **FY24 Budget Resolution & Updates**

Finance Officer Gabi Juba presented an expenditure report for the year to date and the FY24 budget resolution. She reported that spending is on track. She noted that the board's last expenditure report had reflected planning allotments and this report reflects actual allotments. Approval of the FY24 budget resolution will be scheduled for the December 4 meeting.

8. **Annual Financial Report 2022-2023**

Shannon Dennison from Anderson, Smith & Wike PLLC, CPAs, presented the Transylvania County Schools Annual Financial Report for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2023. She gave an unmodified opinion for a clean audit. Two significant deficiencies were noted: 1) The board recorded prior period adjustments during the current year to correct prior year errors relating to liabilities in the General Fund, School Food Service Fund, governmental activities and business-type activities; and 2) The district does not have internal controls in place to appropriately re-audit and monitor expenditures as compared to the board-approved budget. Ms. Dennison reported that while testing receipts at individual schools, they discovered that certain schools are not maintaining receipts in a manner that provides adequate accountability. They recommend implementing stronger controls to ensure that all funds collected are easily tracked by the individual handling the funds. While reviewing the state bank reconciliation, they discovered that the State Treasurer's account was temporarily overdrawn by \$82,682 as a result of not requesting enough cash from the state. There were no bounced checks. Stronger controls were recommended. Finance Officer Juba is working with the schools to improve procedures for handling receipts.

9. **Closed Session**

Per G.S. [115C-105.27\(c\)\(1\)](#), as part of the School Improvement Plan approval process, the superintendent is required to review the safety components of the school improvement plans with the board and make recommendations to the board. The safety components of the plans are not public records open to inspection [N.C.G.S. 115C-105.27(a)(2)], and the board's review of the safety components must be done in closed

session 115C-105.27(c)(1). This process should take place before the board votes on the overall School Improvement Plans.

ON A MOTION BY MRS. MCCOY, SECONDED BY MRS. DALTON, the board voted unanimously to go into closed session pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 115C-318.11 subsection (a)(8) to formulate and adopt the school safety components of school improvement plans and subsection (a)(3) to consult with an attorney retained by the public body in order to preserve the attorney-client privilege. Following a brief recess, the closed session convened at approximately 9:10 p.m. Present in the closed session were board members Tawny McCoy, Chair; Kimsey Jackson, Vice Chair; Tanya Dalton; Bryan O'Neill; and Chris Wiener. Dr. Lisa Fletcher, Superintendent, Missy Ellenberger, Director, Safe Schools; and Board Attorney Kris Caudle were also present in the closed session. At approximately 9:30 p.m., BY MOTION MADE BY MRS. MCCOY AND SECONDED BY MRS. DALTON, the board adjourned closed session and returned to open session.

10. Resolutions

At the November 6 meeting, Mr. Wiener introduced a motion to audit third-party activities in the school system and a resolution supporting Israel and denouncing Hamas, Hezbollah and the Iranian-backed Houthis. Mr. Wiener withdrew his motion regarding third-party activities. Board members McCoy, Jackson, O'Neill and Dalton discussed the resolution in support of Israel and indicated that while they support Israel, they do not feel the resolution is within the board's purview or scope of duties. Mr. Wiener disagreed and discussed the years he spent working in the Middle East, including Israel and surrounding areas. He stated that the board has a responsibility to provide clear moral guidance on this issue and should set the tone for the local community. There was a majority consensus to not place the resolution on the next meeting agenda. Members indicated that the resolution could be revisited in the future if appropriate.

11. Setting Agenda for December 4, 2023

The board designated by consent agreement the following items as information, consent, or action for the December 4, 2023 business meeting agenda:

- School Improvement Plans 2023-2024 – action
- Change to January meeting schedule – consent
- FY24 budget resolution – consent

There was no further business, and ON A MOTION BY MR. O'NEILL, SECONDED BY MR. JACKSON, the meeting was adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chairman

Secretary