

**Minutes
Transylvania County Board of Education
December 7, 2020**

OATHS OF OFFICE
INVOCATION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME
BUSINESS ITEMS:

1. Approval of Agenda
2. Election of Officers
3. Public Comment
4. Good News Report
5. Former Students in the Military
6. Consent Agenda:
 - A. Minutes
 - B. Personnel Report
7. COVID-19 Update
8. CTE Honors Internship
9. Bond Projects Update
10. Superintendent's Update
11. Important Dates
12. Other Items

The Transylvania County Board of Education met in regular session at 6:30 p.m. on December 7, 2020 at the Morris Education Center. In accordance with the remote meetings statute from the General Assembly and the Governor's guidelines, the meeting was conducted remotely and public access was not permitted. The public was invited to view the meeting livestream at <https://youtube.com/tcsnc>. Before the meeting began, Transylvania County Clerk of Superior Court, Kristi Brown, administered the oaths of office to newly elected board member Kimsey Jackson and re-elected board members Ron Kiviniemi and Tawny McCoy. Marty Griffin led a moment of silence and Ron Kiviniemi led the Pledge of Allegiance. Chairman McCoy welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order. In addition to family members of board members being sworn in, the following individuals were in attendance (* indicates remote attendance). Social distancing was observed for in-person attendees.

BOARD MEMBERS:

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

BOARD ATTORNEY:

Kris Caudle*

MEDIA:

John Lanier, Transylvania Times*

STAFF:

Dr. Jeff McDaris, Superintendent
Jenny Hunter, Administrative Assistant
Dr. Brian Weaver, Assistant Superintendent*
Norris Barger, Director, Business Services*
Missy Ellenberger, Director, 9-12 Curriculum/Instruction*
Carrie Norris, Director, K-8 Curriculum & Instruction*
Kevin Smith, School-Community Relations Coordinator*
Chris Whitlock, Director, Technology Services
Blake Tesnow, Technology Specialist
Kelly Cook, School Resource Officer

PRESENTER:

Elaine Russell, Director, Transylvania Public Health*

1. **Approval of Agenda**
ON A MOTION BY MRS. DOMOKUR, SECONDED BY MR. GRIFFIN, the meeting agenda for December 7, 2020 was unanimously approved as presented.

2. Election of Officers

N.C.G.S. § 115C-41 requires all local boards of education to have an organizational meeting no later than 60 days after the swearing in of members following election or appointment. Chairman McCoy asked Attorney Caudle to lead the election of officers for 2021. Mr. Caudle opened the floor for nominations for chair. Mr. Kiviniemi nominated Tawny McCoy as board chair. There were no other nominations. ON A ROLL CALL VOTE, Tawny McCoy was unanimously elected as board chair for the 2021 year. Mr. Caudle opened the floor for nominations for vice chair. Mr. Griffin nominated Ron Kiviniemi as vice chair. There were no other nominations. ON A ROLL CALL VOTE, Ron Kiviniemi was unanimously elected as board vice chair for the 2021 year. Mr. Caudle turned the meeting back over to Chairman McCoy.

3. Public Comment

Persons wishing to make public comment were invited to email their comments by 1pm in order to have them read during the meeting as appropriate within board guidelines. Dr. McDaris read aloud the one item that was sent in from Commissioner Larry Chapman:

“First, I want to congratulate Kimsey Jackson on his election to the Board of Education and I know he will be a valuable asset to the board with his commercial construction and project management experience. Also, congratulations to Tawny and Ron on their reelection for another term. With the other two members Courtney and Marty I feel you have a great team and will continue to do what is best for our kids and our citizens. I look forward to working closely with you and your school staff as all of us try to manage in these trying times. We all pray that this plague will soon be behind us and we can start returning to some semblance of normalcy whatever that will look like in the future.

One additional comment related to questions I was asked about during my recent campaign. People are very interested in knowing more details about where we are related to the progress on the school construction bonds and has anything changed. Many comments were related to "has anything changed from what was presented during the vote for the school bond". I encourage you to do more specific detailed communications with our citizens regarding your progress, share any additional specific designs that have been completed and especially any projected time lines regarding when construction will start and projected completion dates. I have encouraged people who have contacted me to reach out directly to your board and school staff regarding any questions they have. Additionally, I and I am sure the other Commissioners do also, look forward to receiving the same type of updated information on such a key project for our county.

Thanks again to all of you and please feel free to reach out to me personally or to our board if we can be of additional service. We all know we have tremendous needs but limited resources that we will have to navigate as we move into 2021 and beyond. We all have to be in this same boat paddling in the same direction as they say in order for all of us and our projects to be successful. We must never forget that we are responsible to our citizens and we must keep them informed.

Best regards and wishing each of you and your families a very safe and happy holiday season. Merry Christmas to all.”

4. Good News Report

Dr. McDaris congratulated Mr. Jackson, Mrs. McCoy, and Mr. Kiviniemi on being sworn in and Mrs. McCoy and Mr. Kiviniemi on their re-election as officers. He recognized the student artwork from Pisgah Forest Elementary School that was on display in the board room and thanked Attorney Caudle and Officer Cook for attending the meeting. He shared the following good news items:

DAR "LADIES FIRST" PRESENTATION

Each year, members of the Transylvania Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) have written and performed a historical, costumed skit for all fifth graders that showcases the notable women who played roles in America's fight for freedom. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's presentation will be a little different. Instead of visiting the schools, the DAR applied for and received a grant from the Pisgah Health Foundation to hire a videographer who will film this year's presentation. Filming will take place in January at the Allison-Deaver House in Pisgah Forest, and part of the music on the soundtrack will be performed by local bluegrass band, the Steep Canyon Rangers. The video and a lesson plan aligned with the state curriculum will be supplied to teachers later this spring. Our fifth-grade teachers look forward to having this video lesson to share with their students, and we thank the Transylvania DAR members for their creativity and support of our schools.

'SAY SOMETHING' ANONYMOUS REPORTING SYSTEM LAUNCHED

Transylvania County Schools has launched the "Say Something" Anonymous Reporting System (SS-ARS) for students, which most North Carolina public school districts will be adopting this year to meet the reporting guidelines and standards developed by the N.C. Department of Public Instruction and the Center for Safer Schools. Say Something is a youth violence prevention program from the national nonprofit organization Sandy Hook Promise (SHP), which has funding to provide the program and training at no cost to the district. The SS-ARS allows youth and adults to securely submit anonymous safety concerns - anytime, from anywhere - to help identify and intervene upon at-risk individuals before they hurt themselves or others. The system enables school administrators and law enforcement to create effective interventions and to help prevent violence, suicide, bullying, self-harm and other forms of threatening behavior.

CROWDFUNDING SUPPORT FOR ATHLETICS

Board policy 7360/8225, Crowdfunding on Behalf of the School System, allows the use of online sites to solicit donations, whether monetary or in-kind, on behalf of the school system. To help recoup expenses and offset the loss of gate revenues this year due to COVID-19, high school athletic departments will be launching GoFundMe campaigns to raise money for athletic programs at the schools. The GoFundMe account will include a link to accept donations during livestreams of sporting events. Our thanks to principals and athletic directors for finding a creative way to help support students and sustain programs during these difficult times.

Mr. Kiviniemi asked if the board could see a summary of the "Say Something" reports for our system. Dr. McDaris stated that Alan Justice would be able to provide a report on the amount of activity; just not specific content.

5. Former Students in the Military

The board reviewed 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.

6. Consent Agenda

ON A MOTION BY MR. GRIFFIN, SECONDED BY MRS. DOMOKUR, the minutes of the November 16, 2020 meeting and the personnel report for December 7, 2020 (see attached) were unanimously approved.

7. COVID-19 Update

Transylvania Public Health Director Elaine Russell gave an update on the status of COVID-19 cases in Transylvania County. She reported that numbers are up here (as

they are nationwide); however, our county is in a good position for its population size. As of today, there have been 620 total cases. This represents an 11% change over the last seven days and can be attributed mostly to holidays and increased travel. There have been 40 hospitalizations and 9 deaths. The majority of COVID cases have occurred in the 25-49-year age group and the 50-64-year age group. Among children, there have been 80 cases, with most occurring in students ages 14-17 years and 5-10 years. The most likely exposure sources are close contacts with other cases and healthcare or long-term care facilities. Twenty-seven cases have resulted in close contacts or potential exposures within Transylvania County Schools. There is currently one cluster of 9 cases at RHS (7 students, 2 staff) associated with the women's volleyball team. Mr. Griffin asked whether there have been serious cases of flu in conjunction with COVID cases. Mrs. Russell reported that has not occurred; in fact, there have been far fewer serious flu cases this year. Mrs. Russell thanked the school system for its good work in following prevention and control measures. Chairman McCoy thanked Mrs. Russell, the Health Department, and our school nurses for all they are doing to keep everyone safe.

8. CTE Honors Internship

At the November 16 meeting, Director Missy Ellenberger presented a proposal for students who are working in an approved Career/Technical Education (CTE) internship capacity to be eligible to earn honors credit. Mr. Kiviniemi thanked Mrs. Ellenberger for taking the initiative to put advanced CTE courses on the same level as other advanced courses. There were no questions, and ON A MOTION FROM MR. GRIFFIN, SECONDED BY MR. KIVINIEMI, the board adopted an honors internship option for the Career/Technical Education program.

9. Bond Projects Update

Norris Barger presented the bond expenditure report and gave a status update on the projects. He reported that final preparations are shifting into high gear. Construction documents are being readied for review by DPI and the Department of Insurance in preparation for breaking ground this summer. A recent bid opening received better than expected pricing; some other line item costs have also changed for the better. Regarding potential COVID-related delays, timelines are beginning to shorten for some construction materials, but there have no impacts to our projects at this time. We are on track. The projected completion date for BHS is December 2024. The RHS move-in date has been moved up to August 2024.

Mr. Kiviniemi asked the attorney to send the board a list of documents that the county commissioners must provide to the Local Government Commission in order to issue the bonds. Chairman McCoy indicated that there has been discussion within the school bond construction committee about the board's ability to continue paying invoices since the county still has not moved to issue the bonds. Chairman McCoy stated that public meetings will be scheduled as soon as it is safe to do so in order to share 3-D renderings of the plans. There was mention of possibly putting something on site for drive-by viewing at each high school. Dr. McDaris reported that the bond page on the TCS website will be updated soon. The board thanked Mr. Barger for his work and commended staff for their valuable input during the planning process.

10. Superintendent's Update

Dr. McDaris reported that the recent change in Transylvania's ranking from a Tier 2 county to a Tier 3 designation is puzzling and not good news for our schools. The tier designations are supposed to indicate the level of county distress based on four economic factors: (a) average unemployment rate; (b) median household income; (c) percentage growth in population; and (d) adjusted property tax base per capita. Counties with lower tier rankings are eligible for grants and additional funding incentives.

Unfortunately for our county, the new Tier 3 ranking makes us ineligible for a number of grants, many of which would help our schools. Consider the following comparisons.

Buncombe County has a slightly higher unemployment rate than our county. They have moved from a Tier 3 to a Tier 2, making them eligible for more grants and incentives than our county. Underemployment and types of employment adds to the inequality. Having a job, and having a job that pays enough to allow you to live in this county are two different things. Using the latest available statistics from the NC Department of Commerce we see the following:

- a. The median age for Transylvania County is 51. The median age for Buncombe is 42. This indicates more retirees as a portion of our population than Buncombe, which suggests we are less affected by job loss, even if temporary, than Buncombe.
- b. Estimated median worker earnings for Transylvania County is \$22,644 per year. For Buncombe County it is \$30,567.
- c. Estimated portion of the population with income below the poverty threshold is 12.8% for Transylvania. For Buncombe it is 11.5%.
- d. Buncombe has many more manufacturing jobs, which pay much higher wages than travel and tourism. Average weekly wages for all industries in Transylvania is \$685. For Buncombe it is \$863. Average manufacturing wages for Transylvania is \$855. For Buncombe it is \$1,041.
- e. While the median value of owner-occupied housing is slightly higher in Buncombe County, they benefit from volume. They have a 27.8% vacancy rate on housing. Transylvania's rate is only 11.9%. Rentals are more available in Buncombe, with a higher vacancy rate (4%) than our county (2.3%).
- f. Per capita income is higher in Buncombe (\$48,592) than Transylvania (\$42,070)—about a \$6,000 difference. Buncombe also has a higher median household income rate.
- g. For families struggling to afford child care, Buncombe has 113 licensed care facilities. Transylvania has 11.
- h. The child poverty rate in Buncombe County is 17%. In Transylvania County it is 23%.

Nevertheless, Transylvania County is now ranked as less economically distressed than Buncombe (or Henderson, for that matter). It does not make logical sense. But more importantly, it makes our schools less eligible for grants and other resources.

11. Important Dates

Dec. 21	REGULAR MEETING, 6:30 p.m., MEC
Dec. 22	End of first semester: students dismissed at noon
Dec. 23-Jan. 4	Christmas break
Jan. 5-6	Teacher workdays
Jan. 7	Beginning of second semester
Jan. 12	WORK SESSION, 5:30 p.m., MEC
Jan. 18	Martin Luther King Day; annual leave day
Jan. 19 (Tue.)	REGULAR MEETING, 6:30 p.m., MEC

12. Other Items

Chairman McCoy asked if the high schools would be livestreaming all sporting events or only certain ones. Dr. McDaris reported that we anticipate streaming as many as possible. Some donors may help with the cost of livestreaming football games which require higher camera placements.

Mr. Griffin asked the superintendent to send the board the most recent realignment information from NCHSAA, noting that some classifications have changed dramatically.

Mr. Griffin requested an update on EOC testing for at-home learners. Dr. McDaris reported that the state's current rule requires 95% of students to test in person. This will be difficult for the 20% of our students who are OLP learners. As this issue affects all NC school districts the state may apply for a waiver.

Chairman McCoy asked how numbers for second semester are shaping up. Dr. McDaris reported there will be fewer students in the online learning path and more teachers will be teaching in person. The biggest change will be seen in middle school class sizes.

There was no further business, and ON A MOTION BY MR. GRIFFIN, SECONDED BY MR KIVINIEMI, the meeting was adjourned at 8:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chairman

Secretary

**PERSONNEL REPORT
December 7, 2020**

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

Licensed Personnel

Bianca Adkins-Tarlton, Teacher, BES, effective December 31, 2020
Ann Stone, Teacher, BMS, effective January 31, 2021

Classified Personnel

Caitlin Coffey, Teacher Assistant, BHS, effective November 18, 2020
Haley Melton, Teacher Assistant, PFES, effective November 24, 2020
Cynthia Waters, School Nutrition Worker, BMS, effective December 22, 2020

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

Licensed Personnel

Elizabeth Gibbs, Teacher, BES, effective January 5, 2021
Elizabeth Shoher, Teacher, PFES, effective January 5, 2021

Classified Personnel

Jennifer Bellmund, Teacher Assistant, BES, effective December 7, 2020
Hubert Brown, Custodian & Bus Driver, PFES, effective December 14, 2020
Tracy Calla, Teacher Assistant, RES, effective January 7, 2021
Janet Whitmire, Part-time Custodian, RES, effective December 14, 2020

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

Licensed Personnel

None

Classified Personnel

Kim Garrett, from Office Support, BES, to Bookkeeper/Office Support, BHS, effective January 5, 2021

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

Licensed Personnel

Stephanie Ramsey, Teacher, RHS, Discretionary Leave Without Pay (BOE Policy 7510), effective January 5, 2021 through June 4, 2021

Classified Personnel

None

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

Substitute Teachers

Teresa Duvall
Angela Patane

Substitute School Nutrition Workers

None