

Minutes
Transylvania County Board of Education
March 11, 2024

INVOCATION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME

WORK SESSION ITEMS:

1. Approval of Agenda
2. Capital Reserve Planning
3. FY25 Budget
4. Closed Session

The Transylvania County Board of Education held a special called work session on March 11, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. at the Morris Education Center. Tawny McCoy led in a moment of silence and Tanya Dalton led the Pledge of Allegiance. Chairman Kimsey Jackson called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. In addition to approximately eight guests, the individuals listed below were in attendance.

BOARD MEMBERS:

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

STAFF:

Dr. Lisa Fletcher, Superintendent
Jenny Hunter, Administrative Assistant
Dr. Brian Weaver, Assistant Superintendent
Kerry Putnam, Director, Facilities; CTE
Gabi Juba, Chief Finance Officer
Audrey Reneau, Director, Federal Programs
Tessa Brown, Public Information Officer
Greg Stroup, School Resource Officer

BOARD ATTORNEY:

Kris Caudle, Campbell Shatley

MEDIA:

Nick Haselhoff, Transylvania Times

1. Approval of Agenda

ON A MOTION BY MR. WIENER, SECONDED BY MRS. DALTON, the meeting agenda for March 11, 2024 was unanimously approved as presented.

2. Capital Reserve Planning

Chairman Jackson recognized Transylvania County Board of Commissioners Chair Jason Chappell. Mr. Chappell read a letter that had been approved by the commissioners at their 4 p.m. meeting. The letter stated that the commissioners recognize that time is of the essence to begin work on the school facility improvement projects and that the timeline hinges on joining together with the school board and committing to the next steps outlined by the Education Capital Workgroup for Step 1. The letter further states that, "Tonight, the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners unanimously voted to empower our staff to move forward as quickly as possible with Step 1 Investment as recommended in detail by the work group as soon as the Board of Education votes the same. We have taken this step with faith in the work that we commissioned together, and we are ready to take the next step as two boards—together." (see attached)

Finance Officer Juba presented a spreadsheet of the Step 1 projects with the administration's FY24 recommendations:

- Proposed per Step 1: \$15,773,858
- Administration's proposal from the bond: \$36,300,400
- Certain projects removed (either already completed or can be addressed in the capital repair line): \$1,503,830
- Certain projects are not a priority for FY24 and can be moved to a different fiscal year to evaluate: \$3,298,090
- Certain projects are critical needs that the administration added. BHS cafeteria (no mention on the report at all); BHS old gym replacement; BHS boiler (different fiscal year on this report); RHS football field (different fiscal year on this report): \$22,588,200
- Projects that can be shifted into sales tax money: \$3,715,263 (can be less depending on clarification for certain projects).

Ms. Juba presented sales tax and bond balances. The original bond was \$68 million. Fees to date from the original architect fees and designs are \$3,282,289, bringing the total remaining bond balance to \$64,717,711. Sales tax remaining balance at the end of this fiscal year (including all old outstanding projects) is \$3,446,471.86. Projected revenue for next year is approximately \$3,000,000 which would bring the total sales tax available to \$6,446,471.86.

The board briefly discussed the sinkholes at the RHS football field and the 2024 football season. Mr. Putnam reported that this was why he had started the repair project earlier in the year.

Mr. Putman stated that he appreciates Axias' work on the capital reserve study; however, he would not recommend using bond money to pay for things like ceiling tiles before paying for bigger items such as roofs, boilers and chillers. He emphasized that Axias did nothing wrong; they simply did their walkthroughs in July when boilers and chillers were not in operation. He believes this could be managed by reprioritizing when some of the bigger projects will be done and holding off on some of the smaller projects.

Dr. Fletcher reported that the BHS cafeteria had been left off the Step 1 project list. The administration wants to ensure that it is included.

The board discussed next steps. Ms. Juba reported that there should be a meeting with county commissioners to agree on the projects in Step 1 (projects that reflect the needs the board knows it has and that need to be addressed before others). In that same meeting the boards should agree on the amount of bond and sales tax money available. The commissioners would then present that to the Local Government Commission.

Mrs. McCoy stated that as the only member who was on the board when the bond referendum was passed, she was sad and disappointed that the board could not do the original projects as planned, but no one had any idea at the time that COVID was on the horizon or that it was going to escalate costs as it did. She felt bad that the bond could not move forward. She does believe, however, that what the board is looking at now is the only way it can move forward to address its critical needs, and she appreciates that it is finding a path to move forward with the county commissioners. She also appreciates all the work of staff to make it happen. She would like to see staff and board officers work together in small groups to explain to both boards why we need to change the timing on certain projects in order to keep a wall from going up. She feels that we need

to learn from and keep from repeating history. We need to do the big ticket items now when the economy is steadier, and in case costs go up again in the future. And we need to do things in the right order so that we don't have to do them twice.

Mrs. Dalton stated that she appreciates the county commissioners' work with the board of education on this. She advised that no one is riding in to save the day, and that it is time to work together as adults to get this done. Mr. O'Neill stated that it is imperative that the two bodies sit down and work through work through disagreements in order to move quickly through the projects.

A question was asked about a new girls' wrestling facility that had appeared on the Step 1 project list. This item had not been requested by the board of education on any of its capital needs lists.

Mrs. McCoy recommended that a time be scheduled for the superintendent, finance officer, board officers, and facilities director to meet with the county manager and her staff to review the changes that the administration has recommended. There was consensus agreement for Dr. Fletcher to request a meeting.

3. FY25 Budget

Dr. Fletcher gave a reminder that federal ESSER funding will expire by June 30. The board discussed requesting local funds to keep the ESSER-funded counselor and dropout prevention coordinator positions in place for next year. Members indicated that they would like to be able to meet with commissioners in person to discuss the need to maintain these critical positions.

Dr. Fletcher reported that the ESSER funding expiration means we will go from 6 to 4 PreK classrooms next year. The board could ask the commissioners to make up the funding difference to stay at 6 classrooms, but there is no guarantee the request would be granted. Director Audrey Reneau reported that demand for PreK services is great. The PreK waitlist is currently at 156 children. We can only meet the needs of 102 preschoolers with 6 classrooms. We are licensed for 18 students per class. Many of our PreK students have disabilities. Even if we had all the funding we need, we would still have space constraints and a hard time finding enough licensed PreK teachers and teacher assistants. Parents are asking now about PreK slots for next year. We must make decisions very soon in order to get information out to parents and staff for next year. Dr. Fletcher recommended that we commit to 4 classrooms for next year. Mr. Jackson stated that he would be in favor of more PreK classrooms, but does not know realistically how it could be done. Mr. Wiener recommended that the board present this as a fully funded need and consider using any leftover bond money to buy buildings for more PreK classrooms. Dr. Fletcher noted that would not solve the problem of finding enough PreK-licensed teachers and assistants.

March 25 or April 8 were noted as potential dates for the board's FY25 budget request to be presented at a county commissioner meeting.

4. Closed Session

ON A MOTION BY MR. WIENER, SECONDED BY MR. O'NEILL, the board voted unanimously to go into closed session pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 115C-318.11 subsection (a)(1) to prevent the disclosure of personnel information that is privileged or confidential pursuant to N.C.G.S. 115C-319 et seq., and confidential student information pursuant to

20 U.S.C. 1232g et seq.; and subsection (a)(3) to consult with an attorney employed or retained by the public body in order to preserve the attorney-client privilege between the attorney and the public body. Following a brief recess, the closed session convened at approximately 7:23 p.m. Present in the closed session were board members Kimsey Jackson, Chair; Tanya Dalton, Vice Chair; Tawny McCoy; Bryan O'Neill; and Chris Wiener. Dr. Lisa Fletcher, Superintendent; Dr. Brian Weaver, Assistant Superintendent; and Board Attorney Kris Caudle were also present in the closed session. At approximately 7:42 p.m., BY MOTION MADE BY MR. WIENER AND SECONDED BY MRS. MCCOY, the board adjourned closed session and returned to open session.

There was no further business, and ON A MOTION BY MRS. MCCOY, SECONDED BY MR. WIENER, the meeting was adjourned at 7:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chairman

Secretary

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Jason Chappell, Chair
Jake Dalton, Vice-Chairman
Emmett Casciato
Lary Chapman
Teresa McCall



COUNTY MANAGER
Jaime Laughter
828-884-3100
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101 South Broad Street
Brevard, NC 28712

March 11, 2024

Mr. Richard Kimsey Jackson
Chairman, Transylvania County Board of Education
225 Rosenwald Lane
Brevard, NC 28712

Dear Mr. Jackson:

The Education Capital Work Group was an endeavor that required both of our boards to commit to a collaborative process placing the interest of our community as the central focus of our next steps to fix our schools together. We tasked our organizational leaders- Superintendent Dr. Lisa Fletcher and County Manager Jaime Laughter to represent us on the work group. Last Monday we were jointly presented with a plan endorsed by our staff that was well thought out, clear and that addresses necessary improvements for all of our schools with funds that we have the ability to access this year if we take the next step as quickly as possible. Our staff stood alongside two retired peers- retired County Manager Steve Wyatt and retired Superintendent Dr. Bo Caldwell in a unified presentation based on a professional building assessment that presented clear steps starting with investment in our schools to protect the investments we have made together as a community with the school bonds already approved by citizens.

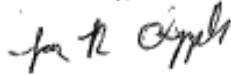
Mr. Wyatt and Mr. Caldwell shared valuable insight from their success in Henderson County that emphasized how important continued collaboration is and that working in silos separately does not work. They challenged the two boards to step forward together with Step 1 Investment establishing a new and improved way of assuring our school facilities are maintained. The list of projects and the next steps are clear. We must act now to fix leaking roofs, improve school safety, and repair deteriorating exteriors and aging mechanical systems to protect the school buildings our community built. We know that you join us in the desire to get those improvements started to support our teachers and our students in those buildings.

Commissioners entered into this process with a commitment to the Board of Education to see this process through in the spirit of collaboration and we know you did the same. We recognize that time is of the essence and our Superintendent and County Manager along with the work group have made it clear that we can start these improvements by the end of this year. That timeline hinges on joining together and committing to the next steps outlined by the work group for Step 1. There is no time to waste.

Rectangular Sign

Tonight, the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners unanimously voted to empower our staff to move forward as quickly as possible with Step 1 Investment as recommended in detail by the work group as soon as the Board of Education votes the same. We have taken this step with faith in the work that we commissioned together, and we are ready to take the next step as two boards- together.

Sincerely,



Jason R. Chappell

Chairman, Transylvania County Board of Commissioners

Cc: Members, Board of Commissioners
County Manager
County Attorney
File