

**Minutes  
Transylvania County Board of Education  
May 2, 2011**

INVOCATION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE  
CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME  
BUSINESS ITEMS

1. Approval of Agenda
2. Public Comment
3. FY12 Budget
4. Public Forum
5. FY12 Budget (continued)
6. Important Dates
7. Other Items
8. Public Comment

The Transylvania County Board of Education met in special session at 6:30 p.m. on May 2, 2011, in the Rosman High School Auditorium. The purpose of the meeting was to provide an opportunity for public input on the FY12 budget. Present were Chris Whitmire, Chair; Tawny McCoy, Vice Chair; Sue Fox; Shelia Norman; and Cindy Petit. Also present were Dr. Jeff McDaris, Superintendent; Jenny Hunter, Administrative Assistant; Norris Barger, Director of Business Services; and approximately 95 guests. Mrs. Fox gave the invocation and Mrs. Petit led the Pledge of Allegiance. Chairman Whitmire called the meeting to order. Mr. Whitmire explained the procedures for public comment and public forum and discussed the budget challenges that the Board is facing.

1. **Approval of Agenda**  
ON A MOTION BY MRS. MCCOY, SECONDED BY MRS. FOX, the meeting agenda for May 2, 2011 was approved.
2. **Public Comment**  
Meredith Licht, TCAE president, thanked the Board for its tireless work to put children, people and programs first during these difficult budget times.  
  
Allison Reece, student, expressed concerns about the possibility of cutting sports programs.  
  
Sonya Shelton, parent, stated that athletic programs encourage academic success and deter drug use, and cutting these programs would be a huge mistake. If athletics are cut, she believes that many families would move away in order for their children to have opportunities to play sports.
3. **FY12 Budget**  
Dr. Jeff McDaris gave a presentation showing the impact of a 9% cut as proposed by the NC House. The 9% cut could mean a loss of \$1,573,141 and job losses to 38 people. Combining this with the already known losses of \$1,328,592 in ADM and other funding and a potential loss of 30 people, TCS could be facing losses of \$2,901,733 and 62 positions. The federal Edu-Jobs allotment, which could help save 15 teaching positions, could reduce these losses to \$2,131,703 and 47 potential jobs. Dr. McDaris presented the following options to fill the \$2.2 million gap:

- A. Hope that the state increases revenue
- B. Hope that our local government can increase revenue
- C. Make cuts and look for any in-house revenue
- D. Combination of any or all of the above

Dr. McDaris gave a comparison of how TCS stacks up against other western districts in terms of ADM funding, jobs, county tax rates, and school performance. Buncombe, Henderson, and Haywood Counties have more jobs, higher taxes, and lower school performance. Jackson County and Macon County have more jobs, lower tax rates but larger tax bases, and lower school performance. Dr. McDaris noted that other western counties all receive either small county, low wealth or both in supplemental funding. Transylvania County receives no supplemental funding, yet consistently delivers an excellent return on investment.

Dr. McDaris outlined his recommendation for the FY12 funding request as follows:

- Capital funding equal to current year (\$1,046,963)
- Request \$200,000 be moved to current expense
- Use allowable percentage of lottery funding for jobs (\$131,581)
- Use \$200,000 of lottery balance to offset capital loss
- Use \$200,000 (14%) of undesignated fund balance  
Total \$531,581
- Request *increase* in local current expense (not including capital conversion) of \$1,600,122

Dr. McDaris listed possible cuts that could be necessary if the county is unable to provide the needed help:

- 100% cuts to AP and PSAT testing support
- Deeper cuts to school furniture and equipment
- 100% cut to support for Communities in Schools
- 100% cut to all non-competitive and program field trips
- Cut to Math and Science Fair competitions
- Deeper cuts to school supplies and materials
- Cut to TCS Scholars' Banquet
- 100% cut to Teacher of the Year and other "of the year" awards
- 100% cut to TC Arts allocation
- 100% cut to all off-campus band, music and club competitions  
(Note: 14% of fund balance would already be utilized)

All of the cuts listed above would only add up to \$531,581. The district would still need an additional \$1,500,000. Further cuts might include the following:

- Cuts to all *middle school* non-revenue sports (baseball, softball, soccer, cross country, track, tennis and cheerleading)
- 30% cut to middle school athletics equipment
- Cuts to *high school* non-revenue sports (boys soccer, girls soccer, cross country, track, golf, JV baseball, and JV softball)
- Elimination of band travel to all away games and competitions

This would save another \$245,000, leaving a remaining gap of \$787,000. Dr. McDaris emphasized that no one wants to cut any of these programs; he listed them only to make the point that the elimination of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities *will not cover the gap*. Not only would the cuts not be a solution to the funding problem, but they would harm children's education and the school system's legacy of excellence. Dr. McDaris concluded his presentation by saying that it is not the local government's fault that the state has created this budget mess; however, the school system will have to have the county's help.

Mrs. Fox stated that she is proud to be a North Carolina educator. However, she is not proud of what is being done to public education by state legislators. She believes that the foundation of the state is to educate its citizens.

Chairman Whitmire stated that the school system is facing draconian cuts. He said that stakeholders need to understand that the decisions being made today will not just impact one fiscal year but many years to come. Mr. Whitmire stated that the school system's infrastructure is the public's infrastructure and listed some of the most pressing capital needs. He emphasized that the school system does not have a \$2.9 million "slush fund" as has been rumored. He discussed the impact of Senate Bill 8 and the potential for more lawsuits that will take money away from traditional schools in favor of charter schools. He discussed the restrictions that have been placed on lottery fund uses. He discussed the huge concerns over proposed cuts to teacher assistants. He asked the assembly to consider whether, at the end of the day, it would be good stewardship to decimate the school district's fund balance.

Mrs. McCoy stated that the Board is trying to do the best for students that it can with what it has. She discussed the importance of being able to maintain at the current level in order to continue providing needed programs, including athletics. She stated that extracurricular activities are very important when applying for college scholarships.

#### 4. Public Forum

Chairman Whitmire explained the rules for the public forum. A speaker sign-up sheet was distributed among the assembly.

1. Leigh Hyatt, business owner, parent and teacher, expressed concerns about possible cuts to athletics. She predicted that many families would move away in order for their children to play sports in other districts. She also questioned what incentive there would be for families to move here if the schools had no sports programs. Mrs. Hyatt asked for clarification regarding what constitutes a non-revenue sport and whether parents could pay for a travel team. She asked, should a pay-to-play program be instigated, whether the charter school would be entitled to a portion of that money as well. She requested that parents be notified of cuts before the start of the next school year in case they want to transfer schools. She pointed out that Transylvania's facilities are falling far behind other districts, and if people leave the county because of sports, it will only get worse. She commented that the condition of the BHS concession stand/restrooms are an embarrassment. *Dr. McDaris explained that a non-revenue sport is one in which the overall cost of operation exceeds the revenue from ticket sales. He stated that he does not have full clarification on all of the charter school entitlements, but his understanding is that donations made through the school would be protected. He stated that should athletics have to be cut (not a recommendation at this time), the administration would let parents know as soon*

*as possible. Mrs. Petit stated that as the parent of a female athlete, she has seen firsthand the modern, well-appointed gyms and facilities in other school districts and agreed that Transylvania County simply does not compare.*

2. Faye Yeager, business owner, stated that business has dried up and people have lost jobs, homes, insurance, and pensions. She believes that those with jobs should give up a percentage of their payroll. She does not think that property taxes should be increased.
3. Robert Crowe suggested saving money by using inmates to paint buildings and mow grass. *Mr. Barger explained that inmate labor has been used for painting projects during non-student hours. Lawn maintenance service is contracted, and mowing is done in off hours to minimize classroom disruption.*
4. Dianne McKinney, parent, expressed concerns about potential cuts to sports programs. She predicted a rise in dropouts and criminal incidents if students do not have extracurricular activities. She stated that the needs of the schools should come before the library, animal shelter or a park in Connestee. She also suggested charging tuition to out-of-district families. *Mr. Whitmire stated that he refuses to accept the notion that Transylvania is a cul de sac community. He stated that the schools are an attraction no matter one's income level, and should be a factor in the county's economic development plan. He pointed out that programs cannot be sustained on private donations. Dr. McDaris explained the potential drain on the county's economy that would occur through unemployment payments and loss of revenue that would be associated with heavy staff layoffs.*
5. Kaitlin McCrary, student, expressed concerns about potential cuts to sports, AP testing and AIG programs. She discussed the negative impact that reduced extracurricular opportunities would have on students applying for college scholarships. She asked whether instead of cutting entire teams, the Board would consider reducing the size of teams. She also suggested asking parents to pay for uniforms or using hand-me-down uniforms. *Dr. McDaris explained that TCS has traditionally reimbursed the cost of AP exams for students who score level 3 or 4. This practice may be discontinued. He stated that layering of sports teams (i.e., only upperclassmen) could be considered. Uniform replacement is already being extended. These solutions are good ones, but only a drop in the bucket. Mr. Whitmire added there is a point when our county becomes just a rich man's playground, allergic to ever touching the tax rates. Transylvania has the 88<sup>th</sup> lowest tax rate in the state. He asked everyone to consider what a potential flight of talent would do to the county's economy and tax base.*
6. Gerry Hunsicker stated that his family moved here 19 years ago because of the schools and spoke glowingly of the TCS teachers and programs. He stated that Transylvania is a sanctuary when it comes to taxes, and asked if it would be possible to charge higher tax rates to part-time, second-home residents. *Dr. McDaris explained that such a move would require a bill to be passed by the legislature. Mr. Whitmire stated that half of the county's homes are owned by non-residents, and he believes it would be worth asking the question. He remarked that he empathizes with those who have suffered due to the economy; stating that he is a licensed pilot who is currently selling real estate.*

7. John Huggins, parent, stated that raising taxes on working people in this county would be wrong. He feels the Board could save money by eliminating student drug testing. He does not think that drug testing program is effective in preventing drug use because it only tests student athletes. He also stated that the county wasted \$40,000 on a city/county parks and recreation study. *Dr. McDaris clarified that all students who park on campus and/or participate in any competitive club or extracurricular activity, not just athletics, are subject to the drug testing policy. He stated that eliminating drug testing would not come close to solving the budget problem, and would remove an important tool in identifying and providing services for students who test positive for illegal substances. Chairman Whitmire added that the drug testing program provides a deterrent to those students who may be on the fence regarding experimentation with drugs.*
8. Larry Chapman, speaking for himself and not as a county commissioner, stated that the county has always supported education. He took exception to a comment heard earlier that the November election was not a mandate; he feels that it was a “tidal wave of change.” He sees the state’s Department of Education as a huge, unnecessary bureaucracy. He feels that with 250 county homes in foreclosure, 2400 families on food stamps, and unemployment at 9 percent, everyone will have to share the pain. He stated that property taxes are the county’s only real way to raise revenue and believes that raising taxes would harm small businesses and struggling families. He stated that our county’s citizens are in crisis, and taxes are not the answer. He concluded by saying that everything is important to somebody if you can afford it.

Mrs. Norman commented that the Board has tried to educate the public regarding how the schools are funded and where they are in the process. She stated that she has been traveling across the state in her role as a state board member fighting for Transylvania County Schools. She reported that teachers have not had a raise in three years and have not once complained. Everyone has taken on additional responsibilities and are doing all they can to support students and each other. She expressed serious doubts about the motivations of those in Raleigh who are making decisions about schools and budgets. She stated that no one is talking about stopping rising gas prices or food prices and that she “is sick of it.” She observed that some seem to believe that schools should be run the way they were 30 years ago. She sees that drugs are on the rise in this county. She urged everyone to contact their legislators and not to let this community become a ghost town. (Handouts with contact information for elected officials were available.)

9. **Elaine Bagwell** urged the Board to keep sports and AP courses intact.
10. **Jamie Reese** urged the Board to ask for more. She expressed her belief that God will take care of our children and our county and asked that everyone wrap the situation in prayer.
11. **Sue Null** expressed willingness to pay higher taxes to support the schools.
12. Mack McNeely stated that it is unrealistic to think that the county can go on having the school system as its largest employer and continue “propping it up.” He believes that staffing cuts should be made based on merit. He reported that his business has laid off employees due to decreased work, and the schools

should too. Mr. McNeely also asked what ever happened to the timber sale revenues that went to the schools. *Chairman Whitmire responded, "We appreciate that times are tough. However, students don't have the option of being laid off for a year. Our work has not gone away, and we have to have the money with which to do it." Mr. Barger reported that timber sale proceeds have never been recorded on the school district's books. Those proceeds go to the county, which in turn credits them to the schools.*

13. John Huggins stated that he is taking home a third of his earnings from three years ago. He asked why, if everyone else has taken a salary hit, don't the teachers? He asked how many teachers are double-dipping (drawing salary plus retirement). He suggested reducing the number of teacher assistants to the levels there were when he was in school. *Dr. McDaris responded that he is grateful to have retired educators who are willing to work part-time with no benefits because they provide a very cost-effective wealth of knowledge and experience. As for why the Board does not considering reducing teacher pay like in the private sector, teacher salary schedules are mandated by the state of North Carolina. Regarding TCS being the county's largest employer, he stated, "We don't want to be. I would love to have more industry and jobs in this county." Regarding Mr. Huggins' comment about how things were when he was a student, Dr. McDaris stated, "When you and I were in school, we did have fewer teacher assistants. However, we also did not mainstream exceptional children, have as many broken homes, global competition, or the drug problem that we do now. In 1979 we had manufacturing jobs in this county. The reality is that it is not 1979 anymore. Educators are asked to do more and be more now than ever before." Chairman Whitmire added, "Our teacher assistants help us to meet many federal mandates. They are force multipliers. The retired educators working in our system are force multipliers, too."*

Vice Chair McCoy reported that she has taken a 20% pay cut in her private sector job and is doing the work of two people at her workplace. She stated she is grateful for her job and is not jealous of teachers' pay because they more than earn it. She stated that she does want anyone in the county to lose their job, private or public sector, and hopes that we can all work together to make the county better for everyone.

Mrs. Norman stated that teachers effectively take a pay cut when their benefits get cut. She estimated that if one were to do some research, they would find that some licensed teachers qualify for and are receiving public assistance. Mr. Whitmire stated that he has had personal experience with layoffs and understands the pain many are experiencing.

Dr. McDaris addressed a rumor that the school system recently purchased a brand new school bus wrecker. In actuality, a request has been in for a number of years for a replacement wrecker large enough to handle all of our school buses. The old wrecker was inadequate for the large chassis buses. The state finally responded to the request and, due to the advanced age and configuration of the old wrecker, provided a new replacement wrecker free of charge.

The Board recessed for a 15-minute break.

**5. FY12 Budget (continued)**

The Board continued its review and discussion of the FY12 budget. Dr. McDaris stated that House cuts could rise to 9.6% or higher. The Senate budget is still unknown. Mr.

Barger cautioned that the state could freeze lottery disbursements again like they did last year. Mrs. McCoy and Mrs. Fox indicated that they were comfortable with the superintendent's budget recommendations (see previous). After much discussion it was agreed to delay a vote on the current expense budget request until the May 9 meeting in order to see what occurs with the state budget. Dr. McDaris gave a reminder that the Board's budget request is due to the county commissioners by May 13. He stated that the commissioners' budget workshops will begin the first week in June, and it will be important to have someone at the workshops in order to answer questions about the school system's budget request.

**6. Important Dates**

May 6	May Day Festival, 3:30-8:00 p.m., TCHES
May 9	REGULAR MEETING, 6:30 p.m., BHS Cafeteria
May 12	Superintendent's Communication Council, 3:45 p.m., MEC
May 12	RMHS Chorus Concert, 6:30 p.m., RHS Auditorium
May 12	JOINT MEETING (tentative), TBD
May 20, 21	"Fiddler on the Roof," 7:30 p.m., BHS Auditorium
May 23	BHS Senior Projects, 3:30-5:30 p.m., BHS
May 23	REGULAR MEETING, 6:30 p.m., MEC
May 24	Scholars' Recognition Evening, 5:30 p.m., BHS
May 26	RHS Senior Projects, 3:00 - 5:00 p.m., RHS
May 26	BHS Spring Band/Chorus Concert, 7:00 p.m., BHS Auditorium
May 30	Student Dismissal 1:00 p.m.
June 6	REGULAR MEETING, 6:30 p.m., MEC
June 10	DRS Graduation, TBD
June 10	BHS Graduation, 6:00 p.m., Brevard Music Center
June 11	RHS Graduation, 10:00 a.m., Brevard Music Center
June 20	REGULAR MEETING, 6:30 p.m., TBA

Chairman Whitmire requested that the joint meeting on May 12 begin at 6:30 p.m. instead of 7:00 p.m.

**7. Other Items**

None.

**8. Public Comment**

Meredith Licht gave a reminder that the budget debate is not just about sports, but teacher assistants, textbooks, dropout prevention, and many other needs. She stated that it is important for people to know just how hard teachers work.

There was no further business, and ON A MOTION BY MRS. NORMAN, SECONDED BY MRS. PETIT, the meeting was adjourned at 10:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Chairman

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Secretary