

**Minutes  
Transylvania County Board of Education  
May 20, 2024**

INVOCATION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME

BUSINESS ITEMS (including amendments and rescissions):

1. Approval of Agenda
2. Personnel Report
3. FY25 Emergency Capital Request

WORK SESSION ITEMS:

1. Public Comment
2. Former Students in the Military
3. Policy: Fall 2023 PLS Custom Updates
4. Budget Update
5. Proposal to Change Monthly Meeting Schedule
6. July Meetings
7. Setting Agenda for June 3, 2024
8. Closed Session

The Transylvania County Board of Education met in regular session on May 20, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. at the Morris Education Center. Chairman Kimsey Jackson invited Retired Colonel Larry Chapman, County Commissioner, to lead in a moment of silence and the Pledge of Allegiance. Chairman Jackson called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. In addition to approximately nine 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/HR  
Kerry Putnam, Director, Facilities; CTE  
Gabi Juba, Chief Finance Officer  
Audrey Reneau, Director, Federal Programs  
Tessa Brown, Public Information Officer  
Chris Whitlock, Director, Technology Services  
Brent Owen, School Resource Officer

BOARD ATTORNEY:

Chris Cambell, Campbell Shatley

MEDIA:

Laura Denon, Transylvania Times

**BUSINESS ITEMS**

1. **Approval of Agenda**  
ON A MOTION BY MR. WIENER, SECONDED BY MR. O'NEILL, the meeting agenda for May 20, 2024 was unanimously approved as presented.
2. **Personnel Report**  
ON A MOTION BY MR. O'NEILL, SECONDED BY MRS. DALTON, the personnel report for May 20, 2024 was unanimously approved (see attached).
3. **FY25 Emergency Capital Request**  
Facilities Director Kerry Putnam recommended that the board request an emergency release of FY25 sales tax funding from the county in order to order boilers for Brevard

Middle School, Pisgah Forest Elementary School, and Rosman Middle/High School. Both boards had approved these projects for Phase 1 funding from the bond sale this fall; however, it was learned that the lead time to receive the materials could take up to 16 weeks or longer. This could delay completion of the work past the arrival of cold weather and possibly result in unheated classrooms this fall. Proposals from MSS Solutions for boiler replacements were reviewed. The proposal for Brevard Middle School was \$296,539; the proposal for Pisgah Forest Elementary School was \$190,000; and the proposal for the Rosman Middle/High School Gym was \$90,525. Attorney Chris Campbell clarified that the board would not be entering into contracts at this time as the source of funding is not yet identified. The request would be to allow the administration to move forward with the projects contingent upon on the bids being submitted to the county and funding being approved by the county commissioners. ON A MOTION BY MR. WIENER, SECONDED BY MR. O'NEILL, the board unanimously approved a request for the emergency release of FY25 sales tax funding to begin boiler replacement projects for Brevard Middle School, Pisgah Forest Elementary School, and Rosman Middle/High School, not to exceed the value of the bids currently on hand. Dr. Fletcher reported that she and Mr. Putnam have asked to be on the commissioners' agenda for May 28.

## WORK SESSION

### 1. Public Comment

Chairman Jackson reviewed the guidelines for public comment.

**Jeannie Stellitano** - As I was reading the May 16 issue of the *Transylvania Times*, I saw an article with the following headline, "North Carolina Bill to Curb Mask Wearing in Protests Could Make It Illegal for Medical Reasons." I was shocked and appalled at what I read. As a retired registered nurse with 40 years of experience, I know the value of mask wearing. There are two basic reasons to wear a mask—to protect yourself if you are immunocompromised and to protect others if you are contagious. If you are compromised and this law passes without medical exceptions, it will sentence people to be housebound, making going to the grocery store too dangerous without a mask. Mask wearing has been a practice way before the pandemic. Even if you have a doctor's appointment, you are screened to make sure you are not contagious. If you are, they hand you a mask. These days are particularly dangerous as diseases once nearly eradicated are making a comeback due to incomplete or no vaccines. They include polio, measles, and COVID (which actually never left), and now we are in the midst of a whooping cough outbreak. Any of these diseases can cause death to a compromised person, such as a person on chemo. That is not being dramatic, it is just the truth. This bill has already passed through the state Senate and will hit the House soon. I am bringing this up to you because I think it would be very beneficial if the school board of Transylvania County objected to the "no medical exceptions," especially during a whooping cough outbreak. I plan on spending tomorrow on the phone with state representatives and hope many of you will join me. We are talking life and death here, and the legislature needs to hear that. In closing, just one more thought. North Carolina is a legal open carry state for guns without a permit. How is it that we can openly carry a gun, but can't wear a mask? That is just absurd and illogical—and dangerous.

**Noelle Khare** – I am an educator and have been teaching at Brevard Middle School for 22 years. When I started at BMS, I was immediately humbled. Our building vibrated with positive energy, enthusiasm and passion. We had extensive support staff, basic classroom resources, and our administration supported us through their interventions for disruptive or unengaged students. I bragged about our county and told everyone "this is the place to work and send your kids to school." We need to bring back that positive climate. There is little support staff. For most of us, it is just us and the school administration and that's pretty much it. It's undoable day after day. We need to get disruptive students who do not understand how to, or choose not to, function in a classroom, so that teachers can teach the students ready to learn. At this point, it doesn't matter

where these deficits came from. They are there and they need to be addressed. Our new district leaderships seem completely unconcerned with student learning and the learning environment. They don't engage with professionals who work with the students each day. We are the experts. It is time we are recognized and utilized for what we bring to the table. We are given directives that don't work in practice and expected to do the undoable. We want to educate kids. We have zero interest in indoctrinating them. Social media is doing that. But teachers are an easy target. The educated recognize this. I have supportive parents who have helped in my classroom. I also have parents who have been raised by a screen, who raise their children with a screen. They have no experiences to build on. We have parents who are gaslighting our schools, and are not part of the problem, but not part of the solution. It's well known that our state chooses not to fund education, and it's time for Transylvania County to step up. We are trying to squeeze blood from a stone. Teachers are exhausted. They are leaving in droves. Most are not coming back. I have turned in my own resignation. But I have faith that Transylvania County Schools will be an ideal place to work again. And that I will return. We in our community need to vote for education and for people who care about education. The heart of our community is our schools. And our schools are suffering from heart failure.

**Susan Lefler** - I was recently able to sit in on a workshop in which Gabi Juba offered an overview of school finance in Transylvania County. This involved all the categories of funds, the origin of the funds, the timing and the availability of the funds, which ones must be used within a fiscal year, which ones roll over, as well as the complexity of fiscal year dates differing from the state and federal government. My suggestion is that if the school board has not heard this presentation, you invite Gabi to schedule it. I know she regularly presents financial reports here, but this is the large picture of how the funds work and what they are for. My second suggestion is that the school board invite the county commissioners to participate in this workshop. I am surprised and discouraged every time I attend a meeting of the commissioners and hear one or more of them express outright distrust of members of the school board and question their knowledge and judgment when it comes to the need for approval of expenditures. If they could see this overview, it would at least inform them about the intricacy of these funds—that school administrators and board members are not careless or uninformed, and that money isn't just lying around. As I make the suggestion, the commissioners have just last week refused to approve the down payment for boilers at the schools. Why on earth would the timing of this request be questioned? Clearly the furnaces must be in working order before it gets cold. The need for this is prominently mentioned in the recent Axios study presented to commissioners, the public, and the school board. The commissioners' decisions, or lack thereof, seem to me another example of a strange new distrust of public education. It appears to be a national phenomenon that fits neatly into the desire of powerful political groups to manipulate and control sources of information, history, scientific facts, and the freedom for Americans to think, write and read freely.

## 2. **Former Students in the Military**

In recognition of the upcoming Memorial Day on May 27, 2024, the board read aloud 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. The list of names is read aloud twice a year in recognition of Veterans Day and Memorial Day. Additional names are included as they are received.

## 3. **Policy: Fall 2023 PLS Custom Updates**

Dr. Brian Weaver presented the second set of NCSBA Fall 2023 PLS (Policies to Lead the Schools) Custom Updates as first-read information. These 18 policies contain substantive changes as summarized below. Dr. Weaver also presented an update to policy 2310, Public Participation at Board Meetings, as recommended by the school board attorneys.

- **1310/4002, Parental Involvement.** Updates information about parental consent for student participation in protected topic surveys to reflect new state law exceptions. Includes minor editorial changes.

- **2310, Public Participation at Board Meetings.** Updated to strengthen and enhance the rules regarding personal attacks on staff and the legal extent and scope of complaints that may be made during public comment.
- **3610, Counseling Program.** Adds new Section C to reflect statutory requirement to have peer-to-peer student support programs in schools with grades 6 and higher. Adds language regarding early graduate scholarships. Updates the legal references.
- **4040/7310, Staff-Student Relations.** Modifies subsection C.4 to reflect legal requirements in new state law. Updates the legal references.
- **4110, Immunization and Health Requirements for School Admission.** Removes reference to the Governor's Commission on Early Childhood Vision Care, which no longer exists.
- **4130, Discretionary Admission.** Includes substantive changes throughout. Updates legal references.
- **4240/7312, Child Abuse and Related Threats to Child Safety.** Modifies Section D to reflect legal requirements in new state law. Updates legal references.
- **4342, Student Searches.** Includes changes in first paragraph and Section A based on new state law. Updates legal references.
- **4720, Surveys of Students.** Updates the parental consent information in subsection A.2 to reflect the new statutory exception.
- **5210, Distribution and Display of Non-School Material.** Adds language based on new statutory provisions regarding the display of farm signs on state highway rights-of-way.
- **6220, Operation of School Nutrition Services.** Adds a provision based on a new statutory requirement that prohibits the use of administrative penalties on a student for unpaid meal charges. Updates legal references.
- **6401/9100, Ethics and the Purchasing Function.** Adds new statutory requirement that employees who are involved in making or administering contracts receive conflicts of interest training. Updates legal references.
- **7100, Recruitment and Selection of Personnel.** Clarifies the age discrimination standard. Updates a timeframe in Section D regarding criminal history checks of child care providers to comply with statutory changes. Eliminates unnecessary language in Section D. Updates legal references.
- **7130, Licensure.** Adds new subsection B.6 to address new licensure requirements for service members and their spouses relocating to North Carolina. Other minor editorial changes. Updates legal references.
- **7510, Leave.** Adds new Section D about paid parental leave. Updates legal references.
- **7520, Family and Medical Leave.** Adds reference to paid parental leave in Section M.
- **7730, Employee Conflict of Interest.** Adds new section to include the new statutory requirement that employees who are involved in making or administering contracts receive conflicts of interest training. Updates legal references.
- **8325, Daily Deposits.** G.S. 115C-445, which governs daily deposits, has increased the threshold from \$250 to \$1,500. The board may keep the dollar amount currently listed or choose a different amount up to \$1,500.
- **9125, Participation by Minority Businesses.** Modifies first paragraph to reflect statutory changes to the definition of "minority business." Corrects a typo in subsection B.6.

#### 4. Budget Update

Dr. Lisa Fletcher and Finance Office Gabi Juba gave an update on budget. Dr. Fletcher reported that the county manager has recommended a 2% increase for FY25. This will not cover state raises for locally funded employees, the full amount for Pre-K, the full amount for counselors, additional counselor positions or other local requests. Ms. Juba presented a slide show showing the deficit based on the amount requested for FY25 and the amount recommended. She reported that expenditures for FY24 are where they should be at this time.

Chairman Jackson stated that he was extremely disappointed that the board's requested increases for PreK classrooms and counselor positions were not funded. He stated that our dropout prevention coordinator and counselors have done great work and we must continue to support their efforts to address chronic absenteeism and mental health issues. He stated that Pre-K is a great need in our county. It gives children a head start and allows parents to work. As discussed at the last meeting, he reiterated his support for a 1.2 cent tax increase to support Pre-K.

Mr. Wiener added that PreK provides an opportunity for developmentally delayed students to get pre-assessed and for teachers to identify issues early. For kids coming from homes where there may be issues that hinder performance on par with their peers, PreK is something to take very seriously. Mr. Wiener expressed support for a tax increase and asked the public to recognize that the cost figures are not pure salary; they also include benefits. Mr. Wiener noted that the impact of two years of school closures are not yet being seen. These kids are the ones who will be acting out when they get to high school. Counselors are needed to be proactive for these kids for at least the next nine years. They will need to be their champions and communicate with parents.

Mr. O'Neill asked if any other program funding sources could be used to recover the deficits. Dr. Fletcher reported that we may be able to get some external funding for JROTC based on enrollment in the program. Mrs. McCoy asked about attrition in other positions. Mr. Jackson suggested a meeting between the board chairs, vice chairs, superintendent, and county manager to try to work out the problems. Dr. Fletcher reported that the county will hold a public hearing on the budget on May 28.

**5. Proposal to Change Monthly Meeting Schedule**

At the May 6 meeting, Vice Chairman Dalton proposed that the board consider returning to a once-a-month meeting schedule. She reported that most of the surrounding counties have one meeting a month. She added that meeting once a month would save money on attorney fees and create less work for staff. For many years, the board met once a month from July through January on the third Monday of the month. During February through June (budget season), the board met twice a month on the first and third Mondays. During discussion, Mrs. McCoy stated that she would support changing to one meeting a month as the board could always call a special meeting if needed. Attorney Campbell requested that if the board should decide to eliminate one of the Monday night meetings, to please consider dropping the first Monday of the month as that is their busiest night in terms of meeting coverage. Mr. Wiener stated that he could not support changing to one meeting at this time, noting that the board has the bond and other pressing matters this fall to which it needs to be responsive. Chairman Jackson stated that he is neutral. Mr. O'Neill agreed with Mr. Wiener.

**6. July Meetings**

Dr. Fletcher thanked Officer Brent Owen for securing the meeting.

Dr. Fletcher reported that July 4 is the Independence Day holiday and because many staff will be taking the week of July 1-5 off, she recommended that the board cancel its meeting on Monday, July 1. She also recommended that the board move its meeting on Monday, July 15, to the following Monday, July 22, due to several administrator vacations the week of July 15-19. The July 22 meeting would be designated as a business meeting and potential work session. The board had no objections to canceling the July 1 meeting or moving the July 15 meeting to the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

7. **Setting Agenda for June 3**

Board members designated the following items for potential action and consent approval on the June 3 agenda: 1) first-read acceptance of 18 policies from the Fall 2023 PLS Custom Updates and policy 2310 update; 2) potential action on the proposal to change the monthly meeting schedule; and 3) consent approval to cancel the July 1 meeting, change the July 15 meeting to July 22, and designate July 22 as a business meeting and potential work session.

8. **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 subsections (a)(1) to discuss confidential student matters pursuant to the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act; (a)(1) to discuss confidential employee matters pursuant to G.S. 115C-319-321; and (a)(3) to discuss matters covered by the attorney-client privilege. Following a brief recess, the closed session convened at approximately 7:21 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 Chris Campbell were also present in the closed session. At approximately 8:27 p.m., BY MOTION MADE BY MR. WIENER AND SECONDED BY MRS. DALTON, the board adjourned closed session and returned to open session.

There was no further business, and ON A MOTION BY MR. WIENER, SECONDED BY MRS. DALTON, the meeting was adjourned at 8:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Chairman

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Secretary

**PERSONNEL REPORT**  
**May 20, 2024**

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

Licensed Personnel

James Proctor, Teacher, BHS, effective June 14, 2024

Classified Personnel

None

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

Licensed Personnel

Holly Egan, Teacher, BMS, effective August 19, 2024

Katharina Kramer, Teacher, RES, effective August 19, 2024

Michelle Pitts, Teacher, BMS, effective August 19, 2024

Classified Personnel

None

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

Licensed Personnel

Angela Barnes, from Instructional Coach, TCH, to Teacher, BMS, effective August 19, 2024

Hannah Dickson, from Teacher Assistant to Teacher, BMS, effective August 19, 2024

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 & Tutors

Heather Corn

Substitute School Nutrition Workers

None

The licensed employee named here is recommended for a one-year renewal of their contract:

Catherine Motuz

The licensed employees named here are recommended for a four-year renewal of their contracts:

Stephanie Ramsey

Jessica Sharp