

**News Release**  
**June 7, 2011**  
**Giles County Public Schools**  
**School Board Meeting**

*Dr. Terry E. Arbogast, II*

*Division Superintendent*

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**\*Pledge of Allegiance**

The School Board Chairman led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**\*Public Comments**

Mr. Cory Brunson, represents "A Few of Us Here," students and instructors from Virginia Tech, and attended the meeting in opposition of the Historical Documents display. They don't pose as residents of Giles County. However, they do pay taxes in Virginia and are part of our voting district. They also share the same health district. On those grounds, they feel they are affected by the decisions made here. They want to address the proposed resolution to adopt the revised historical display in the public schools of Giles County. "In order to not go into too much exposition, I will just mention that as representatives of Giles and Virginia to a lesser botanical extent, your decision reflects upon us. The relevant precedent for displays that include not just the Ten Commandments in public schools is the so called Lemon test from the Supreme Court Case Lemon V. Kurtzman. For anyone here that is not familiar with this precedent, the three criteria the display must meet to be deemed secular includes a secular legislative purpose, must not have a primary effect on advancing or inhibiting religion and must not result in excessive government entanglement with religion. I don't want to go into any more detail. I was pleased to see The Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom included in the documents. Though we personally don't agree that it constitutes a fair balance, we are glad to see it included. We have not seen any opposition to the display as it previously was or as is currently proposed from anyone from this area. The ACLU and the Freedom from Religion Foundation have been corresponding, but from this area we have not detected any opposition and we are here to supply this voice. With this in mind, we urge the board to vote against the proposed resolution."

Mr. Charlie Henderson, spoke in support of the Historical Documents display. "Thank you honorable school board and citizens of Giles County and guests. Today, I come to you thinking that this is very ironic that we are assembled here today about a presentation of historical documents on which are the freedoms and privileges that allow us to be here. There are many countries in this land and throughout history that did not have those freedoms and responsibilities and yet these documents give us the freedom to meet here today to discuss this very thing. The question is not whether we display these documents, but whether it's the right thing to do. Everybody here knows it's the right thing to do. The question is who is going to be responsible for these documents to be displayed. Who is going to take that commitment, that responsibility? School Board, I speak directly to you, I take on that responsibility myself as a common word and you have my word that my spiritual, physical and financial resources will be behind you if you all vote affirmative on this measure. You may ask, well Charles, how can you be so bold in that statement? Yesterday, we celebrated the anniversary of D-Day. How can I possibly look back 67 years and look in those young men and women's faces that gave all they had (18,19, 20 year olds). They could not be here because they gave their lives for these documents for the freedoms. How can I look at them straight in their eyes and tell them I can't be responsible for that today? How could I do that? The more important thing is, how can I go home tonight and look in my granddaughter's eyes and say girls, the costs were just too high...that I couldn't stand up for what was right today? I leave you with that and I leave you with these words from a famous man about these documents. *They are not just idle words, they are our life.* Thank you!"

On behalf of the School Board, they thanked Mr. Henderson for the playground at Macy that he built, as well as the ball fields at Giles High School! "We really appreciate you Charlie!"

**\*Special Presentations**

Mr. Buckland – "We had told you folks that June 7<sup>th</sup> there would be a decision. This board has wrestled with this, many prayers said, and thought of it. Whatever the decision is this afternoon, it's final." Mr. Buckland opened the floor for a motion to display the historical document display. Mr. Whitehead made a motion to display the historical document display. Mr. Gollehon seconded the motion and voting was 3-2 (Ayes: Mr. Buckland, Mr. Gollehon, Mr. Whitehead Nays: Dr. Webb, Mrs. McMahan).

Mrs. McMahon – “I did not feel comfortable making my statement before the board voted. I support the historical document displays in our schools. I love my country and these documents have ensured all our freedoms. I believe the Ten Commandments have provided the moral background of our country and the foundation of our legal tradition. Outside interests have threatened to take money from our school system and our county if we hang these historical documents. We do not have the money to fight this battle to the Supreme Court. Our teachers and our staff continue to do an outstanding job even though they have not had a raise in 4 years and we are talking about spending \$350,000 to fight this to the Supreme Court. They are paying the same fuel cost that we are, the same increased electric bills, they have house payments and car payments and children to feed and clothe and send to college. Our staff here has put hours and hours into this already. Dr. Arbogast has put many hours on emails and phone calls and interviews regarding these documents. His job is commitment to excellence in education for the students of our county. Speakers addressing the School Board have referred to the Ten Commandments, not the historical documents. You have come carrying banners of the Ten Commandments; you wear support of the Ten Commandments on your t-shirts. The removal of the matted and framed constitution and the Ten Commandments in Giles County public schools has brought the Ten Commandments to life in Giles County. They are on vehicles, in yards, on trailers in Narrows and Giles County. At last count, there were 40 documents of the Ten Commandments in Giles High School. They were hung by our students on their lockers, which is their right to do and no one can take that away from them and are still hanging in our schools today. This battle that you have called and referred to as The Ten Commandments has been won. There has been victory without changing this costly legal battle.”

Dr. Webb – “I would like to explain my position on this issue this afternoon. I have served to the best of my ability all the citizens of Giles County for the past 23 years on this school board. Without question, this has been one of the most difficult decisions I have had to make during all these years. This issue, in my thinking, creates a great conflict between what is in my heart as opposed to my mind. When I first became a school board member, I took an oath to uphold the Constitution of this great country and to provide the best possible education for our students. Personally, I feel this issue violates the Constitution as it has been overturned many times by the Supreme Court. I feel that many people are asking the school systems throughout our nation to do more and more to help them raise their children. Schools can NOT do it all. Much has to come from the home and the community. As I’ve heard said many times before, IT TAKES AN ENTIRE VILLAGE TO RAISE A CHILD. I applaud all who have stood up for this VERY important issue and respect your opinion very much. All I ask of you is to respect my position as well. This nation would not be the strong nation it is if it were made up of all like thinking people and the freedom of every individual to have an opinion. I have certainly not taken this decision lightly. I have talked to countless people on both sides of this issue and there has not been a day that I have not given much thought as to what my decision would be. I thank you for your interest in the youth of Giles County.”

Samuel Marshall – “You were talking about the costs of this. Through southwest Virginia, you not only have the support in this county, you have the support of Christians throughout Southwest Virginia that will fight with you if necessary and the support of this \$350,000 or whatever. I thank you again for accepting this. If we have to, we will fight. As a Christian, thanks be to god that it has gone this way and god will prevail. This is not over by a long shot and it wind up in schools across this country. We thank you.”

Billie Jean Huskey – “I spent getting my graduate degree on my way to my doctorate. I didn’t get the doctorate finished in Washington D.C. You go to any of those monuments and even on the top of the tower; there is the word of God. I have walked them, I have read them and I wish I could still walk them. I will tell you, I was a non-believer when I left Virginia Tech. I thought I got smart enough, I thought I had enough of the evolution. It wasn’t true. I am in full love of all three of you (Mr. Whitehead, Mr. Gollehon, Mr. Buckland) for standing. He gave all. My god provides.”

Mr. Buckland said that all board members have wrestled with this task, but personally I felt it was the right thing to do and I have never wavered from the night we took that vote. We appreciate Mr. Henderson. I think that relieves a lot of pressure thinking it is going to take local funds. He has assured us. He is a man of his word. We appreciate all of you.”

#### **\*School Board Approves Consent Items**

- Meeting Minutes – May 19, 2011
- Special Meeting Minutes – May 25, 2011

- Special Meeting Minutes – May 31, 2011
- Bills in the amount of \$ 720,701.83
- Payroll, May 31, 2011
- Revenue for May 2011
- Expenditure for May 2011
- Appropriation Request for June 2011

#### **\*The School Board Approves/Confirms Personnel Items**

The School Board confirmed the following **Resignations:** Stephen Guenzi – MMS Elementary Teacher (effective June 9, 2011), Peter Binkley – GHS French/ESL Teacher (effective June 9, 2011)

The School Board confirmed the following **Employment:** Jennifer Hogan – EEMS Elementary Teacher (effective for the 11-12 school year), Amanda Havens – GHS Secondary Education Teacher (effective for the 11-12 school year), Jason Mills – GHS Principal (effective July 1, 2011)

The School Board confirmed the following **Volunteer Agreements:** Alice Hudson – EEMS Library Assistant

#### **\*The School Board Hears Reports from the Superintendent**

The School Board approved policy revisions as recommended by VSBA Policy Services and Administration.

The School Board approved Mr. Buckland and Mr. Whitehead as the VSBA delegate and alternate respectively to the 2011 Annual Convention in Williamsburg.

#### **\*School Board and School Staff Present Comments and Mission Statement Accomplishments**

Board members commended Giles High School for the most recent Spartanian edition.

Board members thanked Mr. Meade for all of his help and support at Giles High School this year.

Mrs. McMahon thanked Dr. Arbogast for all of his hard work during the issues the last couple months.

Congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. Canaday on the birth of their new little girl!

Dr. Webb stated it was hard to believe we were talking about the end of school year and graduation!

Dr. Webb asked Dr. Arbogast about the email received from VSBA about training for coaches. The last year to get certified is next year. “Do all coaches have to go through this training? The Superintendent stated that they did. The courses are found online at the VHSL website. If the coaches do not go through the training, they will not be brought to the board for approval after next year.

Mr. Whitehead gave out handouts on the 2011 Virginia Junior Academy of Science annual meeting. In February, students submitted their science fair project research paper to the VJAS for review. Students whose papers were accepted by the VJAS were then invited to attend the annual meeting held at the University of Richmond on May 24-26. Each student gave a ten minute PowerPoint presentation on his or her research project to a panel of judges. Prizes were awarded in each category. Two Giles High School students received Honorable Mention awards in the Medicine and Health Category (Elena Anderson & Avery Mahaney).

Mr. Buckland stated that it has been a long, tough year, but we are going to be okay! We have a good school system!

The Superintendent stated that SOL scores are coming back and look promising as far as accreditation purposes.

The Superintendent stated that renovation has been moving forward at a better rate at EEMS than previously. Amber has been back on site and working. Concrete has been poured in back for the playground area. The sidewalk at the end of the parking lot has been poured. The bleachers in the gym are up. They are working on the sheetrock on the stage. The motorized projection screen on the stage is up. Painting is almost complete in the gym. Once they get everything done, so they can get people off the floor, they are going to do

a test area on the floor. In the next week or so, they will be working on the extension of the canopy in the bus loading area.

The Superintendent stated that he provided a sample resolution of the AASA/NSBA regarding regulatory relief from the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. They have been asked as school divisions by VASS, VSBA and NASA if they so feel to do the resolution and send to our congressman, so hopefully get heard when reauthorizing ESEA (No Child Left Behind). Next year, English is 86%, Math is 85%. It continues to go up from there. It is 91% for reading and 90% for Math in 2012. In 2013, it will be 96% for reading and 95% for math. This will be further looked into for the June 30<sup>th</sup> board meeting.

The Superintendent thanked Mr. Meade for what he has done over the last 6 months.

**\*Next School Board Meeting**

The next School Board Meeting will be held Thursday, June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2011 at 7:30 a.m.