

Giles County Public Schools  
School Board Meeting  
September 24, 2002  
News Release

*Dr. Robert C. McCracken*

*Division Superintendent*

**\*School Board Approves Consent Items**

- Regular Meeting Minutes – August 22, 2002
- August Expenditures in the amount of \$423,022.15
- August Payrolls
- Bills as amended to include an additional check register for 9/25/02
- Appropriation Request for November, 2002
- Declaration of Surplus Property as amended to include GHS floor wax and filters
- Confirmation of Receipt of 2001-02 Report from Special Ed. Advisory Committee

**\*Pledge of Allegiance**

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

**\*Special Presentations**

The Superintendent and School Board surprised Mr. James Wheeler with a resolution for his dedication to Giles County Public Schools during his thirty-four years of service.

**\*Educational Feature – A Trip to China!**

This summer, three of our teachers had the opportunity to participate in the Fulbright-Hayes Program through VA Tech, which was of no cost to the school system. The program consisted of a trip to China for a month in July 2002. The School Board had the pleasure of a presentation by Sam Level (NHS Teacher), Carolyn Painter and Lynn Williams (GHS Teachers), who represented Giles County Schools as participants in the program. And what a delight it was! The three participants were dressed in beautiful dresses/handsome suit that were custom made for them in China in 2 days. They each conveyed thanks to the Board and Superintendent, and were deeply appreciative for their support in the program and allowing them to be a part of what they called "a dream come true". Mr. Level shared that 12 others traveled with them, 6 from Fairfax; 3 from Newport News, and 3 professors from Western Kentucky University. He also commented that Giles County was ahead of all the rest in technology, their skills shone through! Mrs. Painter shared various contrasts in China by providing pictures by CD, where many existed side by side. Pictures reflected old buildings next to new modern buildings. She also mentioned that China is very excited in preparing to host the 2008 Olympics and "getting ready for the world". Other pictures included rooflines of different temples and buildings, an interesting old baby stroller that is used in China and a donkey cart chauffeured by a donkey with particularly long legs! A special picture was of students who hid until they were bribed with lifesavers! Mrs. Painter had other school pictures as well, of a private school with a pool, track, auditorium and science lab; and a public school which is funded with government funds, and consisted of long tables for students rather than desks and a teacher's supplies – a chalkboard and chalk. Ms. Williams shared what she called "a lighter side". It was apparent how fortunate we are in America, when she explained about the public restrooms in China, which consist of porcelain holes in the floor, with no doors, just slats. However there is what are called "western toilets" which Ms. Williams recommended should you ever go to China. Her experience was that once she saw the restrooms there, she decided to wait for a "nicer" one, but then unfortunately was detained in a 3½hour traffic jam due to a car wreck in a tunnel. When they detoured, so did thousands of other people, and since there were only two roads, it made an uncomfortable situation! On the brighter side, there are beautiful roses everywhere in China. Visits to the Great Wall, the Panda Reserve, private and public schools; Terra Cotta Soldiers and many more points of interest helped make a stupendous trip! Ms. Williams' advice for travelers was to never leave home without a survival pack. Her package included multiple water bottles; food for traffic jams and bus break downs; pain relievers for headaches caused by no stop signs (just stop lights); antibacterial wipes to wipe down chop sticks and other utensils as

recommended to them; glucose tablets and Imodium for the worst of times, and most importantly, toilet tissue...they have none. She then shared a poem A-Z, which reflected all that China stands for. Mr. Level closed with information regarding visits to the schools in China and also, the National Exams students can take after they complete the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. The exam is over a two-day period, all air condition is cut off so that all students are treated fairly. The results are posted for everyone to see. For those that pass and are chosen, the government sends them on to a university in China. Recruiters from trade schools are on standby for those students that do not pass. They take their education very seriously in China. He noted that the food there was excellent, not like Chinese food here, but was real Chinese food. Technology is very popular there. Most everyone has a cell phone and they have Internet Cafes, however they are very smoke-filled facilities with lots of bacteria! Mr. Level noted that the three of them developed techniques for shopping, wheeling and dealing, which is the vendors' desire.

Unfortunately China has its own problems as well. The air pollution is extremely bad and their statistics of job accidents are high, with over 50,000 people having died in the workplace in a 6-month period (January-June, 2002). Also, parents are limited to one child per couple. They can have more children, but are heavily taxed for more than one child.

It was a wonderful trip, and it was good to get home!!

#### **\*Public Comments**

There were no public comments.

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

The School Board confirmed the following employment for the remainder of the 2002-03 school year: Truancy Officers – Kelly Frazier, Eric Thwaites, Jimmy McCroskey, and Jon Bowman. Rhonda Brown and Charles Sanders – NEMS Special Ed. Teacher Assistants; Alvin Crotty – Bus Driver, Western District; Debra Havens – MMS from part-time work agreement to full-time work agreement; Angela Terry – NHS Girls JV Basketball Coach; GHS Volunteer Coach – Jacqueline Phillips – Ass't Cross Country and Cindy Henderson – GHS Team Physician/Trainer. Also, the following part-time employees – Melinda Wilson – NEMS Health Assistant, Wanda Stump – GTC GED Instructor/AEP Program; Deborah Coker – SBO Psychological Assessment Evaluator; Carolyn Martin – MMS Cafeteria Monitor; Carrie Gillespie – SBO Educational Testing & Sociological Interviews.

The School Board confirmed the following resignations: Andy Keffer, effective 8/29/02; Sherry Crosier, effective 9/13/02; Linda Hill, effective 9/30/02; and Shirley Hubbard – effective 10/18/02.

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

- The Superintendent shared information with the School Board regarding the opening of the 2002-03 school year. Current student enrollment is 2558. In September 2002, enrollment was 2535 and at the end of the 2001-02 school year, enrollment was 2525. He also commented about September 11<sup>th</sup> activities and commended the New York firefighter who visited the schools. He was a great speaker and was as moved with the activities and students, as they were with him. Also, EEMS had a very moving ceremony where all students participated. He talked about the Distance Learning Lab at GHS for NHS and GHS students. It is generated by NRCC and was very successful last Spring, and we are in the second phase this year. More classes have been added, psychology and art appreciation, with an on-line computer class available as well.
- Mr. Jim Wheeler attended the Board meeting to share information from the Career Opportunities Committee. The Board received a report from the committee for their review. Mr. Wheeler commended the committee and the work they had put into the report. He attended for any questions that Board members might have regarding the report and/or the work of the committee.
- The School Board approved all policy revisions as recommended by VSBA Policy Services and administration with the exception of Policy KQ: Commercial Promotional and Corporate

Sponsorships and Partnerships. The Board requested to review Policy KQ in depth before considering the implementation of the policy.

#### **\*School Board Takes Action on Other Items**

The School Board approved the Southwest VA Governor's School two-year formal agreement for a commitment of 37 seats for the 2002-03 and 2003-04 school years, at \$2500 per seat.

The Superintendent shared information regarding Locally Verified Credit for students. He stated that the General Assembly has approved a law for students grades 9-12, who have not passed Math and Science SOL's, to receive verified credit under strict requirements. It is an option for a standard diploma only and students must have taken the SOL test twice in Math and/or Science to be eligible for the verified credit. After some discussion, it was the consensus of the Board to have a committee to review the option of the appeal process, in the event of an appeal, whether to stop with the committee or allow appeals to the School Board. The committee will consist of a principal and guidance counselor from each high school, and a teacher in the Math or Science field. The Superintendent will bring the committee's recommendation back to the School Board.

The School Board confirmed the week of October 28<sup>th</sup> for the annual budget meetings in the schools, with the regular October School Board meeting to be held Wednesday, October 30, 2002 at 5:00 PM at the School Board Office.

The School Board acknowledged American Education Week November 18-22. They scheduled their annual school tours for Tuesday, November 19, 2002, with the Board meeting to be held at 2:00 PM.

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

- The School Board met with administrators prior to the regular session, and was pleased of the positive attitudes of administrators. With all administrators in new positions, it is a pleasure to see them upbeat about the school year. Dr. Webb and Mrs. McMahan both commented on the positive attitudes and that administrators seem to be happy in what they are doing. Mr. Buckland stated that we have had no major problems and the ones we have had have been handled very well.
- Dr. Webb commented that Board members recently attended an NRCC Board meeting at Anna's Restaurant. He stated that NRCC is such a vital part of our overall educational process, especially for students who are unsure what they want to do. It is important to support their activities.
- The School Board conveyed their appreciation to Sam, Carolyn and Lynn for the outstanding presentation. Mr. Buckland commented that sometimes we take a lot for granted and don't appreciate what we have until you visit another country and see how fortunate we really are.
- Mrs. McMahan and Mr. Whitehead highly commended the Governor's School for being such a wonderful opportunity for students. It is a very positive program for the Giles County students that attend.
- Modular units are now in use at the Governor's School, thanks to Seth McCracken. He has worked diligently to get them up and running.
- Current enrollment at the Governor's School is 150 students, with 37 being from Giles County.
- Mr. Gollehon commended EEMS for the outstanding ceremony on 9/11. It was very touching to see all the students wave their flags. The wind cooperated and made it a beautiful display. Mr. Whitehead added that the ceremony was quite impressive, with representatives attending from the fire department, police department and rescue squad.

- Mrs. McMahon was pleased with the interaction and good sportsmanship of the Giles and Narrows students during the recent NHS/GHS football game. She commented that the sportsmanship interaction should make it easy to discuss consolidation in the future.
- The Superintendent commended all the schools for a successful opening, and commented that it is very positive to be building a team of new administrators. He also stated that he heard a tremendous amount of excitement at the quarterly meeting among the administrators.
- The Superintendent conveyed his appreciation to Mr. Fowler and Janice Gautier and her students for hosting and providing the delicious meal for the quarterly meeting.
- The Superintendent thanked the members of the Career Opportunities Committee for their extra efforts regarding the final report.
- Prior to adjournment, Mrs. McMahon inquired about the CPR information given to School Board members and her concern of no football or basketball coach certified in CPR. The Superintendent directed Deputy Superintendent, Mr. Arbogast, to pursue the concern with the Athletic Directors. She also asked about the grading system in place, and how the 5-10 points added to a student grade originated. The Superintendent explained that a committee several years ago recommended it for students in a class for the first time that required an SOL exam. He offered that the policy could be reviewed again at anytime.