

June 30, 2020

The closeout meeting of the Giles County School Board was held at 7:30 a.m. on June 30, 2020 in the School Administration Office Building Conference Room. A closed meeting was held. Persons present were:

Marion C. Ballard (electronically)
Melissa R. Guynn
Phillip A. Pennington
Stephen M. Steele
Mark A. Wilburn

Dr. Terry E. Arbogast II, Superintendent
Lisa Mustain, Assistant Superintendent
Amanda J. Tickle, School Board Clerk

The meeting was called to order by the Chairman.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The Board, on motion of Mr. Wilburn, with second by Mr. Pennington and unanimous voting, approved the Superintendent's June 27, 2019 School Board Meeting Agenda.

The School Board, on motion of Mr. Pennington, with second by Mrs. Guynn and unanimous voting, approved Mr. Ballard to participate electronically due to health concerns.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Dr. Arbogast & School Board Members,

I am sending this e-mail in regards to today's school board meeting. I was disappointed as I watched the meeting in that only one e-mail was read at today's meeting. Mr. Wilburn mentioned he had received numerous e-mails from parents wishing to open schools back up and became very frustrated & scratched his head while reading those e-mails. Why were those not read aloud today? Imagine our frustration as parents begging you as our elected members of the school board to have some type of communication with us as parents. We as parents have attempted to reach out via e-mails, phone calls & petitions, with a majority of parents receiving no response.

We as parents gave you Dr. Arbogast & the school board members a chance today to let us know that you did in fact hear us but instead we heard of a proposed plan in which no parent was provided an ample opportunity to give feedback as the telephone survey that was not adequate. My understanding there was a 23 person panel that was hand picked to help decide the return of school this fall. I would have embraced the opportunity to serve on that panel. Again, we as parents have been given no information as to your planning process for the return of school until today.

Yes, Mr. Steele parents do want to be heard & feel as if they have input regarding their child(ren)s education. But not only do parents want to be heard they want & need acknowledgement of their concerns from the board. So when parents e-mail or call a member of the board & receive no response as I myself called you today & received no response and e-mailed the board last week with no response it puts little faith in you encouraging reaching out to the members.

With growing frustration of the community and a sense of urgency as the new school year approaches a town hall meeting is being planned to give parents a platform to be heard. It is the hope that you Dr. Arbogast & members of the board will embrace this as an opportunity to openly communicate with parents. Give parents an opportunity to ask questions & you as board to provide answers to help us as parents understand the reasoning behind decisions being made. NHS has graciously offered the auditorium or the football field to hold the meeting. I am asking that a date & time be given that would be convenient for you to be able to participate.

If I should not receive a response by this Friday the meeting will proceed with media present. Questions from parents will be collected then presented to you the board as well as to the county. I think you will be surprised at ideas that parents may offer thinking outside the box to help get our children back inside the classroom. Utilize your resources. Parents can be your best allies.

Thank You,
Amy Smith

We all are aware of the unprecedented times we are in and need to balance how our children will be taught next year. We have some serious concerns around the idea of distant learning, especially since it was a huge challenge for us this year. Our family is an example of how tough it is to teach children from home.

My Husband and I both work FT. He leaves for work at 6:30am, I head out at 7:30am. Neither of us are home before 5:30pm. We have 2 children who are rising 5th and 8th graders. When school closed early this year, they did not have anyone to teach them during the day while we worked. Although our 8th grader is an A/B student, our 5th grader struggles. With that being said, I feel strongly that our 5th grader would be at a terrible disadvantage if not in a classroom setting each day.

I know that you have already heard the challenges with working families and not having any childcare available in Pearisburg. This presents a huge problem of its own. After giving it some thought, IF children are not able to attend classes each day in the Fall, why not make it possible for all elementary/middle school children to attend and allow the HS students the days needed to learn at home? Even if you have 10th-12th graders distant learning, you could utilize the HS classrooms to teach the other grades, especially K-5.

We can only hope that school will open with a regular schedule so that all children will have an opportunity to learn in a classroom setting. I know for a fact that if this doesn't happen, many will children will fail or worse, be forced through and that wouldn't be fair to anyone, and no parent should not have to carry that burden.

We look forward to hearing what comes of the meeting tomorrow. Thank you for all you do.

Best Regards,
Stacie and Jon Whetzel

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Dear DrArbogast and all school board members,

We would like to voice our opinion of Giles County schools reopening. We have a son that will be a junior at Narrows High school. With the current low cases of COVID we have had in Giles county and surrounding counties, I feel getting our kids back to a full, 5 days a week school schedule, in a normal environment, would be best for the kids, teachers and parents. I think half days would be extremely hard on parents and grandparents who would have to find childcare. I also feel extracurricular activities need to resume. Kids need social interaction.

Please consider reopening our schools in the most normal environment as possible.

Thank you

Kenneth and Tonya Johnston

First, I would like to thank each of you on our school board for your continued and tireless effort to make very hard decisions for our upcoming school year. I understand that our governor has now left it up to the school boards across Virginia to make the decision for returning, with no mandates, but rather recommendations.

Like many other parents, I struggled with the transition of working full time and providing the proper education to my children. We worked hard to maintain the new normal that was the pandemic culture.

My youngest, struggled. Hard. We did every handout, reviewed tirelessly, over and over and over. When the work came to an end, I realized what a disservice our kids had been dealt when he wasn't retaining ALL this information.

He was struggling. Struggling to remember and retain this crucial information. So much in fact, that we have decided it is best that he be retained, and repeat Kindergarten. I do not feel this would be the outcome had he been able to finish the school year.

We must attempt to minimize disruptions to our children's education as it is crucial to their mental health and the progression of learning.

A high percentage of our population does not have internet access. I, for one can not spend hours in the school parking lot hooked up to WiFi to complete at home assignments at 9 o'clock at night after working all day. This can not be the new normal.

Kids are less likely to spread and contract this virus. Our children have been in packed daycares and group settings so parents can still work and surprisingly, less than 2% of all the positive cases effect children ages 2-18.

If there is any consideration OTHER than sending our children back full time, think of this.

The lapse in education has already been detrimental.

Detrimental to their mental health, their happiness, and their future.

Please consider their future, their need for full time education and the necessary avenues you can take to make this happen.

Best regards,

Paula Parsell

Ms. Tickle:

Per our conversation on 6/25/20 here is my concern about the next school year.

I read where other counties are going to have kids go two (2) days a week and have three (3) virtual learning days. I want to stress and I think that every grandparent that is raising grandkids and parents that have to work full time will agree with me when I say that the school board does not have any idea how stressful it is on the adults and the kids if they have to go virtual learning. I don't think that Giles County should be punished for the counties that have a high rate of covid-19. Please let the kids go to school for we at home are not school teachers. If the school days have to go longer for our kids to be taught by teachers that are equipped to teach than please consider that. Kids are resilient and can adapt to precautions.

Thank you.

M.Crockett

I want to begin by thanking each person involved in the development of plans for the upcoming school year. There have been countless hours spent and many more to come in trying to determine the most appropriate and safe education possible to be provided. The Giles Education Association would like to encourage the School Board members to consider their obligation to the safety and health of the students and staff in this county. While we all want our students back to "normal" in our classrooms, on our buses, in our cafeterias, on our playing fields, and simply the opportunity to see their smiling faces, we cannot ignore the guidelines that have been developed to limit the possibilities of sickness or tragedy in our community. Your teachers and staff are beyond ready for our students, but we must take necessary precautions and mitigations in returning to "normal." While the cases may be low, it is inevitable that it will spread when school returns. We must do the best we can with the guidelines given. We charge the Board to consider all of these items. We appreciate you for the difficult decision that must be made at this time.

Sincerely,

Katie Wright – GEA President

Mrs. Nicole Haskins attended to speak to the board regarding opening of school information. She stated that being there in person is very helpful. There is really no right answer, as you are not going to make everyone happy. She stated there is a tremendous concern from parents, but also a tremendous willingness to help. There is only 37 business days to execute these plans. As part of the parent's side of this, you do have a support system. She emphasized to use this support system. The decision that has to be made is a very hard decision to make. He stated that the community will have to come together to help make this a team approach. She emphasized that there are lots of people in the community that are very willing to help.

Mr. Wilburn thanked Mrs. Haskins. He thinks that good communication between parents, the board and teachers are very crucial during this time.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT ITEMS

The Board, on motion of Mr. Pennington, with second by Mrs. Guynn and unanimous voting, accepted the Superintendent's recommendation to approve the following consent items:

A. Meeting Minutes

1. Special – May 7th, 2020
2. Regular – May 21st, 2020
3. Special – June 9th, 2020

B. Financial Data

1. Payroll – May 29th, June 15th, June 30th and July/August Escrows
2. Surplus
3. Title Grants
4. Gifted Plan
5. Appropriation Request – July 2020 2,395,142.00

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

A. The Superintendent recommended action and Board approval of the following personnel/contractual items:

1. The School Board, on motion of Mrs. Guynn, with second by Mr. Pennington and unanimous voting, confirmed the following **Employment:** Lisa Mustain – Asst. Supt. For Curriculum (July 1, 2020), Jessica Morris – Director of Spec. Ed. (July 1, 2020)
2. The School Board, on motion of Mr. Wilburn, with second by Mr. Pennington and unanimous voting, confirmed the following **Resignations:** Sarah Ahlswede- EEMS Teacher (6/10/20), Lindsay Meredith – GHS PE Teacher (6/16/20), Marion Ballard – Board Member (6/30/20)
3. The School Board, on motion of Mr. Pennington, with second by Mrs. Guynn and unanimous voting, approved the following **Volunteer Agreements:** Helen Bowles – NEMS General
4. **The School Board, on motion of Mr. Wilburn, with second by Mr. Pennington and unanimous voting,** approved the Bid for School Calendars (2020-21) school year. The only bid received was from Wordsprint in Blacksburg.
5. **The School Board, on motion of Mr. Pennington, with second by Mr. Wilburn and unanimous voting,** approved the bid of RFP 6-2020 (Sports Officiating Services).
6. **The School Board, on motion of Mr. Pennington, with second by Mrs. Guynn and unanimous voting,** approved the bid of IFB 4-2020-1 (Custodial Supplies) to Oliver Distributing. We received 3 bids for the services.
7. **The School Board, on motion of Mr. Wilburn, with second by Mr. Pennington and unanimous voting,** approved the rollover of IFB #4-2015 (Water Treatment Services). This bid is currently with Water Chemistry. This will be the third of three one-year rollovers. Prices will remain the same.

B. The School Board, on motion of Mr. Wilburn, with second by Mr. Pennington and unanimous voting, approved policy revisions as recommended by VSBA and Administration.

C. The School Board, on motion of Mr. Pennington, with second by Mrs. Guynn and unanimous voting, approved Mr. Steele and Mr. Wilburn to be the delegate and alternate to the 2020 VSBA Annual Convention.

D. The School Board, on motion of Mrs. Guynn, with second by Mr. Pennington and unanimous voting, approved the following:

- 1) The School Board Chairman and Superintendent, in some cases, need to authorize employment, resignation and RFP's. The Board is requested to continue this practice. All such actions are brought before the full Board for confirmation/action.

- 2) The VA Dept. of Education requests that the School Board appoint designee(s) to sign documents in the event the Superintendent is unavailable when his signature is needed. I recommend that Lisa Mustain be approved to sign documents in my absence, effective July 1st, 2020.
- E. The School Board, on motion of Mr. Wilburn, with second by Mrs. Guynn and unanimous voting, approved a 5 cent meal price increase for next school year. The USDA formula actually showed we needed to increase prices by 10 cents to meet their requirements; however, after speaking with DOE about our financial situation, they agreed to just a 5 cent increase.

COMMENTS/CONCERNS

IN OTHER ACTION

The School Board, on motion of Mr. Wilburn, with second by Mr. Pennington and unanimous voting, approved Mrs. Guynn to serve on the governor's school board for a **two-year** term.

Dr. Arbogast discussed the 20-21 school board **budget** at prior meetings. He stated that the new, updated budget shows no additional request for new money from the county. The School Board, on motion of Mr. Wilburn, with second by Mr. Pennington and unanimous voting, approved the 20-21 budget in the amount of \$28,741,704. He stated that he anticipates approximately \$400K in savings from this year's budget. Mr. Steele stated that the original budget included approximately \$800K in new money, which included new positions.

Board members discussed the back to school draft plan that was discussed at the work session yesterday. Mr. Steele stated that this plan was created by a 23 person committee. Dr. Arbogast stated that the plan that was presented by the committee is a hybrid plan that includes going 2 days a week and virtual learning for the other three. Group A would attend school on Monday and Wednesday and Group B would attend school on Tuesday and Thursday. Friday would be used as a cleaning day and for teachers to do lesson plans and/or do virtual lessons. Safety protocols will be in place. There will be abbreviated bus routes with fewer students on the bus. He stated that transportation will be a driving factor. Chromebooks and/or Pro Books will be used from grades 3 – 12. Dr. Arbogast discussed CARES funding, which will be used on video equipment, thermometers, sanitizing machines, cleaning supplies, sanitizer, gloves, wipes, hand sanitizer, masks/shields for students/staff, stipends, etc. Board members continued the discussion of the plan and asked if other plans could be considered. They each discussed their thoughts on the plan and discussed additional survey questions that they would like sent out to families. Mrs. Mustain discussed what the day will look like for kids, with the proposed plan and Virtual Virginia. Mr. Pennington stated that in a perfect world, he would like to go 5 days a week, but he would now like to recommend going with the plan that Dr. Arbogast has proposed **so** teachers and staff can get going on preparing for the school year. Mr. Wilburn agreed with Mr. Pennington, but stated he would like to make sure we check in with the parents that don't have adequate internet. Mrs. Guynn stated that she supports our teachers, but her heart goes out to the kids who don't have anyone to speak for them. Mr. Ballard stated that he feels like our younger kids would benefit to have more days, but he stated we need to get started with a plan and move forward. The School Board, on motion of Mr. Wilburn, with second by Mr. Pennington and unanimous voting, approved the proposed A/B schedule for the 20-21 school year as presented by Dr. Arbogast. Mr. Ballard abstained. Mr. Pennington stated that this plan is not set in stone and it will be constantly reevaluated. Dr. Arbogast stated that he will be mailing letters out and a new survey will also be sent out to parents with different questions. Continued communication will continue to occur with parents, students and staff regarding these plans.

School Board members discussed information that will be put out on the school board page regarding parties interested in the Western District seat. It will be posted by first thing in the morning and will run through July 8th. All interested parties will send their interest letter to Amanda Tickle, SB Clerk.

NEXT BOARD MEETING

The next School Board Meeting will be held Thursday, July 9th at 4:30 p.m.

The Chairman, on motion of Mr. Wilburn, with second by Mr. Pennington and unanimous voting, adjourned the meeting.

Chairman

Clerk