

The Amherst County School Board met in regular session on Thursday, January 28, 2016, in the School Administration Office, Amherst, Virginia at 6:01 p.m.

PRESENT: Alan J. Wood, Chairman
W. Michael Henderson, Vice Chairman
Alan H. Bumgarner
Jennifer E. Cumby
Priscilla M. Liggon
Patricia C. Massie
Randy V. Summers

ABSENT: Camryn Garrett, Student Representative

Mr. Wood called the meeting to order, asked that a moment of silence be observed and asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Wood asked if there were any changes to the agenda of January 28, 2016, regular School Board meeting. There were none.

Mr. Wood asked if there was a motion to approve the agenda for the January 28, 2016, regular School Board meeting.

Upon motion by Mr. Summers, seconded by Mrs. Massie and unanimously carried, the Board approved the agenda for the January 28, 2016, regular School Board meeting.

Mr. Wood stated the next item on the agenda was to recognize a Title I Distinguished School.

Dr. Nichols stated Dr. Rogers would provide of an overview for the school who received the award.

Dr. Rogers stated that Temperance Elementary School received the Title I Highly Distinguished School Award from the Virginia Department of Education. Dr. Rogers recognized Mr. Michael O'Brien, Principal at Temperance Elementary School, for this honor. Mr. O'Brien recognized two teachers from Temperance Elementary School who attended the meeting. Dr. Nichols awarded Mr. O'Brien with a Certificate of Recognition.

Dr. Rogers recognized Mrs. Erin Calhoun, teacher at Amherst Elementary, for coordinating the division-wide fitness challenge. Dr. Nichols awarded Mrs. Calhoun a Certificate of Recognition.

Mr. Wood stated the next item on the agenda was the quarterly update concerning the Office of Civil Rights.

Dr. Nichols stated Ms. Jennings, Dr. Wells, and Dr. McFaden would provide the update.

Ms. Jennings provided an overview of the OCR data for 2011-2012, 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015 and for the first semester of this year. Ms. Jennings informed the Board that a data report is due to the Office of Civil Rights by February 28, 2016. Ms. Jennings reviewed the referral practices, referral average per student by year, likelihood of referral by years, and most frequent offenses by years. Ms. Jennings provided an overview of what ACPS had already completed and a list of tasks that still

need to be completed. Ms. Jennings reviewed the Amherst County High School Behavioral Support Plan.

Dr. Pam McFaden provided an overview of the Student School Climate Survey preliminary results. Dr. McFaden stated she was still reviewing and consolidating all of the comments in the surveys. Dr. McFaden stated additional information regarding the surveys will be provided to Board members at a later date.

Board members discussed the preliminary results and expressed concern with some of the results of the preliminary survey.

Ms. Jennings reviewed information regarding discipline practices in 2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-14, 2014-15 and the first semester of the 2015-16 school year. She also reviewed information regarding the first offense altercation/fight, first offense disruptions, and first offense for disrespect, defiance, and insubordination and language/gestures for 2014-15 and 2015-16 school year. Finally, she discussed the next steps in the OCR process.

Board members reviewed and discussed the information provided. Board members asked for clarification on some of the data provided. Board members expressed appreciation to the committee members for continuing to review and decipher the data. There was no action by the Board on the information regarding the OCR data.

Mr. Wood stated the next item on the agenda was public comment.

Mr. Wood asked if anyone wished to address the Board.

Mrs. Kathleen Lloyd, Buffalo Springs Turnpike, Monroe, Virginia, PTO President for Pleasant View Elementary School, shared information with the Board regarding events that had occurred in and around the community as well as the upcoming events that have been scheduled.

Ms. Kate McPhatter, Lewis Keith Road, Monroe, Virginia, addressed the Board concerning the possibility of increasing enrollment at Pleasant View Elementary School and alleviating overcrowding in other schools.

Mr. Sammy Mays, Sugar Hill Tunnel Road, Monroe, Virginia, addressed the Board concerning Pleasant View Elementary School and the surrounding community.

Mr. Wood thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

Mr. Wood stated the next item on the agenda was the consent agenda. Mr. Wood asked if there were any questions.

Mr. Bumgarner asked that the contract for bandwidth services be removed from the consent agenda.

Upon motion by Mrs. Massie, seconded by Mr. Bumgarner and unanimously carried, the Board approved the following consent agenda items: minutes of the January 14, 2016, regular School Board meeting; confirmation of the Superintendent's personnel actions for the period January 11, 2016 through January 22, 2016; a trip request for Amherst County High School wrestling team to travel to Virginia Beach, Virginia to participate in the National High School Wrestling Competition on Friday, April 1, 2016 through April 3, 2016; a trip request for Amherst County High School wrestling team to travel to New Kent, Virginia to participate in New Kent High School Wrestling Competition on Friday, April 15, 2016 through April 17, 2016; a trip request for Amherst County High School wrestling team to travel to

East Stroudsburg University in Pennsylvania to participate in the National Wrestling Tournament/Coaching Clinic on Saturday, April 30, 2016 through Sunday, May 1, 2016; a trip request for Amherst County High School wrestling team to travel to Richmond, Virginia to participate in the Freestyle/Greco State Wrestling Tournament/Clinic on Saturday, May 14, 2016 through Sunday, May 15, 2016; and a request to home school children under the religious exemption clause of the Code of Virginia.

Mr. Bumgarner stated he was unable to attend the last School Board meeting and asked for clarification on the bandwidth proposal provided by Shentel.

Dr. Norman and Dr. Nichols provided an overview of the Shentel proposal for updating bandwidth services for Amherst County Public Schools. Dr. Norman stated that Mr. James Funkhouser, representative for Shentel, was available to answer the questions.

Mr. Funkhouser stated the proposal that Shentel provided would lease existing lines to Pleasant View Elementary School and Temperance Elementary School and the other schools would have fiber optic wiring. In the future, if fiber optic was installed to Temperance Elementary School, it probably would come from the north.

Board members reviewed and discussed the information provided.

Mr. Wood asked if there was a motion to award the contract for bandwidth service to Shentel.

Mr. Bumgarner made a motion to approve the five-year contract with Shentel for bandwidth services. The motion was seconded by Mr. Summers and unanimously carried.

Mr. Wood stated the next item on the agenda was an update on accountability measures.

Dr. Nichols stated that Dr. Norman did not have an update on accountability measures.

Mr. Wood stated the next item on the agenda was the Travel Authorization Report.

Dr. Nichols stated the Travel Authorization Report for October, 2015 through December, 2015 was at their place.

The Board reviewed and discussed the information provided. No action was taken regarding the Travel Authorization Report.

Mr. Wood stated the next item on the agenda was an update from the Human Resources Department.

Dr. Nichols stated Dr. Rogers did not have an update from the Human Resource Department.

Mr. Wood stated the next item on the agenda was an update on facilities.

Dr. Nichols stated Mr. Cocke did not have an update on facilities at this time.

Dr. Nichols shared the following information with members of the Amherst County School Board:

- February 26, 2016 and April 4, 2016 will be snow make up days
- Monday, February 1, 2016 & Tuesday, February 2, 2016 – New Teacher Forum with Dr. Nichols, Dr. Rogers, and Dr. Norman
- Revised Memorandum of Understanding for the School Resource Program
- Virginia School Principals' week – January 21, 2016 – January 29, 2016
- National School Counselors' week – February 1, 2016 – February 5, 2016

Mr. Wood stated the next item on the agenda was the Superintendent's Presentation of the FY17 School Operational Budget.

Dr. Nichols presented the Superintendent's Proposed 2016-2017 School Operational Budget. A copy of the proposed presentation is attached to the minutes. After the presentation, Dr. Nichols stated if Board members had questions, to please contact him or members of the senior staff.

Mr. Henderson asked about the Budget Calendar, which is included in the budget document.

Mr. Wood asked if anyone wished to address the Board.

Mrs. Carmen Sitten, Vice-President of the Amherst Education Association, informed Board members on Monday, February 1, 2016, she will be attending Lobby Day in Richmond, Virginia. She asked Board members to let her know if there were any concerns she could share.

Mr. Wood thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

Mr. Wood stated the next item on the agenda was items from School Board members.

Mrs. Massie shared information with the Board regarding Pleasant View Elementary School activities. Mrs. Massie expressed appreciation to the administrative staff for closing schools on the snow days. Mrs. Massie stated she visited Madison Heights Elementary School to look at the new LED lights installed in certain classrooms.

Mr. Henderson echoed Dr. Nichols' remarks regarding Principals' Week and stated every week is Principals' Week. Mr. Henderson stated Amherst County has a good group of Principals and they make it happen every day.

Mr. Henderson stated he, Mr. Wood and Mr. Cocke visited four schools to look at the facilities. He stated on Wednesday, February 3, 2016, the Joint Building Committee would be touring Amherst County High School, Monelison Middle School and Madison Heights Elementary School to look at the new lighting that had been installed in certain classrooms. Mr. Henderson stated the Building Committee has a meeting scheduled for February 17, 2016.

Mrs. Liggon expressed appreciation to the administrative staff for the decisions made on the snow days. She stated she had enjoyed attending some basketball games. Mrs. Liggon expressed appreciation to the staff for their hard work on the information regarding the OCR reporting. Mrs. Liggon stated she watched the STEM video that Mrs. Massie forwarded to Board members.

Mrs. Cumby stated her children appreciated the snow days. She stated regarding the information from the OCR report, each number represents information on a person's actual experience. Mrs. Cumby stated as Amherst County moves forward to a more broadly consistent approach, she is hopeful that it will increase the ability of all the students to stay in the school and be served by the school system. Mrs. Cumby stated she was encouraged.

Mr. Summers stated he met with his member of the Amherst County Board of Supervisors to discuss the decision the members of the Amherst County Board of Supervisors made to reject the proposed cell tower on the property of Elon Elementary School.

Mr. Wood asked the members of the Amherst County School Board to review the CIP and look at the priorities for the facilities and prepare to discuss the projects they wish to move forward by March 2016. Mr. Wood suggested one item he has is to work out a schedule of painting one or two schools and repairing parking lots at one or two schools annually.

Mr. Wood informed the Board, the Chairman of the Bedford County School Board had organized a meeting of the surrounding counties' School Board Chairmen to discuss similar interests and things the counties can work on together. Mr. Wood stated there is an interest in considering a regional CTE Program. Mr. Wood stated additional information would be forthcoming. Mr. Wood stated there would be follow-up meetings with the group of School Board Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen.

Prior to adjourning the meeting, Mr. Wood made the following comments regarding upcoming discussions on the proposed school board budget:

I want to thank Dr. Nichols, Mrs. Crouch, and our staff for their work in providing us the 2016-2017 Budget.

It will be important for our Board and our community to face head-on the reality our Division faces during this budget process.

The Superintendent has provided us much information for our consideration.

As the process develops, we will likely ask for more information.

The basic underlying fact we must address is that this year marks the 10th consecutive year that student enrollment has declined for Amherst County Public Schools.

Projections indicate that this trend will continue with enrollment falling below 4,000 students next school year.

While our student enrollment declines each year, overall staffing levels have not.

We also continue to operate all of our school buildings.

This approach has led to reduced resources being available for other needs. Most notably, maintenance needs of our facilities have gone unmet. Other examples where greater resources should be considered include our Early College Program students, our Talented and Gifted Program Students, and our Career & Technical Program students.

In the weeks ahead, the Amherst County School Board is going to conduct a comprehensive review of how the funds Amherst citizens have entrusted to us are spent.

This process will require choices to be made as facts are presented and considered.

We encourage citizen participation. Broad input from the community will help us make the best decisions. We want your ideas and your help.

Specifically, we will evaluate using attrition to reduce staffing levels to reflect what our enrollment is, not what our enrollment has been. We will also consider the cost of operating our smallest school.

We are a Division built to serve more than 4,500 students. Yet, we will have fewer than 4,000 students next school year with further declines expected in subsequent years.

In Amherst County, we are used to dealing with a growing student enrollment.

Times have changed.

In our own households, when we have fewer children at home, we adjust our spending priorities. We evolve. Amherst County Public Schools must now evolve as well.

We will give the same respect to the money taxpayers provide to us as we give to our own household finances. Amherst County has in essence seen more than 500 children grow up and leave. We can no longer ignore this reality.

For those who would say that the Prismatic study already evaluated our schools and staffing, I am sorry to inform you that Prismatic looked at little data in these matters and did not evaluate the options. While that is unfortunate, I am comfortable that this Board will look at data, evaluate all options, and make decisions based on the facts.

For those who would say that the Board of Supervisors should simply provide more funding, I point you to analysis staff provided last year. Our problem is not rooted in a shortfall in funding from county taxpayers. In fact, local funding continues to rise while other sources of funding do not. There are many reasons for this, but one of the most basic issues is that the Commonwealth of Virginia pays based on the number of students enrolled. Fewer students results in lower payments from the Commonwealth.

There will certainly be a time when the need for greater funding by Amherst County taxpayers is required.

We look forward to receiving the community's assistance in this process and the community's support for the decisions we reach.

Thank you.

Mr. Wood asked if there was a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Upon motion by Mr. Bumgarner, seconded by Mrs. Massie, and unanimously carried, the Board adjourned the meeting at 8:35 p.m.



Teresa C. Crouch, Clerk
Amherst County Public Schools



Alan J. Wood, Chairman
Amherst County Public Schools