

The Amherst County School Board met in regular session on Thursday, August 13, 2015, in the School Administration Office, Amherst, Virginia, at 6:00 p.m.

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

ABSENT: None

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 the August 13, 2015, regular School Board meeting. There were no changes to the agenda.

Mr. Wood asked for a motion to approve the agenda as presented.

Upon motion by Mrs. Massie, seconded by Mr. Henderson and unanimously carried, the Amherst County School Board approved the August 13, 2015, regular School Board meeting agenda.

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

The following citizens addressed the Board expressing opposition to the installation of the proposed cell tower at Elon Elementary School:

Mr. Holcomb Nixon
Mr. Kenneth Smith
Mrs. Abby Thompson
Mr. James Massie
Mrs. Florence Nixon
Mr. Jim Thompson
Mr. Allen Nixon
Mr. Ted Campbell
Mr. Greg Franklin

Mr. Wood asked if anyone else wished to address the Board. No one else addressed the Board.

Mr. Wood thanked the citizens for attending the School Board meeting.

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

Mr. Wood asked if the agreement with Commonwealth Autism was the same company that had provided services in the past and if the agreement was considered a renewal.

Dr. Nichols stated that was correct.

Mr. Wood asked if there was a motion to approve the consent agenda.

Upon motion by Mrs. Liggon, seconded by Mr. Bumgarner and unanimously carried, the Board approved the following consent agenda: the Superintendent's personnel actions for the period July 27, 2015 through August 7, 2015, the Commonwealth Autism contract, a field trip request for Amherst County High School theatre students to travel to Norfolk, Virginia to participate in the 2015 Virginia Theater Association State Competition, on Friday, October 23, 2015, through Sunday, October 25, 2015, and a request to home school students under the Code of Virginia religious exemption clause.

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

Dr. Nichols stated Dr. Norman would provide the update on accountability measures.

Dr. Norman provided the following update to the members of the Amherst County School Board regarding accountability measures:

- The 4th Quarter Data Analysis Report for Madison Heights Elementary School. (A copy of the report is attached).
- Accountability Information – Amherst County Public Schools showed gains in math standards for the 2014-2015. The official release by the State is September 15, 2015. Information will be shared at the September 16, 2015, School Board Retreat.
- Previous year – showed huge gains in math and reading areas in the 2014 school year.
- Preliminary data show that MHES has exited out of being a Focus School.
- Expressed appreciation to the Central Office Supervisors, Administrators, Principal and Assistant Principal at Madison Heights Elementary School, and to the teachers at Madison Heights Elementary School for their hard work and dedication.

Mr. Henderson stated the information that was included in the newspaper article was preliminary data. Mr. Henderson asked if the scores would be fairly accurate to the aggregate scores.

Dr. Norman stated the information included in the newspaper article was whole school and the information was broken down by content areas.

Dr. Norman stated that the Virginia Department of Education had not released sub content areas which allow a division to determine federal accountability as well as state accreditation.

Dr. Nichols reminded Board members that the Amherst County Public Schools have shown two successful years of improvement in SOL tests scores.

Dr. Norman reminded Board members that the division was required to post pupil/teacher ratios for the K-3 classroom on the website in September.

Dr. Norman stated information regarding student enrollment for the first ten days of school would be provided to members of the Amherst County School Board at the August 27, 2015, regular School Board meeting.

Dr. Norman stated pupil/teacher ratio information would be provided and discussed with members of the Amherst County School Board at the School Board Retreat.

Dr. Nichols stated there was not a concrete way to calculate pupil/teacher ratios. Dr. Nichols stated the problem was statewide. Dr. Nichols stated at the School Board Retreat calculation of pupil/teacher ratios would be provided to and discussed with the members of the Amherst County School Board.

Mr. Bumgarner asked how the pupil/teacher ratios for Amherst County Public Schools compare to the other divisions.

Dr. Nichols stated Amherst County Public Schools pupil/teacher ratios were very favorable.

Dr. Norman provided the following update:

Kindergarten Projected Enrollment - currently at 287 students
Graduating Class for 2015 – 289 students
Potential - 10 transfers of which 8 were students with special needs

FY15 - 600 students IEP and 102 students designated with a 504 Plan – Total 702
FY16 -576 students IEP and 116 students designated with a 504 Plan - Total 692

Currently there are 28 students waiting for IEP eligibility meetings and 11 students waiting for their 504 Plan. Total of 731 students receiving some type of services.

Mrs. Massie asked if the 28 students were all kindergarten students.

Dr. Norman stated the 28 students were across the grade levels as well as all the schools.

Dr. Nichols stated the special education student numbers continue to grow and continue to be an increasing share of the overall student population.

Mr. Bumgarner asked how the cost per pupil for a special education student compares to a non-special education student.

Dr. Nichols stated it was approximately three times the costs. Dr. Nichols stated what drives some of the cost were the limits placed on the number of students that can be placed in a classroom. Dr. Nichols stated those numbers were driven by the federal government.

Mr. Henderson asked about the graduation rate for 2015.

Dr. Norman stated the rate for Amherst County was very good; however, the information could not be released until September 2015.

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

Dr. Roger provided the members of the Amherst County School Board with the following update:

- The initial substitute workshop included approximately thirty new substitutes.
- In addition, substitutes were able to access a virtual Smart Board training that was offered through the Summer Tech Academy.
- Custodians and maintenance employees have been working all summer to prepare the buildings for the opening of school.
- Bus drivers met last week with Mr. Cocke and Mr. Thurman for their opening meeting to review new requirements and expectations, so they will be ready for the opening day of school.
- The new teacher orientation was last week, which included twenty-seven new teachers who received the initial Thinking Maps training. All of the new teachers were assigned new mentors to get a jump start on planning before all staff returned.
- Supervisors and central office administrators presented and attended staff development training and vertical team meetings in all content areas.
- Principals have met with all staff, reviewed state and federal data projections and discussed the student achievement goal setting process.
- All Principals and Supervisors met with the Superintendent to review and discuss school year procedures, instructional projections and expectations.
- There is an Algebra II position that has not been filled. High school teachers are being compensated at their daily rate to assume an extra section to cover the class currently.
- Staff members have been attending health insurance meetings which provided an overview of benefits, changes to the plans and open enrollment.
- Information and surveys are being conducted regarding the Health Savings Plan. Currently 40 employees out of 355 wish to have additional information regarding the Health Savings Plan.
- Everyone has been very appreciative of the decreased insurance premiums for the current year.
- Scott Insurance and Mr. Barney have decided not to renew their contract with Amherst County Public Schools. The current contract will expire September 30, 2015.
- Board members will have to decide whether they wish to bid insurance consulting services or whether you wish to work solely through the insurance provider.

Mr. Summers asked if Mr. Barney provided a reason for not wishing to bid on the health insurance services.

Dr. Rogers stated Mr. Barney met with her to discuss the reasons for not bidding; however, information regarding this matter would need to be discussed in closed meeting.

Mr. Wood stated he believed the Board could discuss the matter in September.

Mr. Bumgarner asked how the savings for health insurance impacted employee paychecks.

Mrs. Crouch stated payrolls had not been processed with the new health insurance renewal premiums.

Dr. Nichols stated information will be provided to Board members when payrolls are processed with the new health insurance rates as well as the three percent increase in salaries.

Mrs. Liggon stated she believes the members of the Amherst County School Board need to hear why Scott Insurance and Mr. David Barney have chosen not to bid on the Employee Benefit Services Contract. Mr. Liggon asked that the Board receive the update during the closed meeting that was already scheduled at the August 13, 2015, regular School Board meeting.

Mr. Henderson asked if Amherst County Public Schools had a shortage of bus drivers.

Dr. Nichols stated Mr. Cocke would provide an update to the members of the Amherst County School Board regarding transportation.

Mr. Henderson asked how the employee retention rate for Amherst County Public Schools was.

Dr. Rogers stated the employee retention rate for Amherst County Public Schools was very good. Dr. Rogers stated the turnover rate was less than 10%. Dr. Rogers reminded Board members that some of the new hires were positions that were vacant because of employees retiring.

Dr. Nichols stated at a recent meeting with the members of the Amherst County Board of Supervisors, he informed them that test scores were up, teacher retention was up and Amherst County Public Schools was very successful in a number of areas. Dr. Nichols stated Amherst County Public Schools had made great headway in the past several years.

Dr. Nichols stated education and teacher shortages were going to be a real challenge over the next several years.

Dr. Nichols stated Mr. Cocke would provide an update on the facilities.

Mr. Cocke stated Amherst County Public Schools received a donation from Central Virginia Community College of twenty-five file cabinets and six white boards. Mr. Cocke expressed appreciation to Mrs. Liggon for assisting with the donation.

Mr. Cocke expressed appreciation to members of the Sheriff's department and the inmate crew for assisting with mulching and weeding the grounds at different schools.

Mr. Cocke shared with members of the Amherst County School Board the 2015 summer maintenance projects and painting projects that had been completed.

Mr. Cocke stated after two years the radio repeater on 60 West had been installed and was working.

Mr. Cocke provided an update on the tennis courts at Amherst Middle School.

Mr. Cocke stated there were enough school bus drivers to start school. Mr. Cocke stated there continues to be a challenge in keeping school bus drivers.

Mr. Cocke discussed the new federal guidelines for bus drivers that would be implemented with the start of the 2015-2016 school year. Mr. Cocke stated training would be provided to bus drivers on a one-on-one basis to ensure the federal guidelines were met.

Mr. Cocke stated he had talked with representatives of the Tanglewood Trailer Park regarding buses entering the trailer park to transport students to schools. Mr. Cocke stated the road going through Tanglewood Trailer Park had been inspected and does not meet the standards for buses to travel on the roads; therefore, the students would be walking or the parents would transport the students to the entrance of the trailer park.

Mr. Wood stated he attended the meeting of the Amherst County Board of Supervisors and the members agreed to move forward with the PPEA.

Mr. Wood stated the members of the Amherst County Board of Supervisors also agreed to add two members of the Amherst County School Board to the Amherst County Building Committee. Mr. Wood stated in his opinion, it would be good for the members of the Amherst County School Board to appoint two members to represent the Amherst County School Board. Mr. Wood stated that Mr. Henderson had volunteered for one spot on the committee and asked if there was anyone else interested in serving on the committee.

Mr. Bumgarner made a motion to appoint Mr. Wood and Mr. Henderson to represent the Amherst County School Board on the Amherst County Building Committee. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Liggon and unanimously carried.

Dr. Nichols informed members of the Amherst County School Board that the 2015 VSBA Annual Convention would be held Wednesday, November 18, 2015 through Friday, November 20, 2015, in Williamsburg, Virginia. Dr. Nichols stated the deadline for registration is Friday, November 6, 2015.

Dr. Nichols proposed that the meeting on September 14, 2015, be held at the School Administration Office, in the Board Room and the meeting on September 21, 2015, for Public Input be held at Elon Elementary School.

The members of the Amherst County School Board agreed with the proposed dates; however, decided to conduct both of the meetings at Elon Elementary School.

Upon motion by Mrs. Liggon, seconded by Mr. Bumgarner and unanimously carried, the Board approved the following times, dates and locations for the proposed cell tower meetings at Elon Elementary School:

- September 14, 2015 – Elon Elementary School – 6:00 p.m. – Proposal from Milestone Communication – no public input – Board member questions only
- September 21, 2015 – Elon Elementary School – 6:00 p.m. – Public input from citizens
- September 24, 2015 – School Board Room – Administration Office – 6:00 p.m. Board will consider approval of the proposed cell tower at Elon Elementary School.

Mr. Henderson stated when the members of the Amherst County Board of Supervisors have a public hearing, they have to wait a certain length of time before action can be taken. Mr. Henderson asked if that were the same case for Amherst County Public Schools.

Dr. Nichols stated the school board attorney would be contacted regarding the matter.

Dr. Nichols stated the student recognition by the Amherst County School Board has been scheduled for May 17, 2016, at Amherst County High School at 6:00 p.m. Dr. Nichols asked if this date works for the members of the Amherst County School Board.

The consensus of the Board was to schedule the student recognitions by the Amherst County School Board for May 17, 2016, at Amherst County High School at 6:00 p.m.

Dr. Nichols stated the following items will be discussed at the fall School Board Retreat:

- School Resource Officers
- Accountability
- Pupil/Teacher Ratios
- CTE Programs – CVCC
- Executive Summaries

Mr. Wood stated he had several other items he would like to add to the agenda for the fall School Board Retreat. Mr. Wood stated he would email the information to Dr. Nichols.

Dr. Nichols stated the new student representative, Ms. Camryn Garrett, would be attending the August 27, 2015, regular School Board meeting.

Dr. Nichols informed Board members the Amherst County Public Schools Education Foundation Raffle is scheduled for Saturday, August 29, 2015, at the Madison Heights Community Center. Dr. Nichols stated Mrs. Crouch had tickets.

Dr. Nichols stated four students from Amherst County High School produced the “Welcome Back” video that would be emailed to all staff on Friday, August 14, 2015.

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

The following citizens addressed the Board regarding their opposition of the proposed cell tower at Elon Elementary School:

Mrs. Abby Thompson
Mr. Jim Thompson
Mr. Ted Campbell
Mr. Kenneth Smith

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

Mr. Summers asked if Board members can walk around the proposed site of the cell tower.

Mr. Henderson asked if anyone knew what time Milestone Communication was planning to fly the balloon at the potential site of the proposed cell tower.

Mr. Cocke stated that Milestone Communication was planning to fly the balloon at the potential site at Elon Elementary School, on Thursday, August 20, 2015, at 9:00 a.m. Mr. Cocke stated the balloon would be flown from the potential site and potential height.

Mrs. Massie stated she and Mr. Wood visited Pleasant View Elementary School, Amelon Elementary School and Elon Elementary School. Mrs. Massie stated the schools looked wonderful.

Mr. Henderson expressed appreciation to the administration for the new teacher luncheon.

Mr. Henderson stated he was encouraged about the results of the SOL testing scores.

Mrs. Ligon stated she had visited the Amelon Elementary School and Amherst Education Center and they look great.

Mrs. Ligon stated she attended the first L.A.U.R.E.L. School Board meeting and all seem to be going well.

Mrs. Ligon asked if there were any way that the School Board meeting not be scheduled the same date as back to school registration.

Mrs. Ligon asked if there were anyway that the School Board meeting not be scheduled the same date as the Central Virginia Community College graduation.

Mrs. Ligon asked how was summer school.

Dr. Norman stated summer school went very well.

Mrs. Ligon asked Mr. Wood if he would schedule a legislative meeting prior to the delegates and senators going into session.

Mrs. Ligon stated she understood that some of the football players would not be traveling to Florida for the game that will be shown on ESPN. Mrs. Ligon asked Dr. Nichols if the reason some students were not attending the football trip was due to lack of money.

Dr. Nichols stated he understood that all the cost was covered.

Mrs. Cumby stated she agreed with Mrs. Ligon regarding not having a School Board meeting the same night as back-to-school registration.

Mrs. Cumby expressed appreciation to everyone for their support.

Mr. Bumgarner stated he had a call from a citizen wanting to know why Amherst County Public School did not pay any money toward the tuition for Central Virginia Community Early College students. Mr. Bumgarner stated the parent wanted to know why the per pupil amount of state funding that Amherst

County Public School received was not applied to the tuition for early college students. Mr. Bumgarner stated he could not answer her question.

Pursuant to Section 2.2-3711 (A) (1) (2) and (7), of the Code of Virginia, upon motion by Mr. Summers, seconded by Mr. Bumgarner and unanimously carried, the Board convened a closed meeting for student matters and legal matters.

Upon motion by Mrs. Massie, seconded by Mr. Summers and unanimously carried, the Board resumed their meeting in open session.

CERTIFICATION OF CLOSED MEETING

WHEREAS, the Amherst County School Board has convened a closed meeting on this date pursuant to an affirmative record and in accordance with provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, and

WHEREAS, Section 2.2 - 3712 (D) and 2.2 - 3711 of the Code of Virginia requires a certification by this School Board that such closed meeting was conducted in accordance with provisions of the Freedom of Information Act; and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Amherst County School Board hereby certifies that to the best of each members knowledge (i) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirement by Virginia law were discussed in the closed meeting to which certification applies, and (ii) only such public matters as were identified in the motion convening the closed meeting were heard, discussed or considered.

Upon motion by Mr. Massie, seconded by Mr. Bumgarner and unanimously carried, the Board certified that they discussed only permissible topics.

AYES: Liggon, Wood, Henderson, Massie, Summers, Bumgarner, Cumby

NAYS: None

Upon motion by Mrs. Massie, seconded by Mr. Summers and unanimously carried, the Board approved to engage Sands Anderson as legal counsel.

Upon motion by Mrs. Massie, seconded by Mrs. Liggon and unanimously carried, the Board adjourned the meeting at 10:05 p.m.



Teresa C. Crouch, Clerk
Amherst County Public Schools



Alan J. Wood, Chairman
Amherst County Public Schools