

The Amherst County School Board met in special session on Monday, November 21, 2016, in the Board Room of the School Administration Office, Amherst, Virginia at 6:00 p.m.

PRESENT: W. Michael Henderson, Chairman
Priscilla M. Liggon, Vice Chairman
Jennifer E. Cumby
Francisco D. Mayo
Randy V. Summers
Craig S. Terwilliger
Abby J. Thompson

Nathan Gowdy, Student Representative

ABSENT: None

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

Mr. Henderson stated the November 21, 2016, was a special School Board meeting; therefore, there would be no public comment.

Mr. Henderson asked if there was a motion to approve the agenda for the November 21, 2016, special School Board meeting.

Upon motion by Mrs. Liggon, seconded by Mr. Terwilliger and unanimously carried, the Board approved the November 21, 2016, special School Board meeting.

Mr. Henderson stated the action by the Board was to reconsider the decision of the previous School Board in regard to the closure of Pleasant View Elementary School at the end of the 2016-17 school year.

Prior to any discussion, Mr. Henderson made the following comments:

- *In January 2016, at the beginning of the Budget Cycle for the 2016/17 School Year, in response to a data request from the Board we were presented with information that showed a potential \$480K annual savings if PVES was closed with students being redistricted to Elon and Temperance.*
- *In March 2016, the Superintendent recommended closure of PVES at end of 2016-17 school year based on a continued and steady decline in enrollment, increased costs per pupil to operate the school and difficulty in justifying proposed infrastructure improvement project cost of over \$1.5M*
- *Many hours of discussion and deliberation ensued with respect to this recommendation during the March and April School Board meetings. In addition, a Parent Task Force Group had been formed and presented to the Board various options aimed at enhancing enrollment.*
- *The School Board held a public hearing on May 5th on the recommended action of the Superintendent to close PVES at the end of the 2016/17 school year.*

- *At the regular School Board meeting on May 12th after a lengthy and robust discussion, the Board voted to accept the Superintendent's recommendation.*
- *At the beginning of the 2015/16 there were 60 students at PVES with enrollment dropping to 54 students by the end of the year. Just 4 years ago, in 2012, there were 94 students. With the current school year, enrollment again declined to 45 students and as of today there are 44 students.*
- *Declining enrollment is not isolated to the Pleasant View area. County wide school enrollment has continued to experience an on-going decline with enrollment dropping below 4000 students for the first time ever. During the past 5 years we have lost over 300 students from our Division and this year, we have lost another 50 students. State funding for the operation of our schools is based on enrollment so this decline has a direct and immediate negative financial impact on our school division. We have lost over \$1.8M in state funding over the past 5 years.*
- *Our Division currently operates 7 elementary schools. With the decline in county wide enrollment there is excess capacity available in all schools with more in some and less in others. The key takeaway point is that our schools are not overcrowded and the overall pupil-teacher ratio is favorable, with all schools at a less than a 20:1 ratio. Redistricting of our elementary schools has been discussed and reviewed numerous times but with the continued enrollment declines across the county and the current available capacity, the Board has chosen not to pursue this strategy.*
- *Projected annual operational cost savings with closing PVES is in excess of \$400K per year. This figure will be even higher if a full-time principal becomes mandated by new state requirements.*
- *The heating, cooling and lighting improvement project costs for PVES were estimated well in excess of \$1M. The maintenance and security enhancement project cost estimates are approximately \$400K and the roof replacement cost is proposed at \$200K. A total of \$1.6M in building upgrades will be needed if the building were to remain open.*
- *Costs per pupil at PVES are more than double the average cost per pupil at 5 of our other elementary schools. Realigning enrollment from PVES to Temperance will reduce the cost per pupil at Temperance and will keep them in line with the other schools.*

Tonight we have placed the PVES decision taken by the previous Board on the agenda. The new members of the Board were given an opportunity at the end of September during their orientation briefings with Dr. Nichols and his staff to discuss the issues and strategies that were taken into consideration during the prior decision to close PVES. The School Board then held a lengthy discussion at the School Board Retreat in mid-October on the PVES closure. The overarching question for consideration during that discussion was whether or not the previous Board missed something or if there was any new viable strategy that could be feasibly implemented to boost enrollment. At the end of this discussion, it was agreed that the Board would place the previous PVES closure decision on the next meeting agenda.

Mr. Henderson asked Board members if they wished to make any comments. Board members expressed their views on Pleasant View Elementary School.

Mr. Henderson asked if there was a motion to consider the decision of the previous School Board in regard to the closure of Pleasant View Elementary School.

Mr. Terwilliger made a motion to rescind the decision of the previous School Board to close Pleasant View Elementary School at the end of the 2016-17 school year. Mrs. Thompson seconded the motion. Mr. Henderson asked for a roll call vote.

AYES: Cumby, Thompson, Terwilliger

NAYS: Liggon, Henderson, Summers, Mayo

The motion to rescind the decision of the previous School Board to close Pleasant View Elementary School failed; therefore, Pleasant View Elementary School will close at the end of the 2016-17 school year.

Mr. Henderson stated in previous discussions by the Board, the boundaries for Pleasant View Elementary School would follow the two middle school attendance zones; however, the School Board did not take formal action. Mr. Henderson asked that they consider establishing the attendance zones for Elon Elementary School and Temperance Elementary School that would follow Amherst Middle School and Monelison Middle School routes.

Board members discussed establishing the attendance zone as well as how the requests for out-of-zone students would be handled for the Pleasant View Elementary School students. The Board decided to establish the attendance zones; however, the procedure for request of out-of-zone students will be discussed at a later date. Board members asked for information regarding current out-of-zone students. Dr. Nichols stated information would be provided to Board members.

After much discussion by the Board, Mr. Summers made a motion that the attendance zones for the redistricting students of Pleasant View Elementary School would follow the current middle school lines. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Liggon.

AYES: Liggon, Henderson, Summers, Cumby, Mayo, Thompson

NAYS: Terwilliger

Mr. Henderson stated there is a need to discuss information regarding out-of-zone requests.

Mr. Henderson asked if there was a motion to adjourn.

Upon motion by Mr. Summers, seconded by Mrs. Cumby and unanimously carried, the Board adjourned the meeting at 6:42 p.m.



Teresa C. Crouch, Clerk
Amherst County Public Schools



W. Michael Henderson, Chairman
Amherst County Public Schools