BUNCOMBE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING
4:00 p.m. – Call to Order – Executive Conference Room
(Work Session Updates / Closed Session)
***Thursday, December 5, 2024***
5:30 p.m. – Minitorium
Broadcast live on BCS Communications YouTube Account

***MINUTES***

**BE IT REMEMBERED**: That the Buncombe County Board of Education met in a regular session on December 5, 2024, at 5:30 p.m. in the Minitorium located at 175 Bingham Road, Asheville, North Carolina and streamed live on YouTube, when the following business was transacted.

The following Board members were present:
Ann Franklin, Member
Greg Cheatham, Member
Rob Elliot, Member
Charles Martin, Member
Kim Plemmons, Member
Amy Churchill, Member
Judy Lewis, Member

Staff present: Dr. Rob Jackson, Superintendent; Dr. Jennifer Reed, Associate Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction; Dr. Jamie Johnson, Assistant Superintendent of Educational Equity & Student Support; Dr. Donna Lanahan, Director of Secondary Education; Lisa Payne, Director of School Nutrition; Shanon Martin, Director of Student Services; Jeremy Stowe, Director of Transportation; Clark Wyatt, Director of Facilities & Maintenance; Dr. Mindy Conner, Director of Special Services; Michelle Smith, Director of CTE; Laura Mitchell, District Arts Education Specialist; Tina Thorpe, Chief Finance Officer; Robert Frisby, Director of Technology; Steve Earwood, Director of Testing & Accountability; Jeanann Yates, Director of Federal Programs; Ken Ulmer, Chief Communications Officer; Scott Emory, Nathan Pfeiffer, and Sabrina Briggs, Technology Support Specialists; Tim Reaves, Assistant Director of Communications; Michaela Bivins and Breanna Hensley, Digital Communication Specialists; Dean Shatley, Attorney and Kim Matthews, Executive Administrative Assistant

**MOTION TO CLOSED SESSION**
Mr. Elliot made a motion to enter into closed session at 4:45 p.m. and Ms. Churchill seconded the motion – the motion was approved unanimously.
The Chair entertained a motion for the Board of Education to enter into closed session pursuant to G.S. 143-318.11 for the following purposes:
- Under subsection (a)(1) to prevent the disclosure of privileged and confidential personnel information pursuant to G.S. 115C-319-321;
- Under subsection (a)(1) to prevent the disclosure of privileged and confidential student information pursuant to 20 U.S.C. 1232g (FERPA);
- Under subsection (a)(3) to discuss matters protected by the attorney-client privilege.

**ADJOURNMENT**
Ms. Plemmons made a motion to adjourn the closed session at 5:05 p.m. and Mr. Cheatham seconded the motion the motion was approved unanimously.

**WORK SESSION UPDATES**
Dr. Reed distributed copies of the Executive Summary of the School Improvement Plans (SIP) for each school. These plans are also available online with NCSTAR. In January, the Board will be asked to approve the plans for schools designated as Low Performing (LPS). Dr. Reed shared that same information with the Board in an email earlier today. Dr. Reed also included the District Strategic Plan for Board members as a resource that the SIP's were built upon. The State requires school districts to receive feedback on the plans for schools designated as Low Performing. This survey is located on every school's website and is open to the public. An email will also be sent out sharing that information with the school community.

**CALL TO ORDER**

**PRESENTATION OF COLORS / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE / ENKA HIGH SCHOOL JROTC –**
Instructed by Major Kevin Den Boer U.S. Air Force (retired) and Master Sergeant Douglas Draper, U.S. Air Force (Retired)

**MOMENT OF SILENCE**

**SWEARING IN OF BOARD MEMBERS** – The Honorable Superior Court Judge Alan Thornburg
Judge Thornburg administered the Oath of Office to the following Board of Education members: Amy Churchill, District 4 (re-elected); Ann B. Franklin, District 1 (re-elected); Greg Cheatham, District 2 (newly elected); and Reverend Charles Martin, At-Large District (newly elected)

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**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**
Mr. Elliot made a motion to approve the agenda and Ms. Lewis seconded the motion – the motion was approved unanimously.

**ELECTION OF BOARD CHAIR**
Mr. Shatley opened the floor for nominations for Board Chair. Ms. Plemmons nominated Mr. Rob Elliot, and Mr. Elliot accepted the nomination. Hearing no other nominations, the floor was closed. Mr. Shatley called for the vote. All voted in favor of Mr. Elliot.

Mr. Elliot thanked the Board and expressed his appreciation at the opportunity to serve as Chair. He took a moment to acknowledge the remarkable service as Board Chair since 2015 of Ann Franklin to the Board of Education and Buncombe County Schools. Mr. Elliot noted that under her outstanding and steady leadership BCS worked to improve school facilities and safety, supported education initiatives for our children, advocated and gained higher teacher pay, and promoted fiscal responsibility. During her time thus far on the Board, Ms. Franklin was instrumental in hiring two outstanding superintendents in Dr. Tony Baldwin and Dr. Rob Jackson. Mr. Elliot also noted that when Ms. Franklin became the Chair, the graduation cohort rate was 85.2% and now it is 91.5%, an increase of over four hundred students graduating now! Ms. Franklin has truly made a positive impact with her leadership, and he greatly appreciates her. Ms. Lewis added that she is grateful for Ms. Franklin as a colleague and a friend and is assured that Ms. Franklin will continue to help guide and mentor the Board. Ms. Plemmons also thanked Ms. Franklin for her service to Buncombe County Schools.

**ELECTION OF BOARD VICE-CHAIR**
Mr. Shatley opened the floor for nomination for Vice-Chair. Ms. Franklin nominated Ms. Churchill and Ms. Churchill accepted the nomination. Hearing no other nominations, the floor was closed. Mr. Shatley called for the vote. All voted in favor of Ms. Churchill.

**HOLIDAY MUSIC**
- North Buncombe High School Chamber Choir, Directed by Jeannie Graeme

**SUPERINTENDENT'S COMMENTS**
- Dr. Jackson took a moment to note that as the holiday season is approaching, he finds himself overwhelmed with gratitude for the incredible resilience, compassion, and teamwork demonstrated by every member of our school community. In the aftermath of the most devastating natural disaster in our county's history, they have all shown what it means to come together, support one another, and rebuild with hope and determination.
- The Blackhawks of the North Buncombe High School Chamber Choir are absolutely amazing! In sharing their gift of music Dr. Jackson said. They have powerfully demonstrated the greatest highlights of the month of December which are the multiple opportunities available to everyone to experience our students' musical and dramatic talents through band, orchestra, and chorus winter concerts and through the winter musicals in schools across the school system. Details for all the performances are located on the Arts Calendar on the school system website. He encouraged everyone to invite their friends and neighbors to join in attending one or more winter concerts in our schools. Dr. Jackson promised it will be incredible.
- Dr. Jackson joined the Board tonight in welcoming Mr. Cheatham and Rev. Martin. Thank you both for offering yourself to serve the community, for the long hours of study and service you will give, and for the leadership you will share. On behalf of our faculty and staff, He wished them the very best as we join together to serve our students, their families, and our community.
- As a school system and as a community, Dr. Jackson stated that we continue to recover from the tragic impacts of Hurricane Helene. He has asked that every member of our staff share what they believe we did well and what we might improve upon in our storm response. He noted that as a school system, we are dedicated to continuous improvement. While we pray that our community never again goes through what we have just endured, we want to make sure that we use what we have learned since September 27th to grow and improve and that we share what we have learned with other school systems across the state and country so that they might also learn from our experiences.
- Dr. Jackson stated that BCS is currently working with the Asheville Water System to test the water in our buildings. Unfortunately, these tests take time to receive the results. As the results are received, these will be posted on our school system website. Communication with parents and staff will continue as schools are cleared to begin using the water in their buildings for drinking and cooking.
- Dr. Jackson thanked the Board of Education for their steadfast leadership and guidance. He also thanked BCS staff for their tireless dedication to our students and families. To the students, he thanked them for their strength and courage. And to our entire community, Dr. Jackson thanked them for standing beside us, offering your hands, hearts, and resources to help us reopen our schools and restore a sense of normalcy for our children.
- In this season, Dr. Jackson stated that he wished everyone peace, joy, and time to reflect on the incredible progress we have made together. While the road has not been easy, your collective efforts have shown the true spirit of this community. Together, we are stronger, and together, we will continue to move forward.

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**REPORTS**

- Consolidation Feasibility Study Update – Rachael Sawyer, Buncombe County Strategic Partnership Director

Ms. Sawyer presented information to the Board on the Feasibility Study. She highlighted the legislative mandate that required the study to be conducted, the team that was assembled to collaborate on the study on this study and their respective roles, and the scope of work to be provided by Prismatic. Ms. Sawyer shared information on the work that has been conducted so far, the community input received, and the project timeline to date. Finally, Ms. Sawyer described what the next steps of the study would cover. These include the findings report from Prismatic due to the Commissioners by December 31st. Then a presentation to BCS, ACS and the County Commissioners at the Joint Meeting on January 16, 2025. Findings and recommendations are due to the General Assembly no later than February 15, 2025. The statute does not require BCS, ACS or the Commissioners to make any endorsements, but is an option if any of the entities would like to do so. Ms. Sawyer then answered questions from board members concerning the school system making a recommendation when the survey information would be shared and if the hurricane had caused any timeline issues.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

-The following people expressed their concern over the removal of the digital book platform "Epic" from schools: Lachlan Lane, Campaign for Southern Equality; Gracie Anderson, Campaign for Southern Equality; Amanda Simons, resident of the Reynolds area; Natalie Dorsey, an Enka area parent; Beck Martins, Youth Outright; Laurin Robertson, a Reynolds area parent.
-Kim Poteat, an Enka resident, and President of Moms for Liberty, stated that the removal of the digital book platform "Epic" was not requested by Moms for Liberty and feels they have been maligned.
-The following people voiced their concern and request to change current BCS gender support guidelines: Anita Leis, a resident of District 3; and Staci Metcalf, a resident of the Roberson area.
-Glenda Weinert, former BOE member, Congratulated Rev. Martin on his election to the At-Large seat.

**ACTION AGENDA**

- Facilities and Maintenance Department Hurricane Helene Response Noncompetitive Procurement Requests:
  Carpet One Floor and Home, Centimark Corporation, Duffield Aquatics Incorporated, Forever Clean, Grigg Electric Incorporated, Hoffman Mechanical Solutions Incorporated, J. Bartholomew Construction, Lake Electric Company Incorporated, Masters Mechanical, MSS Solutions LLC, Newcomb Tree Service, Petroleum Traders Corporation, Portable Tank Group, PortableHandwashing.com, Preferred Sports Flooring, Pyatt Heating and Air, Rainey Battery, RPB Systems, Tucker Materials Incorporated, Vesco Industrial Trucks, and Webrestaurant Store

Ms. Plemmons made a motion to approve the Facilities and Maintenance Department Hurricane Helene Response Noncompetitive Procurement Requests as presented and Ms. Lewis seconded the motion – the motion was approved unanimously.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

- Minutes: November 14, 2024 – Open Session Regular Meeting
- Personnel Report – December 5, 2024
- 2024-2025 Budget Amendment #1

Ms. Lewis made a motion to approve the consent agenda and Rev. Martin seconded the motion – the motion was approved unanimously.

**INFORMATION AGENDA**

- Finance Reports

**ANNOUNCEMENTS / FUTURE MEETINGS**

- The next Board of Education Regular Meeting is January 9, 2025. Work session updates and Closed Session beginning at 4:00 p.m. in the Executive Conference Room, and the Open Session beginning at 5:30 p.m. in the Minitorium at 175 Bingham Road, Asheville, NC 28806.
- The Buncombe County Board of Education will meet in a joint special called meeting with the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners and the Asheville City School Board on January 16, 2024 from 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. at the AB Technical Community College Conference Center, 16 Fernihurst Drive, Asheville, NC 28801.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Cheatham made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:09 p.m. and Rev. Martin seconded the motion – the motion was approved unanimously.

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Robert Jackson, Superintendent & Ex Officio Secretary
Minutes for Approval: January 9, 2025
klm

Rob Elliot, Chair