

**LAURENS COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT #55
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MONTHLY MEETING
LCSD 55 ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
JUNE 26, 2023 - 6:30 P.M.**

Present: Trustees Cathy Little (Chair), Peggy Nance (Secretary), Anthony Carpenter (Vice Chair), Mike Hughes, Superintendent Dr. Ameca Thomas

OPENING BUSINESS

1. **Call to Order** - Chair Mrs. Cathy Little called the meeting to order at 6:30 in the LCSD 55 Administrative Office.
2. **Confirmation of Notice to Media** - Candice Branim confirmed the media were notified of the date, time, agenda, and location.
3. **Declaration of a Quorum** - Mrs. Cathy Little confirmed there was a quorum.
4. **Approval of Agenda** - Mrs. Cathy Little asked if there was a motion to approve the agenda. Mr. Anthony Carpenter made a motion to approve the agenda. Mr. Mike Hughes seconded. Mrs. Little asked if there were any discussions and then asked who was in favor of approving the agenda. All were in favor, none opposed.
5. **Welcome** - Mrs. Little welcomed all who were in attendance.
6. **Pledge of Allegiance** - Mrs. Cathy Little led the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance.
7. **Prayer** - Trustee Mrs. Peggy Nance led the meeting in prayer.
8. **Approval of Minutes: May 1 and May 22, 2023** - Mrs. Cathy Little asked if there was a motion to approve the minutes for May 1 and May 22, 2023. Mr. Mike Hughes made a motion to approve the minutes of May 1 and May 22, 2023. Mrs. Peggy Nance seconded. Mrs. Little stated that she did have some discussion on the minutes and said that on May 1, 2023, she did not move forward with the motion because she did not hear Mr. Hughes state his "Second" on a motion since he was virtual. She asked if there was any further discussion. None answered. She then made a motion to approve the minutes of May 1 and May 22, 2023 by raising their hands. All trustees raised their hands making it unanimous.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

1. **District Updates** - Superintendent Dr. Ameca Thomas reported on the 2022-2023 year in review. Dr. Thomas reviewed "Our Mission Statement: Empowering and Inspiring all to be Educated and Informed." Dr. Thomas outlined the three goals:

- Provide world-class safety and a positive school culture
- Provide world-class, high quality instruction to increase student achievement
- Provide world-class communication and family engagement.

Dr. Thomas showed a year in review with highlights from many activities and events such as staff development, Drone Signing Day, Fire Science Program, Read Aloud Day, and Reading Buddies Distribution. Dr. Thomas focused on the goals:

- A. GOAL 1: Instructional Focus - Laurens County School District 55 will create an exceptional learning environment that supports and challenges each student to reach their potential.
- B. Mrs. Kim Penland gave an overview of the HMH 2022-2023 Growth at Waterloo Elementary School. Kindergarten and 1st grade did not take reading testing at the beginning of the year, so there was no reference for that period. Mrs. Penland stated that several factors went into implementing HMH. She stated that teachers were more familiar with the HMH resources, there was a strong instructional coach support in place, they used lesson plan templates, used the Standards Report provided by HMH to guide instruction and provide targeted small group instruction, integrated Dreambox and LETRS to enhance instruction, and had teachers "buy in". Mrs. Penland stated that the goals for next year are to have at least 75% of their students scoring on or above the HMH Growth Measure Math Assessment and at least 70% of students scoring on or above on the HMH Growth Measure Reading Assessment by the end of the 2023-2024 school year. Teachers will continue using data charts for each student. Teachers will have a Progress Monitoring Notebook and checklist for each student. Teachers will continue the use of Amira, Waggle, Dreambox and LETRS. There will also be pacing guides for using the HMH curriculum in reading and math throughout the year and teachers will plan according to these guides. Mrs. Penland stated Waterloo Elementary's theme for the 2022-2023 school year was "Planting Seeds in Achievement...Watch Us Grow!" She stated that they have planted those seeds and they are growing. She said that the theme for the 2023-2024 school year is "Wild About Learning!"
- C. After Mrs. Penland's presentation, Dr. Thomas thanked Mrs. Penland and Dr. Tucker and then continued on with her presentation.
- D. GOAL 2: Staff Development - Laurens County School District 55 will continually strengthen the recruitment, retention, and development of highly effective staff. Dr. Thomas listed ways the district has implemented to recruit and retain staff such as employee assistance programs, professional development opportunities, Welcome Walks, Listen and Learn Sessions, Lunch and Learn, staff surveys, and staff recognitions. Dr. Thomas also listed district wide areas for improvement including school safety and order, professional development, and appreciation.

- E. GOAL 3: Facilities - Laurens County School District 55 will provide safe schools with innovative learning environments to support student readiness for college and careers. This goal focuses on school infrastructure and overall safety for students and staff. Dr. Thomas listed ways that this goal is being met such as Listen and Learn Sessions with Facility Focus, Capital Projects such as updating the HVAC systems, safety upgrades such as cameras, new doors, and weapon detection equipment, and by integrating a Facilities and Demographic Study.
- F. GOAL 4: Family and Community Engagement - Laurens County School District 55 will actively engage with parents and community as partners in the education of all students. Dr. Thomas listed the many ways that the district is kept up to date on all issues in the school with the many forms of communication such as The Times in 55, the weekly School Board Newsletter, TableTalk is sent to all parents, staff, and school board weekly during the school year, call alerts, emails, and texts are sent out to notify parents and the community about any events or issues happening, Impact 55 allows students to tell their own stories about how District 55 has impacted their lives, and the Pride of 55 Podcast in efforts to stay transparent about our district. The Grad to Greatness series highlights some of our graduates after they graduate and enter the workforce. The district also offers many volunteer programs such as the Reading Buddies event.
- G. GOAL 5: Fiscal Responsibility - Laurens County School District 55 will use resources effectively and maintain a strong fiscal position. Dr. Thomas listed ways the district stays within budget with programs such as the General Fund Budget, Budget Surveys, Budget Work Sessions, Utility/Energy Analysis, Grants, GoFundMe, and the monthly financial reports. Dr. Thomas also listed the many Grants that have been awarded to the district.
- H. Dr. Thomas stated that while the district may not have experienced all of their desired outcomes, they “have witnessed many positive changes, a lot of growth, consistent development, and a genuine commitment to continuous improvement.”
- I. Dr. Thomas asked if there were any questions at this time. No response.

2. Department of Academic Interventions Report - Mrs. Kathy McMillan-Bennon, Laurens District 55 Director of Academic Interventions, discussed academic interventions for students in grades Kindergarten through 6th grade. She shared data in ELA, Math retrieved from MAP, FastBridge, and HMH student academic performance data. Mrs. McMillan-Bennon gave an overview of ABii, a robot led learning program that interacts with students. She provided a list of 13 Superstar students whom HMH recognized nationally for their academic achievements. Mrs. Renee Madden helped Mrs. Millan-Bennon hand out certificates to the students who were at the meeting.

BOARD OPERATIONS

1. **Board Officer Elections** - Mrs. Cathy Little stated that there is a need to elect a board secretary since Mr. Bubba Rawl resigned and left the position open. She said they will take nominations at this time. Mr. Anthony Carpenter nominated Mrs. Peggy Nance. Mr. Mike Hughes seconded. Mrs. Little asked if there were any other nominations. No responses. Mrs. Little asked all of those in favor to nominate Mrs. Nance. There was a unanimous vote for Mrs. Peggy Nance to become the board secretary. There was no opposition. Mrs. Little stated that they will now move on to finance and operations.

FINANCE AND OPERATIONS

1. **Cenergistics Report** - Mr. Jim Lollis stated that Phillip Roberts was not able to attend the meeting, so he will give the Cenergistics update in his place. Mr. Lollis stated that as of June 20, 2023, we had a savings of \$58,613. Our energy usage has decreased by 7.15% over a year.
2. **Monthly Financial Report** - Mr. Jim Lollis stated that he was sorry about the last minute updated financial report, but noted that the district received some last minute additional revenue from the county late Friday afternoon on June 23, 2023.

As of May 31, 2023



CASH FLOW ESTIMATES

		5/31/2022
Balance with Treasurer 5/31/2023	\$13,881,466	\$11,776,515

General Fund Revenue and Expenditures Year-to-Date

Revenues 5/31/2023	\$49,863,853	\$46,062,413
Expenditures 5/31/2023	\$43,742,761	\$41,238,170
Difference	\$6,121,092	\$4,824,243

May 2023 Tax Collections

Current/Delinquent/Refund Taxes - Local	\$307,689	\$305,568
Motor Carrier - Vehicles	\$29,842	\$63,315
Motor Carrier - BMW	\$1,171	\$586
Manufacturers Reimbursement - State	\$335,859	
Tier III Sales Taxes - State	\$984,683	\$440,628
Tier II Homestead Rollback - State	\$0	\$0
Tier I Property Tax Exemption - State	\$0	\$0
Fee In Lieu of Taxes	\$0	\$0
Merchandise Inventory - State		
Interest Income	\$26,921	\$383
Total Tax Collections	\$1,686,165	\$810,480

- 3. Budget Information for 2023-2024 General Fund Budget and Request for Approval - Second Reading** - Mr. Jim Lollis requested that the board make a motion to approve the 2023-2024 General Fund Budget. Mr. Anthony Carpenter made a motion to approve the 2023-2024 General Fund Budget. Mrs. Peggy Nance seconded. Mrs. Cathy Little thanked both and asked if there was any discussion. Mrs. Little took a vote for approving the budget by asking for a show of hands. The vote was unanimous to approve the 2023-2024 General Fund Budget. There was no opposition.
- 4. Procurement Code** - Mr. Jim Lollis stated that state law requires that every school with more than \$75,000,000 expenditures across all funds will have a procurement code that is substantially similar to the provisions of SC Consolidated Procurement Code and Regulations. He stated that schools have their own model for the procurement codes that is customized to school operations. Their most recent model was developed in 2021 and districts can slightly change the model, basically only changing the name to show their school district. These changes bring an audit every 3 years. Laurens District 55 has operated under the same procurement code, unedited, since 1985. Mr. Lollis asked the board to vote to approve the adoption of a new procurement code. Mr. Lollis also asked the board to approve the list of items that are exempt from the provisions of that code. If approved, both will be effective July 1, 2023. Mr. Lollis presented the first action to vote on the model code and then for another vote to approve the list of exemptions. He asked the board to vote on the procurement code. Mrs. Peggy Nance motioned to approve the procurement code. Mr. Mike Hughes seconded the motion. Mrs. Cathy Little thanked both and asked if there were any discussions. She asked for a vote by show of hands. The motion was unanimously approved with no objections. Mr. Lollis continued by asking for a vote on the approval of the list of items that are exempt from the provisions of the procurement code. Mr. Anthony Carpenter made a motion to approve the list. Mr. Mike Hughes seconded the motion. Mrs. Cathy Little thanked both and asked if there were any questions. Mrs. Little asked all those in favor of approving the list of items to vote by a show of hands. The vote was unanimous in approval, no objections.
- 5. Bond Resolution** - Mr. Jim Lollis asked the board to approve the General Obligation Bond. This bond provides funds for payment of the LEAD Corporation debt in addition to funding the capital projects fund. He is asking the board to approve a resolution for the issuance not to exceed \$7,600,000 and this amount will not lead to an increase in property taxes. The purpose of the bond is twofold: to provide \$3,116,913 in payments of the LEAD Corporation bond (the only long-term debt the district owes) and \$4,460,000 to cover the cost of the district's capital projects. This debt will be repaid using debt service funds before the end of the year. This will allow the district to pay off the capital project debt by 2030. Mr. Lollis stated that this does require board action and asked that

the board vote to approve the bond resolution. Mrs. Cathy Little asked for the board to make a motion to approve the bond resolution. Mr. Mike Hughes made a motion to approve the bond resolution. Mr. Anthony Carpenter seconded the motion. Mrs. Little thanked them both and asked if there were any questions or discussions. Mrs. Little asked all those in favor of the \$7,600,000 bond resolution to show their hands. The vote was unanimous in approval, no objections.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - Cathy Little read the guidelines for public participation and recognized 5 individuals who had submitted requests.

"Individuals who submitted the required form for the Public Participation portion of the meeting are strongly encouraged to maintain appropriate decorum while addressing the Board. Please remember that this is a meeting of a public school board and children may either be in attendance or watching via live stream. Please use appropriate language reflecting the nature of the meeting and its audience. Pursuant to Board Policy BEDH, speakers may offer objective comments on school operations and programs that concern them. The board will not permit in public session any expression of personal complaints about school personnel nor against any person connected with the school system."

1. Nick Ulmer - did not attend meeting
2. Dr. Catherine Cullen Evans - spoke of the 50 year LHS reunion, Dr. Thomas' contract issues, school improvements, board issues
3. Tammy Pinson - did not attend meeting
4. Elma Morrison - this was a late submission to speak. Mrs. Little said the board would have to approve her to speak, but Mrs. Morrison did not attend the meeting, so there was no vote needed.

MOTION TO ENTER EXECUTIVE SESSION - Mrs. Cathy Little asked if there was a motion to enter into executive session. Mr. Mike Hughes made a motion to enter into executive session. Mrs. Little seconded the motion. Mrs. Little asked all those in favor to enter into executive session to raise their hands. Mr. Mike Hughes, Mrs. Peggy Nance, and Mrs. Cathy Little raised their hands. Mr. Anthony Carpenter did not raise his hand. Dr. Ameca Thomas asked Mrs. Little that Mrs. Renee Madden be allowed to enter into the executive meeting. Mrs. Little agreed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

1. **Certified Employee Contract Recommendations for the 2023-2024 School Year**
2. **Annual Review of the Superintendent**

RECONVENE IN OPEN SESSION - Mrs. Cathy Little called the meeting to order in open session in the Laurens District 55 meeting room at 9:00 p.m.

ACTION ON EXECUTIVE SESSION - Mrs. Little stated that there was one item the board needed to vote on from the executive session, the contract recommendation. Mr. Mike Hughes made a motion to approve the contract recommendations. Mrs. Peggy Nance seconded the motion. Mrs. Little thanked them both and asked if there was any discussion. Mrs. Little asked all of those in favor of the contract recommendations to raise their hands. All raised hands as a unanimous vote. There were no objections. Mrs. Little stated that they did complete Dr. Thomas' evaluation and the overall score was "Excellent."

ADJOURNMENT - Mr. Mike Hughes made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Anthony Carpenter told Mr. Hughes that he could not make a motion to adjourn the meeting and that he could not "hide from this." Mrs. Little said that Mr. Hughes can make a motion to adjourn. Mr. Carpenter stated that they voted no raise and no extension to the contract. Mrs. Little said that there was no vote taken during the executive session and asked Mr. Carpenter to correct what he had said about a vote being taken. Mr. Carpenter continued stating "that's what it was" and Mrs. Little repeated that there was no vote taken during the executive session. Mrs. Little stated that the meeting was adjourned at 9:11 p.m.

Candice Branim
Recorder

Peggy Nance
Board Secretary

cbranim 6.28.2023, 08.18.2023