

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE  
JEFFERSON COUNTY BOARD OF SCHOOL COMMISSIONERS  
FEBRUARY 22, 2018 – 6:30 P.M.  
PATRIOT ACADEMY**

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Jim Vines who then asked everyone to stand for a moment of silence. Board member present were Chairman Vines, Vice Chairman Bill Jarnigan, Dusty Cox, Maurice Solomon, Anne Marie Potts, Randall Bradley, and Denise Fair. Sherry Finchum, Interim Director of Schools and Secretary to the Board, was also present.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Board member Cox led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Chairman Vines added Director of Schools Search under New Business and three Overnight Field Trip Requests to the consent agenda.

Upon motion by Maurice Solomon and second by Dusty Cox, the board unanimously voted 7-0 to approve the agenda with the above additions. (attached)

**CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS**

Upon motion by Vice Chairman Jarnigan and second by Dusty Cox, the board unanimously voted 7-0 to approve the consent agenda items as submitted. (attached)

**ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

Ms. Donna Coffey addressed the board regarding why the extra 30 minutes added to the end of the school day could not be used for snow days if needed. Ms. Finchum responded that there is an extra 30 minutes build in to the school day which make up the 10 snow days listed on the calendar that do not have to be made up. Mr. Finchum told Ms. Coffey that she would be glad to talk to her further if she would call her at the central office.

**ITEMS FOR INFORMATION – DIRECTOR OF SCHOOLS**

1. Each board member received a current copy of the January financial reports.

**Items for Information – continued**

2. Tony Pettit, BurWil Construction Manager, gave an update on the additions and renovations to White Pine School. He stated the project schedule indicated the completion date for the project to be May 18, 2018.

3. Michael Phagan, Facilities Supervisor, gave a status report on the JCHS baseball stadium renovation.

4. Each board member received the Annual Assessment of Capital Assets and Facilities Planning as stated in Board Policy 3.208. Michael Phagan provided a brief overview. Mr. Phagan stated the report contained business and industry forecast plus population at the various schools and system wide as well as classroom availability. He pointed out the east and southeast part of the county was showing an increase in population and the west and northwest was showing a decrease. Board member Solomon expressed his concerns regarding Rush Strong School and low enrollment numbers this year. He felt re-zoning needed to be looked at. Board member Bradley was in agreement with re-zoning and stated the board may need to get started on that process. Mr. Phagan responded if the board wanted to get started on re-zoning for the next school year it needed to begin now. Board member Potts commented that in her opinion the decline in the population at Rush Strong School was due to the turnover in administration over the last 3-4 years and the opening of surrounding new schools. Chairman Vines stated the board needed to begin discussions on planning what to do either for this upcoming school year or the next school year. Board member Bradley suggested waiting until after the upcoming election to start discussions on re-zoning for the 2019-2020 school year.

5. Sherry Finchum, Interim Director, informed the board of the need for a School Age Child Care nurse for two additional hours. She explained the need was due to a child having medical needs that requires a nurse. She stated that Mandy Schneitman was trying to find a way to cover the additional expense by not having to pay overtime. Ms. Finchum commented that she wanted to make the board aware that the cost for the two additional hours would have to be provided by the system. She pointed out that a budget amendment might be presented in the near future to request those funds.

6. Sherry Finchum informed the board of a Pre-K grant application at each school as well as the IDEA Discretionary Grant for Preschool students with disabilities.

7. Ms. Finchum requested that prior to working on the budget that an increase in the payout for the Sick Leave Exit Option for Certified teachers be discussed at the next work session. Ms. Finchum also asked if the substitute rate should be looked at as well.

**Items for Information - continued**

Board member Bradley commented that he would like to look at a sick leave exit option for classified employees. The items will be placed on the next work session agenda in March. Board member Bradley requested that the Policy Committee review the policy regarding the Sick Leave Exit Option for Certified Personnel.

8. Ms. Finchum asked for the board's guidance and direction in a plan to involve parents in a discussion regarding school security and safety. The item will be discussed at the work session in March.

9. Sherry Finchum went over the current policy for approval of out of zone students and if the Director of Schools or principal should be making that decision. She pointed out the current policy states that the Director of Schools will make the decision. She asked for the board's direction. Board member Fair stated that it should be left up to the principal and could be delegated to them by the Director. Board member Potts stated the board goes by policy unless the board wants to change the policy.

**NEW BUSINESS**

1. Approval – Budget Amendments

Upon motion by Dusty Cox and second by Randall Bradley, the board unanimously voted 7-0 to approve General Purpose Fund 141 Budget Amendment #105 and General Purpose Fund 141 Budget Amendment #14 as submitted. (attached)

Upon motion by Dusty Cox and second by Vice Chairman Jarnigan, the board unanimously voted 7-0 to approve Federal Purpose Fund 142 Budget Amendment #8 and Federal Purpose Fund 142 Budget Amendment #106 as submitted. (attached)

2. 2018-2019 School Calendar

Sherry Finchum went over the proposed 2018-2019 School Calendar as submitted by the Calendar Committee along with an attachment of other counties in East Tennessee that have a week long fall break. She pointed out that 86% of teachers surveyed were in favor of a weeklong fall break. Board member Bradley questioned why they could not use the three (3) Professional Development Days as snow days which would make 13 snow days instead of 10. Ms. Finchum responded they could do that but it would take away 3 days of training for teachers. Board member Bradley asked if the 3 professional days placed in the calendar could be switched to snow days if needed. Ms. Finchum responded it would be a challenge to

**New Business - continued**

restructure the calendar but it could be done. Chairman Vines requested that in the future the board receive a copy of the proposed school calendar in order to have discussion at a work session prior to voting at the regular meeting. There was much discussion from the board expressing their concerns regarding the week long fall break. Chairman Vines stated that he was not for a full week of fall break because in his opinion September and October were prime teaching times. He pointed out that just three weeks after the fall break comes Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. Mr. Vines went on to say that he would rather see 2 days taken from the fall break and added to the Christmas break. Board member Fair stated she would rather see the reserved day (November 12<sup>th</sup>) for Veterans Day as a day off instead of the full week for fall break. Board member Fair expressed her concerns over the first week of school and having to dismiss at 9:30 a.m. on Monday, missing the next two days and having to go back on Thursday as the first full day of school. She stated this was an issue for parents and she did not support that at all. Ms. Fair also expressed her feelings regarding snow days and more instruction time for students. Board member Solomon suggested going to school half a day on Wednesday with professional development days for teachers in the afternoon. Board member Bradley responded that half days were wasted days. Mr. Solomon also stated the calendar should be approved for the following year prior to the Christmas holidays. Board member Fair expressed her concerns over staggering kindergarten days. The board agreed to send the calendar back to the Calendar Committee and have it placed on the work session agenda for March. Board member Potts agreed that she did not support the proposed calendar. She stated the board needed to be specific and give guidance to the committee as to what the board wanted to see in the calendar.

3. Approval – School Support Organization – JCHS Be the Hammer Wrestling Booster Club

Board member Cox stepped out of the meeting at this time.

Upon motion by Anne Marie Potts and second by Maurice Solomon, the board voted 6-0 to approve the Jefferson County High School Be the Hammer Wrestling Booster Club as submitted. (attached)

4. Price Rate Increase to School Board Attorney Bennett & DeCamp, PLLC, from \$170 Per Hour to \$190 Per Hour

Sherry Finchum stated the firm that Scott Bennett was associated with had started billing Mr. Bennett's rate at \$190 per hour instead of the \$170 per hour stated in Mr. Bennett's

**New Business – Scott Bennett - continued**

retention agreement. She pointed out the change in rate occurred about one year ago and was never brought to the attention of the board. She further stated that when Mr. Bennett was questioned about the rate change he responded that he did not know how that came about but did say that \$190 per hour had been his rate for a while. Mr. Bennett also stated that when he transitions to Bennett & DeCamp, he will continue to honor the \$190 rate and will hold that rate in place for at least two years. Ms. Finchum pointed out that Mr. Bennett had agreed to conduct a training session for principals this summer in order to fix the situation. He asked that the board consider an increase to \$190 which is Bennett & DeCamps standard rate.

The board agreed to postpone the item in order to review the agreement and have discussion at the next work session in March.

5. Director's Search

Chairman Vines stated that Mr. Qualls would be at the next work session in order to present the nine (9) candidates for Director of Schools. He further stated interviews will be conducted on March 19, 20, and 21 beginning at 5:00 p.m.

Board member Cox returned to the meeting.

6. New Director of Schools Salary Rate

There was much discussion regarding setting the base salary rate for the new Director of Schools. Vice Chairman Jarnigan expressed his concerns over setting a base rate and then accepting applications turned in after that. He felt the base salary should be left as is and negotiated when the applicant is hired. Board member Bradley expressed his opinion regarding the base salary being set higher and having an evaluation document that means something. He pointed out the evaluation document currently being used is too subjective. He commented the evaluation should be based on the same percentage as the teachers and test scores. Chairman Vines suggested having further discussion at the work session in March. Board member Bradley commented that he would not be able to be at the March work session scheduled for March 8<sup>th</sup>. The board re-scheduled the work session for March 15<sup>th</sup>.

Other board members expressed their opinions on why they should go ahead and set the base rate now. Board member Potts pointed out the current Director's salary is below the high school principal's salary. She stated the Director of Schools should be the highest paid

**New Business – Director’s Salary Rate - continued**

employee in the school system. Ms. Potts stated the former Director of Schools salary had not been addressed and that was the board’s fault. She further stated the applicants should know what the base salary is when they interview for the position.

Board member Potts made the motion to set the base salary at \$125,000 with the board evaluating experience and degrees during negotiations. Board member Bradley seconded the motion.

Vice Chairman Jarnigan made an amendment to the motion that no other applicants would be added to the list of nine (9) applicants presented to the board. Board member Potts seconded the motion and the motion passed 7-0.

The motion to set the base salary at \$125,000 with the board evaluating experience and degrees during negotiations passed 5-2. Board members Fair and Jarnigan opposed.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

1. Fair Lease

Vice Chairman Jarnigan made the motion to accept the lease agreement between the Jefferson County Board of School Commissioners and the Jefferson County Fair Association, Inc. as presented. Board member Bradley seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously 7-0. (attached)

The lease is to begin February 22, 2018 and end on August 31, 2018.

2. 3 Year Capital Projects Weatherization

Board member Bradley commented that the board needed to go back and look at the 3 year plan using the document that each principal presented listing their needs. He asked for an updated prioritized list from each principal in order for the board to review and discuss at the March 15th work session.

Board member Cox made the motion to accept the weatherization base bid from Trane. Board member Solomon seconded the motion and the motion failed 3-4. Board members Vines, Cox and Solomon voted for the motion. Board members Potts, Bradley, Jarnigan and Fair voted against.

JCBOE  
February 22, 2018  
Page Seven

**ADJOURN**

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jim Vines, Chairman

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Sherry Finchum, Interim Director of Schools &  
Secretary to the Board

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Date

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Date