

McMinn County Board of Education  
Board Workshop  
Monday, August 6, 2018  
5:00 p.m.

AGENDA

1. High School Consolidation
2. Middle School Concept
3. Advance Capital Projects

Chairman Brown asked Mr. Blevins to begin the meeting.

Mr. Blevins said at the board's request, we would look at the idea of possible consolidation and the addition of a middle school concept. Mr. Blevins said if the board decided to keep our current elementary school status, he would like to move forward with capital projects needed at several elementary schools that he would like to pass on to the next director of schools. Mr. Blevins then opened the door for discussion.

1. High School Consolidation

Several board members questioned the pros and cons of the idea along with the concerns of added bus routes, academics, sports, and the question of costs involved. Mr. Blevins addressed several of these questions and concerns. He said academic-wise the results showed about 50/50 regarding the affect it would have on our students academically. Mr. Blevins said our athletics would be stronger but would allow fewer students to participate in some sports while offering other sport options to others. Mr. Blevins said currently students are only allowed to ride the bus 1.5 hours a day and we would need to look closely at those routes which could involve more buses and drivers. He said regarding course selections, this could help broaden the selection and more consistency district wide.

Board members Tony Allman and Donna Cagle both expressed their desire to possibly build a new technology school and broaden our course offerings in these areas. Mike Lowry said we could do this if we built a new high school and incorporate an area or a separate building to house our technology classes. Mr. Cochran said he agreed that if we are going to build another high school to investigate building one dedicated for our CTE programs as this would be something worth looking into.

Mr. Blevins said in the consolidation, we would still have issues to address at our current elementary schools. Mike Cochran asked the capacity of both high schools and were we currently meeting or exceeding these numbers. Mr. Blevins stated was approximately 1500 at McMinn and around 900-1000 at Central. Mr. Cochran said if we did build a new school we would need to build large enough to house 3000 students. Mr. Cochran said he did know that putting all our students in one building would be a good idea in regard to safety measures. Mr. Blevins said we currently have a traffic flow problem in the hallway at McMinn that is a concern in the event of an emergency and at some point, will need to be addressed. Ms. Cagle then questioned that we would need more administrators and asked our current numbers. Mr. Blevins said we have six between both high schools at this time.

## 2. Middle School Concept

Mr. Blevins said that if the board wanted to look at a middle school concept this might help eliminate the need for our portable buildings as we are coming into the life expectancy of them. Mr. Blevins said our current needs at a Riceville and Mountain View would be to build another gymnasium which would allow space for additional classrooms and cafeteria expansions.

Mr. Shamblin said we are not gaining ground by maintaining our schools as we need to be thinking about how to assess our current status and our options. He said he is not sure with our long-term projects that we would be getting very far.

Tony Allman said that building new schools is not going to do away with our maintenance and repairs with our other schools.

Mike Lowry said we have to think of the decision of Athens City Schools in regard to closing their system and consolidating with the county. He said this could make our decisions for us.

Mr. Blevins shared several pros and cons with a middle school concept. He said academically, we can offer programs with full time art and music teachers with the possibility of offering foreign language and keyboarding. He said more students in one location would justify the need for additional teachers. Mr. Blevins said we could be pulling our focus in on our K-5 and 6-8 grades with the middle school concept. He said the cons would be our parents are traveling to two and three separate school buildings to drop off students and we could lose some sense of community support.

Chairman Brown said some of our top-ranking school systems have middle schools.

## 3. Advanced Capital Projects

Rob Shamblin said we need to define the immediate needs in our school system. Mike Cochran asked if we have a working list with estimated costs of our capital project needs. Mr. Blevins said he has a list of things to address but no estimates. He said depending on the board's direction, we wouldn't want to put a lot of money into these projects if we are looking at middle school concepts and consolidation.

Mr. Blevins said the board could look at hiring a consultant to view our schools and the needs. He said this could take several years but the board needed to be thinking of our direction as the county commission is ready to support us in our efforts. Chairman Brown said she had concerns that the commission has money ready to spend and we needed to take advantage of this opportunity.

After much discussion, Mr. Blevins said the consensus of the board was to prioritize our needs and then look at the possibility of entertaining a middle school concept with a long-range plan. Mr. Blevins said he would work on the current needs by school and would bring this back to the board and by that time, we should have an idea of the direction of Athens City Schools.

Rob Shamblin asked for our enrollment numbers by school, as well, in order to see where we are regarding our portable buildings.

Chairman Brown asked Mr. Blevins to prepare this information to get to the board to determine our direction needed. Chairman Brown thanked the board for the great discussion and would continue it at another time.

Chairman Brown closed the meeting by distributing copies of all applicants for the position of Director of Schools. Chairman Brown told the board to review the applicants and rank them on the enclosed ranking sheet with "1" being the best applicant to interview and "8" being the last choice to interview. Chairman Brown told the board to return their ranking sheet to Ms. Bivens by Thursday, August 30<sup>th</sup> at 12:00 p.m.

Adjourned.

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Chairman's Signature

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Director of Schools' Signature