

July 6, 2020

The Board of Education of the County of Kanawha met in Special Session on Monday, July 6, 2020 at the Board of Education Building, Charleston, West Virginia. The meeting was called to order by Board President Ryan White at 4:00 p.m.

**PRESENT**

Becky J. Jordon, President  
Tracy White, President Pro Tem  
Ric Cavender  
Jim J. Crawford, Sr.  
Ryan White  
Thomas E. Williams, Secretary

Debra J. Lewis, Recording Secretary

**ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF**

Carol Hamric, Executive Director, Human Resources  
Lindsey McIntosh, General Counsel  
Briana Warner, Communications Director  
Keith Vititoe, Executive Director, Safety & Security  
Amon Gilliam, Asst. Superintendent, Middle & Alternative Schools  
Leah Sparks, Executive Director, Technology

**OATH OF OFFICE-BOARD MEMBERS**

Mr. Jim Crawford and Mr. Ric Cavender were officially sworn in before starting their duties on July 1, 2020.

## **NOMINATIONS FOR BOARD PRESIDENT**

Mr. Ric Cavender moved: To nominate Becky J. Jordon to serve as President of the Board of Education, County of Kanawha, for a two-year term, commencing this date (July 6, 2020-June 30, 2022). Motion was seconded by Mrs. Tracy White and unanimously carried.

Mr. White-Congratulations Mrs. Jordon. I would like to thank the Board for allowing me to serve as President for the last two years. One of the things that I wanted to do was to make sure that we got money for all our HVAC projects in the county and I'm happy we were able to do that with the entire Board's support.

## **NOMINATIONS FOR BOARD PRESIDENT PRO TEM**

Mr. Jim J. Crawford moved: To nominate Tracy White to serve as President Pro Tem of the Board of Education, County of Kanawha, for a two-year term, commencing this date (July 6, 2020-June 30, 2022). Motion was seconded by Mr. Ric Cavender and unanimously carried.

Mrs. Jordon-Do any of the Board Members want to be the Board Representative for Head Start? Mrs. White-I will do it.

## **PUBLIC HEARING**

### A. Renaming of Stonewall Jackson Middle School

Mrs. Tracy White moved: The Board open the floor for public comment and discussion on this matter in accordance with our county policy on Delegations to all individuals who have signed up to speak. Motion was seconded by Mr. Ric Cavender and unanimously carried.

Wayne Crosier-I appreciate your time. I believe you are going to vote for the name change so I'm going to switch a little bit and let you know that preliminary discussions have already begun with working with Stonewall Jackson to work on test scores, math scores and reading scores. This is not just about a name, it's about a culture change. We will also be working with the feeder school Mary C. Snow. I am committing myself and whatever resources I have to work with you on the future and make sure it's not just the name. You all will be proud that we were part of changing the culture at the school.

## **PUBLIC HEARING (continued)**

Gregg Ferguson-I am going to speak to you all as my colleagues and my friends. We did a really good job of rooting out discriminatory practices in education. Research shows that the name sets the tone for school culture and social ideology. It can have a negative or positive effect on the community it serves. In the case of Stonewall, black teachers, black educators and black students feel like it is symbolic violence. As a black educator I saw this happening to myself and my black colleagues on a daily basis. I want you to know that for black educators we found that it was offensive and painful. I wanted to stress that we have become exhausted by the coping mechanisms we have used. I am asking you to feel the pain of your colleagues and change the name of Stonewall Jackson Middle School.

Jeanine Faegra-My reasons for being here today are two-fold. First I am reading a statement on behalf of Hoppy Shores. When the West Side Community hears "Stonewall" they certainly do not think of a Civil War General, they remember the days they spent as students at Stonewall Jackson High School or Stonewall Jackson Middle School. When segregation of schools ended, Stonewall became a melding of the rich and the poor, the middle class, the athletes and the scholars and the citizens of the West Side. A community spirit became a way of life that still exists today. Please do not change the name. Its 70 year history is important to much of the West Side Community. Secondly, I grew up on the West Side and attended Wilson Junior High and Stonewall High School. We chanted the West Side is the best side. Katherine Johnson was a brilliant woman and her statute should be on our State House grounds not on the name of a middle school that sets on the west side. There are too many local legends who have either taught, coached, attended or contributed to Stonewall that are deserving. I urge you to vote for West Side Middle School.

Taylor Raab-As our world is in the midst of this shared pandemic I've been more careful now than ever to be aware of what God is trying to show me and tell me each day. A few weeks ago Howard Swint started a campaign to remove the statue of Stonewall Jackson from the State Capital grounds. I thought to myself somebody should really do something about the name of the school. I started this public petition on Thursday morning and currently it has 6,600 signatures. The name needs to change now. This will be one of the most important decisions you all make as a Board. Through all of this the people have remained peaceful. They have come together to demand that justice be served. I ask that you vote for this unanimously.

## PUBLIC HEARING (continued)

Camdyn Harris-Our school name should be an inspiration to us. During the integration process there were schools that were changed to names of famous white people so the white kids didn't have to go to a school named after a famous black person. Booker T. Washington was changed to Grant prior to any white students entering the building and Carter G. Woodson was changed to McKinley before white people entered the building. Even Garnet Technical School was temporarily changed to John Adams Junior High in the late 60s as it housed the white students from South Hills while their new school was being built. So we ask why is it right for us to go to a school named after a confederate soldier who owned slaves. We need positive role models for inspiration. I hope the students can have input on the new name. I come from a strong legacy with my great grandmother being Dr. Mildred Mitchell Bateman, the first black woman psychiatrist in West Virginia. We are not trying to take away history but we are moving forward starting now.

Mrs. White-This is the third time I have heard you speak and you are an amazing self-advocate. I hope you continue to advocate and use your voice after this is all over with.

Navery Davis-I'm just going to warn you all, I'm not going to be as cordial as most. Terrorist, betrayal, treason, words like these are what we should think of when we hear the name of a confederate general. Yet we have a school and a statue on Capital grounds idolizing a man who believed that God had provided for the institution of slavery. We seem to have forgotten what Jackson stood for. More than 400 slaves were auctioned off in the largest sale in US history. That's what these men fought for. So let us put a whipping post and an auction block below his pedestal as a reminder of who he was. Do the right thing and change the name.

Kitty Dooley-I appreciate the work you all have done regarding this name change. White supremacy is so embedded in America that it makes it seem that we are unpatriotic because we challenge the status quo. I'm trusting that at least 3 of you will do the right thing and remove the name of Stonewall Jackson. I ask that you invest in the students of Mary C. Snow and the newly named middle school to support their academic success. I am calling for the Board to convene a task force to determine why the test scores are among the lowest in the State of West Virginia. I am calling for the Board to put a moratorium on suspensions and expulsions except in cases where there is true harm. I'm calling on this Board to hire social workers, psychologists and counselors in the place of SROs to assist our children so they can receive their constitutionally-guaranteed education and lead the education system in Kanawha County to become responsible citizens. This is an opportunity to not only change the name but declare that our students will excel with your help.

## **PUBLIC HEARING (continued)**

Jennifer Phair-I am wearing many hats today. One is the Charleston City Council, mother of a teenage son and I am a Board Member of an organization called 10 in 10. The goal of that organization is to bring 10,000 people in 10 years or less to the City of Charleston. Many times when we speak to people, they talk about how inclusive Charleston is and what are we showing to demonstrate that inclusiveness. I was involved with Kitty Dooley in with the honorary street naming of Martin Luther King, Jr. Way. One of the things we determined is that there is a cost with anything like that and we know there will be a cost with this so we decided to create a pledge. Within a 10 day time period we were able to garner 175 pledges. We have raised over \$46,000 that can be used for uniforms, programming, etc. If there is an affirmative vote we would like to work with you to push this forward. One of the most significant pledges was BBT Truist and they pledged \$10,000.

Mrs. Jordon-I want you all to know that John Wilkerson is here tonight. He's the Principal at Stonewall. He's been there 21 years. He's the one you all need to work with and get to know. I wanted you all to know who he is.

Steve Rubin-I am very respectful of the hard work that each of you do for our community. Regardless of how you decide I know that everything you do is done very thoughtfully and respectfully. I am friends with Becky Jordon and I'd like to tell you that no one that I know of other than her and her husband have contributed more in energy, effort and money to making this community stronger and I'm very proud to call her a friend. Regardless of this vote I will still be a proud member of Stonewall. I went to Stonewall. This morning I was fortunate to call a meeting of the BBT Truist Board and I discussed what we were doing today and they donated \$10,000. This vote was unanimous. We are all on board. The name change can only be a start. The Board, parents and community need to commit to making the school the best it can be. Today we have the opportunity to change something that is important to so many.

Dinah Adkins-On behalf of KCEA, I will give you a copy of a resolution that was presented at our monthly meeting and we are asking for your support of this resolution. The majority of our members supported the resolution and we hope you can work with the community in renaming Stonewall Jackson Middle School. The 2020 school year will be a challenge beyond measure. Let's come together as we deal with the issues in Kanawha County.

## PUBLIC HEARING (continued)

Howard Swint-I'd like for you to understand that you didn't cause this problem but the United Daughters of the Confederacy did. Now it's your problem to clean up this mess they made. I believe you are in a position to step up in a national movement in a peaceful way to right the wrongs of history. This is where we can make national news by righting the wrongs for the students and community as a whole. It's the right thing to do. Think about students and the community and the wonderful opportunity that you all have before you.

William Board-I am a 1969 alumni of Stonewall. I was a student journalist and for 20 years the color of the yearbook was either red or gray. During my junior year we bucked the tradition and made it green. Then in 1969 it was brown. A backlash ripped through our community. Not unlike the cover color, today's backlash on changing the name is heresy to many, to others it is long overdue. I would recommend that you consider the names of Woodrow Wilson or Abraham Lincoln. These were the two junior high rival schools that fed into Stonewall High School. Good luck to you as you head down a slippery slope.

Kathy Ferguson-To me change is fundamental. We had 43 presidents that were white and then we finally got an African American one. I'm a proud alumni of Dunbar High School that was closed. There were other schools like DuPont and Charleston High that were also closed. Now we are seeing here that we have the opportunity to erase the name of Stonewall Jackson. What I am asking for you all to do is accept that the time of change is here. It's time for that school name to be changed.

Patricia Sneed-I taught at Stonewall. I have seen the children at Stonewall. They all work together. The children were dedicated to Stonewall. I live on the West Side. Before school starts the name needs changed and the confederate general who was in favor of slavery needs removed. You need a black woman. I would put Katherine Johnson's name on it and on the side of the building I'd put a rocket ship.

Bobby Robinson-As you go throughout Charleston you see various churches named St. Marks, St. Johns, but you have never seen a St. Judas probably because he was a traitor. In the same way, why would we as a community ever celebrate someone who would go against the country of America. We also realize that the power of life and death is in our tongues so for these students to go to a school named after someone who thought about them as a servant is destructive to their psyche. I am asking you to think about the students. We want the best decision to be made and the name be changed.

## **PUBLIC HEARING (continued)**

Mr. Ryan White moved: The Board approve the name change of Stonewall Jackson Middle School to be some other name which will be determined no later than October 15, 2020 and change officially in accordance with a plan to change all remnants of the current name to the new name. Motion was seconded by Mr. Ric Cavender.

Mr. Cavender-I've been listening for a long time to a lot of people and first I want to say that the community activism that I have witnessed has been tremendous. To speak to other folks who have done their research on the history of this and why it means so much to the students and how much money they have raised. This is an issue of right and wrong to me. It's that simple.

Mr. Crawford-I've been around a long time and we enjoyed a lot of competition with Stonewall Jackson High School. It's time we look at this. It should have been taken care of back when they consolidated Charleston High and Stonewall. It should have never been Stonewall Jackson Middle School to begin with.

Mrs. White-I was asked early on why I didn't come out and make a statement about what I was going to do. I do have an opinion on what's right and wrong but I have an obligation as a Board Member to the people who elected me to give them an opportunity to come and voice their opinion and know that I will listen to them wholeheartedly. I'm proud of our Board for giving every opportunity to hear the community's voice. Tonight I will be a very proud yes to change the name of Stonewall Jackson.

Mr. White-Dr. Williams I have one question for you. Is it your opinion that we should change the name of Stonewall Jackson Middle School? Dr. Williams-Yes it is.

Mr. White-I've said from the beginning that my vote was not going to be based on my personal feelings but based on what the community and the school community wanted. I can tell you that the vast majority want this name change. The students supported the change, the faculty supports the name change as well as the Superintendent. I will probably vote yes to change this name. This is not a vote to erase history. I hope our school system works with all of the people who have volunteered to raise funds and to work with schools on the West Side to achieve better education. That's what this is all about. I also think we need to look at other systematic things like disciplinary issues to see if we need to do some things differently.

## **PUBLIC HEARING (continued)**

Mr. Crawford-I want to say that I agree with Mr. White that we need to make a cultural change and I agree with Ms. Dooley's statement that she asked that we form a task force to improve the quality of education. I personally think the only way to solve this problem is through education and with Dr. Williams' leadership I think we will be fine.

Dr. Williams-We've spoken a lot about Mary C. Snow but we also need to remember that we have Grandview, Ruffner, Edgewood, Piedmont and Shoals that feed into Stonewall.

Mrs. Jordon-I have been the most resistant on this change. I was born and raised on the West Side and it has hurt my heart. I didn't see color when I went there. It was a different time. I realized after hearing from Camdyn that times are changing and we have to go with the changes. Years ago when the West Side wanted it named Mary C. Snow, we didn't do it at first because we wanted people to come and quit complaining about the name and work inside that school building. Those years we were planning those two elementary school no one came to our meetings. All they cared about was the name after we built them. We asked that you come and volunteer and people stepped up and we changed the name. I'm going to vote for this but I'm asking you to go to Mr. Wilkerson and see what you can do. Let's step up what's inside that building.

The above motion unanimously carried.

Mr. White-Should we discuss the process of determining a name? Mrs. White-I'd like us to form a committee on how we are going to do that so we can move forward. We need to get the name changed and we need to start focusing on August and how we can get students back in school so if we could have that brought to us by the next meeting and then we can figure out where to go from there. Mrs. Jordon-Ms. Dooley please continue the fund raising. The money has to come from the community for all of these things to happen if possible. We will make it work.

## **PERSONNEL**

A. Personnel Agenda for July 6, 2020 (Enclosure 1)

Mrs. Tracy White moved: The Board approve the Revised Personnel Agenda as included in Enclosure 1. Motion was seconded by Mr. Ric Cavender and unanimously carried.



## **QUESTIONS/ANSWERS**

Mr. White-Dr. Williams when do you think we will have an update for the public on school openings? Dr. Williams-We had a conference today and since Dr. Slemp was removed in her position by the Governor she had approved the things we could do to open school. The governor has asked that they be re-looked at. As of today they still do not have those approved. We can't bring anything forward because the rules will change. We are waiting for final approval from the State Department of Education.

Mrs. Jordon-I am telling people to prepare for August 10<sup>th</sup>. We need to get out our calendars and schedule a goal setting for Dr. Williams. The next board meeting is the 16<sup>th</sup> at 6:00. I can do that morning. Can anyone else? The Board decided to meet at 9:00 a.m. on the 16<sup>th</sup> upstairs in the Board Room.

## **ESTABLISHMENT OF MEETING DATES**

- A. Monday, July 6, 2020, 4:00 p.m.-Special Session
- B. Thursday, July 16, 2020, 6:00 p.m.-Regular Session
- C. Monday, August 3, 2020, 4:00 p.m.-Special Session
- D. Thursday, August 20, 2020, 6:00 p.m.-Regular Session

NOTE: The above meetings of the Kanawha County Board of Education, unless otherwise indicated, will be held in the Board of Education Building, 200 Elizabeth Street, Charleston, WV.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Ryan White moved: That the Special Session of the Board be adjourned. Motion was seconded by Mr. Ric Cavender and unanimously carried. The Special Session was declared adjourned by Board President Becky J. Jordon at 5:09 p.m.

---

President

---

Secretary

djl  
7/13/2020