

August 19, 2021

The Board of Education of the County of Kanawha met in Regular Session on Thursday, August 19, 2021 at the Board of Education Building, Charleston, West Virginia. The meeting was called to order by Board President Pro Tem Tracy White at 6:00 p.m.

**PRESENT**

Becky J. Jordon, President (via phone)

Tracy White, President Pro Tem

Ric Cavender

Jim J. Crawford, Sr.

Ryan White

Thomas E. Williams, Secretary

Debra J. Lewis, Recording Secretary

**ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF**

Paula Potter, Deputy Superintendent

George Aulenbacher, Assistant Superintendent, High Schools, Technical & Adult Education

Amon Gilliam, Assistant Superintendent, Middle & Alternative Schools

Mellow Lee, Assistant Superintendent, Elementary

Melissa Ruddle, Asst. Superintendent, Curriculum & Instruction

Lindsey McIntosh, General Counsel

Leah Sparks, Executive Director, Technology

Melanie Meadows, Treasurer, Budget & Finance

Ron Pauley, Executive Director, Human Resources

Megan McCorkle, Assistant Superintendent, Special Education & Student Support Services

Alicia Warden, Health Services

Alan Cummings, Executive Director, Purchasing & Supply Management

Brette Fraley, Executive Director, Transportation

Briana Warner, Communications Director

Elaine Gayton, Director, Staff Development/ESL

Keith Vititoe, Executive Director, Safety & Security

### **MOMENT OF SILENCE**

We would like to observe a moment of silence for Da'nija Miller who was a freshman at Capital High who passed away this past Sunday. Mr. White and I actually attended her vigil last night at Piedmont and it was very heartbreaking. The students were the ones who put everything together. Everyone that spoke said she was very spunky and she loved her family and friends and that she would want everyone to be happy and not be sad.

### **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Board President Pro Tem Tracy White.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- A. June 17, 2021 - Regular Session
- B. July 6, 2021 - Special Session
- C. July 15, 2021 - Regular Session
- D. July 28, 2021 - Special Session

### **REPORTS**

- A. Kanawha County Travel Reimbursement for July, 2021 (Enclosure 25)
- B. Monthly Financial Report (Enclosure 26)
- C. Legal Reports  
  
None
- D. Board Reports

### **PERSONNEL**

- A. Personnel Agenda for August 19, 2021 (Enclosure 27)

Mr. Ric Cavender moved: The Board approve the Revised Personnel Agenda as included in Enclosure 27. Motion was seconded by Mr. Jim J. Crawford and unanimously carried.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **CONSENT**

Mr. Ric Cavender moved: The Board approve the following CONSENT Items A-C. Motion was seconded by Mr. Jim J. Crawford and unanimously carried.

#### A. Approval of Bills for July, 2021 (Enclosure 28)

Approval of the payment of bills for the month of July, 2021 in the amounts of \$24,169,297.87 for the Current Expense, Special Revenue and Federal Stimulus Funds; \$40,957.47 for the KCS Public Library Excess Levy Fund; \$17,099,387.04 for the Permanent Improvement Fund; and \$516,940.00 for the Public Library Fund as reflected in Enclosure 28.

#### B. Budget Supplements & Transfers (Enclosure 29)

Approval of budget supplements and transfers as reflected in Enclosure 29.

#### C. Out of State Travel Requests (Enclosure 30)

Approval of the Out of State Travel Requests as contained in Enclosure 30.

## **OTHER NEW BUSINESS**

#### A. Kanawha County Public Library Board of Directors

Mr. Ric Cavender moved: The Board approve Ms. Angela Gould as a Director of the Kanawha County Public Library for a term to end June 30, 2026. Motion was seconded by Mr. Jim J. Crawford and unanimously carried.

#### B. Purchase of 77 Passenger Conventional School Buses (Enclosure 31)

Mr. Ric Cavender moved: The Board approve the purchase of 8 conventional school buses in the amount of \$832,280.00 to Blue Bird Sales of WV as per State Contract Bid #SBUS21A as shown in Enclosure 31. Motion was seconded by Mr. Jim J. Crawford and unanimously carried.

## **SUPERINTENDENT'S PRESENTATION**

### A. Employee Discipline

Mr. Ric Cavender moved: The Board adopt the findings and conclusions of the hearing examiner and approve the Superintendent's recommendation for dismissal of James Murphy, and James Murphy shall be, and he is hereby, terminated from his employment with the Kanawha County Board of Education, effective immediately. Motion was seconded by Mr. Jim J. Crawford and unanimously carried.

## **DELEGATIONS**

Mike Hennessey, WVEA-I am here to speak about the start date of the calendar for next year. There has been a strong indication with our members that the majority would support a later start date next year. The main reasons are the sustained heat in August with the combination of the problematic HVAC systems, which I know the Board is continuously trying to improve and we appreciate that. A lot of students and several teachers and service employees work in the summer. The shorter the summer the less income they can make. Spring Break is very important to our members and it comes at a time when it is needed so we request that it remain intact.

Dennis Westover-I am here to speak against the mask mandate because of one simple word, freedom. The action that you all took was after an increase of 35 cases. You have a bigger chance of dying in a car wreck or being struck by lightning than dying of COVID. The COVID particles have no problem going in and out of the masks, they are a joke. The masks trap bacteria. My deeper concern is that this mandate represents something dark and sinister. I fear you have awakened a sleeping giant.

Lisa Brammer-Shame on each of you who voted against our children to cause this child abuse. You have been presented with the actual science but you are ignoring it. You only care about what goes with your agenda. This is the Board of Education not the Board of Medicine. This is my child, I am the parent and it is my choice. I won't comply and neither will my child.

Petra Monroe-I bet you all are so happy that Superintendent Williams let the three of you off the hook by deciding that all of our kids are going to wear masks. Since you will likely say your decision was based on science, I gave you science from real doctors and scientists. I am asking you where your science is. Please show me your science and show me proof of one vaccinated teacher that contracted COVID from a child.

## DELEGATIONS (continued)

Donna Caruthers-I just think you all believe that masks work and they are best for our children, however they don't work. There are multiple studies that prove that they don't work. Do you have any science at all that you have researched yourselves? Parents should have the right to choose what is right for their own child. Masks are intended for our health care workers to use. The DHHR are saying cases are rising. The CDC just recalled all the PCR tests because they don't differentiate between COVID and the flu so how do we truly know cases are really on the rise?

Lora Persinger-I'm here as a very concerned parent who has a child that should be attending school but isn't attending due to this ridiculous muzzle mandate. I am here to speak the complete truth that our children are the least affected by this virus. They have a higher risk of getting sick from the bacteria build up on their masks than they do this virus. Your tyrannical mandates have nothing to do with the health of our children and I'm sure every one of you sitting here know this. Actually, there are a couple of your members sitting here that think they don't have to follow the mandates. I have photos. You guys like to go out in public and gather in large groups and I have photos to show you. Mr. Cavender-That was from 2018, I reposted it, just to be clear. Lora Persinger-It's ok for you guys but it's not ok for our children. Mr. White, I have pictures of you at a Cincinnati Reds baseball game on June 27<sup>th</sup>. If you don't want this to be seen you shouldn't put it on social media. By the way that's called hypocrites.

Lyudmyla Knoll-We are a free country aren't we? We are free to make our own choices. Three people know better than me what is best for my child? I did my research. I want to know what proof you have. I know that masks interfere with my child's learning. I want to know what you are reading. I am talking scientific research.

Betty Jarvis-This is a medical grade mask that I bought it to show you tonight. On the back is a warning. It says this mask doesn't eliminate the risks of contacting any disease or infection. I'm here to tell you that a mask doesn't work. It became personal when I picked my grandson up from school one day and he kept his mask on in the car and I told him to take it off and he said no I don't want you to die. Suddenly, he's afraid. What have you done to my grandchild? I'm telling you that this will divide your community. Don't make us come out fighting. We will bring suits, it's already in the works and I'm asking you now to not make us go there. Thank you for listening.

## DELEGATIONS (continued)

Patrick Bias-I'd like to do a little pop quiz during my segment if you guys don't mind responding. How many child cases are there with Corona since the start of the pandemic? 4.41 million. Do you know how many child deaths there have been across all 43 states? 368. I've been told that children are responsible for 13% of all corona cases. As a child you have a 48% less chance of contracting it than an adult. When you got in a car to come here tonight you took an assumed risk, you assumed the risk of a drunk driver crashing into you. I'm sure you could find another job working from home since a few of you are quite elderly, but you assumed the risk of continuing your work at the Board. Is it worth risking the kids who already low in reading, the State's math and reading scores aren't that great.

Morgan Bias-I have been a Kanawha County teacher for the past 7 years. I used to be very proud to work for Kanawha County Schools, now I am disgusted. I advocate on behalf of all of the children in Kanawha County Schools. What if a man told someone to do something to my body that I didn't want to do? We would call that assault so that clarifies your decision as medical assault. I hope that by standing up here today and risking possibly being reprimanded by the Board, that they understand that I am encouraging them to speak for their rights. A child has a greater chance of being hit by a meteorite falling from the sky than to die from COVID 19. I dare you to fact check me on that, you will find that I am correct. In my 7 years of teaching I never received any extra funding for Lysol wipes, hand sanitizer, my gosh we barely had toilet paper. I had nothing supplied by the Board, I had to pay for it out of my own pocket to keep my classroom clean. I had COVID when it first began and I still have insanely high antibodies from my medical doctor who says I'm immune so I want to know your science on why I now have to wear a mask. I gave you my science, where is yours. You should be ashamed.

Marsha Orndorff-The other part that I want to talk about are the kids with disabilities. When you are masked up like that they can't see your facial expressions. Kids aren't going to know the meaning of some things without seeing it directly from their face or if they are hearing impaired they are going to read your lips. This virus isn't going to go away. You can vaccinate every adult and kid on the planet. It's going to be like the flu. We need to learn to live with it. It's all a mental game that you are putting a mask on. How are they going to make friends? I have one child that has become a hermit. You have to reverse this for our kids.

## **DELEGATIONS (continued)**

Courtney Mathes-Let me start by saying that you are wrong. Many of you on the Board and our Superintendent have failed our county once again in more ways than one. I have the right to say this because not only am I taxpayer and I contribute to your salaries, but I also used to be a teacher in Kanawha County before resigning a few years ago. I feel that multiple decisions are based upon your own biased opinions and from your own personal agendas. We had some type of normalcy this summer and then all of sudden we have our map back and it's completely red. I don't think we are taking into account what is happening to our children mentally. You are not God. You don't get to choose someone's sexual orientation, their race, religion or how they dress so what makes you think that you could get to choose to mask them. We live in a free country. We will not stop until you do what is right for our children.

Vic Sprouse-I come to you today because I end up being the clearing house for complaints about the schedule and the calendar. This early start date has failed. We have been doing it now for 12 years. The parents universally hate this schedule. We have somehow embraced this concept that we must end the 1<sup>st</sup> semester by Christmas because kids are stressed out over Christmas break because they have to take finals mid to late January. You aren't smarter than Putnam County or Charleston Catholic. Do we buy ourselves any time by going in August and having other schools out due to no air conditioning? I was at John Adams for the orientation and it was like an oven. It doesn't make any sense. We voted on this in a survey to start later in August and you all ignored it anyway. I come and waste my time coming before you all but I hope I can convince one of you all to start listening to parents in this county and giving kids more of a summer.

## **DISCUSSION**

### A. 2022-23 School Calendar (Enclosures 32 & 33)

Elaine Gayton-I am going to go over Option 2. That's an August 22<sup>nd</sup> start date for students. Employees would return on August 16<sup>th</sup>. The semester ends on January 13<sup>th</sup>. The second semester begins on January 18<sup>th</sup>. There is a whole week for Spring Break. The last day of school would be May 26<sup>th</sup>. The last day for teachers would be June 6<sup>th</sup>.

Dr. Williams-This is just a starting point. We are having Public Hearings on September 7<sup>th</sup> and September 16<sup>th</sup>. If you want to extend the school year you could add days at Thanksgiving. Several years ago the calendar was moved back to end the semester by Christmas, however, under State statute now we are not allowed to pay employees up front so last year the Governor gave those counties a waiver to the State law. It cost us

## DISCUSSION (continued)

about \$60,000. We paid people to work and then they left after they received their first paycheck. In speaking with Michelle Blatt and Amy Willard from the West Virginia Department of Education, we cannot start school past August 22<sup>nd</sup>. If we do, we have to go to 25 pays for our employees who are employed 240 days or less. That means each individual paycheck would be approximately \$98 less for professionals and \$52 for service personnel. We have approximately 3,000 employees this would affect. However, we can start school as late as August 22<sup>nd</sup>. We can play around with the end date of the year if you would like a full week at Thanksgiving. In the State there were 34 counties that began school on August 22<sup>nd</sup> or earlier. Out of the 21 that are left, 12 of those started on August 23<sup>rd</sup> or 24<sup>th</sup>.

Mrs. White-I have a lot of teacher requesting a mid-week start. The 22<sup>nd</sup> is the last date, so if we did a mid-week we would have to go back to the previous week? Dr. Williams-Yes. Mr. Cavender-So every year the 22<sup>nd</sup> is the date? Dr. Williams-Yes, unless you all would make the decision to go to 25 pays and then employees would have a choice to have a lower paycheck or not collect a paycheck on August 25<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Cavender-When we started going back earlier years ago, what did we do with employees? Dr. Williams-They got two checks at that time.

Mrs. Jordon-I think people need to understand that it started earlier this year because kids have been out of school for 17-18 months We wanted to get them in as soon as we could. Yes, it's hot, but kids are having anxiety and depression and not learning as well and that was one reason we pushed to get them in right now. Yes, I was one of them years ago who pushed for schools to end the 1<sup>st</sup> semester before Christmas Break. People are forgetting about the secondary students because they would have to study over Christmas Break. It gives them more days to get information for the AP exams, ACT and SAT. With this many buildings we will never have all of our buildings working at 100%. I don't want anyone to hurt from any checks.

Mrs. White-When we started so early this year, I was contacted by parents that said they didn't have clothing vouchers in hand before school started. We need to look at things like that. Mrs. Jordon-Our social workers could get on that. Mrs. White-It could be just as hot in the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of August as it is in the 4<sup>th</sup> week of August but we need some consistency. Can we say we are going to start on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of August so we don't have to go through this every single year? This is what I get contacted about more than anything else. Mrs. Jordon-It has been consistent the past few years.



## **DISCUSSION (continued)**

Dr. Williams-This is just a discussion and then we will have a Public Hearing where people in the community can come and talk. Mr. Cavender-The 22<sup>nd</sup> is my preference. Is there anything we can do to satisfy both of these things? Dr. Williams-I don't believe there is. We have to have 85 days in the 1<sup>st</sup> semester and then we have to have the professional learning days and everything that has been mandated to us. The 15<sup>th</sup> of August would be the latest we could start and still finish the semester by Christmas. Mrs. Jordon-When we end at Christmas doesn't it make it easier for counselors to send college transcripts because they want that 1<sup>st</sup> semester instead of waiting? Mr. Cavender-It's for secondary students who are taking AP classes and going to college and there's a high percentage of students who aren't planning on going to college or taking AP classes. It's tough for me but just from my perspective we have a responsibility to listen to our constituents. I would like for us to figure out a way to start as late as we can in August. I agree with Mrs. White, we need some consistency.

Dr. Williams-We have to vote on it every year but like you did before we could say the first day for the next two years would be on or before August 22<sup>nd</sup>. It just depends where you all would want it. It does have to come up every year.

Mr. Crawford-I do agree that we are starting too early. I don't think we need two weeks off at Christmas. It doesn't matter to me when we finish the first semester we just need consistency. Mrs. Jordon, I'm not buying into this anymore, parents don't want it and I'm not going to support it. Mrs. Jordon-What does your son say who is a principal of a high school that is one of them that pushed having the finals done by Christmas? At the time I was listening to that staff but maybe you aren't listening to that staff. Mr. Crawford-I don't know how the other Board Members feel but personally I think we have problems with air conditioning and it gives us a better opportunity to get everything done. Our maintenance people have worked hard to make sure this fall was a successful opening. I just think we can start too early. Back when we only had 160 days of school it wasn't hard for us to start after Labor Day and finish before Memorial Day. Today we have 180 days. Mrs. White-I will always advocate for the later start date because overwhelmingly that is what I'm contacted about. Mrs. Jordon-I wish we could do both. Mr. Crawford-We need to make sure that our employees don't suffer. Mr. White-I'm good with whatever the Board wants to do

## **QUESTIONS/ANSWERS**

None

**ESTABLISHMENT OF MEETING DATES**

- A. Thursday, August 19, 2021, 6:00 p.m.-Regular Session
- B. Tuesday, September 7, 2021, 4:00 p.m.-Special Session
- C. Thursday, September 16, 2021, 6:00 p.m.-Regular Session
- D. Monday, October 4, 2021, 4:00 p.m.-Special Session
- E. Thursday, October 21, 2021, 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 Regular Session of the Board be adjourned. Motion was seconded by Mr. Ric Cavender and unanimously carried. The Regular Session was declared adjourned by Board President Pro Tem Tracy White at 7:10 p.m.

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President

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Secretary

djl

9/2/2021