

Henderson County Board of Public Education

MINUTES

July 24, 2017

The Henderson County Board of Public Education met in a special called business meeting on July 24, 2017 in the Boardroom of the Administrative Offices located at 414 Fourth Avenue West, Hendersonville, N.C.

Board Members Present: Amy Lynn Holt, Chairperson; Rick Wood, Vice Chairperson; Michael Absher, Colby Coren, Mary Louise Corn, Blair Craven and Lisa Edwards.

Administrative Staff Present: Bo Caldwell, Ed.S., Superintendent; John Bryant, Ed.D., Associate Superintendent, Administrative Services;

Administrative Staff Absent: Jan King, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum & Instruction; Rick Fender, Chief Technology Officer; Scott Rhodes, Chief Human Resources Officer; Bernie Sochia, Chief Finance Officer.

Attorney Present: Dean Shatley

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CALL-TO-ORDER – PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairperson Amy Lynn Holt called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. Mrs. Holt led those in attendance in the pledge of allegiance to the American Flag.

AGENDA APPROVAL

Mr. Blair Craven moved that the agenda be approved as presented. Seconded by Mrs. Lisa Edwards. *(Unanimously approved.)*

CONSENT AGENDA

A. Minutes [*June 29, 2017 (Special Called Business Meeting)*]

B. Personnel [*as presented in closed session*]

Mr. Colby Coren moved that the Consent Agenda be approved. Mrs. Mary Louise Corn seconded. *(The motion was approved.)*

BOARD CHAIRPERSON’S OBSERVATIONS

None

BOARD MEMBERS’ OBSERVATIONS

None

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

STATUS OF BOARD MEMBER MICHAEL ABSHER

Chairperson Amy Lynn Holt asked publicly for the resignation of Michael Absher. She explained the reasons for the request are (1) the termination of Mr. Absher’ bus driver position at Buncombe County Public Schools for use of inappropriate, profane language to students on the bus and for “brake checking” students on the bus; and (2) Mr. Absher’s admission to

several board members and an administrator that he verbally threatened a school employee. Chairperson Holt explained that Board members cannot threaten employees of the school system under any circumstances. Board members' actions need to show that we have the best intentions for all students and staff members. Mrs. Holt also explained that the request for Mr. Absher's resignation has nothing to do with Mr. Absher's pending court cases.

Mrs. Lisa Edwards stated that as Board members we trust each other to make responsible decisions in everything we do. Responsible decision making does not end at the county line. Mrs. Edwards said that in her opinion the act of "brake checking" a busload of kids knowing that they could be hurt is troubling. Mr. Absher's legal issues are for the court to decide. In Mrs. Edwards opinion, it is not an option for the Board to do nothing when a Board member has direct confrontation with employees or with students from any county.

Mr. Colby Coren moved that the Henderson County Board of Public Education request that Mr. Michael Absher immediately resign his position on the Board. Seconded by Mr. Blair Craven.

Mr. Coren explained that he stands with the Board in asking for Mr. Absher's resignation. Mr. Coren's decision is based on hard evidence and Mr. Absher's own statements. Mr. Coren stated that, in his opinion, Mr. Absher's disregard for the safety of students in his care displayed by unsafe bus movements and use of his cell phone while driving prove that Mr. Absher does not have the best interests of students in mind. Mr. Coren also stated that, in his opinion, Mr. Absher's use of inappropriate language around students shows a strong lack of judgment and moral character. Mr. Coren said that Mr. Absher was asked privately for his resignation over a month ago. Mr. Coren said that Mr. Absher's attorney questioned if the Board's actions were consistent with the sworn oath office each Board member took. Mr. Coren stated that he believes the job the Board has been tasked with is to provide for the safety and well being of students. He said that a continued pattern of negligence and misconduct from Mr. Absher are unacceptable. Mr. Coren praised Mr. Absher's work for the homeless youth in our community and hopes for his continued success in that endeavor.

Mr. Rick Wood commented that when he heard Mr. Absher had been fired from his bus driving position in Buncombe County he felt it might be best if he resigned. However, Mr. Wood stated the decision to resign from the Board should be Mr. Absher's decision. Mr. Wood said that he feels the Board should not be involved, and it is not his role to judge other Board members. Mr. Wood stated that 23, 855 Henderson County voters voted for Mr. Absher for the School Board. Mr. Wood said that he does not condone Mr. Absher's actions, which have been a distraction. Mr. Wood believes that the Board is doing its job, and they should let the court cases run their course. Mr. Wood said he has not asked Mr. Absher to resign and does not think the Board should ask for his resignation either; therefore, Mr. Wood said he would abstain from voting on the motion calling for Mr. Absher's resignation.

Those in favor of the motion requesting Mr. Michael Absher's immediate resignation from his position on the Board were Mr. Colby Coren, Mr. Blair Craven, Mrs. Mary Louise Corn, and Mrs. Lisa Edwards. Abstaining from the vote were Mr. Rick Wood and Mr. Michael Absher. The motion carried.

There being no further business, Mr. Blair Craven moved that the meeting be adjourned. Seconded by Mrs. Lisa Edwards. *(Unanimously approved at 4:17 p.m.)*