

Henderson County Board of Public Education
Special Called Emergency Meeting
MINUTES
April 2, 2020

The Henderson County Board of Public Education met in a special called emergency virtual meeting on April 2, 2020 via a *GoTo* web meeting.

Board Members Present: Blair Craven, Chairperson; Rick Wood, Vice Chairperson; Michael Absher; Dot Case; Mary Louise Corn; Jay Egolf and Amy Lynn Holt.

Administrative Staff Present: Bo Caldwell, Ed.S. Superintendent; John Bryant, Ed.D., Associate Superintendent, Administrative Services; Jan King, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum & Instruction; Scott Rhodes, Chief Human Resources Officer; Rick Fender, Chief Technology Officer; Bernie Sochia, Chief Finance Officer.

Attorney Present: Mr. Chris Campbell

Others in attendance: Board Assistant, Kathy Johnson; Public Information Officer, Molly McGowan Gorsuch; Andrew Mundhenk, Media, Blue Ridge Now and Jayne Jennings, League of Women Voters

CALL TO ORDER

Board Chairman, Mr. Blair Craven called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm. Mr. Craven asked for a roll call of all Board members in attendance via the GoTo meeting link. All Board members verbally acknowledged their attendance. All leadership team members were logged in as well and acknowledged their participation.

AGENDA APPROVAL

Mr. Craven stated that the main purpose of the emergency meeting was to address a request regarding a requested policy waiver. The meeting agenda was sent via email to Board members, the leadership team, Board attorney, Chris Campbell, and media partners prior to the meeting. Mr. Blair Craven asked for a motion to approve the agenda. Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt moved that the agenda be approved as presented, seconded by Mr. Michael Absher. *(Unanimously approved.)*

Board Chair, Mr. Blair Craven recognized Dr. Jan King to present the first item of business on the agenda.

NEW BUSINESS

A. On March 14, 2020, Governor Roy Cooper announced Executive Order #117 closing all North Carolina schools for two weeks as a precautionary measure against the transmission of novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). Henderson County Public Schools closed for all students beginning Monday, March 16, and remained closed for two weeks. This closure affected all school programming, including before- and after-school activities, on-campus childcare, all athletic and extracurricular practices and competitions, and all weekend events. On March 23, 2020, Governor Cooper announced Executive Order # 120 which extended the school closures until May 15, 2020.

Dr. Jan King stated that school closure due to Governor Cooper's Executive Order #117 and #120 for the COVID-19 pandemic necessitates a discussion around Policy 4400 (Attendance). She said that the language of section D of the policy creates potential barriers for student promotion during a period of school closure. Dr. King asked the Board to consider waiving section D of Policy 4400 for the 2019-2020 academic year since students will not have sufficient opportunities to make up excessive absences.

Dr. King added that data shows that roughly 3% of elementary school, 6% of middle school, and 8% of high school students have missed one or more days above the limit stated in the attendance policy.

Mr. Craven polled each board member to ask questions.

Mr. Rick Wood stated that he had no questions and agreed that the change needs to be made under the circumstances. Mr. Wood added that he believes the attendance policy should be reviewed in the near future, he has some concerns.

Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt stated that she had zero questions.

Ms. Dot Case asked Dr. King, 'how many total kids is this?' Dr. King responded roughly 3% of elementary school, 6% of middle school, and 8% of high school students and added that we realize that there are more attendance struggles as students get older. Ms. Case asked how many of these students are from first semester? Dr. King replied, around 300 students. Ms. Case asked how many high school students had not made up missed time from first semester. Dr. King replied, 300 and added that we usually give students until the end of the academic year to make up time, if it relates to an FF grade.

Ms. Case agrees with the waiver for now but also agrees with Mr. Rick Wood that attendance procedures need to be reviewed by the Board in the future.

Mrs. Mary Louise Corn stated that her understanding is that the Board is meeting to give authority to Mr. Caldwell and his staff to waive the policy? Mr. Craven stated, that is correct. Mrs. Corn stated that she is in agreement with Mr. Caldwell and his staff having the authority to do what ever they deem is necessary in this very unusual circumstance. She added that the attendance policy has always been a problem and there has never been a good way to deal with it. She reiterated that Mr. Caldwell and his staff should have the authority to do whatever they think is best. Mr. Craven agreed.

Mr. Michael Absher had no questions.

Mr. Jay Egolf said that we should let them decide what they need to do. He added that he is okay with everything discussed so far.

Mr. Craven asked for questions or comments from the Leadership Team or attorney. There were no questions or comments.

Board Chair, Mr. Blair Craven, asked for a motion on the request. Mrs. Mary Louise Corn stated that in response to the COVID-19 school closure, I move that the Henderson County Board of Public Education waive Section D of Policy 4400 for the 2019-2020 academic year. Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken:

Craven, Aye; Wood, Aye; Absher, Aye; Case, Aye; Corn, Aye; Egolf, Aye; Holt, Aye.

The motion to waive Policy 4400, Attendance, Section D passed unanimously.

B. Superintendent Bo Caldwell presented a request regarding the School Board meetings scheduled in April, 2020. Mr. Caldwell asked Board members to approve the cancellation of the Regular Business meeting scheduled for April 20, 2020. Mr. Caldwell also requested an approval to postpone the School Board Budget Workshop scheduled for April 8, 2020, until further notice.

Mr. Craven asked if there were any questions on what Mr. Caldwell presented? There were no questions.

Mr. Craven called for a motion to approve the request.

Mr. Rick Wood made a motion that the Henderson County Board of Public Education approve the request to cancel the Regular Business meeting scheduled for April 20, 2020 and to postpone the School Board Budget Workshop scheduled for April 8, 2020, until further notice. Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken:

Craven, Aye; Wood, Aye; Absher, Aye; Case, Aye; Corn, Aye; Egolf, Aye; Holt, Aye.

The motion passed unanimously.

Board Chair, Mr. Blair Craven asked if there were any other questions? He thanked the administration for all they have done and stated he feels they have been on top of the situation and are doing an outstanding job. Mr. Rick Wood seconded Mr. Craven's comments and thanked the staff for their hard work. Mr. Wood added, he misses being with the board members and hopes everyone stays safe.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mr. Rick Wood moved that the meeting be adjourned. Seconded by Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt. (*Unanimously approved at 5:17 pm.*)

Minutes approved: May 11, 2020