

**Henderson County Board of Public Education**  
**SPECIAL CALLED MEETING-END OF YEAR MATTERS**  
**MINUTES**  
**June 30, 2020**

The Henderson County Board of Public Education met in a Special Called business meeting to discuss End of Year Matters on Tuesday, June 30, 2020, beginning at 2:00 pm, at 414 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue West, Hendersonville, NC. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the June 30, 2020 Special Called School Board meeting was held in accordance with approved, safety thresholds for public gatherings established by local health officials and Governor Roy Cooper. Capacity for the public/staff to attend was capped at no more than 10 persons. Therefore, no members of the public were allowed into the meeting room. The Board did not receive public comment during the special called meeting. The meeting was accessible to the public via a live stream link on the HCPS YouTube channel.

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: None

Board Clerk: Mrs. Kathy R. Johnson

**CALL TO ORDER**

Board Chairman, Mr. Blair Craven called the meeting to order at approximately 2:00 pm.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Mr. Blair Craven led all those in attendance in the pledge of allegiance.

**AGENDA APPROVAL**

Mr. Blair Craven stated that the meeting agenda should be amended to add two items: Board Chair Observations and Board Member Observations. These two items will be presented after the Consent Agenda. Mr. Craven asked for a motion to approve the amended meeting agenda. Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt moved that the agenda be approved as amended, seconded by Mr. Michael Absher (*Unanimously approved.*)

**CONSENT AGENDA**

Mrs. Mary Louise Corn made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented in Closed Session. Mr. Rick Wood seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken: Egolf, yes; Absher, yes; Holt, yes; Wood, yes; Corn, yes; Case, yes; Craven, yes. (*Unanimously approved.*)

1. Meeting Schedule
  - a. HCBPE Regular Business Meeting [*Monday, July 13, 2020, 2:00 p.m., (Boardroom) (Closed Session 1:00 p.m.)*]
  - b. HCBPE Administrator Visit [*(Wednesday, August 5, 2020, 12:00 p.m., (Blue Ridge Community College)*]
  - c. HCBPE Regular Business Meeting [*Monday, August 10, 2020, 2:00 p.m., (Boardroom) (Closed Session 1:00 p.m.)*]
2. Minutes
  - a. June 8, 2020 (*Regular Business Meeting*)
3. Personnel (*as presented in closed session*)
4. Student Acceptances/Releases (*as presented in closed session*)
5. Budget Amendment

Two administrative placement recommendations were presented during Closed Session were approved under the Consent Agenda. Mrs. Joni Allison, Assistant Principal at Hendersonville Middle School will become the Principal at Hendersonville Middle School effective July 1, 2020. Mrs. Katelyn Davis, Assistant Principal at

Apple Valley Middle School will become the Principal at Apple Valley Middle School effective July 1, 2020.

#### BOARD CHAIR OBSERVATIONS

Mr. Blair Craven read the following statement:

June 8, 2020

Joint Statement by the Superintendent and Board of Public Education:

Like others across the nation and the world, our community is reeling from the acts of violence and systematic racism that continue to create a massive divide in our society. We condemn racism, violence, and discrimination in the strongest terms. They are directly opposed to the values of Henderson County Public Schools and our mission statement, which is our promise to the children and families we serve.

Our role as educators is to create conversation and take the position of listening to the hurt, the confusion, and the pain of our students, families and staff to promote healing and change in our schools and community.

We seek to unite educators and families while fostering a positive influence on the community beyond education. We seek to cultivate a community whose bedrocks are kindness, acceptance and inclusion for all. Only through our collective work, can we create a way forward in dismantling racism and other negative influences that affect our school community and nation. It is our shared responsibility to ensure that every student is protected and that all students know they are loved.

We know that the most powerful lessons we teach are the product of our actions and not just our words. We must all work to address the injustices that exist within education and beyond by the conversations we have with others, by speaking up when we see hate, by supporting efforts that oppose racism and oppression, and by directly engaging in advocacy work.

Our every action will shape the future that our children will inherit. Henderson County Public Schools is committed to shaping a future of integrity, respect, inclusivity, and justice for all.

Mr. Craven stated that words without actions are meaningless and charged Superintendent Caldwell with providing monthly action step updates to the Board. He asked for data regarding Human Resources, discipline, and achievement gaps for all students. Mr. Craven asked that the first report on bridging the gaps be presented at the July meeting. Mrs. Mary Louise Corn added that she would also like to have updates from the organic discussions with teachers and staff members across the county. Mrs. Corn feels we can learn a lot from those discussions and discover things we might not hear elsewhere. Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt stated its time to have the painful conversations and use them as a resource as we move forward. Mr. Caldwell stated that he believes the first step is to truly listen. He added, as we begin to truly listen, we'll find the areas in which we need to improve. Mr. Caldwell stated this is not a one-time fix type of issue and added we are committed to work hard and grow from here.

#### BOARD MEMBER OBSERVATIONS

Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt read the following article: *U.S. Pediatricians Call For In-Person School This Fall*. The article advocates for all students to return to in-school instruction for the Fall of 2020.

*The nation's pediatricians have come out with a strong statement in favor of bringing children back to the classroom this fall wherever and whenever they can do so safely. The American Academy of Pediatrics' guidance "strongly advocates that all policy considerations for the coming school year should start with a goal of having students physically present in school."*

*The guidance says "schools are fundamental to child and adolescent development and well-being."*

*The AAP cites "mounting evidence" that transmission of the coronavirus by young children is uncommon, partly because they are less likely to contract it in the first place.*

*On the other hand, the AAP argues that based on the nation's experience this spring, remote learning is likely to result in severe learning loss and increased social isolation. Social isolation, in turn, can breed serious social, emotional and health issues: "child and adolescent physical or sexual abuse, substance use, depression, and suicidal ideation." Furthermore, these impacts will be visited more severely on Black and brown children, as well as low-income children and those with learning disabilities.*

*The guidance for returning to in-person schooling includes recommendations about physical distancing, cleaning and disinfection, hand-washing, and using outdoor spaces whenever possible.*

*The AAP argues that offering elementary school children the opportunity to go to school every day should be given due consideration over spacing guidelines if capacity is an issue: "Schools should weigh the benefits of strict adherence to a 6-feet spacing rule between students with the potential downside if remote learning is the only alternative."*

*And, it also argues that masks are probably not practical for children younger than middle school unless they can wear a mask without increased face touching.*

*The guidelines do note that adult school staff are more at risk compared to young children and need to be able to distance from other adults as much as possible — no in-person faculty meetings, no class visits by parents. And they emphasize the need to make accommodations for students who are medically fragile or have special health care needs or disabilities.*

*However, these guidelines don't necessarily address the health concerns of America's teachers or their willingness to return to in-person teaching. Federal data show nearly a third of teachers are over 50, putting them in a higher risk category when it comes to the disease.*

*Fairfax County Public Schools in Virginia, for example, recently announced its reopening plans, offering families a choice between two days a week of in-person classes or an all-remote schedule plus extra intervention on a third day for students who need it. The county's three educator unions resisted, arguing in a statement that remote learning should continue. "Our educators are overwhelmingly not comfortable returning to schools," said Tina Williams, president of Fairfax County Federation of Teachers. "They fear for their lives, the lives of their students and the lives of their families."*

Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt stated her children have been adversely affected during their remote learning and social distancing experiences. She feels strongly that students should return to in-school learning in August.

Mr. Jay Egolf referenced a newspaper article that said remote learning is not the answer for education. He stated that in an election year, people should be reminded that the Board of Education will base its decisions on requirements and recommendations that come from the Governor, DHHS, NCHSAA, and other agencies. He said we are doing the best we can with the cards we were dealt.

Mr. Michael Absher stated that he is aware people want to know how we are going back to school in the fall. He asked for patience from the community as the members of the School Board and the HCPS Leadership Team work together to formulate a plan. He also asked the community to send their prayers and positive thoughts to our leadership teams during this difficult time.

Mr. Rick Wood said Mr. Craven's statement spurred thoughts about the recent TimesNews editorial by Mr. Bob Orr. He encouraged everyone to read it if they had a chance.

#### OLD BUSINESS

None

#### NEW BUSINESS

##### A. 2020-2021 INTERIM BUDGET RESOLUTION – (Mr. Bernie Sochia)

Mr. Bernie Sochia, Chief Finance Officer presented the 2020-2021 Interim Budget Resolution for approval. He stated the 2020-21 Henderson County Public Schools' Interim Budget Resolution is based on projections at the new 2020-21 levels, it authorizes payment of salaries and benefits in addition to other reasonable and customary expenses associated with the start of a new fiscal year which begins on July 1, 2020. He added, this is intended to be for the interim period until details for implementation of the State, Local and Federal budgets are finalized and a formal 2020-21 Initial Budget Resolution can be adopted.

Mr. Sochia stated the primary purpose of the interim budget is the continued ability to pay the bills until the new budget is released from the state.

Mrs. Mary Louise Corn made a motion that the Henderson County Board of Public Education approve the 2020-2021 Interim Budget Resolution as presented. Mr. Rick Wood seconded.

Roll Call vote: Egolf, yes; Absher, yes; Holt, yes; Wood, yes; Corn, yes; Case, yes; Craven, yes. (Unanimously approved.)

##### B. FEDERAL FUNDS SOLE SOURCE PROCUREMENT – (Mr. Bernie Sochia)

The Office of Budget and Management (OMB) issued new Uniform Guidance Procurement Standards (UG) for local governments that receive and expend federal financial assistance. These new guidelines were effective July 1, 2018. All purchases of goods and services that exceed \$10,000.00 require issuing a bid solicitation using the Uniform Guidance 'micro purchase' procedures.

One 'Exception' to these new guidelines is for 'procurement by noncompetitive proposals' which means that the item is only available from a single source provider. Procurement under this exception requires annual NCDPI and Local Board approval. Letters of DPI approval were presented for the following vendors: Books International, dba Letterland ; Boys & Girls Club of Henderson County; Certiport; Committee for Children – Second Step; Curriculum Associates; ELLevation; Franklin Covey; Panorama Education; Rosetta Stone and Striven Media.

Dr. King stated these same vendors have been brought to the Board for approval previously and there are only two new additions, Panorama Education and Striven Media.

Mr. Blair Craven recused himself from the vote stating he is on the Board for the Boys and Girls Club of Henderson County.

Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt made a motion that the Henderson County Board of Public Education approve the list of specified vendors under the sole source exemption guidelines. Mr. Michael Absher seconded.

Roll Call vote: Egolf, yes; Absher, yes; Holt, yes; Wood, yes; Corn, yes; Case, yes. Mr. Craven abstained. *(Unanimously approved.)*

C. CONSENT FOR UTILITY EASEMENT AT HENDERSONVILLE HIGH SCHOOL – *(Dr. John Bryant)*

Dr. John Bryant stated that in order to maintain power at Hendersonville High School and provide electrical service to the new building, Duke Energy will need to reconfigure utility lines. Duke Energy has asked the County of Henderson to grant the easement and in turn, the County has asked for the Henderson County School Public School Board's consent. Dr. John Bryant stated that Bond counsel has approved the easement and Campbell Shatley has reviewed and approved the forms as well.

Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt made a motion that the Henderson County Board of Public Education approve the Consent for Utility Easement at Hendersonville High School as presented. Mr. Michael Absher seconded.

Roll Call vote: Egolf, yes; Absher, yes; Holt, yes; Wood, yes; Corn, yes; Case, yes; Craven, yes. *(Unanimously approved.)*

## BOARD / SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORTS

A. Superintendent Bo Caldwell gave an update on student and staff re-entry planning for August 17, 2020. Governor Roy Cooper's office released the following options for North Carolina schools to follow as they return to learning in August, 2020:

- Plan A- the least restrictive reopening model, requires minimal social distancing, most closely resembles a traditional start to school
- Plan B- adds additional restrictions for social distancing, incorporates a blend of in-person and remote learning to satisfy limited occupancy requirements
- Plan C- suspends all in-person instruction, remote learning would be utilized for all students

Mr. Caldwell said that state officials will tell us which of the plans we must use when planning for our students to come back to school in the fall. Governor Cooper and the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) are expected to make this determination on Wednesday, July 1, 2020. In the meantime, HCPS leaders are working to prepare students, staff, and families to *Return to Learn* under a variety of conditions. In response to the NC State Board of Education and the NC Department of Public Instruction's release of *Lighting Our Way Forward: North Carolina's Guidebook for Reopening Public Schools* on June 8, HCPS has organized a Re-Entry Task Force made up of seven teams from throughout the district. These workgroups consist of educators, campus- and district-level staff members from many departments. Workgroups are currently addressing operations and scheduling, instruction, student and employee safety, emotional and mental support, and communications, in order to formulate a set of models for various potential scenarios.

Board members voiced a variety of potential questions and scenarios to be addressed.

Superintendent Caldwell stated that he knows this is a frustrating time for everyone and assured board

members that he will share more information as it becomes available from the governor's office. He reiterated his dedication to bringing the best re-entry plan possible centered around the health and safety of our students. Mr. Craven feels it is extremely important for our elementary students to return to face-to-face instruction in August.

Mrs. Holt feels all students should return to school for face-to-face instruction in August.

Mrs. Corn stated there is no better group that she would rather have than our Senior Leadership Team working on this issue. She is confident they will bring the best option available at the time when our kids return to school.

Mr. Craven expressed the Board's gratitude to the leadership team and HCPS staff members for their work.

Superintendent Caldwell stated that per Governor Roy Cooper's Executive Order 147, face coverings will be required in all HCPS buildings beginning July 1, 2020. This includes staff members and anyone from the community who access our facilities. This order remains in effect until July 17, 2020 unless amended by the governor.

#### ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt moved that the meeting be adjourned. Seconded Mr. Jay Egolf. *(Unanimously approved at 3:17 pm.)*

Minutes approved: July 13, 2020