

## Henderson County Board of Public Education

### MINUTES

January 11, 2021

The Henderson County Board of Public Education met in a regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, January 11, 2021, beginning at 4:00 pm, at 414 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue West, Hendersonville, NC.

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the January 11, 2021 regular business 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 received public comment via email prior to the meeting. The meeting was accessible to the public via a live stream link on the HCPS YouTube channel, <http://tiny.cc/HCPSlive>

Board Members Present: Blair Craven, Chairperson; Amy Lynn Holt, Vice Chairperson; Robert Bridges; Dot Case; Stacey Caskey; Jay Egolf and Kathy Revis.

Administrative Staff Present: John Bryant, Superintendent, Ed.D.; Jan King, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction; Scott Rhodes, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources; Rick Fender, Chief Technology Officer; Bernie Sochia, Chief Finance Officer and Carl Taylor, Chief Administrative Officer.

Attorney Present: Mr. Chris Campbell

Board Clerk: Mrs. Kathy R. Johnson

#### CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Blair Craven called the meeting to order at 4:00pm. and led all those in attendance in the pledge of allegiance.

#### AGENDA APPROVAL

Mr. Blair Craven acknowledged receipt of the meeting agenda and called for a motion for approval. Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt moved that the agenda be approved as presented. Seconded by Mrs. Kathy Revis. *(Unanimously approved.)*

#### BOARD CHAIR OBSERVATIONS

None.

#### BOARD OBSERVATIONS

Mr. Jay Egolf thanked the teachers and staff for all they are doing for our students. He acknowledged this has been a year like none other and appreciates everyone working together to get through this. He feels parents should always have a choice between fully virtual and face to face instruction for their children. He challenged everyone to make our virtual and in-person learning options the best instruction possible for our students, whichever they choose.

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Blair Craven stated that 28 pre-submitted public comments were received for the January 11<sup>th</sup> meeting. The majority of emails were in favor of all students remaining on Plan C. A copy of all email received will be posted to the Henderson County Board of Public Education website for public access on Tuesday, January 12, 2021.

#### CONSENT AGENDA

Mr. Blair Craven called for a motion to approve the consent agenda as presented.

- A. Meeting Schedule - HCBPE Regular Business Meeting [Monday, February 8, 2021, 4:00 pm., *(Closed Session at 3:00 pm.) (Boardroom)*]
- B. Minutes – December 14, 2020 *(Regular Business Meeting)*
- C. Personnel – *(as presented in closed session)*
- D. Student Acceptances/Releases – *(as presented in closed session)*
- E. Budget Amendment
- F. Resolution – African-American History Month
- G. Resolution – School Board Appreciation Month

Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented in Closed Session. Mrs. Stacey Caskey seconded the motion. *(Unanimously approved.)* Mr. Blair Craven read the *African-American History Month* resolution into the record. Dr. John M. Bryant read the *School Board Appreciation Month* resolution into the record.

## OLD BUSINESS

None.

## NEW BUSINESS

### A. Approval – Waiver for Board Policy #470: Athletic Participation; Section IX, Athletic Eligibility

Assistant Superintendent, Scott Rhodes presented a request for the board to waive the local athletic eligibility standards for the remainder of 2020-2021 school year. Currently, student-athletes in Henderson County must have earned an unweighted grade point average of 2.0 or higher during the preceding semester to be eligible for athletic participation. This requirement is specific to Henderson County and not a requirement by the North Carolina High School Athletic Association. This follows the N.C. High School Athletics Association (NCHSAA) mid-December implementation of an academic eligibility waiver, as a result of students being given the option to delay taking End of Course tests until Spring or Summer 2021. According to the NCHSAA, effective for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year, a course that is incomplete due to state-mandated testing (EOC), may be used for the second semester athletic eligibility provided the student is passing the course(s) at the end of the first semester. Mr. Rhodes stated that students will still be required to pass 3 out of 4 or 5 out of 7 courses for athletic eligibility.

Mr. Blair Craven and Mr. Jay Egolf were not in favor of the waiver. They feel we are doing a disservice to our students by waiving the eligibility standards and that the Covid pandemic should not be used as an excuse to lower student expectations. Mr. Egolf feels students have to learn how to deal with real life issues and we are not helping them to do that.

Ms. Case stated athletics are so important for students and it's the main reason many students are still attending the virtual classes. Ms. Case supports the waiver for the rest of this academic year.

Mrs. Revis also believes in high student standards but feels we should show grace to all of our students at this time due to the many educational obstacles surrounding the pandemic. Mrs. Revis agrees the waiver for one semester is the right thing to do if we consider the big picture for our students.

Mrs. Caskey asked if we could offer extra support to students affected by this rule to ensure they are held accountable for this semester? Mr. Rhodes said we could provide extra student support at the school level for our athletes.

Mrs. Holt agreed the waiver is a good idea but would like to see the extra academic support plan added for students meeting these criteria.

Dr. Bryant reminded the board, this waiver follows the N.C. High School Athletics Association (NCHSAA) mid-December implementation of an academic eligibility waiver and stated this waiver surrounds the additional internal standards adopted by Henderson County for athletic eligibility.

Board attorney, Mr. Chris Campbell stated there is a difference between State athletic eligibility and internal standards for athletic eligibility. Mr. Campbell advised, the board could suspend the policy for this year allowing these students to be eligible through the state and then delegate to the administration a need to develop a student support plan for this semester. Instead of micromanaging this issue, the board could allow the administration to come up with a support plan for each student and then delegate the administration to follow through with the proposal. Mr. Campbell stated the only board action required would be to suspend the policy for the remainder of the semester, this matter would not need to be brought back to the board for approval.

Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt made motion to approve the waiver for Board Policy #470: Athletic Participation; Section IX, Athletic Eligibility, for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year adding the directive to administration to develop a student academic support plan for athletes meeting the criteria. Mrs. Kathy Revis seconded the motion as presented. Mr. Blair Craven asked for a roll call vote on the motion:

Mr. Bridges, Yes; Ms. Case, Yes; Mrs. Holt, Yes; Mr. Egolf, No; Mrs. Caskey, Yes; Mrs. Revis, Yes; Mr. Craven, No. The motion passed 5-2.

As of Jan. 11, 2021, the 2.0 grade point average eligibility rule in local Board Policy 470 will be waived for

HCPS students through the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year, with the understanding that administrators will create academic support plans for each student who would otherwise be affected by this rule.

B. Approval – (2021-2022) Traditional Schedule Calendar – *(First Reading) (Mr. Carl Taylor, Chief Administrative Officer)*

Mr. Carl Taylor presented the 2021-2022 draft school calendars for first reading. The board considered two versions of the Traditional Calendar: one with a start date of August 16, 2021 and the second with a start date of August 23, 2021. The August 16 version was originally considered in the February 2020 board meeting during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, when school districts statewide were discussing taking a more “year round” approach to the traditional calendar school year. This version would allow schools on the block schedule to complete the first semester before dismissing for Winter Break. However, existing North Carolina school calendar law requires a start date of no earlier than the Monday closest to August 26.

The proposed 2021-2022 Flex Calendar has a start date of July 8, 2021, and an end date of May 27, 2022, \* with Intersession from September 13-29, 2021. The proposed 2021-2022 Early College Calendar has a start date of August 16, 2021, and an end date of May 27, 2022. \* Both calendars include a Winter Break from Dec. 22-31, 2021 and teacher workdays on Jan. 3, 2022; the Early College Calendar also has a Required Teacher Workday on Jan. 4, 2022. Both calendars include a Spring Break from March 14-18, 2022, with an Optional Teacher Workday on March 21 for Flex Calendar teachers. \*the school calendars include flexibility to be extended for students until Friday, June 3, 2022 due to inclement weather

The board directed administration to draft a resolution to the N.C. General Assembly with support from local stakeholders, requesting permission to allow HCPS to create calendars with earlier start dates in order to align district Traditional Calendars with local community college calendars.

C. Approval – (2021-2022) Flexible Quarter Schedule Calendar – *(First Reading) (Mr. Carl Taylor, Chief Administrative Officer)* Presented for first reading.

D. Approval – (2021-2022) Early College High Schedule Calendar – *(First Reading) (Mr. Carl Taylor, Chief Administrative Officer)* Presented for first reading.

Therefore, the August 23 version of the Traditional Calendar, with the last day of school on June 3 and a Winter Break of Dec. 22-31, 2021, was presented for first reading, along with the Flex and Early College calendars. All three calendars will be revisited for second reading at the February 8<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt made a motion to approve the 2021-22 Traditional Calendar with a start date of August 23, 2021, adding that a resolution is to be sent the NC General Assembly requesting permission to allow HCPS to create calendars with earlier start dates in order to align district Traditional Calendars with local community college calendars; the motion included approval of the (2021-2022) Flexible Quarter Schedule Calendar; and the (2021-2022) Early College High Schedule Calendars as presented. Mr. Robert Bridges seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

## BOARD / SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORTS

### A. RETURN TO LEARN UPDATE

Superintendent John M. Bryant shared the local health pandemic indicator numbers from the Harvard Global Health Institute. He reminded everyone that research data from the Harvard Global Health Institute (HGHI) indicates risk levels that are calculated based on daily cases per 100,000 people using a seven-day rolling average. As of Friday, January 8, the rolling average in Henderson County was 83.1/100,000 people. Henderson County is listed as Critical/Red on the NC DHHS County Alert System Report.

**Covid-19 Vaccinations:**  
Your best shot at stopping COVID-19.

YOU HAVE A  
**SPOT.**

TAKE YOUR  
**SHOT.**

You have a spot, take your shot. A tested, safe and effective vaccine will be available to all who want it, but supplies will be limited at first. To save lives and slow the spread of COVID-19, independent state and federal public health advisory committees recommend first protecting health care workers caring for patients with COVID-19, people who are at the highest risk of being hospitalized or dying, and those at high risk of exposure to COVID-19. Keep practicing the 3 W's—wear a mask, wait six feet apart, wash your hands—until everyone has a chance to get vaccinated.

1a Health care workers fighting COVID-19 & Long-Term Care staff and residents.	1b Adults 75 years or older and frontline essential workers.	2 Adults at high risk for exposure and at increased risk of severe illness.	3 Students	4 Everyone who wants a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccination.
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Dr. John Bryant shared the developing vaccination plans from the Henderson County Health Department stating the county is currently in Phase 1a.

The transition to Phase 1b, Group 2, is important to note because it includes those who work in the education sector (teachers and support staff members), as well as child care workers. Dr. Bryant stated the schools that were closed in late December 2020, were closed due to staffing issues and the inability to safely monitor and support our students. Mr. Scott Rhodes added, the Human Resources Department continues to track staff attendance on a daily basis. Mr. Blair Craven asked that Mr. Rhodes provides a weekly report containing teacher absence data for the Board to review. Mr. Craven feels the data will be extremely important as we move forward and transition between Plans.

The board discussed transitioning all K-5 elementary students to Plan A and grades 6-12 to Plan B, beginning Monday, February 1. This would mean transitioning 4th- and 5th-graders to the Plan A model, so all elementary grades would be operating under Plan A and attending school on campus in-person every day. Administrators emphasized that a full implementation of Plan A in the elementary schools would eliminate the social distancing requirements within classroom environments and on school buses, given the logistical constraints of transportation.

Consideration of expanding the Plan A model to include all elementary grades is part of the district's continuing efforts to reintroduce more students to the traditional face-to-face learning environment, as long as it is allowable under Executive Order and advisable by local public health officials. District administrators reminded the board that these considerations are based on community health and workforce stability, and they continue to prepare for immediate transitions between Plans, if necessary. Families are still able to commit to a fully virtual second semester by registering for the Engage Remote Learning Option (RLO).

No action was taken. Mr. Craven asked district administrators to prepare logistical details for a potential transition to another plan in February. The next Board of Public Education meeting is tentatively scheduled for Monday, January 25, and will be held prior to any instructional transitions on February 1.

#### B. CALENDAR FOR 2021-2022 BUDGET DEVELOPMENT – PER BOARD POLICY: 8100, BUDGET PLANNING AND ADOPTION

Per Board Policy 8100, Superintendent John M. Bryant presented the following schedule for planning and development of the 2021-2022 budget.

January 20, 2021	County Commissioners Budget Planning Workshop
April 14, 2021	School Board Workshop
April 29, 2021	School Board Workshop
May 10, 2021	Public Hearing and School Board Final Approval
May 14, 2021	Transmittal Letter to County Commissioners

Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt made a motion to approve the 2021-2022 Budget Development Calendar as presented. Mrs. Stacey Caskey seconded the motion. The board unanimously approved the 2021-2022 Budget Planning Schedule, allowing Superintendent Dr. John Bryant to proceed with these target dates of developing the budget for the next fiscal year.

#### C. EQUITY UPDATE – (*Dr. Jan King, Assistant Superintendent*)

As North Carolina poet Dr. Maya Angelou once said, “Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.” Educators in Henderson County Public Schools are participating in professional learning opportunities in order to create more equitable classrooms and opportunities for all students.

Our January learning activities include two that have been previously mentioned to the Board and one new opportunity.

First, you’ll recount the Racial Equity Institute (or REI) Groundwater session. This 3-hour session will be attended by eighteen (18) HCPS district and school leaders. It is sponsored by WRESA and funded through a grant from the Dogwood Trust.

Second, our three teacher leaders are continuing their trainer certification through the Paideia Center. Their sessions, Dialogues on Racial Equity, equip teachers to select and facilitate seminar-style learning from authors such as John Lewis, Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston.

A new opportunity available to all staff this month is sponsored by the NC Public School Forum's Dudley Flood Center. The webinar series will feature student voices sharing thoughts on a culturally responsive curriculum.

To conclude, I will share a quote with you from Henderson County teachers. Last week, Dr. Frye and I were meeting with our teachers in the Paideia training and it was encouraging to hear one teacher say, "I have had conversations around equity in my personal life - with friends and family. But now I am gaining the courage to have these conversations with co-workers."

#### **D. CHILD CARE SERVICES UPDATE**

Mr. Scott Rhodes, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, presented board members with an overview of the history of the Henderson County Public Schools Child Care program along with information on the current Child Care operations, COVID-19 pandemic's effect on operations, and multiple options to consider for successful maintenance of the valuable program that provides reliable, vetted care providers to families.

Since March 2020, Child Care sites have run at a reduced capacity; enrollment numbers decreased while staffing remained the same, as part of the district's commitment to keeping all staff groups employed during the pandemic. The Child Care fund balance is annually used to balance the district's budget each year. With a decrease in Child Care enrollment and an increase in employee benefit costs, the Child Care Services operation continues to lose money and requires board consideration for future sustainability. Per Board instruction, Mr. Scott Rhodes presented the following options for board consideration:

##### **Option 1 – Operational Changes to the Current Model**

- Pricing stays the same
  - A.M. Only = \$30 per week
  - P.M. Only = \$70 per week
  - A.M/P.M = \$100 per week
- Families must register in advance and pay by the week.
  - This will allow us to staff appropriately each week based on enrollment numbers.
- Suggested dates for implementation
  - March 2021: This would give families enough time to make decisions concerning their child care needs.
  - June 2021: Start of the Summer Plus Program

##### **Option 2 – Outsourced Child Care**

- Advertise Request for Proposals in late January or early February
- Identify qualified responses to the RFP for consideration
- Transition the HCPS Child Care enterprise program to an outside provider before the start of the 2021 - 2022 school year

##### **Option 3 – Current Model with Contingency Planning**

- Continue current programming based on...
  - New pricing standards
  - Pay by the week
  - Improved staffing guidelines
- Send out RFPs and create an exit strategy if the Child Care program is not revenue neutral by June 30, 2022.
- Continue to operate with the exclusive use of the Child Care program fund balance, if needed
- No General Fund Balance or Local Current Expense dollars committed to the program's sustainability

Mr. Rhodes feels strongly that it is important for HCPS to stay in the child care business for the following reasons:

1. Control over who serves and takes care of our students.
  - a. Background Checks
  - b. Guardian System
2. Child Care thrived when pricing and benefits were in line with each other.
  - a. Child Care fund balance was over \$400,000 in 2017

3. Part of what makes HCPS great is we value the people in our organization.
  - a. 6 employees with 20 years or more
  - b. 5 employees with 10 years or more

Mr. Rhodes asked for questions or comments on the proposal.

Mr. Blair Craven reiterated his prior concerns regarding the viability of the program and its available fund balance. Mr. Bernie Sochia stated that as of December 31, 2020, we have \$200,000 cash in the bank for the program. Mr. Craven emphasized that no local dollars should be used to prop-up this program.

Mr. Craven prefers the Child Care Option #3 but would like the revenue neutral deadline to be moved June 30, 2021, instead of June 30, 2022. Mr. Craven asked how long the program could actually continue with no additional funds coming in?

Mrs. Revis feels we need to continue this service for our families and that we should not use the spring of 2021 as the deciding factor for the longevity of this program due to the limitations surrounding Covid. She would like to use the 2022 deadline as presented. She feels we will be able to assess our financial position and make an informed decision prior to June 20, 2022.

Mr. Craven stated the cost vs the revenues of this program make him nervous and he said we cannot take any money from the local funds to prop it up.

Mr. Rhodes said the leadership team agrees with his concerns and feel that Option 3 is the best win-win solution at this time. Mr. Rhodes said that Option 3 includes an exit strategy, if it comes to that. Mr. Rhodes reaffirmed that no local dollars will be used to support this program, it will continue to run on its fund balance, any grant monies received for child care and its current revenues.

All board members agreed to implement Option 3 as of March 1, 2021 (pay by the week requirement with improved staffing guidelines.)

Mrs. Caskey asked if Henderson County teachers are required to pay for child care for their children? Mr. Rhodes replied, 'yes,' HCPS staff members pay full price for child care.

Mr. Egolf asked if teachers are allowed to bring their child with them to work, during Plan C? Mr. Rhodes answered, 'yes,' if the teacher can meet the district's instructional expectations.

Mr. Bridges asked if parents would receive refunds from the pay by the week option, if their child doesn't attend the full week? Mr. Rhodes replied, 'no,' there would be no refunds.

Mr. Rhodes stated that we had 176 students enrolled in our child care program last week with 5 sites open allowing 40 students per site. Three of the Five sites are at capacity, two of the sites currently have 28 children enrolled.

Mr. Egolf asked why we are opening our schools for child care if we cannot open our schools for student instruction? He feels if we can open the doors for child care, we should be able to open the doors for our students to attend face to face instruction. He believes all kids should be in school.

Dr. Bryant stated that as of March, 2020, Governor Roy Cooper mandated that licensed child care facilities remain open to assist front line workers (doctors, nurses, EMS workers etc.) with their child care needs as they battled Covid-19 on the front lines. Henderson County's 4 Star and 5 Star child care sites remain open supporting that need. Dr. Bryant added that in designated care sites, we have 40 kids per site and we are able to spread them out and properly distance them, whereas in a regular classroom/school building, those distancing requirements cannot be met when all children are in the classrooms. Dr. Bryant feels that the size limitations at our child care sites now will help to enable a quicker transition back to Plan B or possibly Plan C for our students.

Mr. Egolf reiterated that if we can open child care, we should let our elementary kids K-5 go back to school.

Mrs. Revis commented that with smaller child care numbers, you can spread the staff and children out more effectively to achieve social distancing.

Mr. Rhodes agreed with Mrs. Revis and added, *'that is a big reason our child care has been working well so far during the pandemic.'* Mr. Rhodes acknowledges there is no easy decision and he believes we continue to try and make the best decisions for our families. Mr. Rhodes is proud that we offer this service and feels the program could succeed under Option 3 with contingency planning.

Mr. Bridges feels this is a great service for our community and asked if scholarships are available for families in need? Mr. Rhodes said there are voucher programs through DSS and because of our 4 Star and 5 Star ratings, our reimbursements are higher.

Mrs. Revis suggested that each RFP vendor should be asked if they provide licensed child care. Mr. Rhodes said he would add that request to his notes.

The board directed staff to move forward with Option 3, continuing the current model of programming as of March 2021, based on the new pay-per-week payment schedule using existing pricing standards (\$30/week for A.M. care only, \$70/week for P.M. care only, \$100/week for full day care), and improved staffing guidelines – with contingency plans for the future. As part of these contingency plans, district administrators will advertise Request for Proposals, in case the Child Care program is not revenue neutral by June 30, 2022 and outsourcing the operation is required.

#### E. CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

Mr. Carl Taylor, Chief Administrative Officer, presented the latest construction slides from the Hendersonville High School project. He feels work is progressing nicely and is pleased with the current status of the project.

#### F. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Mr. Bernie Sochia, Chief Finance Officer, presented the following financial statement: 1. Results of operations of the Local Current Expense and Other Restricted Funds for the 2020-21 fiscal year as of December 31, 2020: Revenues received total \$17,874,925 and expenditures made total \$13,767,084. Given the short period of business operations in December, expenditures have not changed significantly since the November 30 report. 2. Results of operations of the Capital Outlay Fund for the 2020-21 fiscal year as of December 31, 2020: Revenues are on schedule at \$1,162,571. Expenditures made on the projects as presented in the Capital Projects update total \$518,624.

#### G. GENERAL OPERATIONS

Superintendent John M. Bryant noted that the Martin Luther King Holiday, January 18, 2021, will be an optional teacher workday for staff and no student instruction will take place on that day. He encouraged everyone to participate in the Henderson County Education Foundation's *Food for Thought Week, January 18-24*. He said the HCEF will not receive a portion of the proceeds as a fundraiser this year, instead, all proceeds will stay with the local business to support them during the pandemic closures.

#### ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt moved that the meeting be adjourned. Seconded by Mrs. Stacey Caskey. (*Unanimously approved at 7:15pm.*)

Minutes approved: February 8, 2021