

MINUTES
BLEDSOE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
REGULAR MEETING
JANUARY 8, 2024

The Bledsoe County Board of Education met in Regular Session on January 8, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. at Bledsoe County Middle School.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Vincent Boring, with seven members present.

Roll Call:

Mr. Andy Billingsley	-	Absent – Joined meeting at 6:05 p.m.
Mr. Vincent Boring	-	Present
Mr. Ben Farmer	-	Present
Mr. Jacob Frady	-	Present
Mrs. Carolyn Oakes	-	Present
Mr. Bron Reece	-	Present
Mr. Don Snow	-	Present

1. Approval of the Agenda.

MOTION: Mr. Farmer

SECOND: Mr. Snow

VOTE: Mr. Billingsley: ABSENT Mr. Boring: AYE Mr. Farmer: AYE Mr. Frady: AYE
Mrs. Oakes: AYE Mr. Reece: AYE Mr. Snow: AYE

2. Approval of the minutes from the December 12, 2023 regular meeting of the Bledsoe County Board of Education.

MOTION: Mr. Boring

SECOND: Mrs. Oakes

VOTE: Mr. Billingsley: ABSENT Mr. Boring: AYE Mr. Farmer: AYE Mr. Frady: AYE
Mrs. Oakes: AYE Mr. Reece: AYE Mr. Snow: AYE

3. Request by Mrs. Kara Walling, Finance Director, to approve monthly financial reports for the month ending November 30, 2023.

MOTION: Mr. Farmer

SECOND: Mr. Snow

VOTE: Mr. Billingsley: YES Mr. Boring: YES Mr. Farmer: YES Mr. Frady: YES
Mrs. Oakes: YES Mr. Reece: YES Mr. Snow: YES

4. Approval to advertise bids for site work and structure for Agricultural Barn Structure.

Mr. Allen Jones stated that site work and barn structure designs have not changed. Proposed to put out to bid on January 22, 2024 and bid opening February 29, 2024 and approve or reject at March meeting. Alternate bid for asphalt vs gravel will be included in bid. The interior will be bid out separately.

Mr. Snow questioned where bids would be solicited from and would Ag enhancement agencies or county agents be included?

Mr. Jones stated that site work would be the traditional reaches. He stated that there were some companies that Mr. Turner had that they would reach out to for the structure, but he would be happy to reach out to the county agent.

Mr. Reece requested that the specifications for the 12ft sheds on both side of the building be added to the bid specification advertisement for clarity.

MOTION: Mr. Billingsley

SECOND: Mr. Frady

VOTE: Mr. Billingsley: YES Mr. Boring: YES Mr. Farmer: YES Mr. Frady: YES
Mrs. Oakes: YES Mr. Reece: YES Mr. Snow: YES

Mr. Jones gave an update on the Fieldhouse and Concession building. The old concessions building has been demoed and removed. Half of the concrete has been formed and poured and the other half has been formed. The project is still projected to be within budget. The field house, Mr. Steve has painting pretty much completed, the majority of the electric work is complete, new lights are on their way and then flooring will be installed. In the coach's offices cabinetry is being built and they are making really good progress.

5. Approval of locker quotes for fieldhouse and softball locker rooms.
Recommendation by Mr. Brian Turner, Maintenance Supervisor to approve Schoollockers.com.
Schoollockers.com – Price is \$400.85 per lockers, Gladiator pad rack \$38.00 each, and \$900.00 shipping. Lockers are \$10.00 higher from Schoollockers.com than the Uline quote, but they come assembled and other companies do not have pad rack. Softball will have same locker without shoulder pad racks
Motion to approve the quotes from Schoollockers.com
MOTION: Mr. Frady SECOND: Mr. Farmer
VOTE: Mr. Billingsley: YES Mr. Boring: YES Mr. Farmer: YES Mr. Frady: YES
Mrs. Oakes: YES Mr. Reece: YES Mr. Snow: YES
6. Discussion or action on new site for Bledsoe County Board of Education office.
Mr. Howard Upchurch, Board Attorney, reported that he had spoken with Mr. Ed Boring, City Attorney, and that the City Aldermen were meeting tonight to discuss the possibility of the Board of Education leasing space at the City Hall Building.
Mr. Upchurch had prepared a draft lease for review.
No action taken
7. Approval of the 2024-2025 school calendar.
MOTION: Mrs. Oakes SECOND: Mr. Billingsley
VOTE: Mr. Billingsley: YES Mr. Boring: YES Mr. Farmer: YES Mr. Frady: YES
Mrs. Oakes: YES Mr. Reece: YES Mr. Snow: YES
8. Request by Mr. Steve Reel for permission to purchase a classroom ambulance simulator.
Motion was made for the approval to advertise for bids for the classroom ambulance simulator.
MOTION: Mr. Farmer SECOND: Mr. Frady
VOTE: Mr. Billingsley: YES Mr. Boring: YES Mr. Farmer: YES Mr. Frady: YES
Mrs. Oakes: YES Mr. Reece: YES Mr. Snow: YES
9. Request by Mr. Michiel Palmer for the approval of an overnight trip to NASA in Huntsville, Alabama in late April. NASA rover team. Transportation will be provided by Bledsoe County Schools A grant from Sequachee Valley Electric in the amount of \$1,200.00 will help with transportation cost and lodging
MOTION: Mr. Billingsley SECOND: Mr. Farmer
VOTE: Mr. Billingsley: YES Mr. Boring: YES Mr. Farmer: YES Mr. Frady: YES
Mrs. Oakes: YES Mr. Reece: YES Mr. Snow: YES
10. Request by Mr. Jason Reel, Athletic Director and Mr. Jalen Smith, Baseball Coach, for the approval of Grant Hooten as a volunteer baseball coach pending background check and safety courses.
MOTION: Mr. Billingsley SECOND: Mr. Farmer
VOTE: Mr. Billingsley: AYE Mr. Boring: AYE Mr. Farmer: AYE Mr. Frady: AYE
Mrs. Oakes: AYE Mr. Reece: AYE Mr. Snow: AYE
11. Presentation by Mr. Matt Ridley, Principal Bledsoe County High School, on ACT.
Moved to February meeting.

12. Approval of Bledsoe County Schools Strategic Plan with changes.

Change to make objective #4.3 goal #5.

MOTION: Mr. Farmer

SECOND: Mr. Frady

VOTE: Mr. Billingsley: YES Mr. Boring: YES Mr. Farmer: YES Mr. Frady: YES

Mrs. Oakes: YES Mr. Reece: YES Mr. Snow: YES

13. Discussion and possible action on extending Director Selina Sparkman's contract.

Mr. Howard Upchurch, Board Attorney, stated that during the December meeting that several Board members were operating under the assumption the Mrs. Sparkman's contract terminated on June 30, 2024, it actually terminates June 30, 2025. So there is some time to engage into whatever negotiations the Board wished to pursue. Prior to 2012 there was an Attorney General's opinion that controlled extensions and prohibited an extension for more than four years if there was an existing contract in place. That was amended by action of the General Assembly now you can make and amendment up to four years from the present date. Which would enable the Board if the Board elected to extend the contract effective July 1, 2024 to extend contract thru June 30, 2028. He reminded the Board that an odd year was selected for a reason, first reason is the Board members would not be involved in an election and could devote all of their time and attention, perhaps not be under pressure provided by a political race to make a decision on something as important as the Directors position. Second reason is if you modify or address a Directors contract in an election year you have a 75-day window where you cannot take any action whatsoever on the Directors contract that begins 45 days prior to whatever the date of the General Election is, that is usually the first Thursday in August, so that puts you back around June 15th or 20th and then you have to wait 30 days after the election and that puts you up to the second week of September. That was the reason the Board used an odd year when the contract was negotiated and the June 30, 2025 deadline date was established In any event as directed by the Board on December 14th he prepared the first amendment and initial draft of the first amendment it had the term blank, it had the compensation blank. Mrs. Sparkman then after reviewing it and considering it provided him with her position on January 4th by email, he then immediately drafted a revised draft and included the figures that Mrs. Sparkman suggested in her email which included a base compensation of \$149,000.00, if he remembered correctly, it had a provision for a performance bonus based upon district designations as a Level 5 or school designations of Level 5 and also a Level 4 up to \$6,000.00 each year. It also contained a provision that the performance bonuses would not be paid to Mrs. Sparkman if she did not devote 94.44 percent of her time to the school district. That is the same percentage that teachers and certified personnel that receive bonus have to devote to the school system. That is where that percentage come from. The amendment as draft right now would extend Mrs. Sparkman's term of employment to June 30, 2028, it would set her base annual compensation to \$149,000.00, it would have provisions for bonus payment and also reaffirms employment and fringe benefits set forth in the September 15, 2020 contract and it ratifies and confirms all additional provisions of the September 15, 2020 contract that are not addressed or modified in this first amendment. He further stated that no action could be taken on the contract at tonight's meeting. Statute requires 15 days' notice to the public the Boards intent to either extend, renew or terminate a Directors Contract. The item has to be the first item on the agenda. That is required by statute

Mr. Reece: The whole reason this was brought up was that it was under the assumption that it was ending this year and the best I remembered, and that was a great idea Mr. Billingsley, the reason we set it in an offset year was to keep this from happening. I do not know why the Board is discussing this now that they realize, that was not our intent and was not our intent years ago and there is no reason to move the goal post.

Mr. Billingsley: But we did when we voted on it.

Mr. Reece: We did, but we can kill that as well now that we see the facts instead of what we assumed. Something that was brought up at last minute nobody was prepared for it. I jumped on the band wagon, I knew it was a 3-year thing at one point, but that was from the former Director, guilty, I see the light. To me if we try to extend this, we try to renew or whatever it's unethical. Is that a violation of ethics, no, you can break a law and not go to jail and still be guilty of being a law breaker, it's unethical, that is how we set that up, Mr. Billingsley I am glad you came up with that idea 3 or 4 years ago, that was a great idea. I don't see us moving the goal post tonight or in the future. That was a great idea for a reason then and still a good idea.

Mr. Farmer: So the current due date is 18 months out?

Mr. Upchurch: June 30, 2025

Mr. Reece: We have an election coming up, possible Board members changing, definitely one Board member changing, so that is who should be negotiating the contract. I hope I have enough discipline when it is my time to get off of the Board that I wouldn't try to move it and change it and I would have enough discipline to set back and say that is not my place to vote for something I am not going to be dealing with.

Mr. Billingsley: I appreciate all of the accolades, Mr. Reece. I do not agree with it being unethical, I don't agree with the ethics part whatsoever. We all have come on the Board, when you come on the Board you are going to be over a Superintendent you did not hire, that is going to happen a lot. I don't think anyone on the Board did this intentionally, I don't appreciate that accusation either.

Mr. Reece: I did not say it was intentional.

Mr. Billingsley: We have made this motion; I am sure we could kill the motion in some way shape or form, but personally Mrs. Sparkman has done a wonderful job I think, our results prove that. She is willing to extend her contract and I think we should take advantage of that while she is willing to do that.

Mr. Reece: This is nothing against you Mrs. Sparkman, I don't want you think it is, it is just the wrong time in my opinion. I am one 7th.

Mr. Farmer: When have we normally picked up contract discussion in the past over the last several Directors?

Mr. Reece: Five month before.

Mr. Farmer: We could set that up sometime in the 4th quarter of this year or 3rd quarter or whatever maybe. We would have whatever Board it may be at that time and have plenty of time, we have draft agreement, and plenty of time to negotiate that out.

Mr. Reece: I would not have any problem with it being in September when we started it.

Mr. Boring: I think Mr. Reece from everything you just said you were pointing that at me. I don't appreciate that very much. I am the only one that is in that situation that you just mentioned.

Mr. Reece: That is definitely leaving, there is another that may be leaving. If I had pointed at you I would have said Mr. Boring.

Mr. Boring: You could have just finished it off with that.

Mr. Reece: If you would like me to I will, but that is not what I said.

Mr. Boring: What I see is if you have a coach's contract that ends five years from now, you have a good year, you have a great year, you extend that contract. If a coach comes up and does a spectacular job, you offer to extend the contract. Why do you do that? So the coach doesn't leave. When they start making things happen people start looking at them and they start calling them and try to get them to go to their area. That is why you do things in my opinion expeditiously and I don't mean in a hurry, I mean before something else happens. If you have something going well, you want to keep that going. I was elected to do a job. This is part of my job as a school board member. My opinion of course, I have one of 7 votes. It is amazing what has been going on, we just had reports the last couple month of Level 4 and Level 5 school it is amazing. It is amazing what has been going on thanks to the Principals, Mrs. Sparkman and Administrator.

Mrs. Sparkman: And Teachers

Mr. Boring: We have a couple of teachers right here in the middle. These folks have

done a great job, to keep that going, I don't think it would be unethical in my opinion to continue that, to keep that going. My opinion.

Mr. Billingsley: Mr. Upchurch when you said this had to be disclosed 15 days is that like a formal in the paper or just here at the meeting tonight?

Mr. Upchurch: If you are going to renew, terminate or extend the Directors contract, you have to give the public 15 calendar day notice before that meeting.

Mr. Billingsley: How do we notify the public?

Mr. Upchurch: Have it on the agenda, how we notify them now.

Mr. Billingsley made a motion to negotiate this contract and have it as the first item on the next month's agenda.

MOTION: Mr. Billingsley

SECOND: Mr. Snow

VOTE: Mr. Billingsley: YES Mr. Boring: YES Mr. Farmer: ABSTAIN Mr. Frady: YES

Mrs. Oakes: YES Mr. Reece: NO Mr. Snow: YES

14. Old Business. No Old Business

15. New Business. No New Business

16. Director's update. Moved to February meeting

Meeting	Date	Place	Time
Planning Session	February 5, 2024	Bledsoe County Middle School	5:30 p.m.
Regular Meeting	February 5, 2024	Bledsoe County Middle School	6:00 p.m.

17. Adjourn.

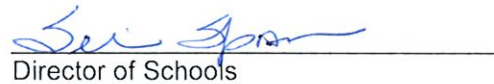
MOTION: Mr. Billingsley

SECOND: Mr. Frady

VOTE: Mr. Billingsley: AYE Mr. Boring: AYE Mr. Farmer: AYE Frady: AYE

Mrs. Oakes: AYE Mr. Reece: AYE Mr. Snow: AYE


Board Chairman


Director of Schools