

May 14, 2020
6:00 p.m.

The Fannin County Board of Education met in regular session with the following members present: Chad Galloway, Chair; Terry Bramlett, Vice-Chair; Bobby Bearden; Mike Cole; and Lewis DeWeese. All members were present. The meeting was held at the Fannin County High School (FCHS) Performing Arts Center (PAC) to allow for adequate social distancing due to concerns with COVID-19.

The meeting was called to order by Chad Galloway, Chair.

Motion by Terry Bramlett, seconded by Mike Cole, to approve the consent agenda. All members voted yes; motion carried.

Approve the agenda.

Approve the meeting minutes from April 9, 2020, at 6:00 p.m.

Superintendent Michael Gwatney shared that FCHS Principal Erik Cioffi's School Happenings presentation and the School Governance Team (SGT) updates were available to view online. **(See attached SGT update.)** Sarah Rigdon shared information on SGT elections, and Darren Danner provided a facilities update.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

Motion by Bobby Bearden, seconded by Mike Cole, to approve the bid from Mundy's Heating and Air, Inc. for \$162,031 for the HVAC system and gas pipe replacement at the FCHS Old Gym. This is to be paid with SPLOST funds. All members voted yes; motion carried. **(See attached.)**

Motion by Terry Bramlett, seconded by Lewis DeWeese, to approve Bowen & Watson as the Construction Manager at Risk for the Transportation Facility and Staff Development Center. All members voted yes; motion carried. **(See attached.)**

Motion by Lewis DeWeese, seconded by Mike Cole, to approve the purchase of six welding stations for FCHS Career, Technology, and Agriculture Education (CTAE) program from Clean Air America, Inc. for \$42,660, which includes six prefabricated booths including filtering, electrical, and curtains. This is a turn-key installation for the stations. These will be paid for with SPLOST funds. **(See attached.)**

Motion by Terry Bramlett, seconded by Mike Cole, to approve the request to the Georgia Department of Education for assistance in developing a new five-year local facilities plan. All members voted yes; motion carried. **(See attached.)**

Lucas Roof provided an update on the Fiscal Year 2021 CTAE federal and state grants.

Motion by Mike Cole, seconded by Terry Bramlett, to approve the Fiscal Year 2021 Perkins V Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment and Local Application. All members voted yes; motion carried. **(See attached.)**

Motion by Terry Bramlett, seconded by Mike Cole, to approve the district's financial report for March 2020. All members voted yes; motion carried. **(See attached.)**

Dr. Gwatney stated the SPLOST check received for March 2020 was \$445,424.87.

Motion by Bobby Bearden, seconded by Terry Bramlett, to approve school quarterly financial reports. All members voted yes; motion carried. **(See attached.)**

Motion by Mike Cole, seconded by Terry Bramlett, to approve the Fiscal Year 2020 budget amendment. All members voted yes; motion carried. **(See attached.)**

Motion by Terry Bramlett, seconded by Bobby Bearden, to approve the Fiscal Year 2021 Budget Timeline. All members voted yes; motion carried. **(See attached.)**

Motion by Terry Bramlett, seconded by Lewis DeWeese, to approve the 2020 Millage Timeline. All members voted yes; motion carried. **(See attached.)**

Motion by Bobby Bearden, seconded by Mike Cole, to approve student meal prices for School Year 2020-2021. All members voted yes; motion carried. **(See attached.)**

Motion by Mike Cole, seconded by Bobby Bearden, to approve the resignations of Ashley Coffinger and Joseph O'Neal effective May 28, 2020. All members voted yes; motion carried.

Motion by Lewis DeWeese, seconded by Chad Galloway, to approve the resignations of Martha Chastain and Debbie Dillinger effective June 1, 2020. All members voted yes; motion carried.

Motion by Mike Cole, seconded by Chad Galloway, to approve the resignation of Dionne Ryff effective June 2, 2020. All members voted yes; motion carried.

Motion by Bobby Bearden, seconded by Terry Bramlett, to approve Sandra Silva as a centralized registrar effective May 18, 2020, pending completion of paperwork and background check. All members voted yes; motion carried.

Motion by Bobby Bearden, seconded by Mike Cole, to approve Terry B. Flowers, Candace King, Frances Lawrie, Julia Lindsey, Hannah Nicholson, Jessica Ramirez, Wesley Simonton, and Brittany Todd as teachers effective the 2020-2021 school year, pending completion of paperwork and background check. All members voted yes; motion carried.

Motion by Bobby Bearden, seconded by Chad Galloway, to approve Jill Key as a teacher 49% effective 2020-2021 school year. All members voted yes; motion carried.

Motion by Chad Galloway, seconded by Terry Bramlett, to approve Deborah N. Decubellis as an administrator effective 2020-2021 school year. All members voted yes; motion carried.

Motion by Bobby Bearden, seconded by Chad Galloway, to approve Mary "Betsy" Hyde as an administrator up to 49%, as needed. All members voted yes; motion carried.

Motion by Mike Cole, seconded by Bobby Bearden, to approve Theresa Brown at 65% for the School Nutrition Department effective 2020-2021 school year. All members voted yes; motion carried.

Superintendent's Comments:

Superintendent Gwatney thanked Elden Moates for preparing the PAC and being so accommodating. He thanked School Resource Officer (SRO) Thomas Kay for covering the meeting; Scott Mathis for the Invocation; and Robert Ensley for leading the Pledge of Allegiance. Superintendent Gwatney stated that approximately 89% of the FCSS budget is personnel, and Assistant Superintendent of Personnel and Administration Robert Ensley does an outstanding job leading our personnel. Superintendent Gwatney commended Mr. Ensley for his work to ensure that we are appropriately staffed and all the while maximizing available funding.

Superintendent Gwatney thanked Sarah Rigdon and Darren Danner for their presentations. He stated Mrs. Rigdon is doing a great job as our Chief Academic Officer for the school district. She is always looking ahead; she excels at finding opportunities to keep us moving safely forward, even in the middle of a pandemic, and he is proud of her. He also commended Mr. Danner for his work – as evidenced by multiple Board actions – with facilities and planning.

Superintendent Gwatney commended Lucas Roof on an incredible job not only learning Perkins IV and finishing out the current year, but on all that he has done to give us a strong start to the new Perkins V. He congratulated Mr. Roof on the welding program, and stated that with tonight's Board approval, our Perkins V plan will be the example. Superintendent Gwatney applauded Shannon Miller for leading virtual registrations for Kindergarten and Pre-K, including today's Pre-K drawing. He stated that Mrs. Miller has done a great job with these, as well as everything else related to student services, and she is looking out for our students.

Superintendent Gwatney commended Heather Finley, Scott Mathis, and all of the Technology Department. He stated that FCSS is ahead of the curve because of them, and we could not do it without them. He is excited about the new district registrar to make us better able to serve parents and save district funds at the same time. What folks see is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to tech; most of their work is behind the scenes, and I want to say thank you.

Superintendent Gwatney thanked Candy Sisson and the Nutrition Department for preparing meals. He stated that over 56,000 meals have been prepared for children of Fannin County thus far. He also congratulated her on receiving a state equipment grant awarded to only 47 districts in Georgia.

Superintendent Gwatney thanked Denver Foster and the Transportation Department for delivering meals. He stated that Mr. Foster has done a great job coordinating and working out logistics, all the while emphasizing how the transportation department is willing to do whatever it takes for our students.

Superintendent Gwatney congratulated Susan Wynn on receiving an award from the Georgia Department of Audits (GDA), and he looks forward to seeing the award presented. He thanked her for her work on budget planning and stated that she is truly a financial expert. He appreciates how she thinks through various scenarios with him to plan in a time when the only thing known is there is an economic downturn.

Superintendent Gwatney praised Board members and stated that the students, faculty and staff, and Fannin County community are benefitting from their wisdom and governance. He thanked

them for their support that has allowed this school district to achieve a healthy fund balance that will carry us through what is to come economically. They are making a difference for our students, personnel, and the community.

Superintendent Gwatney took a moment to remember Garnett Webb for his service to our Board, the County Commission, and our local Veterans' organizations.

Superintendent Gwatney thanked Mr. Erik Cioffi for preparing the School Happenings video, and he gave a special shout out to Fannin County High School. For the last three days, Assistant Principal Dr. Scott Ramsey called out a graduate's name in our stadium, and that graduate walked the field to a receiving line with Principal Cioffi, Board Chair Galloway, Superintendent Gwatney, and Assistant Principal Collis. Each student had video and photos made while his or her family and friends cheered from the track. Superintendent Gwatney thanked David Henson and the SROs who kept everything moving, as well as all of the high school staff members who worked in the field house helping the students. Superintendent Gwatney thanked Bubba Gibbs and his crew for working to show it live on Rebel TV.

Finally, Superintendent Gwatney thanked the teachers at the elementary, middle, and high schools for their work with the Class of 2020. He appreciated the investments they have made in these students, and he knows that these investments will have huge returns. To the Class of 2020, he looks forward to seeing the many great and wonderful things they will accomplish. His thoughts and prayers are with them – May God bless the Class of 2020.

Board Members' Comments:

Mike Cole asked if anyone else here is excited about the school system we are in here in Fannin County. It is very exciting. He looks up and sees Mr. Moates; he recalls that he probably gave him a few of his gray hairs. He looks at the uncommon times we are in that call for uncommon strength. He sees a rising up, and a lot of folks, even those who are viewing online, really don't understand the work that he sees the administrators doing to accomplish graduation and make it a memorable one. This graduation might not look like the ones of the past, but he assures you it will be one you never forget. Graduation is going to be a good time, and he sees the efforts that have been placed to make sure it is the best graduation that we can provide in the times that we are living in right now. He thanked all of those who have worked very hard to make graduation happen.

Mr. Cole referred to the CTAE assessments of needs and wants and that we do not really have many needs here in Fannin County. It is good that we have reserves that allow us to make it through a 14% cut and still move on and really not be affected right now; the things we are striving for are really our wants. He is thankful that we have our needs, but there are things we want and want to do better. Mr. Cole stated that he wants to be able to provide more and more for students. He is pushed toward the CTAE side, and he is excited about CTAE. He is thankful that we are in a community that is so blessed. We are blessed and thankful for teachers who are dedicated, and he sees it because his 10-year-old daughter is involved in the teachers checking in on her and making sure she is getting what she needs and getting her work done. He is thankful for that. Although he cannot say it to all of the teachers, he is saying it now: "Thank you." Mr. Cole is thankful to work with all the Board members and with a Superintendent who is

constantly keeping the Board aware of what is going on. He asked that we be thankful that this place is blessed and stated that we have favor here.

Bobby Bearden stated that we have a great Board, and he enjoys tremendously working with the other members. He recognized Robert Ensley, Sarah Rigdon, Darren Danner, Susan Wynn, Lucas Roof, Shannon Miller, and all individuals whom Dr. Gwatney has on his team. He stated that he thinks these people, along with the teachers, bus drivers, and custodians, have made this great for Fannin County. There are people in other parts of Georgia and the United States who are not blessed to have the things we have. It is unbelievable that we can take meals out to children, and you and I both know that they are not going to have something to eat unless they get these meals. He is so thankful that we can do this for our children here in Fannin County. Over 56,000 meals is a tremendous job, and he thanked – from the bottom of his heart – everyone who had a part in preparing those meals.

Mr. Bearden thanked Denver Foster and the bus drivers for running all the routes safely, and doing everything they needed to do. He has heard teachers would rather be in the classroom than where they are at instructing children at home. That is our teachers, and it shows what caliber of teachers we have. He is grateful that we have the opportunity to have the graduation on May 22. If he were one of those seniors, and this was his time, he would be very thankful that we could have the graduation ceremony. Mr. Bearden mentioned how quick his graduation was in 1968. It was hardly anything. That was 1968; this is 2020. He is thankful for everybody who has a part in this school system.

Lewis DeWeese stated that he is going to use the term “educator” very broadly to include everyone in our system. He cannot imagine where educators’ minds and hearts have been through this time. Ever since Superintendent Gwatney came on board, Mr. DeWeese said he has been kidding him about the fact he has been tried in every way possible. When meal delivery began, Superintendent Gwatney called and told him about a little boy who was at the bus stop with a broken umbrella and tattered clothes; the staff offered him a meal, and he said he had a brother inside. Mr. DeWeese said that he was not ashamed to say that he cried with Superintendent Gwatney. Fannin County is special, and our educators are a special breed of people. He thanked the Lord that they care like they do, and he wishes he had the words to really compliment them properly. They change lives, take lives that are ordinary and make them excellent. It amazes him the difference that educators make. They should be very proud of themselves. If they change one life, isn’t that a miracle? But, to think that they do it on a daily basis — report each morning, teachers, administrators, bus drivers, whoever they are; they care for students and give them a life to live later after school. Mr. DeWeese stated that he prays the Lord will bless you all and reward you for the work that you do because you all are truly special. Mr. DeWeese said that he feels this is the best school system anywhere.

Terry Bramlett said thank you to everyone in the system. You have gone above and beyond to accommodate our students through these difficult times and difficult circumstances we find ourselves in. It is remarkable. He is thankful for so many things. He is thankful this Board and administration has been conservative and fiscally responsible, and we are in a position where we can weather the storm. He has made this statement a number of times, and the time is upon us. Those systems now carrying a heavy load of debt are truly struggling, and they will struggle more with the cuts that are coming. So we are blessed indeed. Mr. Bramlett stated that he is thankful for the SPLOST that has allowed us to fund our technology. He watched other systems

struggle trying to come up with a way to provide personal devices for their students, and Fannin County was already in a position to deal with that. He is thankful for the Curriculum Online Learning Days (COLD) initiative that gave us a head start on distance learning. The planning and thought that went into that program truly served us well and put us ahead of the game.

Mr. Bramlett stated that it is an honor to represent and to be an advocate for the young people of Fannin County. It is also an honor to have the opportunity to be a good steward of taxpayer dollars. He congratulated students who have earned academic achievement awards and students that are receiving scholarships. He gave a very special congratulation to the students who are graduating: the Class of 2020. You are unique. You have dealt with difficult situations with grace and perseverance. The circumstances that we find ourselves in in no way diminish your achievements, and we are so very proud of you. May God bless each and every one of you.

Chad Galloway stated that he agrees with everything that has been said. He thanked all faculty and staff for their huge hearts and the way they have reached out for our children and our community. Faculty and staff have stepped up in ways that are unimaginable. Mr. Galloway wishes that everyone in the community could sit on the Board member side of the table and see the effort that has gone into the current learning environment. All the efforts for our students are amazing.

Mr. Galloway was honored to be a part of the receiving line during the individual ceremonies. To be there and watch the graduates walk across the field, to see their smiles, and to see their eyes, especially in this time of uncertainty. Seeing those children and their eyes light up, he lost all concern for the uncertainty, and he knew that we are going to make it through this; there is hope. In his time on the Board, participating in the graduation ceremony is the one thing that stands out the most.

There being no further business to come before the meeting, a motion was made by Bobby Bearden, seconded by Mike Cole, to adjourn subject to being called into special session by the Chair when deemed necessary. All members voted yes; motion carried.

Chad Galloway, Chairperson

Michael Gwatney, Superintendent

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