

October 13, 2022
5:30 p.m.

The Fannin County Board of Education met in regular session with the following members present: Terry Bramlett, Chair; Mike Cole, Vice-Chair; Bobby Bearden; Lewis DeWeese; and Chad Galloway.

The meeting was called to order by Terry Bramlett, Chair.

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

Approve the agenda.

Approve the Board meeting minutes from September 7, 2022, at 7:00 p.m.; September 8, 2022, at 5:30 p.m.; and September 26, 2022, at 12:00 p.m.

Director of Nutrition & Wellness Martha Williams and the FCSS School Nutrition Program Managers presented both SY21 and SY22 Golden Radish Awards. Chief Academic Officer Lucas Roof and Fannin County Chamber of Commerce President Christie Gribble presented the Georgia Department of Education Economic Development Partnership Award.

Deputy Superintendent Sarah Rigdon reviewed summaries of recent activities of the five Fannin School Governance Teams.

Chief Academic Officer Lucas Roof presented the Fannin County School System's annual certificate from the Georgia Accrediting Commission (GAC) to Superintendent Michael Gwatney and the Board. Mr. Roof also presented each of the principals with his/her school's certificate. All schools and the district were "Accredited with Quality," the Commission's highest rating.

East Fannin Elementary Principal Matt Price presented school happenings to the Board.

Director of Technology & Information Services Heather Finley provided the Board with an update on technology initiatives and information related to Cybersecurity Awareness Month (October).

The Board heard public comment from five individuals.

Chief Operations Officer Darren Danner shared an update on facilities with the Board.

Motion by Chad Galloway, seconded by Mike Cole, to approve a \$27,560.65 quote from Atlanta Soundworks, Inc. for 140 (2' x 4') 2" baffles to be installed at the Fannin Ag Facility (to improve acoustic quality) utilizing SPLOST funds. All members voted yes; motion carried. **(See attached.)**

Motion by Bobby Bearden, seconded by Chad Galloway, to extend the current property management agreement with Jeff Queen by one year. All members voted yes; motion carried.

Motion by Lewis DeWeese, seconded by Mike Cole, to approve two Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with the Fannin County Department of Public Health (FCDPH) to provide a facility to FCDPH, if needed, due to a local health emergency; and to approve FCDPH to provide

scoliosis screenings of students ages 10–15 years. The agreement shall be for one year effective October 1, 2022. All members voted yes; motion carried. **(See attached.)**

Motion by Mike Cole, seconded by Chad Galloway, to approve district financial reports for the period ending August 31, 2022. All members voted yes; motion carried. **(See attached.)**

Director of Finance Susan Wynn informed the Board that the SPLOST check received for August 2022 was \$821,559.03.

Motion by Bobby Bearden, seconded by Chad Galloway, to accept an award from the Third Emergency Connectivity Fund Program (ECF) with the Universal Services Administrative Company (USAC), Schools and Libraries Division (SLD), which will provide funds to purchase 1,350 Hewlett Packard Chromebooks for \$367,875.00. The vendor will invoice USAC for the entire purchase; therefore, there is no net cost to the FCSS. All members voted yes; motion carried. **(See attached.)**

Motion by Mike Cole, seconded by Bobby Bearden, to approve for surplus of technology items. All members voted yes; motion carried. **(See attached.)**

Motion by Chad Galloway, seconded by Mike Cole, to approve for salvage of technology items. All members voted yes; motion carried. **(See attached.)**

Motion by Lewis DeWeese, seconded by Bobby Bearden, to approve a bus use request from the Mountain Education Charter High School. All members voted yes; motion carried. **(See attached.)**

Executive Director Shannon Miller recognized the Board for earning Georgia School Boards Association “Exemplary Board” status for 2022. On October 21, the Board will participate in local Board training facilitated by Pioneer RESA to discuss “FCSS Facilities Planning.”

Motion by Lewis DeWeese, seconded by Terry Bramlett, to go into Executive Session to discuss or deliberate upon the appointment, employment, compensation, hiring, disciplinary action or dismissal, or periodic evaluation or rating of a public officer or employee or to interview applicants for the position of superintendent; (O.C.G.A. § 50-14-3(b)(2)). All members voted yes; motion carried. Before exiting for Executive Session, the Board encouraged the night’s public speakers to stay for Board comments at the end of the meeting.

Motion by Chad Galloway, seconded by Bobby Bearden, to resume the regular meeting. All members voted yes; motion carried. No action was taken during Executive Session.

Motion by Chad Galloway, seconded by Bobby Bearden, to approve the minutes of the Executive Session for July 21, 2022; August 11, 2022; August 19, 2022; August 23, 2022; September 1, 2022; September 2, 2022; and September 7, 2022. All members voted yes; motion carried.

Motion by Bobby Bearden, seconded by Mike Cole, to approve the resignation of Shannon Cioffi effective December 31, 2022. All members voted yes; motion carried.

Motion by Lewis DeWeese, seconded by Mike Cole, to approve Lauren Payne and Amanda Housley as interim administrators for the remainder of the SY22-23 pending completion of paperwork, background check, certifications, and training. All members voted yes; motion carried.

Motion by Mike Cole, seconded by Lewis DeWeese, to approve Molly Conklin as Interim Professional Staff for the remainder of the SY22-23 pending completion of paperwork, background check, certifications, and training. All members voted yes; motion carried.

Motion by Mike Cole, seconded by Chad Galloway, to approve Dorianna Jones as Paraprofessional effective October 14, 2022, pending completion of paperwork, background check, certifications, and training. All members voted yes; motion carried.

Motion by Chad Galloway seconded by Bobby Bearden, to approve Charles “Tim” Hawkins as nutrition substitute effective October 13, 2022, pending completion of paperwork, background check, and training. All members voted yes; motion carried.

Superintendent Gwatney shared internal transfers with the Board for informational purposes, including: Betsy Hyde as Deputy Superintendent (49%) over personnel, Darren Danner (lateral transfer) to Chief Operations Officer, Lucas Roof (promoted) to Chief Academic Officer, and Gini Tipton (promoted) to Director of Student Services, Amanda Housley as FCHS Interim Assistant Principal, and Lauren Payne as interim Student Services Coordinator.

Superintendent’s Comments:

Superintendent Gwatney began comments by addressing the Teacher of the Year program and Mandy Housley, the district winner, as well as runner-up Alex Whitener. He gave a shout-out to the FFA/Ag program and sponsors of the recent youth fair and also the recent “Ag Day” for the third graders stating he is thankful we have these. Dr. Gwatney thanked the night’s presenters.

He thanked Heather Finley for obtaining over \$300,000 in computers at no cost. He recognized the high school band for a successful festival and also the FCHS cheerleading squad, which was invited to UGA to cheer at a recent half-time program there. Dr. Gwatney stated that Fannin has great extracurricular events.

Nutrition appreciation and bus driver appreciation week were addressed, and Dr. Gwatney reminded those present that everybody in the school district either teaches kids or supports the people who teach kids, and that it is important to recognize all.

Dr. Gwatney thanked those who spoke during public comment. He thanked the presenters for exercising their First Amendment Rights in a civil and respectful way. He stated that he respected what they were saying and encouraged them to reach out to their U.S. Senators and Representative, as well as the President with their concerns over Federal legislation.

Lastly, Dr. Gwatney recognized Sarah Rigdon on her retirement. He stated she was one of the best people he knew and a dear friend of his.

Board Members' Comments:

Bobby Bearden stated that he appreciated everyone for coming out to tonight's meeting. He commented to Mr. Price that reading, writing, and arithmetic were number one long ago just as his presentation showed today. Mr. Bearden thanked all of the night's presenters and public comments. To Mrs. Rigdon, he stated that he could not say enough; somebody could take her job, but no one could take her place.

Mr. Bearden concluded by stating that he was a dad, a grandfather, and a great-grandfather. He said there was nobody in the room that loved a child more than a parent does. However, he loves Fannin's students and will do whatever is in his power to ensure that our children have an education. Although there is only so much school Boards can do, he loves and prays for all.

Mike Cole told Sarah Rigdon, "I love ya." He reminisced about working together and stated that she was a great friend whom he would miss.

Mr. Cole stated that he was grateful for the sound tiles that will be installed at the ag building to help with the poor acoustics.

Regarding the public comments and Title IX – Mr. Cole reminded the audience that he has a little girl in 7th grade and a grandbaby at WFES. He stated that he is a person of faith and that he stands for that; morality is taught at home, not at school. He does not want to teach students something he doesn't believe.

Mr. Cole spoke to the presenters with whom he had already met. He also discussed the need to get out and vote. He reminded those present that he can do only what he can do. He stated that we have to pray and that those present must continue to speak and use their voice and their faith. He wished all to have a blessed evening.

Chad Galloway thanked all in attendance and especially Commissioner Jamie Hensley. To Sarah Rigdon, he stated that it had been a tremendous honor to work with her and that she had done many things without any praise, and he considered her his friend. Mr. Galloway thanked Matt Price for his presentation and stated that he appreciated him. He then congratulated all who were promoted, and he also recognized Frankie Rigdon for his support of Sarah.

Mr. Galloway stated that it would be difficult to add to what Mr. Bearden and Mr. Cole had said about Title IX. He stated that as a born-again Christian, a father, and a grandfather that he would do anything in his power to protect our county's children. He concluded by stating that we must pray about this because we have a great big God that can change anything.

Lewis DeWeese stated that he did not want to add anything to what has been said. He told the night's public commenters that they acted on the love of their kids. He stated that he was thankful to live in this area and thankful that a lot of those in attendance were in the kid business.

He implored the audience to keep the Board aware of what needs to be done. He concluded by stating that the Board will do its best to serve the good Lord and serve the children.

Terry Bramlett thanked all for coming out tonight. To Mrs. Rigdon, he said that thanks seemed so hollow compared to the impact she has had on the school system and the children of Fannin county. He continued by saying that we are where we are today in part because of Mrs. Rigdon's diligence, drive, and dedication which are immeasurable. He thanked her for her service to the Fannin County School System and said she was appreciated and loved.

Mr. Bramlett stated that little could be added to the comments tonight. Every member of the Board has or has had children in the school system. The public comments tonight highlighted concerns that are both real and valid. Mr. Bramlett encouraged everyone to contact their Representatives and the President. He stated that the elected officials need to hear from them regardless of whether they voted for them or not.

Mr. Bramlett stated that we are blessed to live in Fannin county. The school personnel are like a big family and they love the community's children. They want the best for them. The Board will do everything within its power to ensure our community's students receive the best education possible.

One other item Mr. Bramlett wished to speak to was another way to express an opinion and voice -to vote. He stated that what many consider unbearable ideas have not become mandates, yet. We have a solid Governor and State Board of Education that are willing to stand up for traditional values that our Board also shares. Mr. Bramlett encouraged all to take the time to go and vote and make their positions and selection clear. He stated that it is important to do research and vote for those that share their values.

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

Terry Bramlett, Chairperson

Michael Gwatney, Superintendent

mfw