

MINUTES
BLEDSOE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
REGULAR MEETING
OCTOBER 4, 2021

The Bledsoe County Board of Education met in Regular Session on October 4, 2021, at 6:00 p.m. at Bledsoe County Middle School. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Vincent Boring. With seven members present.

Chairman Boring introduces Mrs. Selina Sparkman the new director of schools for Bledsoe County.

Chairman Boring request a moment of silence for the passing of Mr. Casto Davis, Head Maintenance and Bus Driver for Bledsoe County Schools, Mr. Warren Watson the husband of Mrs. Jessica Watson, Pre-K teacher at Pikeville Elementary School and Mr. Mike Mitchell, who has children in the Bledsoe County School system

Roll Call:

Mr. Andy Billingsley	-	Present
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 with the following addition and to table item #3, approval of monthly reports: 13c. The approval of the Center for Disease Control Grant.
MOTION: Billingsley SECOND: Frady
VOTE: Mr. Billingsley: AYE Mr. Boring: AYE Mr. Farmer: AYE Mr. Frady: AYE
 Mrs. Oakes: AYE Mr. Reece: AYE Mr. Snow: AYE
Motion Passed
2. Approval of the minutes from the September 9, 2021 regular meeting of the Bledsoe County Board of Education.
MOTION: Farmer SECOND: Reece
VOTE: Mr. Billingsley: AYE Mr. Boring: AYE Mr. Farmer: AYE Mr. Frady: AYE
 Mrs. Oakes: AYE Mr. Reece: AYE Mr. Snow: AYE
Motion Passed
3. Request by Mrs. Janice Ritchie, Finance Director, to approve monthly financial reports for the month ending July 31, 2021. Tabled
Motion Passed
4. Request by Mrs. Janice Ritchie, Finance Director, for the approval of budget amendment #3 to amend for the revenue received from the VW Bus Grant Bus #4 and Bus #5.
MOTION: Mr. Billingsley SECOND: Mr. Frady
VOTE: Mr. Billingsley: YES Mr. Boring: YES Mr. Farmer: YES Mr. Frady: AYE
 Mrs. Oakes: AYE Mr. Reece: AYE Mr. Snow: AYE
Motion Passed
5. Request by Mrs. Janice Ritchie, Finance Director, for the approval of revisions to Fund 141 General Purpose, 156 Education Debt Service and 177 Education Capital Projects quarterly reports ending June 30, 2021.
141 General Purpose - Revision to reflect an increase of indirect cost

- transferred in from the ESSER 2.0 Grant.
- 156 Education Debt Service – Debt Service was corrected by transfer of funds to reflect \$525,000.00 to debt service and \$95,000.00 to Capital Projects.
- 177- Capital Projects - Correction of bond premium to be on a line item by itself.

MOTION: Farmer SECOND: Snow
 VOTE: Mr. Billingsley: YES Mr. Boring: YES Mr. Farmer: YES Mr. Frady: YES
 Mrs. Oakes: YES Mr. Reece: YES Mr. Snow: YES
 Motion Passed

- 6. Request by Mrs. Janice Ritchie, Finance Director, for the approval to transfer funds related to grants.
 To allow transferring money from General Purpose to Federal Projects so all grant payments can be made from the correct line item and as money for the grants are reimbursed back from the state the money will be transferred back to General Purpose. Permission to transfer between funds will be effective until June 30, 2022.

MOTION: Billingsley SECOND: Farmer
 VOTE: Mr. Billingsley: YES Mr. Boring: YES Mr. Farmer: YES Mr. Frady: YES
 Mrs. Oakes: YES Mr. Reece: YES Mr. Snow: YES
 Motion Passed

- 7. Request by Mr. Ronny Collier, FFA Advisor, to attend the National FFA Conference in Indianapolis, IN on October 27-30, 2021 and to use a Bledsoe County School bus for transportation.

FFA Officers gave an update on achievements of the Bledsoe County FFA Chapter.
 MOTION: Frady SECOND: Farmer
 VOTE: Mr. Billingsley: YES Mr. Boring: YES Mr. Farmer: YES Mr. Frady: YES
 Mrs. Oakes: YES Mr. Reece: YES Mr. Snow: YES
 Motion Passed

- 8. Request by Mr. Carl Boynton, Special Education Supervisor, and Mrs. Michelle Rains, Coordinated School Health, for the approval of the Tennessee AWARE grant and four positions associated with the grant.

MOTION: Billingsley SECOND: Snow
 VOTE: Mr. Billingsley: YES Mr. Boring: YES Mr. Farmer: YES Mr. Frady: YES
 Mrs. Oakes: YES Mr. Reece: YES Mr. Snow: YES
 Motion Passed

- 9. Request by Mr. Brian Turner, Maintenance Supervisor, for the approval of bids for the Covid Center.

Mr. Brian Turner, Maintenance Supervisor, recommended the Board set a meeting to discuss facilities before accepting any bids.
 Motion was made to table item #9 and Item #10 and to set a meeting to discuss facilities.
 MOTION: Farmer SECOND: Reece
 VOTE: Mr. Billingsley: AYE Mr. Boring: AYE Mr. Farmer: AYE Mr. Frady: AYE
 Mrs. Oakes: AYE Mr. Reece: AYE Mr. Snow: YES
 Motion Passed

- 10. Request by Mr. Brian Turner, Maintenance Supervisor, for the approval of bids for the Multi-Purpose Building for Bledsoe County Middle School. TABLED

- 11. Discussion of Capital Projects.

Mr. Turner discussed the draft project information sheets for the Covid Center, Multipurpose Center, Health and Wellness Center, and Board of Education Office.
 Mr. Farmer asked who is assigning the price per square foot. Mr. Turner stated it was from

the architect.

Mr. Turner stated the Health and Wellness Center square footage was determined by a combination of Mr. Mosley, Ms. Ritchie and himself providing Upland Design with spaces need and the training area footage was from a previous drawing for another facility that Upland Design had designed.

Mr. Farmer suggested that where these facilities are place is just as important and the facilities themselves. The long term investment of where they are placed whether, it be on the campus or somewhere else drives the economy.

Chairman Boring suggested that a list be compiled of projects with project numbers and names.

12. Recommended policy updates by TSBA after policy review:

- Policy # 4.209 - Alternative Credit Option
- Policy # 6.500 - Special Education Students
- Policy # 5.303 - Personal and Professional Leave
- Policy # 5.801 - Director of Schools Recruitment and Selection with the following revision to read: "but no less than a majority vote"

Motion to approve policies as suggested by TSBA with a revision to policy #5.801 as stated.

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

Motion Passed

A fifteen minute recess was taken at this time.

13. New Business.

13a. Bledsoe County Education Association.

Mrs. Elizabeth Hannah addressed the Board and read aloud a letter that was sent to Chairman Boring on September 23, 2021.

September 23, 2021 Chairman

Vincent Boring,

The Bledsoe County Education Association, pursuant to Board Policy 1.106 Section 5 of the Bledsoe County Board of Education Policy, is formally filing a complaint against Vice Chair Mr. Snow. This complaint is being filed on behalf of the professional educators of Bledsoe County against Mr. Snow for an offensive post toward all educators on his Facebook page that was a public post. The Bledsoe County Education Association officially requests an Ethics Committee be convened in answer to this official complaint against Vice Chairman Don Snow.

The basis of the complaint is Mr. Snow's social media post on Friday, September 10, 2021 at 4:31 pm. Mr. Snow posted a quote by Thomas Sowell, stating, "Ours may become the first civilization destroyed, not by the power of our enemies, but by the ignorance of our teachers and the dangerous nonsense they are teaching our children." The professional educators of Bledsoe County found this social media post to be derogatory, offensive, critical and unsupportive of teachers, and the mandated curriculum and teacher duties that the School Board has adopted and put into place for its professional employees. As Vice Chairman of the Bledsoe County School Board Mr. Snow clearly violated the *Boardsmanship Code of Conduct*.

As such, we declare Vice Chair Snow's statement is in violation of the following sections of Board Policy 1.1061 Boardsmanship Code of Conduct.

MY RELATIONS TO THE CHILDREN

1. I will at all times think in terms of "children first," always determining how my actions and decisions will affect the education and training of children.

MY RELATIONS TO MY COMMUNITY

4. *I will represent the Board and the school district to the public in such a way as to promote both interest and support.*
5. *I will refer to other board members, staff, students, and the public with respect when using social media.*

MY RELATIONS TO TEACHERS AND PERSONNEL

2. *I will support and protect personnel in performance of their duties.*
3. *I will not criticize employees publicly but will express any relevant concerns to the Director of Schools for investigation and action if necessary.*

MY RELATIONS TO MYSELF

1. *I will uphold the integrity and independence of the position.*
2. *I will become familiar with federal and state education laws and school board policies.*
3. *I will educate myself about my duties and responsibilities and current educational issues by individual study and through participation in programs providing needed information.*
5. *I will vote and act impartially for the good of the school district.*
6. *I will avoid conflicts of interest, and I will refrain from using my position on the Board for personal or partisan gain.*
8. *I will model civility to students, employees, and all elements of the community by encouraging the free expression of opinion by all board members and engaging in respectful dialogue with fellow board members on matters being considered by the Board.*

We offer the following remedies for the Board to consider in addressing the violations of the aforementioned codes.

-That Mr. Snow be asked to elaborate on the intention of his post, issue a sincere public apology to Bledsoe County educators for the offensive nature of its content, and agree to remove the post, and refrain from posting any such statements in the future.

-That Mr. Snow shall complete ethics training to become more familiar with his role as a board member.

-That Mr. Snow be provided with a copy of the state standards mandates, and policies for each subject and grade level, set forth by the State of Tennessee and Bledsoe County school system.

-That Mr. Snow be educated on the teacher evaluation system and the responsibility of each educator and the school district to teach the mandated standards set forth by the state and Bledsoe County School District and approved by both entities.

-That Mr. Snow be removed from the position of Vice Chairman of the Board, and a new Board member elected to the position

-That all Bledsoe County School Board Members make an effort to visit schools and regularly confer with their educators to foster a greater sense of community and understanding between the two groups.

Signed on behalf of the Bledsoe County Education Association members,

Elizabeth Hannah, President

Amanda Roberts, Vice President

Benita Cookston-DeBord, Membership Chair

Motion to give Mrs. Cynde Perry five minutes to address the Board.

MOTION: Farmer SECOND: Billingsley
VOTE: Mr. Billingsley: AYE Mr. Boring: AYE Mr. Farmer: AYE Mr. Frady: AYE
 Mrs. Oakes: AYE Mr. Reece: AYE Mr. Snow: AYE
Motion Passed

This not Mrs. Perry's statement in totality, but some of the concerns she had.

Mrs. Cynde Perry addressed the Board with concerns about the statement that was posted on social media by Mr. Snow which was a quote from Thomas Sowell.

Mrs. Perry stated that she and other fellow co-workers were offended by the social media post. She stated that school board members should be encouraging teachers, not tearing them down. Mrs. Perry also stated that teachers were teaching the curriculum that is provided by the state and local board.

Mrs. Perry stated that she thought Mr. Snow should resign his post as vice-chair as she felt that Mr. Snow had not represented the entire communities best interest, he did not support and protect the teachers of Bledsoe County in performing their duties and public view point of teachers, but was rather the cause of the disturbance. He did not refer to teachers with respect. She stated it begins and ends with those in charge.

Mrs. Perry also read a note from a concerned citizen questioning Mr. Snows intend for sharing of the Thomas Sowell post. The statement was cut short due to time restraints

This is not Mr. Perry's statement in totality, but some of the concerns that he had.

Mr. Steve Perry shared that he was surprised and dishearten that a member of this school board would spread this rhetoric about our education. Mr. Perry stated at the last meeting there was a discussion of recruitment of teachers. He stated that respect, appreciation and a comparative pay scale for teachers is the answer. He further stated that he hoped the rest of the Board members did not share the position of Mr. Snow. If so he stated he was asking for their resignation as well as his.

Mr. Snow read his response as follows:

When I read Dr. Thomas Sowell's post I understood what he was referring to, which was the fact that so many Americans have forgotten what life under communism in places like Cambodia, Cuba and Venezuela as well as many others was like.

I did not in any way believe that Dr. Sowell was referring to places like Bledsoe County.

The majority of "friends" on my FB page are family, fellow veterans, former coworkers and friends from high school. Most of these are retirement age or older. They understand what Dr. Sowell meant.

As far as my commitment to and support for our students and teachers, I hesitate to comment. However, I realize that this issue has become public and many younger folks and newcomers to Bledsoe County do not know my track record.

I came to Bledsoe County over 45 years ago as a TWRA Wildlife Officer. Among the first things that I did was establish good relationships with our principals. I very well remember a conversation that I had with Roger Angel (principal at CBR). We talked about the sad fact that several students each year would be on the honor roll in grades 1-4 and by the fifth grade they would no longer be on the honor roll and would drop out of school in a few years. I will not mention what Roger said, but it helped make me a better teacher for the two years that I taught in our system. It also helps make me a better board member. I tell everyone that will listen that teaching is the hardest work for the lowest pay, but the most satisfying job that I ever had.

For the seven years that I have been on the board, I have supported every effort to increase pay and benefits for all of our employees.

I have been asked to issue a sincere apology. I am sincere in whatever I do. It is a helpless feeling when you hurt someone that you care about and there is nothing you can do except say I am sorry. I know many of our teachers personally and have great respect and affection for them. To all of our teachers, I am so sorry If I have hurt you. I in no way thought that this post referred to you. I took it as a reflection of the things being taught at institutions of higher learning nationwide.

My hope is that this misunderstanding will help foster a better relationship among all involved in the education of our children.

To the members and officers of the BCEA thank you for giving me the opportunity to respond. You had legitimate questions. I have respectfully and sincerely answered. Hopefully we can move forward in a cooperative way to serve our students in the best way possible.

Chairman Boring stated the Board was in total support of teachers and staff and the Board is excited about every teacher that we have and would never make any derogatory comments or send anything their way. Every vote we make is to make our system better. He stated that the Board does make mistakes, but hopefully every vote that is made is to the betterment of the whole system. Chairman Boring stated that Board does support our teachers and he hoped that everyone knows that, if they did not feel that way to let the Board know through the proper channels. He stated that the Board wanted to do what was right and what was right for them. Chairman Boring stated that he has stated many times in past and especially the last year of everything that has been done to keep everyone safe and the jobs that they do every day educating our students. Chairman Boring stated on behalf of the Board he just wanted to say thank you for everything they do.

Mr. Farmer added that he hoped that Mr. Snow's apology helped to heal some of those statements so we can move forward. Mr. Farmer stated he understood with his parents being teachers what that means to have that said about your profession in context or out of context. He stated that he felt Mr. Snow was sincere and regrets he has caused some pain substantially across the system.

13b. Discussion of the sell or lease of property behind Pikeville Elementary School.

Mr. Sam Rainey requested the Board discuss the future use or sale of the property behind the school.

Mr. Snow stated that the property will become a problem, will be over run and will be a jungle. He stated it will be a problem to keep it from encroaching the playground, with snakes and rats coming out of it. It will have to be taken care of just for the safety of kids on the playground. While it was being cropped that was not a problem.

Mr. Reece stated that he thought that it would be better to lease the property than to sell it.

After a discussion on the property Mr. Rainey decided that he was not interested in leasing or purchasing the property.

13c. The approval of the Center for Disease Control Grant. This grant will hire and additional nurse until June 30, 2022.

MOTION: Billingsley SECOND: Reece

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

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

Motion Passed

MEETING	TIME	PLACE	Date
Special Called Meeting	6:00 p.m.	Bledsoe County Middle School	October 12, 2021
Planning Session	5:30 p.m.	Bledsoe County Middle School	November 8, 2021
Regular Meeting	6:00 p.m.	Bledsoe County Middle School	November 8, 2021

14. Adjourn.

MOTION: Billingsley SECOND: Reece

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

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