

October 10, 2019
6:00 p.m.

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

The meeting was called to order by Lewis DeWeese, Chair.

Motion by Mike Cole, seconded by Terry Bramlett, to approve the consent agenda.

Approve agenda and Board meeting minutes from September 12, 2019, at 6:00 p.m. and October 8, 2019, at 4:30 p.m.

All members voted yes to approve the items on the consent agenda; motion carried.

Deputy Superintendent Betsy Hyde reviewed School Governance Team meetings. **(See attached.)**

Deputy Superintendent Betsy Hyde reviewed the Charter System 2019 Annual Report.

Blue Ridge Elementary School (BRES) Principal April Hodges presented on BRES School Happenings.

Director of School Nutrition Candice Sisson reviewed Fannin County's Recognizing Educational Achievement Can Happen (REACH) Program and invited everyone to Fannin County Middle School for the REACH Signing Day ceremony on November 12, 2019, at 10:00 a.m.

Assistant Superintendent Darren Danner shared a facilities update.

Public Comment:

1. David Yard spoke in support of the Gay Student Alliance (GSA) Club.
2. Larry Joe Mull spoke in opposition to the GSA Club.
3. Debbie Holcomb spoke on the resolution regarding Board compensation.

Motion by Bobby Bearden, seconded by Chad Galloway, to approve the district's financial report for August 31, 2019. All members voted yes; motion carried. **(See attached.)**

Dr. Gwatney stated the SPLOST check received for August 2019 was \$518,884.88.

Motion by Terry Bramlett, seconded by Mike Cole, to approve the purchase of 14 ViewBoard Interactive Flat Panels with onboard computers and four motorized stands from CDW-G for \$52,556.00 for BRES to be paid for with SPLOST funds. All members voted yes; motion carried. **(See attached.)**

Motion by Chad Galloway, seconded by Bobby Bearden, to approve the purchase of 112 HP x360 G2 EE Chromebooks for elementary schools for \$30,548.00 from CDW-G to be paid for with SPLOST funds. All members voted yes; motion carried. **(See attached.)**

Motion by Terry Bramlett, seconded by Mike Cole, to approve the purchase of a Kubota 4x4 Diesel Tractor with R4 tires, to include a Kubota front loader with a 72" bucket, Dirt Dog pallet

forks (4,000 lb.), and a Land Pride bale spear. The tractor and tractor equipment will be purchased from Mason Tractor Company for \$29,680.00 and paid for by the Georgia Department of Education using funds provided through the Fannin County FY20 Construction-Related Equipment Grant. All members voted yes; motion carried. **(See attached.)**

Motion by Bobby Bearden, seconded by Mike Cole, to approve surplus Transportation Department items to be sold at auction. All members voted yes; motion carried. **(See attached.)**

Assistant Superintendent Robert Ensley reviewed local Board training selections. **(See attached.)**

Motion by Bobby Bearden, seconded by Chad Galloway, to accept the withdrawal of previous recommendation for Ricky White as a custodian. All members voted yes; motion carried.

Motion by Mike Cole, seconded by Lewis DeWeese, to approve Kristen Stone and Beatriz Wilkinson as substitute teachers pending completion of paperwork and background checks. All members voted yes; motion carried.

Motion by Terry Bramlett, seconded by Bobby Bearden, to approve Ashley Green as a substitute for the Nutrition Department pending completion of paperwork and background checks. All members voted yes; motion carried.

Superintendent's Comments:

Superintendent Dr. Michael Gwatney thanked Robert Ensley for organizing the local board training held earlier in the day. He thanked Pioneer RESA representative Dr. Michael Bush for his participation in the local board training and appreciated members of the media for their participation and support of schools. He thanked Denver Foster and Tara Cantrell for organizing the bus tour that reviewed the demographics of the county.

Superintendent Gwatney appreciated Keith Nuckolls for leading the invocation and Denver Foster for leading the Pledge of Allegiance. He thanked April Hodges for sharing the school happenings update and Candice Sisson for sharing information on the REACH scholar program.

Superintendent Gwatney recognized FCSS Teacher of the Year nominees and the county winner Jill Dyer. He announced the district's receipt of a platinum level award for "Farm to School" initiatives, and he shared the powerful experience the Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall provided and the impact it had on our students and community. He commended FCHS on a graduation rate of 94.2% and congratulated all schools for the part they play in this achievement. He thanked all the stakeholders, faculty, staff, parents, students, and everyone in Fannin County who make this success possible.

Superintendent Gwatney stated that one way Fannin County Schools touch his heart is with the respect we show for our veterans. He is thankful that each school hosts a beautiful program that recognizes and honors veterans, and he shared the schedule for upcoming programs. He ended his comments by thanking the board for their time during local board training and the regular board meeting.

Board Members' Comments:

Chad Galloway thanked everyone for the experiences received through the local board training. Mr. Galloway stated that his favorite part of the day was seeing his shy nephew in a Pre-K class at East Fannin participating in the group. He could see the seeds being sown for potential accomplishments in the futures of the Fannin County's children.

Terry Bramlett stated that he had many things to say but would not cover them all. He stated that he wished to share the reasons why he serves on the Board. He has worked with youth all of his life, and today's local board training was refreshing, boosted his enthusiasm, and made him appreciate what the employees of Fannin County School System do for our students, and it is exciting to see the experiences that our students have. He feels a sense of indebtedness to Fannin County School System due to the education provided to his own two children. They received a wonderful education and were successful in college, as well as in postgraduate studies, and their success started right here in Fannin County Schools. He appreciated the people of Fannin County for their support during a difficult time a few years ago, and he will always be indebted to the people of Fannin County.

Mr. Bramlett stated that state and federal laws govern much of what the Board has to do and that Board members are sworn to uphold the Constitution. Sometimes those legal obligations put Board members in difficult situations. It took him at least a year to understand all of the moving parts of the school system. It is a massive undertaking; the Board has a fiduciary responsibility to understand all parts of a \$38 million budget. Board members evaluate, select, and negotiate the contract for the school superintendent; they develop policies that create the framework for teachers, departments, and administrators to do marvelous work; they approve compensation and benefits for everyone who works for the system, which is the largest employer in the county. The Board approves all hiring and firing, and they spend countless hours reading legal documents and reviewing research. Mr. Bramlett has personally experienced many sleepless nights debating issues and challenges encountered by the Board. He has received phone calls and emails, and engages in one-on-one meetings that may occur in local shopping center parking lots or wherever he may encounter constituents. Mr. Bramlett stated that there are many moving parts not readily apparent to others in the public.

The Board manages SPLOST funds without bonding and stages SPLOST projects to prevent bonding at a savings of \$2.5 million per SPLOST cycle, and approximately \$8 million has been saved over the course of four SPLOST cycles. The Board has reserved the right to bond SPLOST funds in the event of an emergency but has chosen to stage projects and not bond funds. The energy management system in place has also saved additional millions of dollars. Mr. Bramlett stated that all of this has been worth it. He wants everyone to know how much he appreciates them, enjoys working with them, and that it has been a blessing and an honor to serve on the Board.

Bobby Bearden thanked Robert Ensley for organizing the local board training and thanked all who had accompanied the Board throughout the day. He thanked Dr. Hodges for her presentation. He stated that he enjoyed the visit to East Fannin, the Middle School, the Bus Garage, and the maintenance facility. He also stated that the highlight of his day was visiting the Pre-K class and seeing the four-year olds doing what they do. The most exciting part was seeing Mrs. Miller and Mrs. Welch dance with the kids while singing the song about Herman the worm that grew each time he ate an apple. He stated, "Children are where it's at." He thanked everyone for being at the meeting and said ditto to everything that had been said so far.

Mr. Bearden asked, “If you are a praying person, pray for all our children, not just one or two; pray for all of our children. They need guidance. They all need guidance. I believe if we all pray for all of our children, things are going to be a lot better.”

Mike Cole stated that it is a good day to be alive. He thanked all of the school resource officers for the love and compassion they show our students. He has seen students share hugs with these school resource officers, which is striking when television often depicts disrespect for law enforcement. He thanked them from his heart for what they are doing for our students. They do a great service because they love it, not because they receive a paycheck — the same as why Board members are here. Mr. Cole stated that he loves the kids, and he enjoyed the opportunity to go around today and visit schools. He thanked Mr. Ensley for a great trip and the time he put into it. Mr. Cole appreciated Mr. Price and his young kids who lead him around on the tour; they were so intelligent, articulate, and respectful. The students made sure that he was kept up to speed on what was going on throughout the tour. It was exciting.

Mr. Cole thanked Mr. Danner for having the pavement marked at West Fannin so people know what time and what lane is appropriate for them. He stated that he enjoyed witnessing Mrs. Welch bubble over with joy while looking at the literacy activities posted on the walls in the schools. He recognized Dr. Hodges, commended the teachers at Blue Ridge Elementary School, and thanked her for allowing him to partner with her school. He stated that he believes in sowing and reaping. He believes that we are supposed to sow in, and he does as much as he can. He believes in God to give him more just so he can put it in different places. Every school we have in FCSS has good ground. In spite of what some want to see, there is good ground, and there are people that we invest in every day. He wants to be a part of that, and he hopes that you want to be a part of that.

Dr. Hodges said that she lets them dream or imagine, and they get to build a design. Man, I am glad that God lets us imagine a future. I believe we have one, and I am excited to be a part of it. Thank you.

Lewis DeWeese stated that these four men (Board members) have given the best Board Meeting he has been through in his life. After today’s local board training, he does not think he has ever been more confident of the state of the school system and its purpose of kids first. He believes that the system is extraordinary, beautiful, and does a superb job with our kids. He thanked those responsible for planning the day that began with a super meal and seeing kids treated well.

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

Lewis DeWeese, Chairperson

Michael Gwatney, Superintendent

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