

September 8, 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, Chairman.

Motion by Chad Galloway, seconded by Mike Cole, to approve consent agenda. All members voted yes; motion carried.

Approve the agenda.

Approve the Board meeting minutes from August 11, 2022, at 5:00 p.m.; August 11, 2022, at 5:30 p.m.; August 19, 2022, at 12:00 p.m.; August 23, 2022, at 2:00 p.m.; September 1, 2022, at 11:45 a.m.; and September 2, 2022, at 7:30 a.m.

Superintendent Dr. Michael Gwatney and Blue Ridge Elementary School Principal Dr. April Hodges recognized Paraprofessional Crystal Walden for heroic actions with a choking student. Director of Learning & Achievement Lucas Roof presented the Fannin County Teachers of the Year for 2024: Alex Whitener, Blue Ridge Elementary School; Tiffany Brown, East Fannin Elementary School; Stacy Herndon, West Fannin Elementary School; Amanda Thomas, Fannin County Middle School; and Mandy Housley, Fannin County High School. Superintendent Dr. Michael Gwatney also introduced Shannon Miller as the sole finalist to become the next Superintendent of Fannin County Schools.

Deputy Superintendent Sarah Rigdon shared an update regarding the recent activities of each School Governance Team (SGT).

Blue Ridge Elementary School Principal Dr. April Hodges presented school happenings.

Superintendent Dr. Michael Gwatney introduced the following: 1. Director of Instructional Services & Curriculum Dr. Connie Huff, who in turn, introduced the FCSS Intervention Coordinators: Katherine Cheatham, Blue Ridge Elementary School; Julie Thompson, East Fannin Elementary School; Milly Rice, West Fannin Elementary School; Jeannie Garland, Fannin County Middle School; Heather Ades, Fannin County High School; and 2. Assistant Superintendent Robert Ensley shared a FCSS Transportation Department update.

There was public comment from two individuals.

Associate Superintendent Darren Danner shared a facilities update with the Board.

Motion by Lewis DeWeese, seconded by Mike Cole, to approve McHan Grading to begin excavation at the Ag Facility for a new greenhouse utilizing SPLOST funds in an estimated amount of \$29,000. All members voted yes; motion carried. **(See attached.)**

Motion by Chad Galloway, seconded by Bobby Bearden, to approve the district's financial reports for July 2022. All members voted yes; motion carried. **(See attached.)**

Motion by Lewis DeWeese, seconded by Bobby Bearden, to approve the tentative millage rollback rate of 7.439 for 2022. All members voted yes; motion carried. **(See attached.)**

Director of Finance Susan Wynn shared Fannin County's 2021 Sales Ratio Study with the Board.

Director of Finance Susan Wynn presented the SPLOST update. \$913,424.17 was collected for July 2022.

Motion by Mike Cole, seconded by Chad Galloway, to approve the 2022-2023 Annual Board Training Calendar & the GADOE Local Board training plan. All members voted yes; motion carried. **(See attached.)**

Motion by Lewis DeWeese, seconded by Mike Cole, to approve the District's Vision, Mission, and Beliefs for SY 2022-2023. All members voted yes; motion carried. **(See attached.)**

Motion by Bobby Bearden, seconded by Chad Galloway, to approve the SY 2022-2023 FCSS Strategic Plan. All members voted yes; motion carried. **(See attached.)**

Motion by Lewis DeWeese, seconded by Bobby Bearden, to approve the school-level Codes of Conduct for SY 2022-2023. All members voted yes; motion carried. **(See attached.)**

Motion by Chad Galloway, seconded by Mike Cole, to approve Mountain Education Charter High to use a bus on September 20 & September 21, 2022. MECH will be responsible for fuel and driver costs. All members voted yes; motion carried. **(See attached.)**

Motion by Bobby Bearden, seconded by Chad Galloway, to approve to rescind the June 9, 2022 resignation of Joseph B. "Ben" Weaver. All members voted yes; motion carried.

Motion by Mike Cole, seconded by Lewis DeWeese, to approve the resignation of Nathaniel Cody Payne effective September 16, 2022. All members voted yes; motion carried.

Motion by Bobby Bearden, seconded by Chad Galloway, to approve the resignation of Melissa Towe (Bus driver only) effective September 30, 2022. All members voted yes; motion carried.

Motion by Mike Cole, seconded by Lewis DeWeese, to approve Patsy Reed, Bonnie Stanley, and Tera Wilson as Paraprofessionals effective September 9, 2022, pending completion of paperwork, background check, and training. All members voted yes; motion carried.

Motion by Bobby Bearden, seconded by Chad Galloway, to approve Amber Reed as School Nutrition Substitute effective September 9, 2022, pending completion of paperwork, background check, and training. All members voted yes; motion carried.

Motion by Terry Bramlett, seconded by Lewis DeWeese, to approve Ellen Barnes, Colton Bridges, Rebecca Gill, Lisa Hevner, Tiffany Hurd, Joseph Johnson, Diana Joslin, Catrina McQuigg, Amanda Sisson, and Alexis Teems as Substitute Teachers effective September 9, 2022, pending completion of paperwork, background check, and training. All members voted yes; motion carried.

Superintendent's Comments:

Superintendent Gwatney thanked the night's presenters and stated that he enjoyed their presentations. He wished good luck to the Teacher of the Year (TOTY) candidates as they move forward in the process to determine the Fannin TOTY.

Dr. Gwatney gave a shout-out to Mr. Danner and Mr. Ensley for the transportation facility ribbon cutting/open house. He also gave a shout-out to the courthouse, especially Rita Newton, Dawn Cochran, and the commissioners as well as Susan Wynn for their work with the millage rate. Dr. Gwatney stated that he was looking forward to a called meeting on September 26 at noon where the Board will recommend a 7.439 millage rate.

Dr. Gwatney stated that Fannin has some awesome leaders. To those leaders that expressed interest in becoming the next Superintendent, he said thank you and that he appreciated them. Dr. Gwatney continued with his congratulations to Shannon Miller as the sole finalist.

Dr. Gwatney gave a shout-out to Scott Mathis for being a fantastic person. To the Board, Dr. Gwatney stated that they had worked hard, especially recently, with honor and dignity. He continued by stating that the Board members do not use their seats to fill a personal agenda. Instead, he stated that the Board is focused on important things – our students. He concluded by stating that he loved them.

Board Member's Comments:

Bobby Bearden congratulated Dr. Hodges on a great presentation. He said that he was glad to see everyone. Mr. Bearden told Mr. Ensley that he was doing a great job at the new transportation facility. He stated that our system needed the bus garage probably 30 years ago, but he is grateful that we have it now.

Mr. Bearden thanked the two individuals that spoke at public comment. He then spoke about the excitement of Teacher of the Year. Although five people were selected, Mr. Bearden stated that all of our teachers are number one to him. He praises God for them. To all that had an interest in being the next Superintendent, it is opportunities like that which make Fannin county great for Mr. Bearden. He stated that it is incredible and unlike other counties to have so many people that qualify for positions in our county. And, as he has stated many times, Mr. Bearden reiterated that Fannin has the greatest schools in Georgia! He concluded by thanking everyone for being present and that he loved them.

Mike Cole stated that he is grateful for the Teacher of the Year and that those selected represent our district well. He continued by stating that they bring joy to his little girl. Mr. Cole thanked all teachers and a special thanks to the five that received accolades for their works. For all that wanted the superintendent's job, Mr. Cole stated that it was a very difficult decision because all of the applicants had great qualities.

Mr. Cole thanked those that presented during public comment. He stated that people need to get out and speak their minds, to stand for what they believe. He stated that he tries to respect the seat that he is in as well. Mr. Cole concluded by thanking all in attendance with, God bless and good night.

Chad Galloway thanked all present and listening online. He stated that the Teacher of the Year event is one of the most nervous events that he has ever attended, but it is such a wonderful event. He congratulated the TOTY nominees.

For those that reached out to be the next superintendent, Mr. Galloway said – wow! The amount of talent in our schools amazed him and made selecting a new superintendent a difficult choice. He stated that he appreciated everyone and congratulated Shannon Miller. Mr. Galloway concluded by thanking everyone for coming and, God bless.

Lewis DeWeese stated that he does not think he has ever been more comforted nor more confident in our school system than in the interview process for the next superintendent.

Kids first. Kids at heart.

Mr. DeWeese stated that he pictures a teacher touching 20-30 students in a class, but in reality, 3,000 students are touched each day that our schools function. He continued by stating that it is such a joy to watch each of you and the care that you give - your profession is special. Mr. DeWeese has a favorite saying – “I believe that you guys when you get to heaven, there will be a special encore waiting for you to carry each of y’all in.” When you change a kid’s life, he wants to thank you! Mr. DeWeese stated that he does not apologize and that it touches his heart and brings emotions. A child with no advantages, yet that child is secure and safe in our schools - our system is special. He believes Fannin county can stand out because we have a superb team. It all goes back to our children.

Terry Bramlett thanked all of the night’s presenters for their excellent reports, as always. He thanked public commenters and stated that it was appreciated. Mr. Bramlett congratulated the Teachers of the Year. He said that it was one of his favorite events to celebrate the teachers and their remarkable success. Mr. Bramlett believes that awards given by peers are the most meaningful. He congratulated all that were chosen.

Mr. Bramlett stated that he sings the district’s praises and accolades everywhere he goes: maintenance staff, teachers, bus drivers, and everyone involved in the process makes him proud. He continued by saying the leadership in place in the county is remarkable. The Board had the honor of getting to know several of those leaders over the last several weeks. The caliber of staff as administration was/is truly remarkable. He thanked Mrs. Williams and Mr. Gwatney for facilitating the process. He also thanked Ms. Miller.

Mr. Bramlett said that it is a blessing to be in Fannin and to be part of the Board of Education. He took time to brag about his colleagues. Over the last several weeks there have been 6 public meetings and countless hours at home reviewing documents and paperwork. The Board has

completed at least 2 times the number of regular meetings with countless hours away from their families. Some Board members even took time away from work to complete the tasks at hand. Mr. Bramlett said that it was an honor to work with them and that their dedication matches that of the system employees. He appreciated his colleagues.

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 session by the Chair when deemed necessary. All members voted yes; motion carried.

Terry Bramlett, Chairperson

Michael Gwatney, Superintendent

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