

Minutes
Anson County Board of Education
Regular Meeting
Monday, October 26, 2020, 4:00 p.m.
Anson County Schools' Administrative Conference Room/Board Room
Virtual Go To Meeting

The Anson County Board of Education met in regular session on Monday, October 26, 2020. Members present via Virtual Go To Meeting were Marilynn Bennett, Bobbie Little and George Truman. Board members present in-person were Lisa Davis, Carol Gibson, Frank Liles, Gay Lookabill, Beulah Pratt and Mike Turner. Others in attendance were Howard McLean (Superintendent), Marty Godwin (Assistant Superintendent), Holly Berry (Finance Officer), Anne Hyatt (Board Clerk), Mike Flake (Board Attorney) and Pete Swails (Administrator: Technology). Leadership Team Members were also present.

Call to Order

Dr. George Truman opened the meeting at 4:02 p.m. and welcomed everyone in attendance.

Invocation

Beulah Pratt gave the Invocation.

Conflict of Interest Statement

In compliance with the requirements of Chapter 138A-15(e) of the State Government Ethics Act, Chair George Truman reminded Board Members of their duty to avoid conflicts of interest and appearances of conflicts of interest under Chapter 138A. There were no conflicts of interest communicated by the members. Chair Truman then requested that if, during the course of the meeting, members became aware of an actual or apparent conflict of interest that they bring the matter to his attention. He further explained it would then be the member's duty to abstain from participating in discussion and from voting on the matter.

Adopt Agenda

Mike Turner asked for the consent items STEAM Academy and Discovery Education to be moved to new business for discussion. Gay Lookabill asked for all consent items to be moved to new business. A motion to approve the agenda with all consent items moved to new business was made by Gay Lookabill, seconded by Carol Gibson and approved by the board. Motion carried.

Approve Minutes

(Regular Meeting 09/28/20)

(Special Meeting 10/12/20)

A motion was made by Carol Gibson to approve the regular meeting minutes of September 28, 2020 and the special meeting minutes of October 12, 2020. The motion was seconded by Frank Liles and approved by the board. Motion carried.

Closed Session

A motion was made by Frank Liles to go into closed session at 4:05 p.m. The motion was seconded by Lisa Davis and approved by the board. Motion carried.

There was no action taken.

Reconvene Open Session

The Board returned to open session at 5:27 p.m. upon a motion by Mike Turner, seconded by Gay Lookabill and approved by the board. Motion carried.

Recognition

The board recognized the teachers of the year, paraprofessionals of the year and principal of the year for 2020-2021. Those honored are listed below:

Teachers of the Year:

Ellen Jeffries	Anson Academy High School
Melinda Robinson	Anson County Early College
Dana Wood	Anson High School
Michelle Borbas	Anson Middle School
Kristy Gerald	Ansonville Elementary School
Lauren Leary	Lilesville Elementary School
Patricia Cole	Morven Elementary School
Taylor Ledford	Peachland-Polkton Elementary
Ashley Huntley	Wadesboro Primary School
Rosalyn Liles	Wadesboro Elementary School

Anson County Schools Teacher of the Year: Patricia Cole

Beginning Teacher of the Year: Kacie Hayes, Peachland-Polkton Elementary School

Paraprofessionals of the Year recognized:

Pam Tillman	Anson Academy High School
Ericka Chaney	Anson County Early College
Nicole Lookabill	Anson High School
Julie Griffin	Anson Middle School
Jennifer Lee	Ansonville Elementary School
Jackie Howell	Lilesville Elementary School
Kenjii Boggan	Morven Elementary School
Kristi Porten	Peachland-Polkton Elementary School
Tanya Jackson	Wadesboro Primary School
Whydon Sellers	Wadesboro Elementary School

Principal of the Year: Michael Vetter, Ansonville Elementary School

Public Comment

There was no one to speak during public comment.

Chair's Report

Public Engagement:

Frank Liles said he had an opportunity to visit Anson Academy and talk with staff members. There were no other public engagement opportunities mentioned by board members.

Superintendent's Report

Ms. Lookabill asked about the interventionist position. Ms. Collard discussed this position with the board. Ms. Collard said the district is in a grant program with NC State University called Wolfpack Works. She explained the program serves beginning teachers in grades K-3 and helps them with reading instruction. She said the program currently works with Peachland-Polkton Elementary School, Wadesboro Primary School, Morven Elementary School, Lilesville Elementary School and Ansonville Elementary School. Ms. Collard explained we have money for part-time positions for approximately 10 hours worth of support in those areas to pull small groups of students and provide them with additional small group reading support. She stated the interventionist gives extra support in reading to help those students get ahead but only in those beginning teacher classrooms. Ms. Collard said they have been looking for a person to fill that position and they have also reached out to retirees and have been in contact with several today. She said this position is paid through the Wolfpack Works grant and this year they were able to get a two-year agreement for this year and next year for 10 hours a week of support. Ms. Gibson asked if the position is 10 hours per week and is it just one position. Ms. Collard said it is 10 hours a week and it is two positions.

Mr. McLean gave a report on Budget, Human Resources, Current Job Postings and Instructional/Operational Programs.

Mr. McLean stated that K-5 is scheduled to begin in-person learning on November 2, 2020. He also gave a summary of the survey results and stated 2,950 parents completed the survey. Mr. McLean explained 835, K-5 students will be attending in-person and 648 K-5 students will continue in virtual learning. For grades 6-13, in-person learning will begin January 4, 2021 for those parents that elected that option on the survey. He said 818 students will be in-person for grades 6-13 and 648 students elected to continue with virtual learning. Mr. McLean said principals will call those parents that did not complete a survey to determine what option they plan to choose for their child. He explained that principals will be making contact with their families starting tomorrow to let them know which cohort their child is assigned. Mr. McLean announced that parents may call their child's school for questions or the central office. Ms. Davis asked Mr. McLean to explain the avenues in which parents can pose questions. Mr. McLean said parents can send questions through Facebook Inbox Messenger, email or by phone call.

Ms. Gibson asked about the survey results for staff. Mr. Godwin said currently there are between 9 – 14 staff for K-5 that will be virtual. He explained the 9-14 range is because he is waiting on 5 to be approved. Mr. Godwin said currently there are 25 total staff at the 6-13 grade level that will be virtual with 14 at Anson Middle School and 11 at Anson High School. He explained they are in good shape right now and there are areas that will be addressed.

Dr. Little asked Mr. Godwin if teachers who ask to work remotely and receive approval, will the approval come through Human Resources. Mr. Godwin said that is correct. He explained that every situation is different and they address each situation individually.

Ms. Gibson asked if a school can't provide enough teachers, is there a plan in place. Mr. Godwin said there is a plan but it's not tangible because of how fluid the situation is at this point. Mr. McLean said at the end of each week, starting November 2, he will send the board updates on how the week has gone.

Mr. McLean said there is a frequently asked questions document on our website and social media sites where anyone can refer to those questions and answers.

Questions & Answers from the Board:

Mr. Turner asked about end of course and grade testing. Mr. McLean said regional superintendents recently asked if waivers would be given for testing and the answer they were given is no flexibility or waivers are being given right now. Mr. Turner said the NC School Boards Association is lobbying to waive those tests based on a survey he completed recently.

Ms. High said her regional coordinator explained that right now waivers are not being offered because it's coming from the federal level. She said one of the reasons is North Carolina is unique because we give Beginning of the Year (BOG) tests for 3rd grade where other states don't give tests until the end of the year. Ms. High said there has been no change for high school students to take the end of course tests which (by law) is the last five days of the semester. Ms. High said she asked her regional coordinator if there could be a local option to waive the 20% of the EOC and her regional person responded to not waive it because it would encourage students to come and test and you will meet your 95% accountability which is required. She said this topic is still in discussion. Mr. Turner asked about the March – May testing. Ms. High said there was a federal waiver for that last year.

Ms. Lookabill asked that once in-person learning gets started, can 6th and 9th grade be brought back to in-person learning. Mr. McLean said once K-5 gets started and we learn from that transition, he will take a look at suggestions for bringing back 6th and 9th grades sooner. Dr. Truman said he thinks we should wait at least three weeks to see how in-person learning goes for K-5 students. Dr. Truman also said administration will need to see if they will have enough personnel for those grades to return. Ms. Lookabill asked if it can be reviewed. Mr. McLean said he will review it with principals.

Ms. Davis asked if hotspots have been given to all families and, if so, is it being utilized and made a difference. Ms. Collard said the hotspots from Pilgrim's Pride have gone out and they have been made available to those in need. She said there are additional devices from the state with limited data and some with unlimited amount of data. Mr. Swails said 700 additional devices came from the state and 400 came from Kajeet and those have a limit of 30 gigs a month. Mr. Swails said they also received some from Verizon that have unlimited data and those will go out this week. Ms. Collard said they want to prioritize the Verizon devices because the Kajeet will run out of data in 12 months. Ms. Collard said for each device, directions were provided for each student/parent. Principals confirmed the devices are working. Ms. Collard said if there are any issues, the device can be swapped out based on the provider. Principals agreed that they are seeing an increase in participation

Ms. Davis asked about proper equipment for schools specifically for those in the self-contained environment including gowns and shields. Dr. Ratliff indicated they are ready to start November 2 and the school nurses have worked hard to be sure the schools are on go to begin with what they need. Dr. Ratliff said the nurses will be meeting in-person tomorrow regarding any questions or concerns they may have. Ms. Davis asked if these meetings would be ongoing to continue best practices. Dr. Ratliff said yes they will continue meeting and she applauded how hard her nurses have worked.

Mr. Turner asked what the requirement is for a nurse to be at each school. Dr. Ratliff said we are only required to have one school nurse for every 750 students. Dr. Ratliff said we are fine now with K-5 starting with having a nurse at each school; however, she said she feels we will not have enough nurses when all grade levels return January 4, 2021 unless we use the COVID funding to hire another nurse. Ms. Gardelle said they are in good shape with equipment for self-contained classrooms. Ms. Davis asked if there is a room students can stay and be away from the other population. Dr. Ratliff said each school has a designated isolation room. Ms. Davis asked if there is staff to man the isolation room. Dr. Ratliff said yes there is staff to monitor the isolation room.

Ms. Lookabill asked if athletics were going smoothly. Mr. Stinson said athletics are going well.

Mr. Turner asked if anything has been done to approach the issue if a student needs face-to-face help. Mr. Stinson said they are providing that resource outside with masks and social distancing as needed. Mr. Turner asked about Anson Early College. Ms. Decker said they were providing that as well if needed.

Ms. Davis said she saw report cards went out and asked how students are doing. Mr. Stinson said he is pulling that data tomorrow and he would say not as well as in the past. She asked if engagement was an issue. Mr. Stinson said he would say engagement was an issue.

Ms. Cureton said they did see some drop on report cards that don't normally drop but they also saw some that increased. Ms. Lookabill asked what principals were doing if there are drops. Mr. Steagall said they are trying to give flexibility to give them time to get their work done and over communicate to help those that need extra help. Mr. Stinson said they are the only school on semester courses and he highly recommends summer school options. Mr. McLean said summer school remediation has been a conversation they have had to help students get ahead.

New Business

Personnel Report: Upon a motion by Frank Liles, seconded by Gay Lookabill, the board voted to approve the personnel report. Motion carried.

Budget Amendments: Upon a motion by Frank Liles, seconded by Lisa Davis, the board voted to approve the budget amendments. Motion carried.

Sole Source Justification (ECU Beginning Teacher Support Program): Upon a motion by Carol Gibson, seconded by Mike Turner, the board approved the sole source justification form as presented.

Sole Source Justification (ECU Coaching and PD): Ms. Lookabill asked if this was a mentoring program. Ms. Collard said with Mr. Godwin's program, it covers teachers in year 1 and what they designed a few years ago was a plan to support teachers in year 2 and 3 that need an additional layer of support. She said the program will target those teachers in high-needs schools and teachers that need intense support. She said they do try to provide additional focus for the high-needs schools. She said with the Title IV plan they must show how they are supporting teachers in those areas of need and how they become stronger in their practice with lesson planning to also help with teacher retention and student achievement. Upon a motion by Carol Gibson, seconded by Mike Turner, the board approved the sole source justification as presented. Motion carried.

Sole Source Justification (Virtual Job Shadow): Upon a motion by Mike Turner, seconded by Beulah Pratt, the board voted to approve the sole source justification as presented. Motion carried.

Cyberschool Renewal Contract for Web Hosting Services: Upon a motion by Gay Lookabill, seconded by Carol Gibson, the board voted to approve the Cyberschool Renewal Contract for Web Hosting Services. Motion carried.

Beginning Teacher Support Program: Upon a motion by Frank Liles, seconded by Marilynn Bennett, the board voted to approve the beginning teacher support program. Motion carried.

STEAM Academy: Dr. Little asked what transportation will look like for all sixth graders going to this school. Mr. McLean said all students will ride the bus to the middle school and all students will be shuttled to the Academy. Ms. Gibson said we couldn't afford to shuttle for Anson Academy but we can for this school. Mr. McLean said we never said we couldn't afford it; we said it would save us funding. Mr. Turner said it's not saving money if we are doing the same thing. Mr. Turner said he doesn't think he can support the recommendation and he is seriously considering putting all 6th graders back to the elementary schools. Dr. Truman said he recalls there being conversation where (in certain schools) there is not enough room to move sixth grade back to elementary schools now. Dr. Truman said he doesn't blame the superintendent for looking for creative and innovative ways to drive up student performance. Ms. Bennett said she doesn't think moving 6th graders back to the elementary schools is a good idea. Ms. Bennett said if we don't vote on this Academy, her vote will be to keep them at the middle school where they can be a part of the other grades. Mr. Turner said he feels they did better at the elementary schools. Ms. Bennett said she would like to see some success information on this type of school at other locations. Mr. McLean said there is a school in Rock Hill they may plan to visit and he will create a list of those schools for the board. Ms. Lookabill said she does think we need to do something to keep students in the county and she would like to see more information about the program. Dr. Truman said one of the proposals could be that we do this at the middle school. He said we may need to table this until the superintendent can give the board a workshop on this type of program and how it works. Upon a motion by Marilynn Bennett, seconded by Frank Liles, the board voted to table the STEAM Academy until another time. Dr. Truman said the board needs more information on what this looks like in the classroom and how it will work. Motion carried.

Discovery Education Contract: Upon a motion by Gay Lookabill, seconded by Carol Gibson, the board voted to table the Discovery Education Contract until a later time. Motion carried.

Dr. Truman asked Mr. McLean when he could get a workshop together. Mr. McLean said to let him gather information and report back. Dr. Truman asked if it could be done in January. Ms. Gibson asked if there are other companies that do STEAM. Ms. Collard said there are other vendors but we have a history of working with this company in other areas.

Revised School Calendars: Upon a motion by Gay Lookabill, seconded by Lisa Davis, the board voted to approve the revised to calendar to add two optional workdays on January 8, 2021 and March 12, 2021. Motion carried.

Lisa Davis asked if Mr. McLean would give an update on how in-person school is going. Mr. McLean said he will update the board every Friday evening.

Dr. Fannie Ratliff was present to speak about her concerns with the Academy being moved to the campus of Anson High School. After Dr. Ratliff's communication with the board, Ms. Davis made a motion to go into closed session at 7:23 p.m. for the purpose of discussing personnel and the acquisition of property. The motion was seconded by Carol Gibson and approved by the board with a 7-2 vote with Dr. Little and Marilyn Bennett voting against the motion. Motion carried.

There was no action taken in closed session.

Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made at 7:25 p.m. by Lisa Davis, seconded by Frank Liles and approved by the board. There was no discussion. The motion carried.

Dr. George Truman, Chairperson

Mr. Howard McLean, Secretary