

**WESTMORELAND COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD**  
**MONTROSS, VIRGINIA**  
**BOARD MINUTES**  
**February 28, 2022**

The Westmoreland County School Board met for a work session on Monday, February 28, 2022 at 4:00 p.m., and met in regular session at 6:00 p.m. at the Gerald B. Roane Center for Excellence Building, Montross, Virginia.

Present:

Mr. Ralph Fallin, Chair  
Ms. Iris Lane, Vice Chair  
Mrs. Katherine Lewis, Member  
Mrs. Sandra Ramsey, Member  
Dr. Daniel Wallace, Member

Others Present:

Dr. Michael Perry, Superintendent  
Ms. Cathy Rice, Deputy Superintendent

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Fallin, Chair.

### **Approval of Agenda**

The agenda for the work session was approved by unanimous consent.

### **New Business**

#### **Overview of 2022-2023 Budget Considerations**

Ms. Rice presented information pertaining to the initial draft of the budget for 2022-2023.

Ms. Rice reviewed the overview of proposed state and local revenue for the 2022-2023 school year, based on Governor Northam's proposed budget and the calculation of Required Local Effort and Match. Ms. Rice shared that the templates containing the House and Senate amendments are not yet available. Both the House and Senate support a compensation supplement and school construction funds, with variations. There is conversation in the General Assembly regarding reducing the at-risk add-on. Reductions in at-risk funds would have a significant impact on the initial draft of the budget.

Ms. Rice reviewed the budget goals. She emphasized the need for competitive compensation by showing how Westmoreland's current teacher and paraprofessional salary scales compare with the other divisions in Region III. Westmoreland currently has the lowest starting salary for teachers among the seventeen school divisions of Region III, and the division ranks 9 of 17 at steps 15 and 30. Among the ten divisions whose paraprofessional scales were available, Westmoreland ranks 5 of 10 for step 0, step 15, and step 30. The initial budget draft includes plans to increase employee compensation by a minimum of 10% for all employee groups. For some employee groups the proposed increase is approximately 12%. This group includes teachers and administration. The proposed percentage increase is significantly higher for paraprofessionals and food service workers.

A second version of the revised salary scales for teachers, paraprofessionals, and food service workers was presented. The starting step of the teacher scale includes an increase of approximately 10.5%, with a 1.5% increase between steps. Both the paraprofessional scale and the food service worker scale include starting steps that reflect an hourly wage of \$14.85/hour.

Ms. Rice shared that the division's health insurance renewal quote includes an increase of 9.1% in the cost of premiums. She shared the budget impact this has for the division, as well as the increased out-of-pocket expense this has for employees.

A list of added positions for 2022-2023 that are budgeted in the current initial draft was shared. This includes an increase in the number of days/hours for part-time secretaries.

Ms. Rice presented the proposed expenditures contained in the initial draft by each major budget category: Instruction; Administration, Attendance & Health; Transportation; Operation & Maintenance; Facilities; Technology; Transfers; and Contingency. Instruction comprises the largest percentage of the budget, followed by Operation/Maintenance and Administration/Attendance/Health.

Next steps include monitoring the amendments to the Governor's proposed budget, along with local revenue, and making needed revisions to the initial draft. The public hearing on the budget follows on March 21, 2022.

### **Open Public Comments**

No public comments were shared either in person or in writing.

### **School Board Member Comments**

Board Members expressed appreciation for the budget work that has been completed to date.

### **Convene Closed Session**

Board Member Mrs. Ramsey made a motion that the Board convene into closed session as provided in Section 2.2-3711(A) of the Code of Virginia, for the purpose of discussing personnel matters related to appointments, resignations, and the Superintendent's mid-year performance review pursuant to Section 2.2-3711 (A)(1) of the Code of Virginia.

Board Member Dr. Wallace seconded the motion.

Voice Vote: 5 Ayes/0Nays; Mr. Fallin, Aye; Ms. Lane, Aye; Mrs. Ramsey, Aye; Mrs. Lewis, Aye; Dr. Wallace, Aye

Following the closed session, the meeting was recessed.

At 6:00 p.m. the meeting was called to back to order by Mr. Fallin, Chair.

The meeting was reconvened into public meeting on the motion by Board Member Dr. Wallace and seconded by Board Member Ms. Lane.

Voice Vote: 5 Ayes/0Nays; Mr. Fallin, Ms. Lane, Aye; Mrs. Ramsey, Aye; Mrs. Lewis, Aye; Dr. Wallace, Aye.

The motion for the approval of the following certification was made by Board Member Mrs. Lewis and seconded by Board Member Dr. Wallace.

WHEREAS, the Westmoreland County School Board convened a closed meeting on this date pursuant to an affirmative recorded vote and in accordance with the provision of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act; and

WHEREAS, Section 2.2-3712(D) of the Code of Virginia requires a certification that, to the best of each member's knowledge, (i) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements by Virginia law were discussed in the closed meeting to which this certification applies, and (ii) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening the closed meeting were heard, discussed, or considered.

Voice Vote: 5 Ayes/0Nays; Mr. Fallin, Aye; Ms. Lane, Aye; Mrs. Ramsey, Aye; Mrs. Lewis, Aye; Dr. Wallace, Aye.

Dr. Wallace read the Westmoreland County Public Schools' mission and vision statements to the public.

Dr. Perry led the Board in prayer.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

### **Approval of Agenda**

The agenda for the regular meeting was approved by unanimous consent.

### **Delegations/Presentations**

#### **Attendance Recognition**

Dr. Perry shared the attendance recognition for December. The school with the highest student attendance was Washington District Elementary with an average percentage present of 94.09%. Staff attendance was not presented this month.

#### **Character Honorees**

Ms. Rice presented the Character Trait honorees for the month of January and the trait of Courage. Students recognized this month included Faith Perry in grade four at Cople Elementary; Paetyynn Vaughan in grade three at Washington District Elementary; Germaine Yerby in grade seven at Montross Middle School; and Kimorah Rice in grade nine at Washington & Lee High School.

#### **Bus Driver Recognition**

Ms. Rice presented the bus driver honorees for the month of February. Lisa McCoy, Lisa Diehl, and Sue Balderson were recognized for their strong work ethic and lack of discipline referrals.

#### **A Moment in African American History – Cople Elementary Students**

Ms. Rice presented artwork created by first grade students at Cople Elementary. For Black History Month, first grade students studied the artwork of Faith Ringgold and used her book, *Tar Beach*, to inspire their artwork. Ms. Rice introduced a video of Cople Elementary students performing Funga Alafia.

### **VSBA Regional Spring Network Forum Art Contest**

Ms. Rice shared the artwork selected by Westmoreland art teachers to be submitted to the Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA) for entry in the Regional Spring Network Forum Art Contest. Featured artists included Madelynn Hays in grade five at Washington District Elementary; Kevin Diaz Garnica in grade six at Montross Middle School; and Arianna Barajas, a senior at Washington & Lee High School.

### **School Board Appreciation**

Dr. Perry announced that February is School Board Appreciation Month and recognized each School Board Member with a Certificate of Appreciation. Board members also received tokens of appreciation from each of the four schools and the Central Office.

### **Virginia Department of Health Update**

Dr. Richard Williams, Director, Three Rivers Health District, provided an update from the Virginia Department of Health. Dr. Williams shared that things are looking better nationally and in the Commonwealth. The Omicron wave is in a steep decline, along with hospitalizations and deaths. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has recently moved to a system of using a combination of three metrics – new hospital admissions, percent of inpatient beds occupied by COVID-19 cases, and total new cases – to determine the COVID-19 community level. The community level is classified as low, medium, or high. Westmoreland County is medium.

Dr. Williams shared Three Rivers cases have dropped dramatically. VDH is watching Omicron BA-1, and a new variant BA-2. BA-2 appears to be more contagious than BA-1 and can infect individuals recently infected with BA-1. A surge in cases is not expected.

Dr. Williams shared that SB739 codifies parent choice in masking. He added that on February 25, 2022 CDC changed its guidance to no longer required masks on buses. Dr. Williams shared that we are moving away from mandates. Nonetheless, research indicates masking does help reduce the transmission of COVID-19. Cloth masks are least effective, followed by surgical masks, and KN95 or N95 masks.

### **Introduction of Attorney, Nicole S. Cheuk**

Dr. Perry shared that Wade Anderson has left the law firm of Sands Anderson. He introduced Attorney, Nicole S. Cheuk. Nicole S. Cheuk is also with Sands Anderson. Attorney Cheuk shared that she has been with Sands Anderson for ten years, and began her career in education law in 2005. Attorney Cheuk then answered questions and provided clarification regarding masks on school buses, as well as masks for employees. She indicated that masks are no longer required in either setting.

Based on the information shared by Dr. Williams and Attorney Cheuk, the School Board elected to take immediate action.

Board Member Dr. Wallace made the motion to affirm that, effective immediately, masks are optional for all school personnel and students, in accordance with CDC guidelines, so long as Westmoreland County remains at the low or medium COVID-19 Community Level. The motion was seconded by Board member Mrs. Ramsey

Voice Vote: 5 Ayes/0Nays; Mr. Fallin, Ms. Lane, Aye; Mrs. Ramsey, Aye; Mrs. Lewis, Aye; Dr. Wallace, Aye.

## **Open Public Comment**

Two individuals shared public comment during the meeting.

- 1) Robert Gilhully asked that the division look into a situation concerning his child and weight lifting. He also shared information related to vaccines. He stated that a number of infections, diseases, and various medical conditions have increased dramatically since the introduction of the COVID-19 vaccinations. He shared literature with the Board.
- 2) Sheila Johnson asked whether metal detectors are being considered for the new high school, voiced concern with what she considered a delay in communication with parents regarding a recent incident at Washington & Lee High School, and asked why the high school prom has been cancelled.

## **Consent Agenda**

Dr. Wallace made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Mrs. Ramsey seconded the motion. Voice Vote: 4 Ayes/1Nay; Mr. Fallin, Aye; Ms. Lane, Aye; Mrs. Ramsey, Aye; Mrs. Lewis, Nay; Dr. Wallace, Aye.

- A. Approval of Appointments & Resignations
- B. Approval of Board Minutes
- C. Approval of Bills

## **Action Items**

### **Appoint Clerk of the Board**

Dr. Perry recommended that Constance Allen be appointed as the new Clerk of the Board.

Dr. Wallace made the motion to approve the recommendation, and the motion was seconded by Ms. Lane.

Voice Vote: 5 Ayes/0Nays; Mr. Fallin, Ms. Lane, Aye; Mrs. Ramsey, Aye; Mrs. Lewis, Aye; Dr. Wallace, Aye

Mr. Fallin shared that School Board Appreciation week was February 14-18, 2022. Mr. Fallin thanked Ms. Rice for filling in as Clerk of the Board for an extended period of time. Board Members welcomed Ms. Connie Allen as the new Clerk of the Board.

### **Donations to Schools**

Dr. Perry shared donations that had been made to the schools. Ms. Lane made the motion to accept the donations. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Ramsey.

Voice Vote: 5 Ayes/0Nays; Mr. Fallin, Aye; Ms. Lane, Aye; Mrs. Ramsey, Aye; Mrs. Lewis, Aye; Dr. Wallace, Aye.

Voice Vote: 5 Ayes/0Nays; Mr. Fallin, Aye; Ms. Lane, Aye; Mrs. Ramsey, Aye; Mrs. Lewis, Aye; Dr. Wallace, Aye.

### **Budget Resolution**

Ms. Rice presented a budget resolution requesting that the Westmoreland County Board of Supervisors appropriate additional federal funds to the 2021-2022 School Board Budget in the following amounts:

- ARP ESSER III – Before & After School Programs: \$143,090.70
- ARP ESSER III – Summer Programs: \$180,674.76

Dr. Wallace made the motion to approve the budget resolution as presented. Ms. Lane seconded the motion.

Voice Vote: 5 Ayes/0Nays; Mr. Fallin, Aye; Ms. Lane, Aye; Mrs. Ramsey, Aye; Mrs. Lewis, Aye; Dr. Wallace, Aye.

## **Information Items**

### **Policy EFB**

Ms. Rice shared that, in preparation for the Food Services program monitoring visit, the school division received a recommendation to revise School Board Policy EFB. Since the division is eligible for, and participates in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) division-wide, it is not necessary to outline in policy any procedures for unpaid meal charges. The revised policy EFB was shared for first reading.

### **Communication Protocols**

Dr. Perry shared excerpts from the Crisis Management Manual, as well as information regarding the division's Crisis Response protocols for communication before, during, and after an incident. He indicated that communication is influenced by factors such as the type of event, length of event, timing of the event, and the need for confidentiality while an event is being actively handled and/or investigated. Clear, concise, accurate information is shared as quickly as possible. Dr. Perry shared that each school has a Crisis Management Team, as does the division. With each incident that occurs, teams debrief to assess how the incident was handled and determine how improvements may be made. Crisis response plans and the Crisis Management Manual is revised, as needed.

### **Facility Update**

Dr. Perry presented a Facility Update. This included photographs of construction progress at the Westmoreland High School site. This update included several pictures of the cafeteria equipment, the locker room hallway, and the auditorium. He shared that the new substantial completion date is March 23, 2022, and noted the total available contingency is now \$115,633.10.

Dr. Perry also shared updates regarding other ongoing capital improvement projects. Renovation of the Montross Middle bathrooms will go out to bid March 4, 2022. Preparation is complete for installation of keyless entry at Cople, Washington District, and Montross Middle. All HVAC units at Cople, and four HVAC units at Montross Middle have been replaced. Seven buses have been ordered. The division is waiting for a proposal from Branch Builds for the athletic fields.

## **Upcoming Events**

Dr. Perry shared upcoming events for Board members.

- March 9, 2022 – VSBA Eastern Region Spring Networking Forum - Virtual
- March 23, 2022 – Board Development - Charlottesville
- April 20, 2022 – VSBA April Hot Topic Conference – Charlottesville
- June 3, 2022 – VSBA School Law Conference – Richmond
- July 19, 2022 – VSBA Conference on Education - Richmond
- July 30, 2022 – Westmoreland High School Convocation – Montross

## **School Board Member Comments**

Ms. Lane noted that the Regional Board Meeting for the Northern Neck Technical Center and Alternative Program is scheduled for the evening of March 22, 2022, which is when the Westmoreland School Board will travel to Charlottesville for VSBA Board Development.

Dr. Wallace shared a connection with former foreign exchange students from Ukraine, and requested that all keep Ukraine in prayer.

Mrs. Lewis stated she was disappointed not to be able to discuss the incident at the high school in either closed or open session, or the question she had previously asked about the prom.

Ms. Lane shared that she had participated in an excellent webinar presented by the USED regarding a systemic approach to support the mental health of African American students. If available, she will share the recording with fellow Board members.

Mr. Fallin thanked everyone who attended in person or watched virtually.

Dr. Perry stated the division is in the 14<sup>th</sup> year of a 15-year contract with ESG. He shared a booklet from ESG regarding the energy savings the division has experienced as part of that contractual agreement. He also shared a flier related to Walking Tours of the new high school campus.

Ms. Lane thanked the schools for the gifts of appreciation.

## **Date & Time of Next Board Meeting**

Chair Fallin shared the dates/times of the next Board Meetings:

- Budget Work Session - Tuesday, March 15, 2022 - 5 p.m.
- Regular School Board Meeting – Monday, March 21, 2022 - 6 pm
- Public Hearing on the Budget – Monday, March 21, 2022 – 7 pm

## **Adjournment**

There being no further business, a motion was made by Mrs. Ramsey, seconded by Ms. Lewis, and unanimously approved by Board Members to adjourn the meeting.