

The Pocahontas County Board of Education met on Tuesday, February 16, 2021, beginning with a Public Hearing on the 2021-2022 School Calendar at 5:30 PM immediately followed by the Board of Education meeting at the Board of Education Conference Room, Buckeye, WV, with the following members present:

Sue E. Hollandsworth, President

John Burns)
H. Samuel Gibson) Members
Jarrett McLaughlin)
Morgan McComb)

Call to Order.

IN ORDER TO COMPLY WITH THE COVID-19 SOCIAL DISTANCING GUIDELINES, INCREASE IN ACTIVE CASES, AND THE OPEN MEETINGS ACT, YOU MAY ALSO LISTEN TO THE BOE MEETING BY JOINING THE SCHEDULED ZOOM MEETING FEBRUARY 16, 2021, AT 5:30 PM. IN-PERSON PUBLIC ATTENDANCE WILL BE LIMITED.

(the audio link will also be provided on County Website at <http://pocahontas-k12.wvnet.edu/boe/>)

Audio link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81104833265?pwd=MlVVRitmeGlxSWZ6VmI3a3ZhZ2Nzd09>

Meeting ID: 811 0483 3265 Password: 0x615b

Open with the Pledge of Allegiance.

CALENDAR HEARING...

The Board of Education held the first of two calendar hearings on the 2021-22 school calendar. Calendar is consistent with those in the past. The public had no questions concerning the 2021-22 calendar.

MINUTES...

On the motion of Mr. Burns and seconded by Mr. McLaughlin, the Board unanimously approved of the Minutes from the Board of Education meeting held on January 26, 2021.

AGENDA...

On the motion of Mr. Burns and seconded by Mr. McLaughlin, the Board unanimously approved the agenda with the following change: pulling the requested transfer of Sarah Cover under the personnel section off the agenda at the present time.

DELEGATIONS...

Superintendent Beam defined the rules of the delegations' process.

1. Andy Friel—Pocahontas County High School ELA Curriculum. Mr. Friel addressed the Board with his concerns. Two books that were prohibited in other universities depicting controversial topics, "The Hate in You" and "This Book is Anti-Racist," and a self-awareness survey asking intimate and personal questions, were distributed in Mrs. Mann's English/Language Arts class. As a concerned parent, he questioned the high school curriculum. "Who decides what our children are taught? Who approved these books and questionnaire?" Mr. Friel would like the Board to look into this further.
2. John Paul Burks—Pocahontas County High School ELA Curriculum. The reading material provided in the current curriculum is full of sex, drugs, alcohol, and vulgar language. Mr. Burks

read an excerpt from the books in question. “Every race, color, and religion is anti-racist except the educated, working-class white man that is a Christian.” He was appalled. The classroom is not a private forum to persuade and influence young students on personal beliefs and political views. Mr. Burks feels this class and school is encouraging our children to be “foul-mouthed, sexually active, anti-racists, that doesn’t respect law and white men and only vote one way.” Mr. Burks would like the Board to look into this further.

3. Susan Lane—Pocahontas County High School ELA Curriculum. Mrs. Lane’s daughter has also been subjected to the same concerns. As a parent, she contacted the school to discuss the curriculum and the infiltration of personal, political views on her daughter’s future. She was informed the principal had not approved the questionnaire/survey. Questions concerning sexual activity is discussed in health class. Several policies have been broken by allowing the filth to enter the classroom. This does not meet the standards and content of the curriculum. Mrs. Lane expects the Board to look into this further.
4. Richard Lane—Pocahontas County High School ELA Curriculum. Times are changing but allowing young minds to be influenced and persuaded by such controversial issues is unacceptable. He does not allow offensive language to enter his home, he definitely does not want his daughter subjected to it at school. The Lane’s exchanged emails with the principal. Mr. Riley said he briefly read through the books. Mr. Lane then questioned why the teacher had to purchase and distribute these books personally if this was part of the approved curriculum? He also would like the Board to look into this further.
5. Susan Ray—Pocahontas County High School ELA Curriculum. Via Zoom, Mrs. Ray addressed the Board on behalf of the teacher. She explained the students, her daughter included, were given options. Students were to read several synopses and vote on the next book to study. The class, as a whole, agreed with no argument, on “The Hate You Give.” Since the topics were similar, the teacher offered “This Book is Anti-Racist” as part of the lesson. Force was not an issue. As a substitute teacher, Mrs. Ray has been inside of this classroom and it is filled with a wide variety of books, not just books depicting anti-racism. Mrs. Ray felt the teacher is being misrepresented, “She is a very wonderful teacher who’s challenging these students to think about real world situations.” The teacher is exposing students to a world outside Pocahontas County. For that, Mrs. Ray is grateful.
6. Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Boggs—Pocahontas County High School ELA Curriculum. Via Zoom, Amanda Boggs also spoke on said concerns. She didn’t appreciate the teacher implying that her daughter is a racist because she’s a white Christian. That is not the teacher’s responsibility to give that information. Mrs. Boggs questioned the validity of said curriculum. Young, impressionable children should never have been put into a position to choose from a limited resource pool, reflecting the teacher’s personal agenda. Is all the negativity and violence the best option right now? When parents confronted the teacher about the book study, Mrs. Boggs discovered a condescending attitude that she felt belittled students for not being open-minded. As a parent, it is her right to protect her child. Mrs. Boggs would like the Board to look into this further.
7. Sarah Riley—Pocahontas County High School ELA Curriculum. Speaking as a parent, Mrs. Riley, approached the Board in support for and commendation of Mrs. Mann, clear rejection of book bans from nationally recognized materials, and immediate reinstatement of books in question and a county-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion initiative. She values your role as educational leaders and suggested the Board consider “creating a task force for the schools to advance this – not only in terms of race, but more generally in terms of inclusion and respect.”

8. Silas Riley—Pocahontas County High School ELA Curriculum. As a senior of Pocahontas County High School, Mr. Silas Riley, supported Mrs. Mann's variety of reading materials. He challenged parents to put things in perspective. Students listen to "music that glorifies drugs, that glorifies sex. They play violent video games." These problems did not exist simply because of the current ELA curriculum. By restricting and limiting the resources, Mr. Riley believes, the critical thinking process has been hindered. Without diversity, students may mimic an opinion based on views of others and not formulate one of their own. He hopes the Board will "uphold academic integrity and protect academic liberty. "
9. Alan Gibson—Pocahontas County High School ELA Curriculum. Another senior in Pocahontas County High School, Mr. Alan Gibson, spoke in favor of the current book study, citing "The Book is Anti-Racist" to be a great book. Mrs. Mann's teaching abilities deem a cut above the rest, pushing the status quo, and encourages students to do their best. By learning from mistakes of the past, one can move forward in a more productive manner.
10. Joseph Riley, Principal—Pocahontas County High School ELA Curriculum. The principal of Pocahontas County High School addressed the concerns. As part of the ELA Department, Mrs. Mann presented Mr. Riley with the proposed curriculum. He briefly read the materials and signed off on the program. When parental discord became apparent, he quickly pulled the books from the study. Admittedly, Mr. Riley considered this a hasty "knee-jerk" reaction that may be reconsidered after all thoughts are heard.
11. Samara Mann, Teacher —Pocahontas County High School ELA Curriculum. First, the English/Language Arts Teacher, Mrs. Mann addressed the survey. She informed the Board it was a personal, self-reflection, concerning mental health. It was not an assignment to be collected but rather afforded students an opportunity to see what areas in their lives may need a greater focus. Mrs. Mann stressed that in her classes she tries to be balanced and not push the agenda, but always encourages students to think differently as independent thinkers. "Book talks"—very impromptu book reports, have inspired reading. She may not always agree with their points of view but claims she can unbiasedly grade on content and academic quality.

The books in question were chosen because they follow the curriculum content standards. They assess validity and identifying false statements and fallacious reasoning. They deal with perspective, figurative language and connotative meaning. These books scaffold one another as systemic racism is different from personal racism. Indeed, the books are realistically worded to reach audiences. They were not chosen to make a student feel uncomfortable. Mrs. Mann's intentions were genuine. Growing up in a small community, she intended to give students a benefit she did not have.

Dr. Hollandsworth appreciated the input concerning the ELA Curriculum being handled in a respectful and courteous manner. The Board will further contemplate and research the controversial subject.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT & SPECIAL RECOGNITION...

Superintendent Beam praised all those involved in the recent wide-area, power failure that ran from Lewisburg to Hillsboro, engulfing Hillsboro Elementary School. Mrs. Bland explained that the electrical system, phone system and cell phone system were all part of the power failure. We were able to maintain communication with Mrs. Spencer by the school bus radio and the analog line. Praises to all staff involved with the HES early dismissal.

Mr. Beam is working with principals on Summer School plans. A survey is being designed to see if we have interested personnel to work in June. These are paid positions.

During the Re-Entry plan discussion, Mr. Beam encourages returning to the full five-day week schedule, the only problem may be the high school schedule. In order to help alleviate other concerns, Mrs. Bostic is designing a virtual schools program for all the schools. It appears Virtual School will continue in the future.

Lastly, WVSSAC has initiated athletic ability waivers for students struggling academically. Athletes may carry under a 2.0 to participate in sports. The statewide waiver remains in effect until March 19, 2021.

INFORMATIONAL REPORTS/CENTRAL OFFICE UPDATES...

- a. Alan Gibson, Student Representative—Mr. Gibson announced that students have returned to in school instruction. They love the block schedule and have been keeping up with the workload. Basketball practice has been good.
- b. Mrs. Linda Beverage, Mrs. Michelle Wilfong, Mr. Joseph Riley, and Ms. Kathy Mason— Senior information updates. Pocahontas County High School staff discussed the futures of our soon-to-be graduates. Every senior has been reached so we know their future plans. Some will enter college in the fall and have been completing virtual tours. College applications and FAFSA forms are going well. Twenty-one students will enter the workforce, while five others are joining the armed forces. These numbers will change. Many have stated that they do not want to go college in virtual study. At this point it appears fifty students want to take the AP test at \$96.00 per test.
- c. Mrs. Lynne Bostic—Academic update. Virtual school is here to stay. By designing an affordable Virtual School platform, we may intrigue homeschool students to return to the public school system. Virtual students can participate in vocational classes, sports, and extracurricular activities.—a win, win situation.

APPROVAL TO AUTHORIZE PAYMENT OF VENDOR LISTING...

On the recommendation of the superintendent and motion of Mr. McLaughlin, seconded by Mr. Burns, the Board unanimously approved to authorize payment of vendor listing of claims in the amount of **\$105,662.66**.

APPROVAL TO AUTHORIZE PAYMENT OF VENDOR LISTING OF CLAIMS (LOCAL GOVERNMENT PURCHASING CARD)...

On the recommendation of the superintendent and motion of Mr. Burns, seconded by Mr. McLaughlin, the Board unanimously approved to authorize payment of vendor listing of claims (Local Government Purchasing Card) in the amount of **\$76,322.38**.

APPROVAL OF GRANT AWARDS...

On the recommendation of the superintendent and motion of Mr. Burns, seconded by Mr. McLaughlin, the Board unanimously approved the grant awards.

APPROVAL OF PAYROLL...

On the recommendation of the superintendent and motion of Mr. Burns, seconded by Mr. McLaughlin, the Board unanimously approved the following employee payroll:

February 03, 2021 – \$240,036.92

APPROVAL OF THE POCAHONTAS COUNTY SCHOOLS SUMMARY OF SCHEDULE OF REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES...

On the recommendation of the superintendent and motion of Mr. McLaughlin, seconded by Mr. Burns, the Board unanimously approved the Pocahontas County Schools Summary of Schedule of Revenues and Expenditures on a Cash Basis for the month ended January 2021.

APPROVAL OF BUDGET ADJUSTMENTS...

On the recommendation of the superintendent and motion of Mr. McLaughlin, seconded by Mr. Burns, the Board unanimously approved the Budget Adjustments.

RE-ENTRY PLAN...

On the motion of Mr. McLaughlin and seconded by Mr. Burn, the Board unanimously approved to leave the Re-Entry Plan as-is and not accept the Revised: February 16, 2021 Re-Entry Plan draft. School will remain at 4.5 days.

PERSONNEL...

On the recommendation of the superintendent and motion of Mr. McLaughlin, seconded by Mr. Burns, the Board unanimously approved personnel.

Green Bank Elementary-Middle School:

UNPAID MEDICAL
LEAVE:

ALISON C. SAFRIT, as Teacher of Art (half-time) at Green Bank Elementary-Middle School, effective March 03, 2021 (or upon exhaustion of personal leave) for a period of up to 12 weeks, as needed.

Marlinton Elementary School:

RESIGNATION:

FRANK L. BARRETT, JR., due to retirement, as Custodian III at Marlinton Elementary School, shift being 2:00 pm – 10:00 pm, effective June 30, 2021.

Pocahontas County Schools:

RESIGNATION:

LINDA H. VANREENEN, as Academic Interventionist for Pocahontas County Schools (assignment: Hillsboro Elementary School), effective at the end of the day February 26, 2021.

~~REQUESTED
TRANSFER:~~

~~SARAH A. COVER, as Itinerant Special Education Classroom Aide/Bus Aide for Pocahontas County Schools (assignment: Green Bank Elementary-Middle School) to Itinerant Special Education Classroom Aide/Bus Aide for Pocahontas County Schools (assignment: Pocahontas County High School), at state basic pay, effective February 18, 2021 for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year, term of employment is 76 days (in addition to the days already worked), shift being 7:30 am – 3:30 pm (Monday – Friday). Note: This position may be discontinued at the end of the 2020-2021 school year.~~

REQUESTED
TRANSFER:

RYAN C. ALDERMAN, as School Bus Operator for Pocahontas County Schools from his current run to run as follows:

Morning Run: Begins at Marlinton Middle School, turning right

onto Route 219 North, traveling to Route 39 East and turning right onto Beaver Creek Road, traveling by the South Entrance of Watoga State Park into Burr Valley, near Morgan McComb's residence, turning and traveling back on County Route 21 through Beaver Creek to Huntersville. At Huntersville, transfer high school students and pick up elementary and middle school students. The route will continue on Route 39 W to Marlinton Middle School to unload middle school students then travel back on Route 219 N to Route 39 E to Fifth Avenue, unloading remaining students at Marlinton Elementary School. Bus will return to Marlinton Middle School where it will be parked during the school day.

Evening Run: Reverse of morning run.

SNOW ROUTE: Start at First Entrance of Watoga State Park traveling regular route to MES and MMS. May pick up students that other buses cannot. Afternoon Run: Reverse of morning run.

Effective February 22, 2021 for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year, at state basic pay, term of employment is 74 days, (in addition to the days already worked). Note: Term of employment shall be 200 days each year thereafter.

EMPLOYMENT:

SCOTT L. KELLEY, as Athletic and Extracurricular School Bus Operator for Pocahontas County Schools, run beginning at Pocahontas County High School, stopping at Green Bank Elementary-Middle School, and ending at Durbin, (schedule to be determined by the Transportation Director and Athletic Director), at salary based on daily rate of pay for actual days worked prior to the school calendar plus \$50.00 per day based on 180 days of operation for days that activity runs are required, commencing on or after February 22, 2021, as needed, for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year, beginning date is dependent upon the WVSSAC calendar.

EMPLOYMENT:

Of the following as Custodian III, Extracurricular, for Pocahontas County Schools, (at location indicated), retroactive to February 10, 2021, as needed, for only the 2020-2021 instructional school year, at \$14.00 per hour, one day a week (Wednesday), two hours per day, shift being 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm. Note: This is an as needed, extracurricular position and contingent upon continued COVID-19 restrictions. Should all virtual or remote learning be enforced, this position will be delayed until students are present inside the school environment with face-to-face instruction. Paid holidays are not part of this contract.

James D. Chestnut—Green Bank Elementary-Middle School

Ollie C. Barkley—Marlinton Middle School

Roger D. Irvine—Marlinton Elementary School

Diane L. Arbogast—Hillsboro Elementary School

- EMPLOYMENT: JOSEPH P. ROSE, as Substitute Aide for Pocahontas County Schools, at state basic pay, for the 2020-2021 school year, as needed.
- EMPLOYMENT: GEORGE J. JAHARIAS, as Substitute Custodian for Pocahontas County Schools, at state basic pay, for the 2020-2021 school year, as needed.
- EMPLOYMENT: SHAWN K. ERVINE, as Substitute Maintenance for Pocahontas County Schools, at state basic pay, for the 2020-2021 school year, as needed.
- UNPAID MEDICAL LEAVE: PEGGY M. OWENS, as Itinerant Teacher of Art/Gifted for Pocahontas County Schools (assignment: Marlinton Middle School), retroactive to February 03, 2021 (or upon exhaustion of personal leave) for a period of up to 12 weeks, as needed.

Mr. McComb recused himself while the Board voted on the following personnel item that included his daughter, which passed 4-0.

Marlinton Middle School:

EMPLOYMENT: Of the following teachers to be included, in addition to Louisa Kiner, Teresa Rhea, and Jeanette Wagner, as After School Tutors at Marlinton Middle School, shared position, at \$22.00 per hour, 2 hours per day, 3 days per week, effective for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year, contingent upon COVID-19 restrictions.

Charlie M. Hughes
Jennifer L. McCarty
Rachel E. McComb
Cynthia E. Shreve

MATTERS OF THE BOARD...

Mr. McComb, Mr. Burns, and Dr. Hollandsworth voiced no concerns for Matters of the Board at the present time.

Mr. McLaughlin inquired about the property update. Weather has interrupted the survey progress.

Mr. Gibson had several concerns. He questioned if the Facilities Needs Project Request included the sprinkler system at Marlinton Elementary School was submitted in a timely fashion. Superintendent Beam said indeed it was. Mr. Beam would be presenting in March and successful applicants would be in April or May.

Mr. Gibson expressed an interest in elaborating and further developing the Outdoor Learning Policy. Mr. Beam said as long as they are on school property, teachers have the latitude to teach in an outside environment. Mr. Gibson was satisfied that all were in agreement to give teachers the tools to encourage learning outside the classroom walls.

Next, Mr. Gibson questioned the ventilation in the schools as the CEFP lists upgrades in all five schools. With the federally funded, COVID Relief Funds available can we address these issues? Are the

grant writers aware of this funding? Though ventilation may seem problematic, Pocahontas County Schools receives passing marks on the annual tests. Laura Young, Central Office Administrators and Principals prepare grant applications on a continual basis, to which Mr. Gibson seemed pleased.

Lastly, Mr. Gibson requested a breakdown of total funds spent at each of the five facilities including salaries, building expenses and instructional supplies. He was directed to the CEFP which delivers the requested expenditures.

NEXT BOARD MEETING...

Next Board of Education Meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 09, 2021, beginning with second calendar hearing at 5:30 PM immediately followed by regular agenda items at the Board of Education Conference Room, Buckeye, WV,

ADJOURN ...

On the motion of Mr. McLaughlin and seconded by Mr. Burns, the Board unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting.


Secretary


President