

## SCOTT COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD

### MINUTES OF SPECIAL CALLED MEETING, OCTOBER 22, 2020

The Scott County School Board met for a Special Called board meeting on Thursday, October 22, 2020 at 4:00 p.m. at the Scott County Career & Technical Center, 387 Broadwater Avenue, Gate City, VA 24251 with the following members present:

David Templeton, Chairman  
Lon Stephen "Steve" Sallee, Jr., Vice-Chairman  
Gail L. McConnell  
Linda Gillenwater  
Robin Hood  
William "Bill" Houseright

ABSENT: None

**OTHERS PRESENT:** John I. Ferguson, Division Superintendent; Jason Smith, Assistant Superintendent; William Sturgill, School Board Attorney; Beverly Stidham, Purchasing Agent/ School Board Clerk; Angela Johnson, Deputy Clerk/School Nutrition Agent/Head Start Payroll Clerk; Kathy Musick, VPE Representative; Makayla Jaramillo, Teacher/NEA Representative; Holly Viers, Kingsport Times News; Lisa McCarty, Scott County Virginia Star; Kathy Wilcox, Head Start Director; Robert Sallee, Maintenance Supervisor; Tori Arnold, Teacher, Lenoir McClung, Teacher; Morgan Quillen, Teacher; Andrew Ketron, Parent; Heather Brown, Parent; Jon Johnson, Parent; Sierra Lane, student; Susan Lane, Parent; Sarah Davis, parent; Sarah Hensley, Parent; Tiffany Howard, Nursing Coordinator for Scott County Schools; Orlinda Tomlinson, Parent; and Melissa Hass, Parent.

**CALL TO ORDER/MOMENT OF SILENCE/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Chairman Templeton called the October 22, 2020 Special Called meeting of the Scott County School Board to order at 4:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone to the meeting. After welcoming everyone to the meeting, he asked the members and audience to observe a moment of silence. After the moment of silence, Chairman Templeton led in citing the *Pledge of Allegiance*.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:** On a motion by Mr. Steve Sallee, seconded by Ms. Linda Gillenwater, all members voting aye, the Board voted to approve the agenda with the edit of moving #5-Discussion/Approval of Alternate School Schedule due to COVID-19 related illnesses to after the return from Closed Session.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** Makayla Jaramillo, Teacher/NEA Representative spoke to the Board about keeping students in the classroom and the importance of teaching face to face. Mr. Andrew Ketron, Parent expressed his concerns about keeping his children in school due to the fact of their age and the conflicts with work schedules and families being faced with the possibility of children being home alone for part of the day. Heather Brown, Parent and Health care worker also stressed the importance of children being onsite learning to help alleviate emotional stress that her children are feeling due to COVID-19 related circumstances. She also asked the Board if school has to close, does it have to affect every school in the County. Mr. Jon Johnson asked the Board to please consider the Special Needs population about keeping them onsite because his child learns from a "hands on" approach and receives therapy that he could not receive by remote learning; as well as the individualized instruction. He spoke to the fact that remote would not be a possibility for his child and recognized how well his child has done in school due to the fact of the learning experiences provided for him. Sierra Lane, a student at Rye Cove High School, spoke to the Board to please consider keeping students onsite as long as possible,

she emphasized the importance of being with her teacher in person and how it helped her to be with other students to share ideas. Other parents and educators were present to express their views as a reinforcement for onsite learning. The Board listened to each one as they expressed their concerns about internet issues, remote learning, emotional well being of their children, social/emotional learning as well as instruction.

**CLOSED MEETING:** Mr. Sallee made a motion to enter into closed meeting at 4:30 p.m. to discuss Teachers and Bus Drivers as provided in Section 2.2-3711 of the Code of Virginia, as amended, the motion was seconded by Mr. Gail McConnell, all members voting aye.

Mr. Sallee also made the motion to enter into closed meeting at 4:30 p.m. to consult with legal counsel pertaining to actual or probable litigation, as provided in Section 2.2-3711A (7) of the Code of Virginia as amended.

**RETURN FROM CLOSED MEETING:** All members present returned from the closed meeting at 5:30 p.m. with a roll call vote being held, and on a motion by Mr. Steve Sallee, seconded by Mr. Gail McConnell, the Board returned to regular session and Mr. Sallee cited the following certification of the closed meeting.

***CERTIFICATION OF CLOSED MEETING:***

*WHEREAS*, the Scott County School Board has convened a closed meeting on the date pursuant to an affirmative recorded vote and in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of the Information Act and,

*WHEREAS*, Section 2.2-3711 and Section 2.2-3711 A(7) of the Code of Virginia requires certification, by this Scott County School Board that such meeting was conducted in conformity with Virginia law;

*NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED*, that the Scott County School Board hereby certifies 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 resolution applies and (ii) only such public matters as were identified in the motion convening the closed meeting were heard, discussed, or considered by the Scott County School Board in the closed meeting

**ROLL CALL VOTE:**

AYES: David Templeton, Steve Sallee, Linda Gillenwater, Gail McConnell, Bill Houseright, and Robin Hood.

NAYS: None.

ABSENT DURING None.

**DISCUSSION/APPROVAL OF ALTERNATE SCHOOL SCHEDULE DUE TO COVID-19 RELATED ILLNESSES:** Nursing Coordinator Tiffany Howard spoke to the Board about the COVID-19 Pandemic Metrics in Scott County and stated with the rise in cases that is hard to keep staff from being out of the workplace and could possibly pose a possible issue. She stated statistics for the County when COVID-19 started that the matrix was 4.0 when the Pandemic first started and now the threshold is 4 times higher at 43.1. Ms. Howard stressed the fact that there has been a rise in cases in the student and staff population even though safety measures have been followed to keep everyone safe.

Assistant Superintendent Jason Smith addressed the Board and audience first of all from an educator's viewpoint. He thanked the parents and audience for coming and voicing their opinion and their concern for the students. He stressed that most important is the education of all children and that is his true calling; however, he and the Board must rely on the VA Dept. of Health for the most up to date and reliable information as it relates to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Mr. Smith gave the statistics of returning all kids onsite in August 4 days a week and one remote day through the week to allow a day for deep cleaning in our schools and at that time the threshold was 29.9 per 100,000. At the October meeting, the threshold had decreased to 9.3 per 100,000 and the Board took no action to change the current model of learning. Today on October 22<sup>nd</sup>, the threshold is now 43.1 per 100,000. He reassured the audience that education of our students is the top priority and he does feel that kids learn best in the classroom. He stated that when we look at the matrix mitigation strategies and how they are working, we have a current uptick at Gate City Middle School/Gate City High School. He stated that there are four (4) positive cases at Gate City Middle School with 37 students quarantined and one (1) positive case at Gate City High School with 53 students quarantined. He went on to emphasize that today as of 2:00 p.m. -4 additional cases were added at Gate City Middle School and 1 additional case at Gate City High School. He felt like this left the Board with the decision to possibly look at the unilateral decision of individual schools altering their current learning models.

Mr. Smith emphasized that the School Board would work within the confines of the VA Dept. of Health and the VA Dept. of Education to ensure that ESL and the special needs population would have access to onsite learning at this time if Gate City Middle School/Gate City High School would begin remote learning on Monday, October 26, 2020 until November 5, 2020.

On a motion by Mr. Steve Saltee, seconded by Mr. Gail McConnell, all members voting aye, the Board voted to alter the schedule of Gate City Middle School/Gate City High School, except for the ESL and Special Needs Population to remote learning from October 26, 2020 until November 5, 2020 and also authorize Superintendent Ferguson to make short term decisions regarding school changes as needed due to COVID-19 related illnesses.

**BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS:**

Mr. Bill Houseright stressed that everyone needs to be on the same page and work together. He asked Mr. Smith how many students were in quarantine at this time.

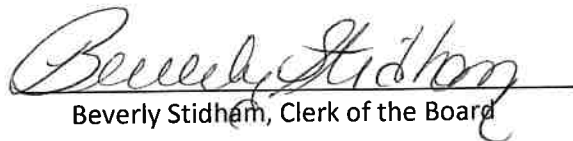
Ms. Linda Gillenwater addressed the Board and audience to reassure the public that the Board is working to keep students in school and to keep them safe. She stated that this takes effort from everyone.

Chairman Templeton stated that he appreciates everyone's comments but we have to treat the School System like a business and we have to have enough people to run our business.

There being no further business to discuss, the Special called meeting of the Scott County School Board was adjourned at 5:51 p.m.



David Templeton, Chairman



Beverly Stidham, Clerk of the Board