

June 11, 2020
6:00 p.m.

The Fannin County Board of Education met in regular session with the following members present: Chad Galloway, Chair; Terry Bramlett, Vice-Chair; Bobby Bearden; Mike Cole; and Lewis DeWeese. All members were present. The meeting was held at the Fannin County High School (FCHS) Performing Arts Center (PAC) to allow for adequate social distancing due to concerns with COVID-19.

The meeting was called to order by Chad Galloway, Chair.

Motion by Terry Bramlett, seconded by Bobby Bearden, to approve the consent agenda. All members voted yes; motion carried.

Approve the agenda.

Approve the meeting minutes from May 14, 2020, at 6:00 p.m.

On behalf of the Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts, Superintendent Michael Gwatney presented Director of Finance Susan Wynn with an *Award of Distinction for Excellent Financial Reporting* from the Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts. On behalf of The University of Georgia, Assistant Superintendent Robert Ensley and UGA Alumni Association Member Manda Gwatney presented Superintendent Michael Gwatney with the *2020 Johnnye V. Cox Award* from The University of Georgia Department of Lifelong Education, Administration, and Policy. This award recognizes individuals for their outstanding contributions to the field of educational supervision and leadership, through service and scholarship. Official representatives from neither organization were able to be on hand for a presentation due to travel restrictions related to COVID-19.

Assistant Superintendent Sarah Rigdon provided an update on School Governance Teams. **(See attached.)**

Director of Instructional Technology Heather Finley provided a Central Office Update on district accomplishments during the last quarter. She also described the work of the new Fannin County School System Central Registrar Sandra Silva.

Assistant Superintendent Sarah Rigdon provided an update on restarting school and the 2020-2021 calendar.

Assistant Superintendent Darren Danner provided an update on facilities and construction.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

Motion by Terry Bramlett, seconded by Bobby Bearden, to approve the propane bid from UPG/Fort Mountain Propane Beginning September 14, 2020, through June 30, 2021, for \$0.753 per gallon. All members voted yes; motion carried. **(See attached.)**

Motion by Bobby Bearden, seconded by Mike Cole, to approve the district's financial report for April 2020. All members voted yes; motion carried. **(See attached.)**

Director of Finance Susan Wynn stated the SPLOST check received for April 2020 was \$428,045.80.

Motion by Lewis DeWeese, seconded by Terry Bramlett, to approve a spending resolution for July 2020. All members voted yes; motion carried. **(See attached.)**

Motion by Mike Cole, seconded by Terry Bramlett, to approve the updated Policy JCDA - Code of Conduct. All members voted yes; motion carried. **(See attached.)**

Motion by Bobby Bearden, seconded by Mike Cole, to approve the amended payment for a half-time Georgia 4-H AmeriCorps State 2019-2020 County Contribution. All members voted yes; motion carried. **(See attached.)**

Motion by Chad Galloway, seconded by Terry Bramlett, to go into Executive Session to discuss or deliberate upon the appointment, employment, compensation, hiring, disciplinary action or dismissal, or periodic evaluation or rating of a public officer or employee or to interview applicants for the position of superintendent; (O.C.G.A. § 50-14-3(b)(2)). All members voted yes; motion carried.

Motion by Terry Bramlett, seconded by Bobby Bearden, to resume the regular meeting. All members voted yes; motion carried.

No action was taken during Executive Session.

Motion by Bobby Bearden, seconded by Mike Cole, to approve the minutes of the Executive Session on April 9, 2020. All members voted yes; motion carried.

Motion by Lewis DeWeese, seconded by Terry Bramlett, to approve the contract for Superintendent Michael Gwatney. The contract is for 36 months and will take effect July 1, 2020. All members voted yes; motion carried.

Motion by Terry Bramlett, seconded by Bobby Bearden, to approve the resignation of Holly Davenport effective May 26, 2020. All members voted yes; motion carried.

Motion by Chad Galloway, seconded by Lewis DeWeese, to approve the resignations of Emily Newman effective June 5, 2020. All members voted yes; motion carried.

Motion by Bobby Bearden, seconded by Mike Cole, to approve Carrie Strout, Christopher Farr, and Amy Young as teachers effective the 2020-2021 school year, pending completion of paperwork and background check. All members voted yes; motion carried.

Superintendent's Comments:

Superintendent Gwatney stated he is honored to have had the opportunity to serve the Fannin County School System in a variety of ways for so many years. He stated his time here has been an enjoyable experience, and, like everything that is truly important in life, it is the people who make it that way for him. He stated that we have the finest group of students, parents, faculty and staff, and leadership to be found anywhere. He thanked the Board for approving another three-year contract for him to continue as the Superintendent.

Superintendent Gwatney stated Proverbs 15:22 says “Plans go wrong for lack of advice; many advisers bring success.” On June 1st, the Georgia Department of Education released guidance on how to reopen schools in Georgia. In the spirit of that Proverb, the leadership team has been seeking wise counsel from many in our community and around the state. Dr. Gwatney is thankful that we have experts and leaders in our community who love Fannin County and are willing to help. He stated the goal remains to have school in August. It is impossible to say right now exactly how school will look in August, as so much will depend on the health of our community at that time. To have school will require finding that balance between serving children’s needs and community health. Dr. Gwatney wants everyone to know that the leadership team is studying the guidance from the Department of Education, planning for various scenarios, and reaching out to the faculty, staff, and parents for feedback through the stakeholder surveys discussed tonight. It is about finding a proper balance.

Finally, Dr. Gwatney congratulated the Class of 2020. The leadership, faculty and staff, and community came together to find that balance, and together they created an awesome graduation. It was beautiful! As a parent and a superintendent, he thanked everyone who had a part in making this very unusual school year a great one for our students.

Board Members’ Comments:

Bobby Bearden stated the graduation ceremony was great, and he was glad to be part of it. He congratulated Susan Wynn and the finance staff on receiving their award. During his almost 18 years on the Board he does not recall FCSS Financial Department having any problems. He congratulated Superintendent Gwatney on receiving his award and said that it could not have been given to a better person. He thanked all those involved in providing over 68,000 meals and knows the children enjoyed getting breakfast and lunch and many would have gone without. FCSS takes care of children. He stated that the City of Blue Ridge is going to host the 12 and 14 youth softball in the upcoming weekend. Mr. Bearden is glad to be on the Board with four gentlemen and Superintendent Gwatney. If he could, he would give Dr. Gwatney a 20-year contract. He thanked Superintendent Gwatney for his service and said he is a credit to our system.

Mike Cole stated that it has been a good year. He doesn’t care what others say, he is optimistic. He could see and hear the emotion in Heather Finley as she reviewed the district accomplishments during COVID-19. He commented on Sarah Rigdon’s presentation on restarting school in August. His 11-year-old daughter wants some interaction, and he is glad that we have a path to get there. He thanked Darren Danner for the great improvements to the district. He congratulated Susan Wynn, and he humorously hates that we are “slumming” in the \$400,000 SPLOST. God opened up opportunity for him to be among these great leaders. He quoted John C. Maxwell: "Everything rises and falls on leadership." He is grateful for the vision in the leadership we have that is constantly looking to where we are going and what we want to accomplish. He asked that we remember those in the law enforcement community. As a Marine, he feels for them in their current tough situations. If believe in prayer, say one for them. He is thankful to be a part of the system, and he is excited for our kids. This is a year that our kids will remember what school system did for them.

Lewis DeWeese stated that he has done much studying trying to assess the value of a teacher and each time, he gains a new appreciation for them because they help and give children better lives.

He is amazed and astounded at the perseverance, love and compassion for children. This county is blessed and he is thankful to be a part of the system. He believes there is a special place for teachers when they walk through the Pearly Gates. He thanked all staff members and others involved in the school system.

Terry Bramlett congratulated Susan Wynn and Superintendent Michael Gwatney for their awards. He thanked the leadership team and system for rising to the occasion in unprecedented times that were faced at the end of the school year. The way they have adapted and dealt with a very difficult situation is remarkable. Thank you for the opportunity to be part of the team. One of his mentors is quoted as saying “True happiness can be found in service to others.” What a standard that has been set. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity continue in service.

Chad Galloway agreed with what others said. He congratulated Susan Wynn and Superintendent Gwatney on receiving their awards. He appreciated Sarah Rigdon’s survey and information regarding getting school started; he is confident in her skills. He thanked Darren Danner and the maintenance team for their continued work on facilities. He thanked Superintendent Gwatney and his entire team for their hard work. It was a great school year that ended differently and will be remembered well. Fannin County will be the bright light shining in the State of Georgia. He loves being on the Board and part of the school system. He is hopeful that our next meeting can be held in our normal place, the Board of Education Office.

There being no further business to come before the meeting, a motion was made by Bobby Bearden, seconded by Terry Bramlett, to adjourn subject to being called into special session by the Chair when deemed necessary. All members voted yes; motion carried.

Chad Galloway, Chairperson

Michael Gwatney, Superintendent

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