

Minutes
Clarksville-Montgomery County
Board of Education

March 26, 2024

The Clarksville Montgomery County Board of Education convened Tuesday, March 26, 2024 in the Boardroom central administration offices, 621 Gracey Avenue, Clarksville TN. The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. Board members present were: District Chair Kent Griffy, Herbert Nelson, Margaret Pace, Jimmie Garland, Carol Berry, Charlie Patterson and Aron Maberry. Also present were: Dr. Jean Luna-Vedder, Director of Schools; Mark Nolan, School Board Attorney; Dr. Angela Huff, Chief of Staff; Norm Brumblay, Chief Operations Officer; David Holman, Chief Technology Officer; Melissa Izatt, Chief Human Resources Officer; Dr. Schanda Doughty, Chief Academic Officer; Chris Reneau, Chief Financial Officer; Anthony Johnson, Chief Communications Officer, Jessica Harris, Director of Elementary Schools; Amanda Nicks, Director of Elementary Schools; Matthew Slight, Director of Middle Schools; Christy Houston, Director of High Schools; Carol Joiner, General Counsel; and LaTonya Long, School Board Secretary who documented minutes of the meeting. Members present of the County Commission School Liaison Committee: Carmelle Chandler, David Harper, Nathan Burkholder, Chris Rasnic

Point of Pride Awards

Anthony Johnson, Chief Communications Officer announced the following point of pride awards

TSSAA Wrestling

CHS-Sha'niayha Wysinger, 2nd Place Girls 235, Ava Johnson, 3rd Place Girls 120, Brooklyn Whiteside, 3rd Place Girls 138, Girls Wrestling Team, 2nd Place Dual Championship, Girls Wrestling Team, 3rd Place Individual Championships

KIHS-Janiya Johnson, 3rd Place Girls 152

MCHS-Audrey Levendusky, 1st Place Girls 145, Cearyona O'Connor, 3rd Place Girls 165, Girls Wrestling Team, 4th Place Individual Championships

NWHS-Sally Johnson, 2nd Place Girls 145, Shyanne Michalski, 3rd Place Girls 114, Girls Wrestling Team, 3rd Place Dual Championship

WCHS-Standford Thompson, 3rd Place Boys AA 175, Jes'Onia Barefield, 1st Place Girls 126, Mariana Bowen, 1st Place Girls 138, Lexi Dean, 2nd place Girls 120, Eleasa Renken, 3rd Place Girls 132, Girls Wrestling Team, 2nd Place Individual Championships

JROTC Leadership and Academic Bowl – JLAB Competition, Northwest High School JROTC Academic Team

JROTC 7th Brigade SGM Paul Gray Drill Championships, Montgomery Central High School Drill and Color Guard Team

All-State Musicians

Andrew Wall – MCHS All-State Choir

Tennessee Reward Schools-East Montgomery Elementary School, Montgomery Central Elementary School, Rossvie Elementary School, Sango Elementary School, Spanish Immersion at Barksdale

Public Conversation

Sandra Brandon addressed the Board on expanding Big Brothers Big Sisters to more schools in the district. Anne Murtha addressed the Board on naming elementary school #26. Christopher Carbin addressed the board on implementing middle school wrestling. Jacaira Crockett addressed the Board on issues related to special needs students. Margery Boaz addressed the Board on naming elementary school #26. Maribeth Knight addressed the Board on abuse and bullying in schools. Ascencion Lopez Jr. addressed the Board on naming elementary school #26. Luther R. Hutchenson addressed the Board on the Michael L. Sutton Social Club presenting the MLSSC Senior Sponsorship Club. Melissa Vedo Smith addressed the Board on students and their success through service learning. Rebecca Zientek addressed the Board on safe learning environment for students. Karen England addressed the Board on Governance policies. Sarah Ring addressed the Board on issues related to district nurses.

Approval of Consent Agenda

On a motion by Mr. Charlie Patterson and seconded by Mr. Jimmie Garland the Board approved the Consent Agenda 7-0. The Consent Agenda consisted of:

1. 02/20/2024 Regular Session Minutes
2. FY2024 March Budget Amendments, 1st Read 03/12/2024

Policy Monitoring

The policy monitoring report for **Executive Limitation 5–Financial Administration**: was interpreted by Dr. Luna-Vedder. With respect to the actual, ongoing financial condition and activities, the Director of Schools shall not cause nor allow fiscal jeopardy or a material deviation from the annual budget or budget policy adopted by the Board, or any fiscal condition that is inconsistent with achieving the priorities established in the Board's Ends Policies. All revenues are scheduled to be spent in accordance with the approved budget. No funds have been borrowed to date for the current fiscal

year without approval. Nor have funds been expended from the fund balance without authorization. The actual ending fund balance will be greater than 3% based on current levels of revenue and expenditures.

A motion was made by Ms. Margaret Pace to declare full compliance for this reporting period of EL-5. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Carol Berry (No Discussion) Motion passed 7-0.

The policy monitoring report for **Executive Limitation 12-Rezoning:** was interpreted by Dr. Luna-Vedder. Because demographic circumstances change and populations increase or decrease with time, the Clarksville-Montgomery County School System is required from time to time to implement rezoning initiatives. Consequently, the Superintendent/Director of Schools shall not fail to recommend and implement rezoning decisions based on the following constraints: No rezoning decision shall be made that does not insure the equitable distribution of resources according to the learning needs of all students. No rezoning decision shall be made that fails to involve key stakeholders in the process of establishing attendance line adjustments. No final rezoning decisions shall be made without the approval of the Board.

A motion was made by Mrs. Carol Berry to declare full compliance for this reporting period of EL-12. The motion was seconded by Mr. Charlie Patterson (No Discussion). Motion passed 7-0.

Board Discussion & Consideration

Naming of Elementary School #26; Mr. Herbert Nelson made a motion to table the naming of elementary school #26 until the next board study session scheduled for April 9th, 2024. The motion was seconded by Ms. Margaret Pace (No Discussion) Motion passed 5-2.

Proposed Resolution Sponsored by Mrs. Carol Berry, A copy of the resolution proposed by Mrs. Berry to oppose education vouchers was provided to the Board for review at the March 12th Board Study Session. Mrs. Berry stated that CMCSS provides a free and quality education for all students including students with disabilities, stating that vouchers would interfere drastically with public schools by taking funding from public schools to support private schools. Mrs. Berry shared that private schools are not run by elected board members, she further stated that private education institutions receiving public funding should have the same accountability in performance reporting expectations so that parents and the public may better understand the use of their public funds. In addition, Ms. Berry shared school choice's that are available for CMCSS students. Mrs. Berry urged the Board to oppose education vouchers for the said reasons, stating that public schools are the great equalizer. Mrs. Berry commented that CMCSS has high standards and she respects the educators that work so hard to meet the needs of district students and that she is offended by some of the things people say, as she put her blood, sweat and tears into public education for 35 years and public schools are the best schools in the world. Mrs. Berry applauded CMCSS educators who work very hard to protect public schools. Mrs. Berry asked the board for their support to oppose vouchers, sharing, that other states that have implemented vouchers are either bankrupt, have large debt or slim budgets giving examples from Ohio, Georgia, and Alabama. Mrs. Berry stated that she will always do what is best for public schools.

Mr. Garland stated, in regard to education vouchers, anyone can apply for the vouchers, however, everyone will not be accepted. Mr. Garland further stated that he has looked into what the vouchers will do for the children of Tennessee. The voucher will pay \$7,000 plus dollars toward tuition per child to attend a private school, however, it will cost approximately \$12,000 to attend, parents will have to cover the additional cost. For example, parents who already have their student in a private school and if they pay 15,000.00 a year the voucher will give \$7,075 of that tuition back to the parent leaving \$8,000 for the parent to cover. For that reason, Mr. Garland supports opposing vouchers for Tennessee overall, stating that vouchers are not for every child they are for children of parents who can afford to send their children to private schools today, not for the poor. Mr. Garland supports the resolution and asked the board to support it as well.

Mr. Maberry stated that he opposes Mrs. Berry's proposed resolution stating that the voucher bill has nothing to do with Charter Schools. Mr. Maberry stated that he loves and support the public school system and Montgomery County Schools as he is a graduate and his children attend here. Mr. Maberry further stated that he supports many options for learning. Mr. Maberry also stated that he is a huge proponent of Gov. Bill Lee's call for school choice. The Education Freedom Scholarship will fund separately from TISA and will have an indirect impact on school districts the same as any student leaving the district for other reasons. As legislation currently stands 80% of the house bill is going to fund public schools. Mr. Maberry shared information on TISA funding and how it will increase funding in CMCSS stating that legislation will step-up incrementally only if certain thresholds are met, also stating that half of the scholarships are set aside based on income and the other half will be for anyone who applies. Mr. Maberry inquired about the cost of tuition for private schools in the area and found that one of the schools cost \$12,000 per year however, most are far below that. The suggested \$7,075 is lower than full tuition but many local private schools have scholarship opportunities that are also income based, those schools suggests that it is a real possibility that a student's complete tuition could be paid in

conjunction with the tuition paid by the education freedom scholarship or it could make it very affordable for families. Mr. Maberry commented that Montgomery County is a fast-growing district with an average of 1,200 students per year and with the state's base rising in additional funding added to public schools, this legislation will add millions to the budget of CMCSS not take away from it. Mr. Maberry stated that he believes that parents are a child's first and foremost educator and have the primary responsibility for their children's education. Parents have a right to direct their children's education, their care and their upbringing, stating that we should fund children not specific systems and allow one's individual tax dollars to go the schooling of their choice, stating once again that he is against the resolution to oppose education vouchers.

Mr. Patterson commented that he was going to suggest \$20,000 a year for tuition to private schools which would leave \$13,000 for parents to pay and would be welcomed by those parents. Mr. Patterson shared that he has read about several instances in Tennessee where monies have been abused at private and charter schools, stating that if voucher's do get passed that hopefully those schools would have a good person auditing them and taking care of the funding. Mr. Patterson stated that he is against public money for private schools and people that are for vouchers are working hard and donating thousands of dollars for campaigns. Mr. Patterson also stated that those who oppose education vouchers need to fight against it as best as they can, stating that it is asinine to him to be able to spend or want to spend public money for private schools.

Mr. Nelson shared that he is the son of a New York City police officer and New Your City public school teacher that sent him to parochial school. His parents worked very hard to allow him to attend that school and when there wasn't a mutual beneficial return on it, he moved to public school. Mr. Nelson stated that the one thing that worries him about vouchers is the fact that schools can be selective on who they accept and there is not equality across the board for who gets accepted or not accepted into those programs. Mr. Nelson shared that he read an article about Birmingham, Alabama where they had a similar voucher program, as a result the public schools suffered significantly from the vouchers, within ten years the demographic of public schools had changed, most of the minority students were attending public schools and most of the non-minority students were attending private schools supported by vouchers, suggesting, to be careful as it is kind of a slippery slope.

Mr. Griffy stated that he gave some latitude with this topic because it's under discussion and consideration. He reminded the board that Ms. Berry talked about her position but it needs to be put in a motion and get a second in order for the board to vote on it.

Mrs. Berry made a motion for the board to approve the resolution to oppose education vouchers. The motion was seconded by Mr. Garland. (Discussion) Mr. Griffy stated that he strongly agrees with Mrs. Berry's remarks concerning CMCSS and others. Mr. Griffy further stated that he feels that there are systems in the state that are failing and need help and vouchers will be a help for those situations. Mr. Griffy stated that it would be difficult for him to support a resolution against vouchers when there are situations in the state were vouchers are needed, also stating that he does not see a need for vouchers in CMCSS as related to Mrs. Berry's points. Mr. Griffy further stated that he has a tremendous amount of respect for Mrs. Berry and her rationale, however, it is difficult for him to support a resolution telling the state that they cannot offer vouchers to any systems at all, commenting that he wished they would rewrite the legislation and make it where it would be applicable to failing systems and hopefully that will be the case before it goes to a vote.

Mrs. Berry reiterated that the resolution was written for Clarksville Montgomery County.

Mrs. Pace stated that she has been a longtime passionate supporter of public schools. Ms. Pace posed the question "does the resolution to oppose vouchers have any muscle to it relating it to last year's charter school vote. Mr. Griffy explained that the proposed resolution is not related to charter schools. The resolution is to oppose the legislation on education vouchers. Mrs. Berry clarified that the resolution is for education vouchers not related to Charter Schools, stating that if the board votes to oppose vouchers the resolution will be sent to Montgomery County state representatives. (No Further Discussion). Motion passed 5-2.

Comments

Fort Campbell School Liaison Officer

Ms. Watkins-Diouf reported that Ft. Campbell has come to the end of music in our school's month and is fast approaching the month of the military child in April. The theme is military children, grace, fearless and resilient. Spirit week is scheduled for April 15th – 19th. On Saturday April 20th a kid's fest will be held on Ft. Campbell from 9:00-2:00. For more information visit MWR on Facebook. In addition, on April 9th a next step one-on-one college fair will be hosted by school support services at 2:00 pm at the Ft. Campbell Education Center.

CMCEA/PET Representatives

Ms. Stefi Outlaw, President of CMCEA thanked the board for passing the resolution to oppose education vouchers and joining counterparts in other parts of the state in adopting a resolution call on the Tennessee General Assembly to fulfill their constitutional obligation to provide a system of public education for our children and to do right by all Tennessee students by rejecting the governor's proposal for a statewide voucher program.

Ms. Cathy Kolb, President of PET commented on tonight's meeting being a heavy night of discussion. Ms. Kolb expressed that she wanted to celebrate public school teachers and that this year is her 42nd year of teaching. Ms. Kolb shared that teachers were asked to take an upbeat survey about how they feel the district is doing and things that need to be improved upon. With that in mind Ms. Kolb took a student survey on what they feel is needed to improve school. Ms. Kolb shared their suggestions.

County Commissioners

Commissioner Burkholder commented that it has been an exciting meeting and he appreciated the board and their patience and their willingness to listen to the public and their comments. Mr. Burkholder commented that he disagrees with the board's decision as related to their decision on education vouchers stating that it is important that the board gives the public and constituents a chance to have some input. Mr. Burkholder further discussed his personal opinion on the board's decisions and vote.

Board Members

Mr. Garland commented that he was very proud of the students receiving point of pride awards this evening and that he appreciated everyone that spoke during public conversation. Mr. Garland stated that as long as he is the school board representative for district five, he will speak on behalf of the children in this district, making sure that the board do the things that are needed to ensure the students get a quality education, a nice building with quality teaching and leadership which is his goal as a school board representative. Mr. Garland also commented that one of the reasons why he is so adamant about school vouchers is that his state representative informed him that every time a child leaves a district school the state will reduce the budget by that amount. Mr. Garland stated that children with parents making \$7.77 per hour will never be able to attend those private schools but their tax dollars will be used for that purpose like everyone else's stating, "that it is wrong".

Mr. Maberry stated that he is very proud of all the wrestling programs and that middle school wrestling will be in the budget for 2025.

Mr. Patterson suggested that the county commission authorize a vote by the people of Montgomery County in the next election as related to Commissioner Burkholder's earlier comments, stating that it would cost very minimum to add the item to the election process in order to see how the people in Montgomery County actually feel. Mr. Patterson acknowledged Chris Reneau; CMCSS' Chief Financial Officer as Mr. Reneau will be leaving CMCSS. Mr. Patterson stated that Mr. Reneau does an excellent job and has a great personality and relationships with board members and county commissioners.

Mrs. Berry thanked the board for supporting the resolution for opposing education vouchers stating that the decision is for the children. Mrs. Berry commented that she views vouchers in the state of Alabama as another means of segregation. Mrs. Berry stated that if a student uses the voucher to attend a private school and for whatever reason returns to public school the private school retains that money. Ms. Berry also stated that she is on the board because she loves the children, education, to make sure that CMCSS staff have what they need, and to support Dr. Vedder in making this district the best that it can possibly be.

Director of Schools Report

Dr. Luna-Vedder reported that last week the district had the pleasure of celebrating 270 seniors who were third year academic award recipients. Dr. Luna-Vedder gave a huge thank you to the CMC Education Foundation who ensures that the district honor students who have worked so hard throughout their high school career to exceed a 93-percentile grading average. Dr. Luna-Vedder thanked the board members and the elected officials who also took time out of their evenings to attend. Dr. Luna-Vedder stated that she is looking forward to students experiencing the solar eclipse on April 8th. Educational activities are being planned and ISO certified glasses have been purchased for all students and staff. Communication will be going out to parents this week. Dr. Luna-Vedder also shared that there will be a three-day weekend for Good Friday and Easter this weekend and she prays that everyone is able to celebrate with family and friends and take time to reflect on what truly matters.


Items on the agenda having been completed, Board Chair Kent Griffy adjourned the meeting at 8:00 p.m.



Kent Griffy
Board Chair



Dr. Jean Luna-Vedder
Director of Schools



LaTonya Long
School Board Secretary