

**RUTHERFORD COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM
Board of Education Meeting
2240 Southpark Drive
Murfreesboro, TN 37128**

**Special Called Joint Meeting
Rutherford County School Board,
Murfreesboro City School Board, and
Tennessee State Legislators**

**Minutes of December 12, 2016
5:30 P.M.**

Rutherford County Board Members Present

**E. J. Jordan, Chairman
Jim Estes, Vice Chairman
Wayne R. Blair
Terry Hodge
Aaron B. Holladay
Lisa Moore
Coy Young
Marvin D. Odom, Director of Schools**

Tennessee State Legislators Present

**Senator Bill Ketron
Senator Jim Tracy
Representative Bryan Terry**

Murfreesboro City Board Members Present

**Butch Campbell, Chairman
Nancy Rainier, Vice Chairman
Wesley Ballard
Jared Barrett
Phil King
David Settles
Dr. Linda Gilbert**

Absent

**Collier Smith, Murfreesboro City Schools
Representative Tim Rudd
Representative Mike Sparks
Representative Dawn White**

County Board Chairman, Jeff Jordan, chaired the joint meeting with members of the Rutherford County School Board, the Murfreesboro City School Board, Tennessee State Legislators, and Directors of Schools, Don Odom and Dr. Linda Gilbert, attending. The meeting was held at the Rutherford County Board of Education Central Office and began at 5:30 P.M.

Butch Campbell led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Jordan welcomed everyone and stated that this meeting would be for questions and answers.

Question:

Butch Campbell – Mr. Tracy, in regards to our testing fiasco last year, is there a possibility of a year harmless legislation to not let the testing count towards the evaluation of the teachers, the systems, principals, etc?

Answer:

Jim Tracy – I do think it is a possibility that legislators or either the Commissioner will do this. There is discussion on this.

Question:

Lisa Moore – Thank you for being here. This question is for both Senators. I would like for you to speak to what would be your top thing that you would like to see us as a board do or do better?

Answer:

Jim Tracy – We appreciate your service as a board members. I served nine years on the Bedford County School Board. I know what it takes to be a school board member. First, I think Career & Technical Education (CTE) is very important. I want to hear more about CTE. You have a great program here in Rutherford County. I understand you graduated 98% last year. It is my passion. Workforce development is a tremendous opportunity for our students. Second is listen to your needs. Each school district is different. We put additional BEP funds in last year and I would like to see additional BEP dollars this year also.

Bill Ketron – I agree with Mr. Tracy. The training facility across from Nissan is opening soon. I would like to see programs like Mechatronics in all high schools. I believe you have it in three high schools now. (Oakland, Siegel and Smyrna) There is the potential to make good money right out of high school. A student takes the two-year program in high school and on to two years at Motlow and they are ready to work. Nissan, Bridgestone and General Motors are all looking at this. They are looking for a trained workforce.

Question:

Jared Barrett – My question is on BEP funding. We need improvement on this. The ratio for school nurses is one nurse to 3,000 students. We have schools with only 1,000 students. We really need one nurse per school. We have other issues with BEP funding. I would like you speak to improvements.

Answer:

Bill Ketron – This year it is 5.62%, and last year 4%. We fully funded BEP last year for the first time in many years. We are trying to fully fund BEP again. There should be some opportunity for the nurses.

Jim Tracy – It was 261 million last year. We put in the 12th month of Health Insurance. We were only paying for ten months. I know that you need the guidance counselors to guide not become the testing people. Yes, we need to tweak the BEP. It is not perfect, especially at the rapid rate of growth in Rutherford County and Murfreesboro City. We are waiting on word from the governor. We have not seen the governor's budget. Guidance counselors as well as nurses are important.

Question:

Wayne Blair – Thank you for the growth funds, teacher pay increases, health insurance, and BEP technology. As far as vouchers, you passed the Special Ed vouchers. Please clarify your position on the voucher programs; opportunity scholarships and education savings account.

Answer:

Jim Tracy – Special Education vouchers were the first that has passed. We had concerns. We met with the commissioner and she has concerns about implementation, who controls the dollars, etc.

Other vouchers I haven't heard much about this year. Last year I do know that Shelby County, Memphis, was the one talked about. It was in the 5% academic lowest failing schools. It was talked about but never was voted on. The dollar figure mentioned was \$4,500 per student which is about ½ of the cost for private school. Very few would use it.

Bill Ketron – A 2012 task force made recommendations concerning low income scholarships similar to vouchers. I foresee legislation coming back up. Possible permissive language for school boards. The new Secretary of Education does like vouchers. I don't see the need for vouchers here. I see the need in Shelby County. Needs to be permissive.

Question:

Wesley Ballard – This summer Governor Haslam stated that we weren't funding education enough in Tennessee. Enlighten us on this. Where will you find the money to increase those funds and to support new ideas?

Answer:

Bill Ketron – We are looking for cuts. Duplication of services. Some maintenance went to vendors and saved money. Some excess dollars are not recurring. If you had some extra where would you put it?

Dr. Linda Gilbert – One time money we could replace carpet, repair roofs, buy playground equipment and technology.

Don Odom – Growth funds are very important. It has been increased. That helped. We have grown over 1,000 new students this year.

Bill Ketron – Our chamber projections are that our population will double over the next 10 years. Of course, more issues come with more growth. Look at the bigger picture. We are thrilled with the extra money. Dr. Gilbert let us know if you have any roofs leaking.

Jim Tracy – Do a budget. You know the difference between one-time and recurring funds. Both systems are growing fast. Both systems could use some one-time money. Get together with all fast-growing systems across the state and let us know, make a presentation to us. The BEP funding challenge is very different with you all. I recommend that you get together and present to us.

Question:

Jim Estes – Thank you for your support of CTE education. With the way CTE is helping our system, I don't think Carl Perkins grant money is going to continue to fund this. Six of the top ten Carl Perkins counties are in Middle Tennessee. The new Rockvale High School CTE programs will cost a lot. If we put in a manufacturing unit it alone would cost \$3,000 plus for that classroom. Any chance of a budget amendment in the budget to help us fund CTE with our growth?

Answer:

Bill Ketron – I totally support that. I have not seen the budget at this point. I haven't heard. I do know that we don't want old equipment in the CTE programs. We need the latest available for student training.

Jim Tracy – I would support that; 100%. We have some surplus dollars. You did your homework on this report. If the Governor doesn't then we will do an amendment. The superintendents need to push for it.

Jim Estes – That was the CTE Directors' report throughout Tennessee.

Jim Tracy – I like it.

Bryan Terry – Get us a specific proposal. When putting the budget together we need to do it on the frontend instead of backend. Now is crunch time.

Question:

Phil King – In light of the recent bus accident in Chattanooga, would seat belts be the answer? It is worth it whatever the cost. Would better hiring practices be the answer?

Answer:

Jim Tracy – About six years ago, the Transportation Department discussed bus seat belts. There was an accident in Alabama. The question is do we need to mandate it? Several factors to consider; is it safer, who is going to put the seat belts on the students and then take them off if there is an accident or fire, and then the cost. If I remember correctly it will cost a lot. With seat belts the bus will not seat as many elementary students as it does now. That would mean additional buses. My question is, do you want us to mandate it? The LEAs can do it in their budget process. It is not necessary for us to mandate. As far as hiring practices, most have their own employees as bus drivers. Back when they did the study it did not show it was safer.

Bill Ketrone – I would like to know that too. I think to retrofit a current bus is approximately \$15,000. You would need more support on the floor where the seat belts would come up. New buses from the factory would already have that support. The jury is still out as to the safety. Not sure how safe they are. It is more complicated. If we mandate it, the state should pay for it.

Bryan Terry – From the last study there were some issues on mobility injuries, not just mortality. I am sure there will be some bills coming out of legislators in Chattanooga. Would like to hear from you.

Jeff Jordan – We will put seat belts on our January Board Meeting agenda for discussion and then get back to you with our opinion.

Jim Tracy – Also please give us an estimate on approximate costs. Bills could go through and we could mandate to all the LEAs. I think if we mandate then the State should pay for it. We go back in session the last week of January.

Jeff Jordan – The estimate of \$15,000 is right on. Doesn't include a second person on the bus that is needed.

Bill Ketrone – At least 10 minutes more time before the bus even moves would be needed. You know like flight attendants making sure your seat belts are fastened.

Aaron Holladay – On that topic the need for qualified bus drivers is an issue. Rutherford County is a contract bus service. Contractors say finding bus drivers is very difficult. Their insurance carriers

require documented hours of driving before any students are on board. If there was a state program who tested and certified bus drivers, then we would have a pool of drivers. That would be beneficial to school systems and contracted services. It is like a Catch 22; need to overcome that hurdle.

Bill Ketron – Some states like Alabama have monthly bus inspections. Tennessee does annually.

Question;

Aaron Holladay – I am the Federal Liaison for Rutherford County schools. So glad they reauthorized ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) legislation. What Federal partnerships are important to you? We are the United States pinnacle of public education. They point at Tennessee. You always have an equal opportunity here. When others say show me some innovation, they are told to go to Rutherford County and Murfreesboro. We are like a pebble in a pond that ripples across the nation and the world. They use Rutherford County as a catalyst. We have dedicated dollars to maintain our buildings. We need to model all over the state.

Answer:

Jim Tracy – I want the federal government to let us handle things. Federal dollars have strings attached. Untie those strings and give us more federal dollars.

Bill Ketron – I agree with that. The Federal Department of Education should not dictate to us. I believe in state rights. We know us, our students, our teachers, the parents and their needs.

Bryan Terry – I echo this. They take a bureaucratic cut off the top and then send it back with strings. Keep it here. No strings.

Jim Tracy – Would it help to have more money for RTI²?

Don Odom – Coming from the BEP Review Committee, RTI² funding is in the top four. It is number four. We have the mandate but have never had the funding to go with it. Here in Rutherford County, we have one coach and two interventionists at each school. We are better off, we are catching the children early.

Jim Tracy – From what I have heard RTI² is working. They like the program but don't have the money to pay people to do the program.

Don Odom – 28 million 220 thousand dollars

Jim Tracy – Just Rutherford County?

Don Odom – No! I can give you this report tonight.

Question:

Nancy Rainier – I want to mention this. The choice for the new Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos, has never taught school. She said she is pro-choice. I am concerned about permissiveness. If it starts somewhere as in Shelby County, it could become a slippery slope. That is my concern. Is there a push for electing the directors of schools? They are elected then the first year is learning the system, the second and third year is working, and the fourth year is trying to elected again. That is also a concern. What is your stance?

Answer:

Jim Tracy – I have voted against this many times. You elect your Board Members. They appoint the director/superintendent. I don't think politicians necessarily make good superintendents. We need what is best for education and students. I have seen it both ways as a board member over the years. However, I do see my coworker's concerns.

Bill Ketron – My personal opinion is that I support appointed superintendents. I do know that some counties, some LEAs can't afford to bring in the most qualified. Elections work for them.

Bryan Terry – I have not researched this. I would be happy to talk with you concerning this issue, the pros and cons.

Question:

Terry Hodge – I appreciate you coming. I have been pretty hard on Jim Tracy concerning vouchers. What do you see on the growth of charter schools at this point and the chance of raising the fee to authorize them?

Jim Tracy – I do not see any movement on expanding or widening charter schools. I do not foresee that. Sometimes in education we change things too quickly. We don't let things work. On raising the authorizing fee, it may go up a little. We need to evaluate where it is. Do not see any movement. No push for it, but doesn't mean someone will not file a bill. I voted for local level control.

Bill Ketron – I am ok with this too. Like Mr. Tracy, I like local control. It should come under where you as a school board decide.

Bryan Terry – I echo this. I have not heard of any push. I am not on any of the education committees.

Question:

Jeff Jordan – I have a couple of comments. We have copies of resolutions for you, recommendations from the TSBA. Also, I would like to see the charter school application fee get up to what it cost us to do all the research on it. I echo what Mr. Blair said, extra BEP money is greatly appreciated and most helpful. We matched the teacher pay raise. So thankful for that. Insurance is a budget nightmare. As for the voucher question, a number of bills were introduced. The last one had so many amendments it would never pass. We are concerned about all students, students all over the state, but mainly concerned about Rutherford County students and Murfreesboro students. Taxpayer money going somewhere else besides Murfreesboro and Rutherford County is a major concern. Is there a chance that our money, our share, is going to someone/somewhere else in the state?

Answer:

Bill Ketron – No, I do not see that happening.

Bryan Terry – The money is earmarked for Rutherford County or Murfreesboro City.

Jim Tracy – I would say we have talked about charter schools and vouchers. There is no magic bullet. Education is extremely important. Teachers have to do so much more than years past. We

want to work with you all on educating all students. We might disagree on how we get there, but we all want the same thing.

Question:

Coy Young – In Rutherford County we have so many portable classrooms. We are trying our best to keep up. We are about two schools behind right now. At budget time, we have to try to pay for all of this. We need your help with the unfunded mandates. We really need your support.

Answer:

Jim Tracy – Give us a list.

Coy Young – Example RTP². Mr. Odom can give you a list.

Aaron Holladay – One example is AP testing. If evaluated on the performance, then we need to be funded. It is in the resolutions we have given you.

Question:

Butch Campbell – We really appreciate you coming. Bill Ketron, you sponsored a bill on PE time requirements. Every limit on time on task and academics suffer. When you mandate more time away from academics it causes problems. I am not saying PE is not important. It is.

Answer:

Bill Ketron – I was not on the bill; an earlier bill, Coordinated Schools Health. But the alarm has sounded. Obesity and childhood diabetes in Tennessee has risen. Health culture needs changing. Will have a symposium this year. We want to work with you on this.

Butch Campbell – I don't disagree with you. Part of the problem is the sitting playing video games after school and not outside playing games and riding bicycles.

Bill Ketron – I agree with that. Starting with the children we can change our health culture.

Bryan Terry – Not only are the breaks physical but mental as well. They need that.

Butch Campbell – What we are more concerned about is being told what to do.

Question:

Lisa Moore – Go back to state testing. I continue to hear from constituents and teachers concerning state testing. I think we are too quick to jump to new programs, new solutions. My question is for you to expound on this, where are we, what are your recommendations? We want to make sure the Department of Education fixes it

Answer:

Jim Tracy – There is too much testing. Have been talking to the commissioner. We need to bring down the number of tests. We do need to keep score. We do need to know children are learning. When Governors change, education changes. We went overboard at one time. We need common sense involved.

Bryan Terry – The teachers I talked with are ok with evaluations. They say too much testing. It needs to be fair, consistent, and valid. The Governor believes testing improves our outcomes. How can we do that effectively? I will listen to any input.

Bill Ketron – TN Ready gives more flexibility. To use or not to use it. Is that working?

Don Odom – Most teachers elected not to use them. Go back another year. On again, off again. For the high schools the kids did not even try.

Bill Ketron – TVAS scores, does it help having flexibility?

Don Odom – The measurements change because the group of students change from year to year for each teacher. That is the risk, different students from year to year.

Bill Ketron – We are finally listening. Using common sense. We are trying to make it better. Trying to put the right tools in your hands.

Dr. Linda Gilbert – In last year's fiasco, learning was lost. Our children get lost when labels are applied. Assessment and accountability are one thing to help us but tracking and labeling hinder. The child and education gets lost. This year scores are supposedly dropping. When the business community comes to Tennessee, they see the labels from testing and it is not a true picture of our students.

Bryan Terry – Last year's test scores caused problems for our students applying for college; in competing with other states. I have concerns with tracking students also. Students have bad days too.

Bill Ketron – Maybe our Chambers of Commerce across the state needs to know and to let businesses know that the grades are not a true reflection. Maybe just a piece of paper to hand out to them.

Dr. Linda Gilbert – Explaining the report card is tough among educators. It certainly is a challenge to explain it to businesses and parents.

Question:

Jared Barrett – My question is on grades, letter grades. The bill was passed for A-F grades. Are you for or against this?

Answer:

Jim Tracy – I want to look at it. I want to talk to my folks in my district.

Bill Ketron – It was designed for parents to understand.

Don Odom – Let me give you an example. ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) passed and the information coming from the U.S. Department of Education in November had a guidance sheet. It suggested the letter grade. Each school must have three categories, not necessarily letter grades. I am ok with a letter grade for each part such as value added, achievement, graduation rate. One simple letter grade is not fair for a school. We need to look at all the parts. Our new law passed does say just one simple grade.

Jim Tracy – Would you put what you said on paper for us. You explained it very well. It is common sense.

Don Odom – I have a sheet right here to give you before you leave.

Bryan Terry – Accountability and validity.

Wayne Blair – Tennessee Public Chapter 680 is what we are talking about. I would like to say that if you have any questions or have any new programs coming, please contact Mr. Odom and Dr. Gilbert to discuss. They are experts in the field of education and they care about the children. I know they would be happy to do that.

Question:

Wesley Ballard – Elected superintendent versus appointed superintendent. What do you suggest?

Answer:

Bill Ketron - Someone always brings out a bill.

Jim Tracy – When the members of the Education Committee are appointed, contact these members and voice your concerns and opinions. Tell them why you feel this way.

Jim Estes – I agree with Mr. Blair in what he said. We have two of the best directors in the state right here. Talk with them.

Butch Campbell – Thank you so much for coming. You have provided us with very important and good information and I hope we have done the same for you. I think both systems work very closely together. Our systems are very proud to know that our two directors grew up through these systems so they know what it is like here.

Jeff Jordan – I really, really want a good relationship with the legislators. That relationship will benefit our students greatly. I am hoping you all will help us with that.

Dr. Linda Gilbert – Thank you every time we call you answer. I would ask and would very much appreciate hearing from you before you make decisions. I think that would be very helpful. We have the best teachers and administrators in the state. Please look at accountability for this year.

Don Odom – Thank you for your dedication to the boys and girls of Tennessee. When we reach out to you, you have answered. Our County Commission has supported us tremendously. At this time our tax dollars are going into buildings. I wanted to share the BEP review committee four top items.

- 1) Educator compensation (there is a shortage of teachers)
- 2) English Language Learners funding (Rutherford County is 4th in the state behind the 3 larger cities)
- 3) Funding for guidance counselor ratio improvement (would have to be multiyear because of the high cost)
- 4) RTI² positions

Grading card will have readiness factors, ACT score of 21 or 4 ESPOS (dual credit, dual enrollment, AP, industry certification, etc.). Industry Certification cost is absorbed by the student.

Some of those tests cost up to \$300. If you could help pay for these tests we would appreciate it. We have 16 pathways. Health is a big one for us.

Jim Tracy – Dr. Gilbert and Mr. Odom are very well respected directors in the state. Unfunded mandates and TN Public #680 are two things I will look at. Call me and others here anytime. Thank you for the service you do for Rutherford County and Murfreesboro.

Bryan Terry – I want to echo Senator Tracy. From a budget standpoint, we do have a deadline out there. The legislative law and changes have a deadline as well. Call me anytime. Thank you.

Bill Ketrone – Thank you for having this meeting every year before we start a new year. We have the best delegation in the state. We become very defensive for Rutherford County. We are your mouthpiece. We are all in this together. Thank you.

Jeff Jordan – Thank you so much for coming. We appreciate you.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:45 P.M.



E. J. Jordan, Chairman

1/26/17
Date



Marvin D. Odom, Director of Schools

1-26-17
Date