

**Jackson County Board of Education
Minutes of Special-Called Meeting
Sylva, North Carolina**

100 Smoky Mountain Drive, Sylva

March 14, 2018

6:00 p.m.

The Jackson County Board of Education met in a Special-Called Meeting at 6:00 p.m. on March 14, 2018, at 100 Smoky Mountain Drive, Sylva, NC. The purpose of the meeting was a Student Forum to discuss School Safety in Jackson County Public Schools with the Board of Education. The following members were present:

Ken Henke, Chairman
Ali Laird-Large, Vice Chair
Elizabeth Cooper
Margaret McRae
Wes Jamison

Also present were Superintendent, Dr. Kim Elliott; and Board Clerk, Cora Fields.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Ken Henke called the meeting to order at approximately 6:00 p.m.

Mr. Henke led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Upon a motion by Mrs. Ali Laird-Large and seconded by Mrs. Margaret McRae, the board voted unanimously to approve the Agenda.

INFORMATION AGENDA

- A. **Agenda Item:** Introduction of Board Members
Presenter: Mr. Ken Henke, Board Chairman

Mr. Henke thanked everyone for coming to the Student Safety Forum, and introduced the members of the Jackson County Public Schools Board of Education, Mrs. Ali Laird-Large, Mrs. Elizabeth Cooper, Mrs. Margaret McRae and Mr. Wes Jamison. Mr. Henke said the purpose of the meeting is for the board to listed to the students and determine additional ways to improve school safety.

- B. **Agenda Item:** Introduction of Superintendent
Presenter: Mr. Ken Henke, Board Chairman

Mr. Henke introduced Dr. Kim Elliott, Superintendent of Jackson County Public Schools. Dr. Elliott reiterated that the main purpose of the meeting is for the board members to listen to members of the student body at each of the three high schools.

C. **Agenda Item:** Appreciation and Introduction of Ms. Addison Hill, Smoky Mountain High School Student Body President

Presenter: Dr. Kim Elliott, Superintendent

Dr. Elliott thanked everyone for coming to the first Student Safety Forum. She said that this forum is the student's forum. She introduced members of the Jackson County Sheriff's Department, the County Commissioners, the County Manager, JCPS Principals, Assistant Principals, and Directors, and thanked the community for their support. Dr. Elliott introduced Dr. Rebecca Ensley, Volunteer Director of School Safety, and thanked everyone for their work on our School Safety Plans and our partnerships with each of their organizations. Dr. Elliott introduced Ms. Addison "Addy" Hill, SMHS Student Body President.

STUDENT COMMENTS

Ms. Addy Hill thanked Dr. Elliott and Mr. Buchanan for meeting with her and her fellow students to discuss school safety options and for providing this forum for the students to be heard by the board. Ms. Hill provided parameters for the students speakers - Designed for school board to listen • Time to speak limited to 5 minutes • Complaints about individual employees or students prohibited. Ms. Hill stated that if they did not have anything nice to say, not to say anything at all.

Sarah Padyk, SMHS – Ms. Padyk stated the importance of mental health support. She cited national statistics that 1 in 5 students require some form of mental health support and that less than 50% seek help. Sarah said that if this national average is correct, 167 students at SMHS need mental health support, and that this affects all of us. Ms. Padyk said that we need to make students aware of the help that is available to them at the school. She stated that we need to train our teachers to inform students about available mental health care. She said that when she has reported issues in the past, she has been told to tell the teacher if it happens again. She also said that it would be a good idea to establish safe rooms for kids to go when they are in crisis.

Abby Spiro, SMHS – Ms. Spiro said that she feels there is a lack of advertising within the schools about mental health services that are available to students. She said that if leaders don't know, why would they. Ms. Spiro said that we need to streamline the process. She said that the school counselors are amazing, but that they are very busy and there is a need for additional counselors. Abby cited that the national average is 1 counselor to every 500 students and that we need more counselors focused on students and available when they need them. She also said that we need to set up anonymous tip lines or tip boxes and that these are kept up with on a daily basis. She said that in the past, tips have been suggested and never followed up.

Tyler Milkey, SMHS – Mr. Milkey said that prior to the Sandy Hook incident there was no discussion about school safety, and now there is a lot of discussion. He said that he is concerned that we could be putting ideas in their heads about violence in the schools. He wants to make sure that students are aware of the resources available, but not put it in their faces about the tragedies. He also wants students to be aware that they can change even if they make one mistake. Mr. Milkey said that he is concerned that the more we broadcast these events the more unsafe the students feel.

Elizabeth Sellers, JCEC – Ms. Sellers said that prevention will not stop everything, but that it does help to talk through the situation. She said that students would like to know what to do when an incident occurs, that being prepared is just as important as prevention. Ms. Sellers said that students would like to hold more lock down drills so that they will know what to do during an emergency. They would like to know

how to lead other students out of a bad situation. Elizabeth said that we have a small school and that if everyone just ran into the main area, that they would be sitting ducks. She said that the students need to know how to handle these situations. Ms. Sellers said that JCEC does not have a school counselor, and stated that the students needed someone to go to. She said that even though there are budget cuts, this should not be taken away from the schools.

Scarlett Kinkaid, JCEC – Ms. Kinkaid said that she has learned a lot in her Leadership Class at JCEC, but that they need to have more lock down drills. The students need to be prepared for any event. She said that social media hints were given from the Parkland shooter.

Maya Sterling, JCEC – Ms. Sterling said that she has been told not to report the small problems until they become big. She said that students need to learn how to deal with smaller things, so that they don't become big problems. Ms. Sterling said that it would be helpful for students to be able to talk through what to do if this happens, an open discussion of problems.

Pollyanna Ballentine, BREC – Ms. Ballentine said that she feels that the BREC campus is very vulnerable due to it being an open campus. She said that students have no knowledge of the safety procedures. Ms. Ballentine said that we should install a buzz-in system and close in the breezeways for added safety. She also said that there is only one School Resource Officer (SRO) at Blue Ridge School and that we should have an SRO at both buildings. Ms. Ballentine stated that the school has a great counselor, but it is not enough to go around. She thinks that we should hire additional counselors, and hold additional safety drills and lock down drills.

Holly Miller, SMHS – Ms. Miller thanked the Board of Education members for opening the lines of communication and the opportunity to address their concerns. Ms. Miller said the students need more coping mechanisms and that everyone needs to remain vigilant.

Grace Ruebel, SMHS – Ms. Ruebel said that we need additional counselors and mental health providers to listen to students. She said that everything changes when you have someone to listen to you. She stated that it is great to know that we have resources and that the school has great counselors. Ms. Ruebel said that we need to make students aware of resources available to them at the school through announcements and posters.

Grace Pressley, SMHS – Ms. Pressley talked about Community for Change organization and that we all need to be a part of the change. Ms. Pressley thanked the board for allowing them to speak and for making Jackson County Public Schools safer. She said that adding SRO's is important. She said that SMHS is a big campus and needs more SRO's. She feels that closing in the breezeways will help and that we need to establish a plan of action.

Lilyan Wright, SMHS – Ms. Wright thanked Dr. Elliott and Mr. Buchanan for the opportunity to meet with her and scheduling this Student Forum. She said that we all need to know what to do in case this happens in their school. She told a story about one of the students at Parkland that told her friend to hold a book in front of her head to avoid being shot. She said that the student that shared this information was killed in the incident. Ms. Wright said that the teachers are now going to have to teach their students what to do in an emergency situation. She would like to see more meetings, more counselors, more prevention, and more realistic drills at different times of the day, not just when they are expecting them.

Madison Page, SMHS – Ms. Page said that there is a lot of bullying, digital more than verbal. She feels that there needs to be consequences for this. Teachers need to be educated about bullying. She feels that bullying needs to be addressed in private, not in front of the class. She said that teacher words matter. Ms. Page said that parents also need to be educated about bullying. Ms. Page said that if a student sees something, they need to say something to a teacher, adult or parent. She recommended more education for adults and parents.

Miranda Pavey, SMHS – Ms. Pavey thanked the board for the opportunity to speak to them. She also thanked Dr. Elliott and Mr. Jake Buchanan for meeting with her and her fellow students to discuss their safety concerns and setting up the Student Safety Forum. She said that it is important to reach out to the younger children. Miranda said that her brother is terrified to go to school after seeing the news about the Parkland shootings. Ms. Pavey said that we need to talk to the younger kids about what to do – See Something, Say Something. She said they need to know they are safe, that we can't hide this. Ms. Pavey said that our teachers need to do this, and the high school students need to talk to these younger kids because they can relate to them better than adults – we can't shelter them.

Addison Hill, SMHS – Ms. Hill said that we need SRO's for all schools. We need more locked doors, and more enclosed schools that are safer and harder to get in. Ms. Hill said she supports the buzz-in system. Ms. Hill said that we need to address communication in the new gym building because the cell phone service is bad and there is only one phone in the wrestling room. She also said that more counselors and services are needed with a better process for mental health services. Ms. Hill said that the addition of support groups, better advertising in the schools, more education about bullying, more safety drills, better preparation and more drills during transition are needed.

CLOSING REMARKS

Mr. Henke said that the board appreciated this opportunity to hear the students. He said it was nice to hear about the new problems and possible solutions from the students. Mr. Henke said that we are here to do what we can to make sure students are safe in the halls, restrooms and all school spaces. He said that we will try to do as many things as we can for school safety. Mr. Henke thanked the commissioners for funding and programs that will aid us in school safety with reasonable solutions. He told the students to contact a school board member or the Superintendent with ideas or concerns. Mr. Henke said that he appreciates everyone that took the time to speak and listen to the students concerns and that hopefully this never happens in Jackson County.

Mrs. Ali Laird-Large thanked everyone and said that we have all taken good notes and will make change happen. She said that the County Commissioners are outstanding in their support and that both boards will be meeting to take these ideas and wishes and begin implementation. Ms. Laird-Large welcomed everyone to attend a board meeting.

Dr. Kim Elliott shared that she appreciates the board and their willingness to listen to the stakeholders and students. Dr. Elliott said she is proud of the students for sharing their ideas and thanked them for taking the time to come to this forum. Dr. Elliott applauded our student leaders.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The next regularly scheduled business meeting of the Board of Education is March 27, 2018, at 6:00 p.m., at the Board of Education Administrative Offices, 398 Hospital Road, Sylva, North Carolina.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no objection, Chairman Henke adjourned the meeting at 7:15 p.m.

Ken Henke, Chairman

Dr. Kim Elliott, Secretary