

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

November 5, 2018

6:00 P.M.

PRESENT: Mark Blevins, Nancy Brown, Charles VonCannon, Austin Jaynes, Ginger Holdren,
Travis Hill for Gary Bailey, Sonja Culler and Robin McKamey

ABSENT: Gary Bailey

CALL TO ORDER: Robin McKamey, Chairwoman

ROLL CALL: Quorum Present

- At this time the floor was given to Dr. Kevin Ward, Director of Schools. He recognized School Board members Tony Garland, Kelly Crain and Keith Bowers, several members of the Carter County Education Association, Peggy Campbell, Assistant Director and Danny McClain, Secondary Supervisor. Dr. Ward stated he wanted to relate to the committee the concerns and pressing needs of the school system.
- The first concern presented by Dr. Ward was the salaries/wages of the para professional employees in the school system. These include janitors, kitchen staff, bus drivers, office staff, etc. He stated a pay scale needed to be addressed for these employees. He gave the example by saying if a janitor was hired today he would have the same salary as a janitor with 20-25 years of service. Another concern was teacher's salaries. He stated that although they did have a pay scale, they could transfer to a City school or take a teaching position in a neighboring county and be paid a considerably higher salary. Peggy Campbell informed the committee of the outcome of several surveys taken comparing pay scales in other counties stating it was hard for our county to compete with counties having more industry and tax dollars to fund education. Dr. Ward stated a way to recruit and retain teachers needed to be addressed with competitive salaries/benefits being key.
- Danny McClain stated that Carter County participates in Early Postsecondary Opportunities (EPSOs) which offers students classes to earn postsecondary credits while in high school such as nursing, CAD, welding, agriculture, etc. He stated that due to the fact students decline to be "transported" from one school to another to attend these classes, they would have to be expanded to allow all four (4) high schools the opportunity to participate.
- Dr. Ward informed the committee the EMA director, Gary Smith, had conducted a handicap survey and cited 5000+ violations in the county and 4000+ were attributed to the schools. He stated these violations were most likely in older and outdated schools. He informed the committee the "companion seating" in the sports stadiums however had been completed.
- Concerning the 2018-2019 School Budget, Dr. Ward stated this years budget started out with a -\$249,000 that had to be taken from fund balance in order to have a balanced budget for this school year. He also stated there was a decline in student enrollment of between 70-74 students resulting in a loss of BEP funds. He stated with the mandatory step raises for teachers, in the

approximate amount of \$225,000, the increase in insurance in the approximate amount of \$259,705, the loss of BEP funds an amount of approximately \$525,000 and the starting negative balance of \$249,000, the school departments budget would be a negative - \$1,258,705 at the start of the next budget process. He stated the Board was looking at ways to create a five (5) year plan for additional future savings in order for the school system to be self supporting. As the teacher/pupil ration was set by the State and could not be touched, cuts mentioned included SRO's, school nurses, etc. He stated that an additional SRO for Little Milligan had just been funded and the school nurses were necessary now more than in the past because of students having more health issues. Monitoring closely budget line item balances to sustain their budget would also be part of that plan. He stated coming before the Commission to ask for additional funding was the last option.

- Dr. Ward brought up the "1/2 cent Referendum", the Commission worked with the School Board to pass, was bringing in \$800,000 per year and an increase was expected in that figure. These funds are primarily used for maintenance.
- Dr. Ward informed the committee the Attorney General was not going to render an opinion in the "In God We Trust" issue as there was no pending litigation regarding the posting of this national "motto" as yet. He said if or when there was a lawsuit filed, he would then provide his opinion. He stated the State had passed a law allowing the posting of the motto in schools but a legal opinion was needed to determine if the permanent injunction the county was under presently, which specifies schools could not promote any student activities relating to religion, would be in violation by the posting of the motto.
- In an effort to be more engaged with schools and the School Board, field trips to visit the schools was suggested by Chairwoman McKamey. It was decided to visit Keensburg Elementary, Hunter Elementary, Unaka High School and Unaka Elementary on November 20, 2018. A bus will be available at the Courthouse at 12:00 pm for anyone interested in participating. Also, the committee set the next regular meeting on December 3, 2018, at 6:00 pm to be held at Cloudland High School. A tour of the school prior to the meeting to begin at 5:00 pm.
- Meeting adjourned by Chairwoman McKamey.

Respectfully submitted,

Suzi Wallace

Approved for entry:

Robin McKamey, Chairwoman