

## Committee on Joint School Services

### MINUTES

August 22, 2019

The Committee on Joint School Services met in its initial organizational meeting on Thursday, August 22, 2019 with the following members present:

Jonathan Arritt	Covington City School Board
Gerald Franson	Alleghany County School Board
Matt Garten	Alleghany County Board of Supervisors
James Griffith	Alleghany County Board of Supervisors
Erika Hunter	Covington City School Board
Tom Sibold	Covington City Council
Allan Tucker	Covington City Council (Absent)
Jacob Wright	Alleghany County School Board

Also present were Mr. Eugene Kotulka, Superintendent of Alleghany County Public Schools and Mrs. Melinda Snead-Johnson, Superintendent of Covington City Schools; and Christy Armentrout.

Mr. Wright acted as temporary chairman. He called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and led in a moment of silence and the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

#### Discussion:

Mr. Wright thanked everyone attending the meeting and expressed that the purpose of the committee being formed this evening was to explore the possibility of a joint school system and to review a timeline of events for doing so.

He urged everyone to remember that this is being done to better serve the children of the Alleghany Highlands.

Mr. Wright asked that all members review a list of tentative dates for possible future meetings over the next four months. The members agreed on the following meeting dates and locations:

September 5, 2019	6:00 p.m.	C.P. Jones Memorial Library
September 26, 2019	6:00 p.m.	Jackson River Technical Center
October 9, 2019	6:00 p.m.	C.P. Jones Memorial Library (Secretary of Education Visit)
October 17, 2019	6:00 p.m.	Jackson River Technical Center
October 24, 2019	6:00 p.m.	C.P. Jones Memorial Library
November 7, 2019	6:00 p.m.	C.P. Jones Memorial Library
November 14, 2019	6:00 p.m.	Jackson River Technical Center
December 5, 2019	6:00 p.m.	C.P. Jones Memorial Library
December 12, 2019	6:00 p.m.	Jackson River Technical Center
December 19, 2019	6:00 p.m.	Summit – Location TBA

Mr. Wright expressed that he hopes the committee will be able to reach a conclusion for their vision on how to proceed with a joint school system by the holiday break this year. He noted that the state budget was in a surplus last year, and potentially may be again this year. The request for funding of the exploration of a joint school system in the Alleghany Highlands was presented on the second year of the biennium. Because of this, a plan for proceeding with a joint school system should be presented within this time frame. Mr. Wright also mentioned that the Secretary of Education would be visiting here on October 9, 2019.

### ORGANIZATION (1-01):

Elect Chairperson. Mr. Wright opened the floor for nominations for a chairperson. Mr. Arritt nominated Mr. Wright for chairperson. Mr. Garten seconded the nomination of Mr. Wright. There were no further nominations for chairperson. Mr. Arritt made a motion to close the nominations for chairperson. Mr. Arritt made a motion to approve Mr. Wright as chairperson. Mr. Garten seconded the motion. Mr. Wright requested a roll call vote. All members present voted yes, and Mr. Wright was named Chairperson

Elect Vice Chairperson. Mr. Wright opened the floor for nominations for vice-chairperson. Mr. Garten nominated Mr. Arritt for vice-chairperson. Mr. Franson seconded the nomination and moved that nominations for vice chairperson be closed. Mr. Franson made a motion that Mr. Arritt be vice-chairperson and Mr. Garten seconded the motion. Mr. Wright requested a roll call vote, and all members present voted yes. Mr. Arritt was named Vice-Chairperson.

### NEW BUSINESS :

#### Media Interview (1-02):

Mr. Wright asked if the committee was interested in releasing information regarding its formation to the local media. Mr. Garten stated that he felt it was best to hold off on this until a formal written statement could be put together at a later time. Other board members agreed with this.

#### Exploration of Salary Equalization (1-03):

It was mentioned that one of the major sticking points in talks of a joint school system is usually that of salary equalization between the employees of the two school systems. Mr. Wright noted that he would meet with the school boards and request this information. Mr. Kotulka noted that generating the needed data for this information would put undue hardship on central office staff members, and the responsibility of putting this information together should be taken care of through the funding for the Committee on Joint School Services.

#### Discussion from Committee Members:

Mr. Griffith stated that he believed the Manager of the City of Covington, the Alleghany County Administrator, and the Superintendents of both school systems should be present at all meetings, as they will have information vital to overcoming any obstacles this committee might face.

Ms. Hunter requested clarification of the purpose of the committee. Mr. Wright said that the purpose of the committee is to explore how we can pool resources to make things better for the kids of the area. The decline in the local population has led to limitations in both school systems because of a reduction in state funding. Mr. Garten noted that this is a common problem throughout the state in rural areas according to information that was communicated to them in Richmond.

Mr. Sibold noted that while this venture is in its early stages the committee members should brainstorm a list of pros and cons of pursuing it, and have that available by the next meeting date. Another question that was raised was what the cost per student in each school system is and what the dollar amount covered by the localities is.

Mr. Griffith asked if the Committee had hired legal representation yet. Mr. Wright noted that discussion about that would take place during closed session.

Mr. Franson stated that we have a unique opportunity available to make this work before the state mandates it. Mr. Wright stated that he agreed that this is a great opportunity for the area schools because we can draft this as we go without dictations. Mr. Arritt stated that the Committee is not solving a new problem, and that we may be working ahead of a situation that may be facing us anyway. He said that he feels that it is important to give this opportunity an honest look. Mr. Franson added that "can't" should not be a word that has a place in this venture, because there are no differences that cannot be overcome.

EXECUTIVE SESSION (1-04):

As requested by Mr. Wright, Mr. Garten offered a motion to enter into executive session to discuss personnel matters pursuant to VA Code Section 2.2-3711.A.1. Mr. Arritt seconded the motion, and the Committee unanimously voted yes.

Mr. Franson offered a motion to return to open session from closed session; Mr. Griffith seconded the motion; and there was a unanimous roll call vote to approve the motion.

Mr. Arritt offered a motion to certify that to the best of each member's knowledge:

1. Only public business matters lawfully exempted from opening meeting requirements by Virginia law were discussed in the closed meeting to which this certification applied; and
2. Only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening the closed meeting were heard, discussed, or considered by the Board.

Mr. Garten seconded the motion and all seven members voted yes that the meeting was in conformity with State law.

Legal Representation & Personnel (1-05):

Mr. Arritt made a motion that the Committee for Joint School Services move forward with obtaining legal representation from Troutman and Sanders law firm, and to retain Ms. Christy Armentrout as its clerk. Mr. Garten seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all members present voted yes.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned as 6:50 p.m. on motion by Mr. Franson, seconded by Mr. Garten.

\_\_\_\_\_ Clerk

\_\_\_\_\_ Date Approved

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Chairman