



GLOUCESTER COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Parent Advisory Committee Minutes

December 10, 2021 (1:00 p.m.)

Dr. Clemons welcomed everyone and hoped all had a good Thanksgiving. Budget meetings are currently being held for the upcoming fiscal year and GCPS will be in the budget process for the next few months. The outgoing Governor is expected to present his budget for the next biennium next week; however, the new Governor could have changes when his term begins in January.

Dr. Clemons also informed members that Gloucester County is now looking for a new county administrator. Dr. Clemons has enjoyed working with Ms. Carol Steele, the acting county administrator. In addition, the county will have one new member on the Board of Supervisors beginning in January and the School Board will have three new members.

Capital Improvement projects are occurring, with work on the Achilles bus loop project coming to conclusion. The baseball field project at Page is now underway and will hopefully be ready in the spring. Dr. Clemons is also hopeful that bids will be ready to go out for GHS in the spring. In addition, Dr. Clemons believes some communication will need to occur regarding the sales tax and GHS. The transportation facility cost increased from over 5 million to over 7 million. Supply and demand is an issue, with limited supplies causing price increases. GCPS is only one in ten divisions in the Commonwealth that has been approved for the sales tax available to use for school construction and renovations. Dr. Clemons believes this will be a topic of discussion moving forward, adding that GHS has been on the CIP since 2008 as needing major renovations.

The GCPS website has been streamlined to be more user friendly with quick links on the homepage to access information more easily.

A reception will be held on December 14 for outgoing School Board members in the TCWEC cafeteria from 4:30 – 5:45 prior to the School Board meeting in the auditorium at 6:00 p.m.

Items from Parent Advisory Members

Mrs. Christina Chavalia (Achilles) referenced a spirit assembly at Achilles following the election where a school board member elect and a current school board member were in attendance. Mrs. Rachel Blankenship (Executive Director of Human Resources & Compliance) indicated all School Board members go through the same background checks as other employees. Dr. Clemons added that we will be working with new members to ensure all are informed about the role of the School Board and hopes all new members will be beneficial to the division. Administrative staff will do everything possible to help our new members to be successful.

Dr. Chuck Wagner (Assistant Superintendent of Instruction) spoke regarding Year Round School (YRS) considerations, now being referred to as “Balanced Calendar” considerations. Most of the parents on the committee have heard about the division exploring options for a balanced calendar schedule. Dr. Wagner indicated additional information will be shared at the School Board meeting on Dec. 14 and information made more public following that meeting. Dr. Wagner explained that in the spring of 2021, school divisions in VA were given an opportunity to apply for a grant to explore YRS.

GCPS was awarded a grant and since that time, Dr. Wagner and committee members have visited schools operating on a balanced calendar and will be returning during an intersession to observe what optional days during those periods might look like. Focus groups have met within the division as well as a meeting being held with community childcare centers. Additional feedback will also be obtained from parents'/community groups, etc. Dr. Clemons added that he looks forward to hearing input from parents.

Dr. Wagner discussed the possible structures for a balanced calendar, such as a calendar with 45 in session days followed by 10-15 intersession days and a six-week summer break, or 60 days in session followed by 20 intersession days. Currently, the committee is favoring the 45/15 schedule. Intersessions would be optional and could include a variety of activities, to include remediation, camps, swimming lessons, etc. Teachers in the schools visited liked the intersessions, which also provide additional income for those who opt to work during the intersessions. In addition, vacations can be taken at non-peak times. The length of the school year (180) and teacher contract (200) days would be the same. Hopewell is first division in Virginia to go division wide with a balanced calendar, which is what Gloucester would be planning if implemented. Mrs. Katey Legg (Page) said as a parent, she has been a huge proponent of YRS and hopes it will receive a lot of positive feedback, noting that learning loss and teacher burnout are areas that could benefit from this type of calendar. Mrs. Legg also believes it could be a great opportunity for tourism opportunities for Gloucester County. Members mentioned potential issues, such as building access during times schools are closed and how it might impact military families moving in or out. Dr. Wagner indicated one military parent is now on the committee and those families already face many different schedules across the country. GCPS may also be receiving a counselor to be assigned to schools (not a school employee) to work with military families. Next year, GCPS will be on a similar schedule as this year. The balanced calendar, if ultimately recommended, would need final approval from by the school board. If approved, the implementation could possibly occur in the 2023-2024 school year. Mrs. Jessi Kittrell, (Peasley/GHS) expressed concerns about Governor's School/Vo-Tech schools not being on the same calendar and also said getting information out to the community will be good and dispel rumors. Dr. Wagner plans to meet with the director of New Horizons as well as staff from the Governor's schools and believes there will be flexibility around the different calendars. Concerns regarding air conditioning in the schools were mentioned; however, schools are already using air conditioning most of the summer and some even more if they host programs over the summer. Dr. Clemons added that a balanced calendar also gives flexibility to end 1st semester at winter break. Mrs. Lisa Jones (Director of Nursing) said managing student medical situations and mental health throughout the year is beneficial. Some routines with medications may not always occur as they should when students are on break. Dr. Clemons thanked everyone for comments.

Upcoming Important Dates: School Board Meeting – December 14, 2021

Adjournment – 2:16 p.m.

Next Meeting: February 11, 2022 (1:00 p.m.) – Location (TBD)