

**AT A JOINT MEETING OF THE GLOUCESTER COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS AND SCHOOL BOARD, HELD ON TUESDAY, MARCH 19, 2024, AT 6:00 P.M., AT THE THOMAS CALHOUN WALKER EDUCATION CENTER, 6099 T. C. WALKER ROAD, GLOUCESTER, VIRGINIA:**

**1. Call to Order and Roll Call**

Mr. Hutson called the Board of Supervisors meeting to order, and Ms. Steele took roll call for the Board of Supervisors.

**THERE WERE PRESENT:** Christopher A. Hutson, Chair  
Kevin M. Smith, Vice Chair  
Phillip N. Bazzani  
Ashley C. Chriscoe  
Kenneth W. Gibson  
Michael W. Hedrick  
Robert J. Orth

**THERE WERE ABSENT:** None

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Edwin "Ted" Wilmot, County Attorney  
Carol Steele, County Administrator

Mr. Andersen called the School Board to order, and Ms. Dehoux took roll call. The following members were present: Troy Andersen, Chair; Leonne Arsenovic, Vice Chair; Carlton Drew, Karen Espinoza, Deborah McDonough, Cindy Saulman, and Kari Scruggs. Dr. Anthony Vladu, Superintendent of Schools, Bryan Hartley, Deputy Superintendent, and Heather Lucas, Chief Financial Officer, were also in attendance.

**2. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance - Kevin M. Smith - Vice Chair, Board of Supervisors**

Mr. Smith gave an invocation and then all in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

**3. Approval of the Minutes - no minutes available for adoption**

There were no minutes available for adoption.

**4. Adoption of the Agenda**

Mr. Chriscoe moved, seconded by Mr. Gibson, to adopt the agenda. The motion carried and was approved by a unanimous voice vote of the Board of Supervisors.

Ms. Espinoza moved, seconded by Mr. Drew, to adopt the agenda. The motion carried and was approved by a unanimous voice vote of the School Board.

**5. Approval of the Consent Agenda - no consent agenda items**

There were no consent agenda items.

**6. Matters Presented by the Boards**

Mr. Chriscoe stated that he was very pleased with the high school progress. He noted that it was amazing what had been done in a short amount of time and he looked forward to the finished project.

Mr. Hutson thanked the school administration for the tour. He reminded everyone of the Board of Supervisors town hall meeting on Thursday at 6:00 p.m. and stated that it would be televised.

**7. County Administrator / Superintendent Items**

There were no County Administrator or Superintendent items.

**8. Citizens' Comment Period - (limited to topics on the Work Session agenda only)**

**LARRY COHEN - YORK DISTRICT**

Mr. Cohen stated in his view the School Board budget was cut down to the bone and was very reasonable. He noted that Dr. Vladu did a great job of cutting everything extra out. He stated that it would be a shame for discussions to lower the budget. Two surprises were the health costs and teacher salaries. He stated that teacher salaries needed to go up, not only in Gloucester but everywhere. He noted that Northern Virginia salaries were going up by 9%. He stated that the new Superintendent was doing a bang-up job and needed the best teachers available. He further stated the Board could make that happen by approving the proposed budget.

**TERESA ALTEMUS - GLOUCESTER POINT DISTRICT**

Ms. Altemus stated that there was no supporting documentation to the appropriation resolution and there was also an error. She noted that this was a one-time pass/fail resolution. She stated that she was not sure that an appropriation could be made for future years. She noted that she was not opposed to capital spending for the school system but was opposed to an open credit card. She stated that there was no policy in place. She noted that the taxpayers of the county were owed an explanation. She stated that there was no reason for the School Board not to come forward to ask for the carry over at the start of each fiscal year.

**9. Work Session Agenda**

**a. Resolutions to Authorize Grant Applications for the Virginia Opioid Abatement Authority's Regional and Individual Grant Programs – Steve Wright, MPA – Deputy County Administrator**

Mr. Wright reviewed that in 2021 there was a settlement with Janssen and other distributors to provide funds to enhance services to individuals and families dealing with opioid addiction. There was an additional settlement with retail distributors. He showed the funding distribution schedule and noted the (OAA) Opioid Abatement Authority column. He stated that the OAA funds were set aside specifically for localities. He advised that the money still needed to be requested for evidence based or evidence informed practices. In addition, there was a 25% incentive that was also available. He reviewed that the Board of Supervisors approved a spending plan in September 2023. He listed the approved items. One of the programs was the Prevention and Treatment Specialist at Gloucester High School. He stated that the Specialist was a CSB (Community Services Board) employee and had already

presented prevention programming to 200 ninth graders. The program would be presented to tenth graders in April. There were already ten youth actively receiving services and help. He then noted that there were four ways to receive settlement funding: direct distributions, set-a-side funding, cooperative grant funding, and planning grant funding.

Mr. Wright then advised that the first grant request was a cooperative grant. He stated it was being submitted in partnership with Northumberland, Westmoreland and Richmond counties, on behalf of the Northern Neck Regional Jail. He stated that they have medication assisted treatment at the jail, but it was inadequate. The grant request was for \$247,000 per year for up to five years. With Board approval, it would include \$20,000 in matching direct distribution funds. The second resolution was the individual locality grant request. He stated that he would like to ask for \$72,000 to fund three of the projects from the approved plan for FY25.

Mr. Drew asked if there was a plan for support in the middle schools for the treatment specialist.

Mr. Wright stated that the intent for this year was to do programming specifically in the high school, but the specialist had already planned to reach out to the middle schools in the next school year.

There was a brief discussion on the family counseling aspect, schedule, and qualifications of the specialist.

After the discussion, Mr. Smith moved, seconded by Mr. Chriscoe, to adopt the collaborative resolution for the Northern Neck Regional Jail. The motion carried and was approved by the following roll call vote: Mr. Bazzani, Mr. Chriscoe, Mr. Gibson, Mr. Hutson, Mr. Nicosia, Dr. Orth and Mr. Smith - yes.

**RESOLUTION TO AUTHORIZE APPLICATION FOR THE VIRGINIA OPIOID ABATEMENT AUTHORITY COOPERATIVE PARTNERSHIP GRANT**

**WHEREAS**, the Opioid Abatement Authority (OAA) was established by the Virginia General Assembly in 2021 as an independent entity to abate and remediate the opioid epidemic in the Commonwealth through financial support from the Virginia Opioid Abatement Fund in the form of grants, donations, or other assistance, for efforts to treat, prevent, and reduce opioid use disorder and the misuse of opioids in the Commonwealth; and

**WHEREAS**, the Commonwealth of Virginia is expected to receive opioid-related settlement funds by the settlement administrators each year until at least 2039 and 55% of each settlement is to be sent to the OAA to be distributed in accordance with Code of Virginia §2.2-2374; and

**WHEREAS**, the OAA is allocating 35% of the Opioid Abatement Funds for use by Cooperative Partnership projects involving multiple cities and counties; and

**WHEREAS**, the counties of Gloucester, Northumberland, Richmond, and Westmoreland are the member localities in the Northern Neck Regional Jail (NNRJ) and wish to submit a joint application with NNRJ to expand the existing Medication-Assisted Treatment program for eligible inmates; and

**WHEREAS**, if the project application is approved, the Cooperative Partnership may continue for up to four, optional one-year renewals.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Gloucester County Board of Supervisors does hereby authorize staff to submit a Cooperative Partnership grant application to the Opioid Abatement Authority and authorizes the County Administrator to execute acceptance of any awards resulting from the submission.

Mr. Chriscoe moved, seconded by Mr. Gibson, to approve the individual distribution grant resolution. The motion carried and was approved by the following roll call vote: Mr. Bazzani, Mr. Chriscoe, Mr. Gibson, Mr. Hutson, Mr. Nicosia, Dr. Orth and Mr. Smith - yes.

**RESOLUTION TO AUTHORIZE APPLICATION FOR THE VIRGINIA OPIOID ABATEMENT AUTHORITY INDIVIDUAL DISTRIBUTION AND “GOLD STANDARD” INCENTIVE GRANTS**

**WHEREAS**, the Opioid Abatement Authority (OAA) was established by the Virginia General Assembly in 2021 as an independent entity to abate and remediate the opioid epidemic in the Commonwealth through financial support from the Virginia Opioid Abatement Fund in the form of grants, donations, or other assistance, for efforts to treat, prevent, and reduce opioid use disorder and the misuse of opioids in the Commonwealth; and

**WHEREAS**, the Commonwealth of Virginia is expected to receive opioid-related settlement funds by the settlement administrators each year until at least 2039 and 55% of each settlement is to be sent to the OAA to be distributed in accordance with Code of Virginia §2.2-2374; and

**WHEREAS**, the OAA is allocating 15% of the Opioid Abatement Funds for use by cities and counties; and

**WHEREAS**, based on the established allocation model an Individual Distribution amount is available to Gloucester County; and

**WHEREAS**, in addition the OAA offers a “Gold Standard” Incentive program providing a 25% increase on the allocation; and

**WHEREAS**, the Board of Supervisors adopted a spending plan for use of opioid settlement funds at its September 5, 2023 meeting; and

**WHEREAS**, individual distribution grant funding along with the incentive funding, is being requested to support the Prevention and Treatment Specialist position, increased access to medication-assisted treatment, and subsidization of costs for medication assisted treatment.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Gloucester County Board of Supervisors does hereby authorize the submission of an Individual Distribution and a “Gold Standard” Incentive grant application to the Opioid Abatement Authority.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the County Administrator shall be authorized to execute acceptance of any awards resulting from the submission.

**b. Update on Capital Improvement Projects – Dr. Anthony Vladu – Superintendent of Schools & Executive Leadership Team**

Mr. Hartley provided an update on some of the HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) projects. He advised that Botetourt Elementary had units that were overdue for replacement. He noted that they had a preventative maintenance contract with Honeywell, and they were on site each day. He stated that Honeywell was working to keep belts and materials functioning as best as they could. He noted that other buildings also had issues. He stated that the lead time on the equipment was the

current issue. He showed the ASHRAE (American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers) recommendations for the replacement of equipment. He noted based on those recommendations that the Botetourt units should have been due to be replaced in 2020.

Members of the boards asked if any of the HVAC units being removed from the high school could be used for parts for the other units, whether parts could be salvaged or marketed, and whether the cost for Botetourt was the 2020 cost.

Mr. Hartley stated that he could check on whether the parts from the high school units could be used for the other units. He noted that they had discussed a possible market for the chiller system that was being removed from the high school. He advised that it had some life left in it. They had worked with Honeywell to see if any of the smaller divisions may be able to benefit from it. He stated that the price listed for Botetourt was from the fall of 2023. He then showed a slide with the long-range capital plan.

Mr. Gibson thanked school administration for their tour as well as Mr. Hartley and Mr. Records for their guidance on that as well. He stated that he felt one of the successes of the School Board and Board of Supervisors working together had been the emphasis on school security. He noted that there had been great strides in getting the School Resource Officers and School Security Officers. He commended the excellent work that they put in every day. For future planning for the high school, he stated that there was a previous demonstration of a weapons detection system. He noted that there was an allocation of \$300,000 for school security that had not been spent yet. He asked about plans or recommendations for implementation of that program and what may be needed from the Board of Supervisors.

Mr. Hartley stated that the School Board had discussed this at the last budget work session. He noted that they had started the purchase of additional metal detectors. He stated that the School Board had asked staff to provide some additional information, and he noted some of the questions that they would be addressing in order to provide an update to the School Board.

Mr. Gibson reviewed the estimates and stated that while he knew the funding was an issue, the safety and security needs of staff and students needed to be the number one priority.

Mr. Hartley agreed and stated that the school division had a really good relationship with the Sheriff's Office. He noted that they had been very fortunate with grants and the hires on the school security officer side.

There was a brief discussion on potential incidents and reporting mechanisms.

Mr. Drew stated in regard to discipline that there had to be buy-in. He noted that money could be thrown at anything but there had to be buy-in from the kids, parents, and community. He stated that security was a full-time topic and needed to be taught in school and talked about at home.

**c. Presentation of School Board's Proposed FY2025 Budget and FY2025-FY2029 Capital Improvement Plan – Troy Andersen – Chair, School Board, School Board Members, and Dr. Anthony Vladu – Superintendent of Schools & Executive Leadership Team**

Dr. Vladu expressed his appreciation for the positive and cooperative relationship between the Boards. He noted that he was also grateful for the relationship with the County Administrator. He advised that the budget handbook was available online and he shared the link. He briefly reviewed the mission and vision statements for the school division. He shared some positive statistics for the schools. He noted the mission and mandates to include doing what was best for students, aligning with mission and vision, aligning to priorities, meeting safety and legal requirements, and evaluating every position and line item. He reviewed the teacher shortage issues. He reviewed state exit survey results, and the teacher vacancy rates across the state. He showed a graph of the teacher compensation history from FY18-FY24. He showed a graph with the average daily membership and noted that the budget was built based on 4,800 students. He noted the homeschool enrollment trend. He reviewed increased costs and stated that it took more money to educate the children because everything costs more. He noted a decrease in the maintenance costs. He stated that he had been getting feedback from employees, parents, and students to find out what the issues were for each group. He noted that crisis communication had been an issue and parents had been asking for better communication. He noted the local composite index for FY25 and FY26, and the average per pupil spending in Gloucester and other localities.

Mr. Hutson asked if the average was based on County or State funds.

Dr. Vladu advised that it was for both. He reviewed some of the budget parameters such as the health insurance increase, declining enrollment, maintenance and transportation budget reduction, sunset of ESSER (Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief) funds, inflation, and competitive compensation. He stated that 86% of the budget was compensation and benefits, and 14% was for everything else. He then reviewed specific items. He advised that the proposed budget included a 3% increase for all employees. He noted the current projected health insurance increase of 21%. He reviewed the expected revenue increases and savings. He noted the additional requests in the School Board budget. He reviewed the personnel requests to include a public information officer and a gifted resource teacher. He reviewed the budget requests in other categories. He noted the summary of the School Board recommended budget for a total increase from FY24. He then showed the proposed health insurance rates and some information on the Governor's budget.

Mr. Bazzani asked about the high school math scores.

Dr. Vladu advised that the scores were aggregated across the division but that he could break out the high school scores and provide that information.

There was additional discussion on the state per pupil spending and increased cost of legal fees.

Ms. Arsenovic provided the end of year math scores for the high school.

Ms. Steele noted that in the County Administrator's proposed budget there was an amount for the buses that was slightly higher than reflected in the School Board proposed budget. She advised that there was a request for proposals out for a new health care consultant. She stated that the County and the Schools shared the same consultant. Although it would likely not help for this upcoming budget year, it was hoped that there would be some benefit next year.

After some discussion, Mr. Andersen stated that the proposed budget could be defined as maintaining the status quo. He stated that it would be great to get into a discussion at some point on how as a community we make some changes that would be more than just maintaining the status quo.

Mr. Nicosia asked about competitiveness of School Security Officer salaries.

Dr. Vladu advised that the 3% increase would also apply to the security officers. He noted that they could consider doing a compensation review on those positions to make sure that the salaries were appropriate.

Mr. Chriscoe suggested considering different dates for the joint meeting when setting the budget calendar as he would like to have seen the school's budget prior to setting the tax rates for advertising.

There was some discussion on modifying the budget calendar dates.

Board of Supervisors members asked questions on compensation for teachers with advanced degrees, club participation for students without transportation, and the weapons detection system.

Dr. Vladu reviewed pay lanes and discussed Board-Certified Teachers. He stated that they did have an activity bus for those without transportation. He advised that there was no money in the proposed budget for the weapons detection system.

Mr. Andersen stated that at the last budget work session, the School Board asked that staff go back to find out the best and most efficient way to spend the \$300,000 for school security measures. The School Board would then figure out what the next steps.

Mr. Hartley noted that there was a school security grant opportunity that the schools engaged in every year and stated that they would also look at other funding sources.

**d. Discussion on Unspent Appropriations Agreement – Troy Andersen – Chair, School Board and Dr. Anthony Vladu – Superintendent of Schools**

Mr. Andersen stated that this was the third time that the boards had discussed the topic of the School Board's use of unspent appropriations. He reviewed the previous times and stated that the resolution that was presented in the spring of 2023 had been included in the packet to serve as a basis of discussion. He reviewed that the School Board felt there was still a desire to come up with an efficient and effective process to meet fiscal needs that were not tied to ongoing operating needs. He stated

that this proposal included an upper limit which was missing during the last discussion.

Ms. Espinoza stated that she sat on the facility committee. She noted that they met and listened to the concerns and there were several different needs. She advised that they were asking for up to \$500,000. She stated that the need for the appropriation this year was great and noted that they were being transparent with the need.

Mr. Chriscoe stated that he had been there for all of these discussions, and he was not in favor of this. He noted that there was a process in place for the Board to handle the requests for the unspent appropriation. He reviewed that usually sometime in October the schools came to the Board with the amount and a specific project. He stated that he did not think the process needed to be changed.

Dr. Orth agreed and stated that the School Board had done an outstanding job of spending funds in the past. He noted that the current system had worked well, and the Board had listened to the requests when needed.

Mr. Bazzani stated that he was against a carte blanche credit card. He noted that he did not want to commit funds and tie the Board's hands.

Mr. Smith stated that he supported the request. He noted that the School Board had always been a good steward of the taxpayer's money and he did not see why they had to keep coming back and asking for the funds each year.

Mr. Gibson stated that he respected the opinions of those who had served on the Board longer. He noted that if the case had been that the Board of Supervisors had always given the schools the funding back, it seemed inefficient. He felt it came down to trust between the two boards. He thought this was a reasonable proposal and was much more efficient.

There was discussion on transparency and fiduciary responsibility.

Mr. Andersen stated that this would be a transparent process. He noted that the schools had a capital improvement plan that was presented every year. He noted that the money would be used to make strides on any unfunded item on the capital improvement plan.

Mr. Hutson asked when the schools would know the amount of unspent funds and when the requests were previously made to the Board.

Ms. Lucas stated that they generally knew the amount of unspent funds in September/October and have submitted requests to the Board in the November/December time frame.

After additional discussion, Mr. Andersen stated that they could close this item out. He noted that the School Board felt that this item needed discussion. He stated that while he may not agree with all the reasoning, he respected the opinions expressed, and the School Board appreciated the additional conversation on this topic.

Ms. Scruggs stated that this was about funds that have been allocated to the School Board and were not spent. She questioned why the School Board could not use



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the funds as they saw fit. She noted that teachers were spending funds out of their pockets and provided a recent example.

Ms. Saulman asked about the loss of positions in the schools.

Mr. Andersen clarified that this discussion was related to one-time purchases and not ongoing expenses such as salaries and supplies.

Dr. Orth asked if the amount teachers were spending out of pocket was known.

Ms. Lucas stated that she did not have information on how much was spent out of pocket, although that could be collected. She advised that each teacher was allocated \$150-\$200 to spend for classroom materials, and then the parent/teacher organizations typically provided some funding.

There was a brief discussion on the spending for classroom materials.

Mr. Nicosia asked about the excess funds. He questioned what would happen if the Board gave the School Board the control of the excess funds and then the Board needed the funds for a catastrophic event.

Ms. Steele advised that currently those funds go back to the General Fund to unassigned fund balance and the Board could appropriate as needed.

**e. Presentation of Summary of Human Resources Departure Data – Troy Andersen – Chair, School Board, Rachel Blankenship – Director of Human Resources and Dr. Anthony Vladu – Superintendent of Schools**

Mr. Andersen stated this topic came up at the School Board's retreat in February. This was tied to the theory of attracting and keeping top quality teachers. He noted that everyone knew that teachers were leaving, and some were leaving due to decisions or conditions outside of their control. The goal was to focus on things to help attract and retain high quality teachers.

Ms. Blankenship presented 2022-23 licensed staff turnover data. She noted that there had been more exits in the last few years. She advised that the division was in a retirement cycle. She then reviewed other turnover reasons to include family/personal considerations, relocation, employment in another division or outside of education, and others. She noted some of the steps to reduce turnover were maintaining the compensation package, providing more opportunities for affordable housing, and continuing to enhance community infrastructure. She then reviewed the vacancy rate data.

There was some discussion on the ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief) funded positions.

Ms. Blankenship stated that six of those positions would need to be reduced based on staffing models. She advised that no teachers were slated to lose their jobs. There would be a reduction of six teaching positions but through other methods.

**f. School Culture – Dr. Anthony Vladu - Superintendent of Schools**

Dr. Vladu stated to provide context that it was the teachers responsibility, and they did a great job, of enforcing the student code of conduct. He reviewed that the School Board approved the code of conduct every year and that it was based on state

law and best practices. He advised that he did not want to impact the teacher's ability to manage their classroom. Choices have consequences. When there was an issue, the answer was to address it. He advised that teachers, schools, and parents all had a responsibility to enforce discipline. It was the community's responsibility to understand that the world had changed over the last 20 years. He wanted everyone to understand that children were still growing and developing. He stated that he was asking the community and everyone not to be so quick to pass judgment but to seek to understand.

Dr. Vladu advised that every school division reported on discipline and discipline incidents. He then provided a graph showing the standards of accreditation infractions adjusted for the average daily membership. He noted that Gloucester was somewhat higher than the market localities and the neighboring localities. To fix the problem, he reviewed that they were using a process to examine the issues, clarify what that meant, assess the priorities, and determine next steps. He advised that there was a Superintendent's task force on discipline. He stated that there were already positive results. He advised that at Petsworth Elementary there was a decrease in the in-school suspension (ISS) and out of school suspension (OSS) referrals from the first semester of the 22-23 school year to the first semester of the 23-24 school year. He reviewed the actions that the principal and staff at the school had taken that contributed to this difference. He then reviewed the changes at the high school, noting the significant decrease in the ISS and OSS referrals. He stated an even more important fact was that the students were saying that the school felt like a more positive place. He reviewed some of the actions taken at the high school to achieve these results. He reviewed the sports, clubs, and activities at the high school that have contributed to the improved school culture.

Dr. Vladu reviewed the interim and strategic actions planned for the next steps.

Mr. Nicosia stated that one other component to be commended was the school security staff. He advised that the school security staff was almost at full capacity. He stated that with security staff in every hall, it cut down on the things that could go on. Most importantly though, they were building relationships with students. Students were going to the officers to report possible problems before incidents happened. He stated that the students were buying in and wanted the school to be a place that represented them. He noted that he was glad to see the turnaround, and he stated that it started with everyone - students and staff - being on the same page.

Mr. Bazzani commended Dr. Vladu, noting that he had heard a lot of positive things about the school system.

Dr. Vladu stated that the commitment of teachers and staff made Gloucester a really special place.

**g. Other Matters (at the discretion of the Boards)**

Mr. Nicosia stated that it was important for everyone to know that the construction project at the school had not slowed the students down. He noted that

the respect the students showed the construction workers was great. He was impressed by the way the students were adapting to an ever-changing atmosphere.

**10. Supervisors / School Board Discussion**

Mr. Andersen stated that this was the last joint meeting with Ms. Lucas and Ms. Blankenship. He noted that they had been fortunate to have very good people in these two very important positions.

Mr. Chriscoe stated that he was happy for Ms. Lucas and Ms. Blankenship. He noted that they were leaving big shoes to fill and that they would be missed.

Mr. Hutson reminded everyone again about the upcoming town hall on March 21st.

**11. Closed Meeting - no closed meeting scheduled**

There was no closed meeting.

**12. Adjournment**

Mr. Chriscoe moved, seconded by Mr. Gibson, to adjourn. The motion carried and the Board of Supervisors adjourned at 8:58 p.m. by a unanimous voice vote.

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Christopher A. Hutson, Chair

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Carol E. Steele, County Administrator