

Thomas Academy Board of Education Meeting

Thomas Academy High School Office

January 14, 2020

CALL TO ORDER – Dave Wyatt, Chairperson

The January 14, 2020 Thomas Academy board meeting was called to order at 4:10 pm by Chairman Dave Wyatt.

Members present via phone conference call: Dave Wyatt, Chairman; Sheila Boles; and Dr. Tom Simmons VP of Education , Present Larry Hewett; Gary Faircloth CEO of Boys and Girls Home of North Carolina; and Dr. Geraldine Bradshaw, Director of Thomas Academy.

Past events:

- Mr. Larry Hewett was nominated to serve as Thomas Academy's Board Chair as Mr. Wyatt would need to step down to assume the position of chairman of the Boys and Girls Homes board of trustees. The nomination was seconded by Sheila Boles and passed unanimously.
- Board approved the hire of new full-time Art teacher
- Mr. Gary Faircloth gave an update on the new "Families First Act" and the possible impact it will have on the Boys and Girls Home and thereby the effect it may have on Thomas Academy's enrollment.
- Board was advised of Mr. Singletary's resignation (School Counselor)

Recognitions

- Ms. Delayne Sons Middle School Science teacher was recognized as 2020-2021 Thomas Academies' Teacher of the Year (recognized by the state of North Carolina).

General Items

- Homecoming – January 30, 2020 Thomas Academy V. Falcon Christian Academy
- Thomas Academy won both Girls and Boys Game.
- Current student enrollment 101
- (15) Seniors
- All seniors and juniors are enrolled in either career or higher education courses
- Parents have already left applications for 2020-2021 school years (5) thus far
- February 4, 2020 Southeastern was welcomed to Thomas Academy for our first College Career Fair (5pm – 7pm) held in school gym.
- Progress Reports went home on February 6, 2020
- Teacher Workday February 7, 2020 (No School for Students)
- Parent Teacher Conference February 7, 2020 11am to 1pm and 4pm to 6pm

2020-2021 Class Availability for Fall Semester:

6th grade – 15 empty spaces
7th grade- 10 empty spaces
8th grade- No empty spaces
9th grade – No empty spaces
10th grade – No empty spaces
11th grade – 10 empty spaces
12th grade – to be announced

Informational Items

- After School Tutoring will start March 2020
- The last 30 minutes of class is used for resource (we are on a Block Schedule each class is 1 hour and a half).
- Chair Person (Larry Hewett) signed an agreement with a speech therapy company to service our children who are in need of these services to keep us in compliance with IEP requirements.
- All Epicenter, and DPI requirements have been met in a timely manner by Dr. Geraldine Bradshaw.
- We have PASSED our EC audit (thanks Ms. Hux and Mr. Wilson).
- We have enough grant money to purchase software MAPS, this is testing software to determine where intervention is needed specifically.

Finance

- Please find attached allotments from State and Federal funds.
- We receive \$3,500 quarterly for after school (United Way)
- As a whole we are adhering to the budget agreed upon by Thomas Academy Board and BGH.
- Thomas Academy will soon need new or slightly used vans as we increase in our student population and the everyday wear-and-tear on our current vehicles.

Personnel

- We are currently interviewing for full-time school counselor for 2020-2021 school year
- We have a tentative full time ELA/History instructor for Middle School (we currently have 2- part-time retirees). The prospective ELA/History teacher (Robbie Fore) is a graduate of Campbell University major was education/minor in Theology. She is not yet licensed but will actively pursue her Praxis. She is currently in Raleigh and is willing to relocate; we have most of her paperwork back we are awaiting her drug screening and physical.

BOARD ACTION – Geraldine Bradshaw

Permission to hire Robbie Fore (new ELA/History middle school teacher)

Permission to move Ms. Blanks and Ms. Burton from full-time substitute teachers to on-call substitute teachers. (No action needed on this as both are already on the substitute list.)

DISCUSSIONS

Adjournment –

Motion to adjourn was made by Larry Hewett and seconded by Shelia Boles. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Dave Wyatt, Chairperson Thomas Academy Board

**Thomas Academy
Board Meeting
February 11, 2020**

Thomas Academy High School Office

Call to order Larry Hewett, Board Chair

- Board Chair Larry Hewett called meeting to order at 4:01pm.

Roll Call.....Dr. Geraldine Bradshaw, Director

- Board Members present in person: Mr. Larry Hewett
- Board Members present by conference call: Shelia Boles, Dr. Zelphia Grissett, Owen Robinson, Dave Wyatt
- Thomas Academy members present: Dr. Geraldine Bradshaw, Dr. Tom Simmons
- Boys & Girls Homes of NC members present: Mr. Gary Faircloth

Approval of Agenda.....Larry Hewett, Board Chair

The Chair asked for a motion to approve the agenda. Dave Wyatt made a motion to approve the agenda and Shelia Boles seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

Approval of January Board Minutes Mr. Larry Hewett, Board Chair

Dave Wyatt noted that on the minutes presented for the Jan. 14, 2020 meeting the motion to adjourn was left blank. After some discussion it was noted that Larry Hewett made the motion to adjourn and it was seconded by Shelia Boles. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Dr. Grissett noted that she was not present for the meeting and was recorded in the minutes as being present.

The Chair asked for a motion to approve minutes of the Jan. 14, 2020 meeting with these corrections. Dr. Grissett made a motion to adopt the minutes with corrections. Dave Wyatt seconded the motion. There was no further discussion and the motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Reports. The Chair asked Dr. Bradshaw, Dr. Simmons, and Mr. Faircloth to report on the list of items included in the agenda.

Recognitions

- Dr. Bradshaw noted that Ms. DeLayne Sons, Thomas Academy Middle school science teacher was recognized by the State of North Carolina’s Department of Public Instruction as Thomas Academy 2020-2021 Teacher of the Year. Ms. Sons’ name is currently on the marquee in front of the school. There was a nice article about her in The News Reporter.

Ms. Sons also received a letter from the state superintendent. Dave Wyatt asked if she received anything in the way of a gift certificate or monetary recognition or a plaque. Dr. Bradshaw noted that there was no plaque, gift certificate, or monetary recognition. Owen Robinson asked if Boys and Girls Homes could make a plaque. Gary Faircloth stated that Boys & Girls Homes could make a plaque that could be presented to Ms. Sons at a future staff meeting. He also noted that it might be possible to find a small monetary award. Dr. Tom Simmons noted that we can make that happen and stated that he would take care of it.

When asked if there were other recognitions Dr. Bradshaw stated everybody was just wonderful and that she was surrounded by a group of hardworking individuals who are very dedicated to the children.

General Items (events/activities)

Dr. Bradshaw

- Homecoming was held January 30, 2020. Thomas Academy played Falcon Christian Academy in basketball that day. Both boys and girls Thomas Academy teams won. A High School King & Queen was crowned along with a Middle School Prince & Princess.
- The school recently lost one senior and currently there are 15 seniors. All but two seniors have manufacturing certification.
- Applications to attend Thomas Academy next year are coming in. 2020-2021 Fall availability to attend Thomas Academy is as follows:
 - 6th Grade – 15 spaces
 - 7th Grade – 10 spaces
 - 8th Grade- no space
 - 9th Grade- no space
 - 10th Grade – no space
 - 11th Grade- 10 spaces
 - 12- Not sure on the number of seniors.
- Representatives from Southeastern Community College came on January 30, 2020 for a Career Fair at Thomas Academy gym. There were approximately 15 stations.
- Progress Reports went out on February 6, 2020.
- Parent Teacher conference was scheduled for but cancelled on February 7, 2020 due to threat of severe weather. Parent Teacher Conferences were rescheduled for February 11th.

Informational Items

- After school Tutoring starts March 2020. In-school tutoring is currently being offered the last 20 minutes of the school day and during the half hour that is in the block schedule.
- An agreement for services was signed with a Speech Therapy company to serve our students whose IEP's require therapy. Currently three students are receiving therapy twice a week.
- All Epicenter and DPI requirements are being met.

- Thomas Academy passed its EC audit (thanks to Ms. Hux and Mr. Wilson).
- MAPPS is a software program that shows where students need intervention. Mike Garrell was able to procure money to purchase the program so Thomas Academy now has MAPPS! This will enable us to assess all our children and provide helpful interventions.

Finance

- Dr. Bradshaw attached in an email allotments of State and Federal funding for Thomas Academy for the 2020-2021 year. She explained that this funding is not available all at once.
- Mike Garrell wrote a grant about 2 years ago for funding from United Way for Afterschool Tutoring. The grant is \$3500.00 quarterly and it helps a great deal.
- Dr. Bradshaw noted that she watches spending very closely to make sure the school operates on budget.

Personnel

- Thomas Academy is currently interviewing for a full time School Counselor for 2020-2021 school year. Ms. Bradshaw has done (2) interviews already.
- Thomas Academy had two substitute teachers (Mrs. Blanks and Ms. Burton) teaching English Language Arts & History for 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. They alternated working one month on and one month off. Dr. Bradshaw stated that this was not working out for students. Dr. Bradshaw has hired a full time ELA/History teacher for that class.
- Dr. Bradshaw asked if Mrs. Blanks and Ms. Burton could be moved to the sub list to call as needed.

Dr. Bradshaw noted that this concluded her presentation. The Chair asked if board members had any questions about Dr. Bradshaw's presentations. None were noted.

Action Items

- The Chair noted that there was one action item for the board to consider and that was the employment of an ELA/History teacher. Dr. Bradshaw stated that the applicant was Robbie Fore. Dr. Bradshaw asked if the board could vote on employing Robbie Fore as Middle School ELA and History Teacher. Her name was incorrectly listed (as pointed out by Mr. Faircloth) as Robbie Harper. Dave Wyatt pointed out that the board approved at the last meeting for Dr. Bradshaw to hire Ms. Fore and that we need to correct her name in the minutes – from Harper to Fore.
- The Chair asked if there were questions about these matters. Dr. Grissett asked if Mrs. Blanks and Ms. Burton were always substitutes if the board needed to take action on them. A discussion ensued as to the need for the board to take action on Mrs. Blanks and Ms. Burton if they were already on the substitute list. Dave Wyatt noted that he could not recall if the substitute list had ever been approved by the board. It was agreed that Dr. Bradshaw would be asked bring an updated substitute list to the March meeting for the board to take action on. Afterward, when a substitute is added or deleted it will be handled as a personnel matter by the board.

Comments & Concerns

- The Chair asked if there were other board comments. There being none the Chair asked Dr. Simmons and Mr. Faircloth if they had any updates. Mr. Faircloth noted that he had a couple of updates/staff changes that relate to Boys and Girls Homes. David Passmore (VP Campus Programs) is retiring effective March 15. Tom Huggins (VP Finance) has submitted his intent to retire effect also on March 15. Mr. Faircloth noted that these decisions were emotional and the individuals would be missed very much. Mr. Faircloth indicated that at least in the interim Julie Ward who worked closely with Tom Huggins would fill in for that position.
- Dr. Simmons did not have anything to bring to the board.
- Dr. Bradshaw asked if she might make a few additional remarks. She thanked Mr. Faircloth for providing the telephone conferencing device and how much better it made hearing those attending by conference call. Dr. Bradshaw also commended Shelia Boles on recently having her school athletic uniform retired. Bravo! Board members also commended Ms. Boles on this great honor.

Adjournment

- The Chair asked if there was any other business. There being none the Chair asked for a motion to adjourn the February 11, 2020 Thomas Academy Board Meeting. A motion to adjourn was made by Shelia Boles and seconded by Dave Wyatt. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 4:41 p.m.



Larry W. Hewett

**Thomas Academy
Board Meeting
April 14, 2020**

Thomas Academy

CALL TO ORDER – Larry Hewett, Chairperson

The Thomas Academy Board of Education met April 14, 2020 by way of “Zoom” at 3 p.m. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Larry Hewett.

Roll Call.....Dr. Geraldine Bradshaw, Director
Dr. Geraldine Bradshaw, Director of Thomas Academy called the roll.

Board members present by “Zoom” video conference: Shelia Boles, Dr. Zelphia Grissett, Larry Hewett, and Dave Wyatt. Owen Robinson was unable to attend.

Staff members attending: Dr. Geraldine Bradshaw, Director of Thomas Academy, and Dr. Tom Simmons, VP of Education.

Approval of Agenda.....Larry Hewett, Board Chair

The Chair asked for a motion to approve the agenda for the April 14, 2020 Thomas Academy Board of Education meeting. Dave Wyatt made the motion and it was seconded by Shelia Boles. The motion was approved unanimously.

Approval of March Board Meeting Minutes Mr. Larry Hewett, Board Chair

-March 10, 2020 minutes The Chair reminded members that tentative March meeting minutes were sent to everyone for their review and asked for a motion for their approval. Dr. Grissett made a motion to approve the March 10 minutes. A second was made by Dave Wyatt. There was no discussion and the minutes were approved unanimously.

Recognitions

Dr. Bradshaw stated that she would like to recognize the whole staff. Everyone has jumped in with hands and feet! Board Chair Larry Hewett said he would like to take his hat off to the entire staff for the tremendous work they are doing to help the children during this difficult time (Because of the Corona virus issues). Shelia Boles affirmed saying “it is amazing.” Dr. Simmons said he would like to say a special recognition of Dr. Bradshaw. He said she had done well in working through things to make instruction work for the students.

General Items (events/activities)

Calendar Updates Dr. Simmons reported that he had heard from his contacts with DPI (Department of Public Instruction) and noted that it was looking doubtful if schools would open after the May 15 initial deadline. On grades Dr. Simmons said it had been decided that whatever grades students had at the end of first semester would be the grades they would get and would be issued P for passing and F for failing. If students were on the bubble distance learning could be used to work with and attempt to get them across

the failing mark. He stated that it was not certain if graduation would be held on June 6 (as scheduled) but there would be a graduation if he had to bring them back in September!

Strategies for dealing with Coronavirus Dr. Bradshaw went over some of the strategies being used by the school staff to provide instruction for the children. Initially they sent out instructional packets to students hoping that school would resume in a few weeks. "Zoom" video conferencing was used to support the packets. A plus for this instructional model is that it has really increased communication between home and school and brought Thomas Academy staff together. There are only four students who do not have access to Internet, and they are being supported with packets.

Exceptional Children Support In order to assist exceptional children students a team was formed to monitor and support their instructional needs taking into consideration their IEP's.

4th digit for use in code for tracking expenses due to State of Emergency Dr. Bradshaw reported that the government sends the school \$3,504 labeled Covid19 Supplemental Funds. [REDACTED] is used for this. These funds are used to buy paper, toner, ink, packets, everything needed for Zoom, and items related to classroom instruction going on at this time.

Informational Items.....Staff
No items.

Finance.....Staff
Dr. Simmons reported that he had completed the projection for next year's enrollment, and we should be at 118. Hopefully all those students will be in at the first of the year and the allotment will be based on that. He also reported that Julie Ward is working on the budget for next year. It must be in by June 1. Hopefully Julie will get the budget ready to present for board approval at the May meeting so it can be sent to Raleigh.

Facilities.....Staff
No report

Personnel.....Staff
School Counselor update - Dr. Bradshaw reported that the search continues for the counselor position.
New Substitute Teacher – Randi Harper lives in and has taught in Columbus County. She cannot teach full time due to family considerations but is available to sub.
Deidre Blanks – Self-termination (submitted resignation)

Action Items.....Dr. Bradshaw/Board
Dr. Simmons authority to make day-to-day decisions until April 30, 2020 Dr. Simmons asked to amend this to reflect May 15. This would allow him to make lesser decisions without having to ask the board to convene. The board will be made aware of any such decisions. Shelia Boles made a motion to extend such authority through May 15 to Dr. Simmons. Dave Wyatt seconded the motion. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

Approval of Plans for dealing with Coronavirus crisis The plans were sent to board members in an attachment titled *Notes for 4-14-20 Thomas Academy Board of Education Meeting*. The strategies detailed in that document constitute the strategies for dealing with the Coronavirus crisis by Thomas Academy. Dave Wyatt made a motion to approve the plan. Shelia Boles seconded the motion. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously. Action on Randi Harper as substitute teacher and Deidre Blanks – self termination Shelia Boles made a motion to employ Randi Harper as a substitute teacher. Dave Wyatt seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously. Dave Wyatt made a motion to accept the resignation of Deidre Blanks. Shelia Boles seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

Board member comments.....Board
Dave Wyatt commented that he was looking over some numbers and noted that about 45% of our teachers were not certified and 55% are. He asked if that were a normal mix? Dr. Simmons replied that this is about normal for charter schools except for more metropolitan areas. Shelia Boles noted that it varies from county to county and in New Hanover it is strict. Dr. Bradshaw commented on various efforts and strategies including taking courses and taking the Praxis to have non-certified staff obtain certification in their area. The chairman asked where we are as far as our standing is concerned. Dr. Bradshaw explained that we are required to be at 50% and currently we are at 55% as Dave Wyatt noted and are in good standing with DPI. Shelia Boles commented that sadly many college graduates are not going into education and teacher certification. Dr. Bradshaw commented that where we are located makes it difficult to attract teachers. Dr. Simmons noted some pending staff decisions/efforts that if completed could raise our numbers to around 75-80%.

AdjournmentBoard
There being no further business the Chair asked for a motion to adjourn. Dr. Simmons asked to be able to thank board members for their support and understanding of “what we are dealing with here” and for your appreciation for what the staff have been doing. (Note – thanks Dr. Simmons!) Board members expressed their thanks and appreciation to the staff. Dave Wyatt then made a motion to adjourn. Shelia Boles seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:50 p.m.



Larry Hewett, Chairperson Thomas Academy Board

**Thomas Academy
Board Meeting
May 28, 2020**

Thomas Academy

CALL TO ORDER – Larry Hewett, Chairperson

The Thomas Academy Board of Education met May 28, 2020 by way of “Zoom” at 3 p.m. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Larry Hewett.

Roll Call.....Dr. Geraldine Bradshaw, Director
Dr. Geraldine Bradshaw, Director of Thomas Academy called the roll.

Board members present by “Zoom” video conference: Shelia Boles, Dr. Zelphia Grissett, Larry Hewett, Owen Robinson, and Dave Wyatt.

Staff members attending: Dr. Geraldine Bradshaw, Director of Thomas Academy, Dr. Tom Simmons, VP of Education. In addition, Julie Ward, Finance Officer for Boys and Girls Homes of NC attended.

Approval of Agenda.....Larry Hewett, Board Chair
The Chair stated that all members should have a copy of the proposed May 28, 2020 Thomas Academy Board of Education meeting agenda and asked if there were any corrections or additions. Dave Wyatt made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Shelia Boles. The motion was approved unanimously.

Approval of April 14, 2020 Board Meeting Minutes Mr. Larry Hewett, Board Chair
The Chair asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the April 14, 2020 meeting. Shelia Boles made a motion to approve the April 14 minutes. Dave Wyatt seconded the motion. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

Recognitions

Board Chair Larry Hewett commended the leadership and staff for their efforts to maintain relationships and direction for the students during the coronavirus epidemic. He remarked how proud he was of Dr. Simmons and Dr. Bradshaw for their leadership in keeping things moving along for the students and of the teachers and staff for their dedication for making sure the students were able to get all they could have during this time. Dave Wyatt affirmed and offered thanks as well.

Finance - Budget

Chairman Hewett said he would like to move down in the agenda to Finance and recognize Boys and Girls Homes Finance Director Julie Ward for a report on the Thomas Academy budget proposal for the upcoming 20-21 school year. Julie reported that she had sent out an electronic form of the budget for the board members as well as a paper document for the staff. Julie noted that the budget was devised based on an estimate of 118 students for the 20-21 school year (See FY 21 Budget Thomas Academy). She pointed out

the income estimates for state, local, federal funds and grants and in-kind support and said that the state funds had been reduced by 3% and others by 1.5% due to a possible economic downturn. Ms. Ward stated that the in-kind support from Boys and Girls Homes was way down for the upcoming year and Dave Wyatt noted that the amount was a number to use to balance the TA budget for 20-21. Ms. Ward then went through the various expense items sharing information about them. For comparison, FY 19-20 and 20-21 figures were presented. Ms. Ward then opened the floor for questions. Dave Wyatt asked about students from Brunswick County and Dr. Simmons responded. Dave also noted that the budget numbers seemed to be pretty straightforward and the budget was in balance. Chair Hewett asked Ms. Ward what steps needed to be taken going forward and expressed appreciation to her for the work she put in to developing the proposed FY 20-21 budget and to Dr. Simmons and Dr. Bradshaw for their part in its development. Dave Wyatt also complimented Ms. Ward for her efforts.

General Items (events/activities)

Graduation

The Chair then asked Dr. Simmons for an update on graduation. Dr. Simmons stated that graduation was going to be held on June 6, 2020 at 10 a.m. using the governor's guidelines for phase 2. Parents would be in cars in the parking lot in front of the chapel. Graduates, staff, and board members in attendance would sit in the grassy area in front of the chapel. The service would be shortened, and school staff and a uniformed officer would be on hand to make sure guests remain in their cars. Board member Shelia Boles has agreed to do the commencement address. Dr. Simmons said he wants to make graduation special for them noting that of the 16 graduates, 14 were going somewhere for postsecondary educational pursuits with the remaining 2 going directly into the work force!

Calendar Updates

Dr. Bradshaw reported that the last day for students was June 5 and noted that they were still working!

Informational Items.....Staff

Several items were listed, and Dr. Bradshaw stated that things were self-explanatory. She reported that the computer teacher had attained certification and was able to do that at no cost. Dr. Simmons gave a brief report on the bus that was purchased for the school and was pleased at the quality of the bus they were able to get. He added that yard signs for each graduate were being made and would be put along the drive for the graduates to see and take home following graduation.

Finance.....Staff

Grants

Dr. Bradshaw reported on grant monies (1 - for students on campus who have an IEP (PRC 032) \$33,884.00 and 2 - for our General Operating funds (PRC 036) \$ 64,000.00) that were received and efforts to use those monies to support students.

Facilities.....Staff

Dr. Simmons reported on improvements to the gym floor and bleachers.

Personnel.....Staff

Dr. Bradshaw asked if anyone had leads on a school counselor, a physical education teacher, or a Spanish teacher, please give them her contact information.

Action Items.....Dr. Bradshaw/Board

Parent Grievance Policy

Thomas Academy Grievance Policy 2020-21

Dr. Bradshaw asked that action on these items be held until the next meeting pending additional revisions to these proposed policies.

Board member comments.....Board

Dave Wyatt asked if we were not approving the budget at this meeting. The Chair asked what the board’s pleasure on the budget was - if time was needed to reflect on the proposed budget or if the board was ready to take action on it. Dr. Grissett asked if anything could change in the budget going forward. Ms. Ward replied that at this point not that she was aware of. Some members indicated that they were comfortable taking action on the budget at this meeting and the Chair asked if someone would make a motion to act on the budget. Owen Robinson made a motion to approve the FY 20-21 Thomas Academy budget. Dave Wyatt seconded the motion. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

The Chair noted that the board would take the June board meeting under consideration and would only meet if needed. Dr. Bradshaw commented on the process of getting the budget and diplomas signed by the Chair.

AdjournmentBoard

There being no further business the Chair asked for a motion to adjourn. Owen Robinson made the motion to adjourn. Shelia Boles seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously. Before adjourning the Chair thanked board members for their efforts to support the school, noting that “We have a great school and a lot to be proud of and that happens because of your dedication and support.” The meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:55 p.m.



Larry Hewett, Chairperson Thomas Academy Board

**Thomas Academy
Board Meeting
July 21, 2020**

Thomas Academy

CALL TO ORDER – Larry Hewett, Chairperson

The Thomas Academy Board of Education met July 21, 2020 by way of “Zoom” hosted by Dave Wyatt at 3 p.m. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Larry Hewett.

Roll Call.....Dr. Tom Simmons, VP of Education for Boys and Girls Homes/Thomas Academy called the roll.

Board members present by “Zoom” video conference: Sheila Boles, Dr. Zelphia Grissett, Larry Hewett, Owen Robinson, and Dave Wyatt.

Staff members attending: Dr. Tom Simmons, VP of Education. Additionally, newly employed George Ward, Director of Education for Thomas Academy, joined later in the meeting.

Approval of Agenda.....Larry Hewett, Board Chair

The Chair stated that all members had been sent a draft version of the July 21, 2020 agenda for the Thomas Academy Board of Education meeting agenda and asked if there were any corrections or additions. Owen Robinson made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Dave Wyatt. The motion was approved unanimously.

Approval of May 28, 2020 Board Meeting Minutes Larry Hewett, Board Chair

The Chair asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the May 28, 2020 meeting. Dr. Zelphia Grissett made a motion to approve the April 14 minutes. Sheila Boles seconded the motion. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

Recognitions

No report

Finance - Budget

No report

General Items (events/activities)

The chairman asked Dr. Simmons to report to the board on the ongoing activities of Thomas Academy and to lead with a report on the 2020 graduation.

Graduation

Dr. Simmons reported that the graduation format was a “drive through” activity. According to Dr. Simmons there was an “outstanding” speaker – Thomas Academy board member Sheila Boles – who brought a message for our kids that I think they will remember for quite a while! The graduation was held outside in front of the chapel and parents were very excited. Under the circumstances it was an outstanding graduation

ceremony and he thought everyone enjoyed it. We are already looking at our numbers for next year and it appears we will have 15-16 graduates and we are excited about that.

Plans for Opening School

(Note: planning for school opening has been predicated on recent directions from Governor Roy Cooper and “next steps” for the state of North Carolina) Dr. Simmons reported that he hadn’t sent letters to parents yet because he wanted to get the board’s concurrence on. According to Dr. Simmons the plans are to offer parents two options for their children. Plan B would have rotating days – half of the kids would come Monday and Tuesday while the other half would come on Thursday and Friday and on Wednesday (and their off days) everybody would be on Distance Learning. The school would be “closed” on Wednesday so it could be “deep cleaned” on that day. An electrostatic sprayer had been ordered that can be used to spray out a fine mist disinfectant to clean the school. The other option would be for those who have concerns about their kids being “in school” - they can do distance learning from home 5 days per week.

We are trying to work it out so that each teacher has a Zoom account so that the kids at home can tune in with the teacher to get help. We are ordering one hundred and ten Chromebooks and give each kid a Chromebook. We’re going to try to upgrade “hotspots” if we can. If we can’t we’ll just have to give paper/pencil packets to the students who don’t have a connection.

Some parents have expressed concerns about their children wearing a mask all day due to asthma or other medical issues. Dr. Simmons said those parents would be able to keep their students’ home and do distance learning.

He said we will probably teach for 50-55 minutes and then have a break where everyone could go outside and get fresh air and wash hands. Then when it is time to go to the next class, they would work it so that not everyone is in the halls at the same time. There will be entrance doors and exit doors so that there is no cross traffic.

On Wednesday’s teachers will work from home remotely doing distance learning and allowing the buildings to be deep cleaned. Tomorrow, once we get board approval, we will begin sending letters to parents letting them know what the plans are. Siblings will be scheduled so that they can come on the same day.

Delaying School Opening

Dr. Simmons said another thing he wanted to talk about was delaying school opening for one week. That will give us time to get everything in place before kids get here. This will be very important for the staff coming in where there will be at least three new instructors.

Dr. Simmons then asked if there were any questions about the plans for opening.

The drivers of the vans or bus will have digital thermometers will take temperatures of students when they get on the bus and temperatures will be taken again when students get to school. If a student does have temperature or symptoms, they will be isolated, and parents called to come for them. With our small student body (approximately 120) and only half of them on campus at one time we can do six foot spacing easily.

Dr. Grissett asked if the calendar would have to be adjusted. Dr. Simmons said we will have to adjust the calendar. The first semester will end before Christmas and be 88 days. We’ll make it up the next semester. There will be breaks for teachers though they are not scheduled as teacher workdays.

Dr. Grissett asked if they had received any information about testing for this year. Dr. Simmons said they hadn’t yet received direction on that.

Sheila Boles asked if the state was providing the school with PPE (personal protection equipment). Dr. Simmons replied that he had gotten a packet of materials that included gowns, thermometers, face shields, and masks. The governor has said he would be sending out 5 reusable masks per student. So students will be able to see teacher's faces Dr. Simmons said he had ordered face shields for every teacher.

Dr. Simmons said every classroom would have a hand sanitizer and between class changes each student would get a wipe to wipe their desk area down. I'm thinking that for our middle school students we will ask the teachers to rotate classes and have the students remain in their classroom. He also said I think we can work it so that not all students are rotating classes at the same time.

Dr. Grissett asked if there were any teachers that would require special accommodations. Dr. Simmons replied that there was one elderly teacher who would be allowed to work remotely.

Sheila Boles asked about the situation with substitute teachers. Dr. Simmons replied that we're ok. We have five or six on the list so we're ok.

Dave Wyatt reported that he had sent an invitation to George Ward, new Director of Thomas Academy, to join the meeting. The invitation was inadvertently sent to a wrong email address and that had been corrected so that Mr. Ward might be joining the meeting soon.

Informational Items.....Staff

No additional reports.

Finance.....Staff

No additional reports.

Facilities.....Staff

No additional reports.

Personnel.....Staff

Dr. Simmons reported on personnel. Earlier in the summer Dr. Simmons, board chairman Hewett and a teacher from the school interviewed George Ward for the position of director of Thomas Academy. Dr. Simmons listed several of his experiences and achievements and noted that he had been offered the position and would be coming on board Aug. 27. The next person is Demetrius Gibson, physical education, a recent graduate of Western Carolina. He is from Chadbourn and attended West Columbus High School. He has excellent reports on his work with students. The next person is Kim McGuire and will be serving as guidance counselor. She is from Pennsylvania. Chris Britton is the fourth person to be hired. He is certified in social studies. The other thing we are looking at according to Dr. Simmons is putting Spanish back in the curriculum and he has talked with a former employee Pat Medlin about that.

Dr. Grissett asked if Mr. Ward had a contract. Dr. Simmons replied that as employees of Boys and Girls Homes there wasn't a contract as such. Boys and Girls Homes can end employment with a three-day notice and employees can end employment with a 30-day notice.

At this point in the meeting Mr. George Ward, newly employed director of Thomas Academy joined the meeting. Dr. Simmons introduced Mr. Ward and board members introduced

themselves and made comments to Mr. Ward. Dr. Simmons updated Mr. Ward on new hires and curriculum changes/additions. Mr. Ward gave the board insight into his background, experiences and beliefs as an educator and following that, Dr. Simmons gave Mr. Ward a synopsis of the plans for the opening of school at Thomas Academy.

Action Items.....Dr. Tom Simmons

Delay in opening of school

Dr. Simmons requested that the board amend the school calendar to change the start of school to August 17. Chairman Hewett asked for a motion to change the opening date to August 17. Dave Wyatt made the motion. Owen Robinson seconded the motion. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

Dr. Simmons noted that he and Mr. Ward would work together to put together a new calendar for the year and send it to the board.

Board Concurrence in employment

Dr. Simmons asked for board concurrence in the employment of George Ward (director), Demetrius Gibson (P.E.), Kim McGuire (guidance), and Chris Britton (social studies). Chairman Hewett asked for a motion for the board's agreement on the employment of these persons. Owen Robinson made a motion to agree on the employment of these persons. Dave Wyatt seconded the motion. There was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

Approval of "Plan B" for opening of school

Chairman Hewett asked for a motion to approve the opening of school using "Plan B" (as offered by Governor Cooper's office". Dr. Grissett made a motion to approve Plan B for school opening. Sheila Boles seconded the motion. There was no discussion and the motion was passed unanimously.

Board member comments.....Board

Dr. Simmons noted to Mr. Ward that the board was a great group to work with to make Thomas Academy successful. "Thank you board!"

AdjournmentBoard

There being no further business the Chair asked for a motion to adjourn. Dave Wyatt made a motion to adjourn. Owen Robinson seconded the motion. There was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:55 p.m.



Larry Hewett, Chairperson Thomas Academy Board

**Thomas Academy
Board Meeting
August 11, 2020**

Thomas Academy

CALL TO ORDER – Larry Hewett, Chairperson

The Thomas Academy Board of Education met August 11, 2020 by way of “Zoom” at 3 p.m. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Larry Hewett.

Roll Call.....Dr. Tom Simmons, VP of Education for Boys and Girls Homes/Thomas Academy called the roll.

Board members present by “Zoom” video conference: Sheila Boles, Dr. Zelphia Grissett, Larry Hewett, Owen Robinson, and Dave Wyatt.

Staff members attending: Dr. Tom Simmons, VP of Education and Mr. George Ward, Director of Education for Thomas Academy.

Approval of Agenda.....Larry Hewett, Board Chair

The Chair stated that the August 11, 2020 agenda needed approval and asked if there were any changes, additions or deletions to the agenda. Dave Wyatt made a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by Owen Robinson. The motion was approved unanimously.

Approval of July 21, 2020 Board Meeting Minutes Larry Hewett, Board Chair

The Chair asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the July 21, 2020 meeting. Dr. Zelphia Grissett made a motion to approve the July 21 minutes. Dave Wyatt seconded the motion. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

Recognitions

No report

Finance - Budget

No report

General Items (events/activities)

The chairman asked Dr. Simmons and Mr. Ward to provide an update on school opening and any needs they might have from the board.

Mr. Ward began the discussion with updates.

-As of this meeting the enrollment is at 104 with a target of 118. A few more applications have been received and he believes the target will be hit.

-There is one staff vacancy – the candidate for the high school social studies position declined the position. A long term sub having a good relationship with students is in place in that position while the search is underway to fill the position.

-Teachers have been working very hard. They have been involved in a couple of trainings. One is training on Google Classroom, learning to maximize using that program for instruction. Teachers are also taking a course through N.C. State University on Remote Learning. They are also working very hard on getting their classrooms ready for the return of students.

-Because our school is small we are in good shape. We can tell parents that students will be learning five days a week. Two of those days they will be face-to-face and the other three days they will be remote. There will be two groups of students – one group will attend two days on Monday and Tuesday and the other group will attend Thursday and Friday. Our expectation is that all students will be attending class each day. Students will be provided with a Chromebook to assist with

the online portion of their instruction. Online learning in the spring was not very successful for some students so we are doing a re-boot. We have different expectations for students to be present and learning with progress checks built in. Teachers will have contact each day with students with time to follow-up with a student that hasn't checked in. We're really going to attempt to make sure that no student gets lost and that they stay engaged.

-Presently about 25% of students are opting for an all-virtual environment. We are also serving parents who need help with internet access so they can find "hotspots" and be able to log on at the appropriate time.

-On August 18 there will be an "Open House" for middle school students and another on August 20 for high school students. Teachers are also preparing short videos for those who can't attend so they can still "meet the teacher!" We do want students to attend the open house so they can pick up their Chromebook and face masks. Each student will get a pack of 5 washable face masks.

Mr. Ward then asked for questions. Dave Wyatt responded by asking about teachers using face shields. Mr. Ward replied that they had been ordered and were on their way – noting that there were extras in case a student needed to wear a shield. Larry Hewett asked about students wanting to do all distance learning and greater expectations. Mr. Ward responded that there were a small number and they were asking those to lock in on their preference so the groups could be stable. He also noted that expectations would be greater. The school day will be from 8 a.m. till 3 p.m. Face-to-face students will be released at 2:30 p.m. and that will give teachers time until 3:30 to work with students who are "remote." Dave Wyatt asked if students attending remotely would have to dress as if they were "in class." Mr. Ward responded that there were not specific requirements for students attending remotely. We will monitor this to see what works best for us. Mr. Wyatt asked if we had gotten a grant to purchase the Chromebooks. Dr. Simmons replied that it came from the "CARES" money.

Dr. Simmons discussed the 10day/20day rule. The rule has been extended to 30/60 for state mandated classes because kids who are on-line for 10 days will only be face-to-face with the teacher for 5 days. The old rule of testing 95% of students will be adjusted and they are looking at how to do end-of-course testing. As to healthy environment – we're going to be as healthy as we can be. A group of Lions clubs are arranging for hand washing stations to be put around. We have arranged for kids to be 6 feet apart in the cafeteria so they can be serve there rather than classrooms. There are hand wipes and hand sanitizers in every classroom. We have fogging machines so we can fog each classroom and transportation on Wednesday when there are no students here. Students will have temperature taken before getting on the bus and when they come in the front door and if a teacher notices a student being lethargic their temp will be taken again. There are isolation rooms so students can be isolated if they have a temperature. One-way directional signs will be on floors. We're small enough that we can make kids and staff as safe as they can possibly be. Every student and teacher will have a water bottle so they can fill the bottle but not drink from water fountains. Mr. Ward showed signs that will be placed by each fountain requiring that it be used as a filling – but not drinking – station. Dr. Simmons stated that one teacher (elderly) who has asked to be able to work from home and they have agreed to her request and, an assistant has been employed to work with students to provide extra coverage.

The Chairman stated that an agenda item was calendar updates. Dr. Simmons stated that the plan is to have the first nine weeks become eight weeks. There are enough days in the calendar to meet the 1025-hour requirement. Report cards can be sent home on Sept. 16 as originally planned and after that, the calendar will be as planned. End of course testing will be over before Christmas break and in the spring, we'll be graduating on June 5. If we have inclement weather, we're still in school because everyone is "virtual." The start of school was delayed from the 17th to the 24th because we were not ready. Sanitizing materials and Chromebooks haven't come along with some other issues and that was why we chose to delay the start. We need the board to approve that adjustment in the calendar.

Chairman Hewett asked the board to take action on the change in the start date for Thomas Academy. He asked for a motion to approve the start date from the 17th of August to the 24th of August. Owen Robinson made a motion to change the start date from the 17th to the 24th. Dave Wyatt seconded the motion. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

Board Member Comments. The Chairman then asked if there were any board member comments. Dr. Grissett stated that things looked organized and ready to go. Dave Wyatt noted that Mr. Ward's video was very professional. Mr. Wyatt asked if there was a copy of the bylaws for Thomas Academy that could be provided. Dr. Simmons replied saying that was a good idea and they would send them out to board members. (Note: the bylaws have been provided and sent to each board member as of Sept. 1, 2020.)

There being no other board member comments Dr. Simmons asked to share a matter with the board. Dr. Simmons said that when he first came to "Flemington Academy" eight years ago his vision was that this would be a place kids could find that connection, compassion, and character and beyond that a place where they were safe, comfortable, and around teachers that really cared about them and worked in their best interest. It's taken a while but we've gotten there. Test scores have come up every year, our graduation cohort rate last year was 73%, the highest it's ever been, test scores we've met or exceeded all the indicators the state dept. set out for us. We have done some really good stuff! We're going to be doing some more stuff that will be even better under Mr. Ward's leadership and I think the school is in great hands. This is not just a school. Boys and Girls Homes is my home and I want to make certain the people in charge are taking care of my home. With that being said I have come to the conclusion my retirement will begin effective Sept. 30. This was not done lightly. I wanted to stay on to help Mr. Ward get school going smoothly and I have all the confidence in the world in Mr. Ward and what he has brought to this school. This was a hard decision, but I have enjoyed this and I have told Mr. Ward I would be a phone call away whenever I can and am needed. I still want to be involved. I appreciate the support you have given me and the things you have done. I know Thomas Academy will do even greater things. It has been my pleasure, it has made the past 54 years in education – these 8 years have been the most enjoyable in my life, to get to come back home and give back to the place that put you where you are. Thank you, thank you for your support, I won't ride away into the sunset, I'll just park my horse and be available when you need me. Thank you so much.

This message was met by great support and commendation by all board members! Sheila Boles offered congratulations. Owen Robinson offered congratulations. Dave Wyatt offered congratulations and that Tom had found someone in Mr. Ward that he felt comfortable and could retire. Dr. Grissett said there is a time and season for everything! Mr. Robinson said we appreciate everything you have done. Mr. Hewett said Tom is the epitome of the saying you can go back home and what he has brought to this organization is compassion and caring for children and this has been a different place for children. He has done everything he could to make sure they knew they were loved and were cared for. I appreciate all you've done for children and for Thomas Academy and I wish you well.

Adjournment

Following Dr. Simmons announcement and board comments the Chairman asked for a motion to adjourn. Owen Robinson made a motion to adjourn. Sheila Boles seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned.



Larry Hewett, Chairperson Thomas Academy Board

Thomas Academy
Board Meeting
September 8, 2020

Thomas Academy

CALL TO ORDER – Larry Hewett, Chairperson

The Thomas Academy Board of Education met September 8, 2020 by way of “Zoom” at 3 p.m. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Larry Hewett.

Roll Call.....Mr. George Ward, Director of Thomas Academy called the roll.

Board members present by “Zoom” video conference: Sheila Boles, Dr. Zelphia Grissett, Larry Hewett, and Dave Wyatt. Owen Robinson was not in attendance.

Staff members attending: Dr. Tom Simmons, VP of Education and Mr. George Ward, Director of Education for Thomas Academy.

Approval of Agenda.....Larry Hewett, Board Chair

The Chair stated that the September 8, 2020 agenda needed approval and asked if there were any changes, additions or deletions to the agenda. Dave Wyatt made a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by Sheila Boles. The motion was approved unanimously.

Approval of August 11, 2020 Board Meeting Minutes Larry Hewett, Board Chair

The Chair asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the August 11, 2020 meeting. Dr. Zelphia Grissett made a motion to approve the Aug. 11 minutes. Dave Wyatt seconded the motion. There was no discussion, and the motion was approved unanimously.

General Items (events/activities)

Chairman Hewett turned the meeting over to Mr. Ward for his report on school activities. Mr. Ward stated that he had just a few updates for the opening of school and the first ten days. It’s been a very different opening. Teachers are very excited and students have been great, and in spite of Covid and new precautions it has been very smooth. Right now enrollment is about 100. There are a few more applications coming in. Presently students have an option to attend 5 days. In the beginning because of “distancing” we had to do a hybrid schedule and because of the numbers we were able to offer a number of students the “face-to-face” option and we really like that. We asked parents to commit for four weeks to the schedule and will be surveying parents again in about a week or so and ask them to make their decision regarding attendance and commit for the remainder of the semester. The goal is to do five days. Depending on the numbers we may have to do a split but our goal is to get the students to do face-to-face as much as possible. We did get our Chromebooks and each student has one for the times when they are virtual or when not on campus. When we survey parents again the option will be all remote or face-to-face options. The face-to-face option could be two days or five days depending upon the number who choose that option. Chairman Hewett commented that the five day option might allow them to move on more quickly with the curriculum. Mr. Ward agreed and stated for a lot of students who don’t have someone at home to monitor them or who don’t have a quiet place to work and be focused, we want to give them that option if we can so they won’t have to spend so much time on the computer. So far things have been smooth. Mr. Ward reported he was happy to tell the reporters asking about quarantines and Covid cases that we had no bad news to report. It’s been a whole lot smoother than I expected. We have two resignations. Ms. Green, our Exceptional Children’s teacher resigned and our math teacher (name not audible) resigned. For Ms. Green Mrs. Hucks has agreed to take on more until we get someone in that role and we are looking for an EC teacher and a math teacher. In good news we interviewed a candidate with certification and a lot of compassion for the students we have for the high school history position and we hope to have that person in place by Oct. 1. When we are able to do that we can move Ms. Harper, the long term sub in history over to the math position while we seek a person for

that position. Ms. Harper has done a good job. With that Mr. Ward concluded his report and asked if there were questions from the board.

Dr. Simmons noted that he might be able to get accustomed to taking things easier (upon his retirement)!

The Chair asked if there were any board member comments. Dave Wyatt offered Dr. Simmons best wishes for a wonderful retirement. Chairman Hewett said I wish you the very best Tom. He noted that Dr. Simmons had given his life and his heart to very special causes and it was a lot better for having his leadership and his presence. Dr. Simmons stated that he wouldn't change any part of it! Dr. Grissett commented that he should look for the withdrawal!

Adjournment

Following the board member remarks Chairman Hewett asked for a motion to adjourn. Sheila Boles made a motion to adjourn. Dr. Grissett seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned.



Larry Hewett, *Chairperson, Thomas Academy Board*

**Thomas Academy
Board Meeting
November 10, 2020**

Thomas Academy

CALL TO ORDER – Larry Hewett, Chairperson

The Thomas Academy Board of Education met November 10, 2020 by way of “Zoom” at 3 p.m. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Larry Hewett.

Roll Call.....Mr. George Ward, Director of Thomas Academy
Board members present by “Zoom” video conference: Dr. Zelfhia Grissett, Larry Hewett, Owen Robinson, and Dave Wyatt. Sheila Boles was not in attendance. **Staff members attending:** Mr. George Ward, Director of Education for Thomas Academy and Ricky Creech, President/CEO Boys and Girls Homes of NC.

Approval of Agenda.....Larry Hewett, Board Chair
The Chair asked for a motion to approve the agenda for the Nov. 10, 2020 meeting. Dr. Zelfhia Grissett made a motion to approve the agenda. Owen Robinson seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Approval of October 13, 2020 Board Meeting Minutes Larry Hewett, Board Chair
The Chair asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the October 13, 2020 meeting. Dave Wyatt made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 13, 2020 meeting. Dr. Grissett seconded the motion. There was no discussion, and the minutes were approved unanimously.

School Report (events/activities)

Chairman Hewett turned the meeting over to Mr. Ward for his report on school activities. Mr. Ward reported that progress reports would be given out next week as the halfway point of the second quarter had been reached. We have really been focusing on students who have not done well in the first quarter. We have put students on an “academic contract” and he has been following up on students who are not doing well. The contract looks at why students haven’t done well and what steps will be taken to improve. Many “remote” students reported that they didn’t have the motivation to get on the computer each day and then fall behind. We’ve been doing after school tutoring, following up, helping with math and reading and trying to keep them focused. Students getting a grade less than 50 will have a hard time passing the course. Under the contract the grade will be raised to a 50, giving the student an opportunity to make a C grade and pass for the semester, thus offering an incentive not to give up – keeping them in the game. Mr. Ward said that he had been following up with students, especially seniors, to make sure they stay on track and graduate.

Another big thing we have is our Beginning Teacher Support Plan. This is something we do yearly and requires board approval. It outlines and formalizes the support we provide new teachers – typically those with less than three years’ experience. We have three teachers in that category and they get support by having a mentor teacher that works with them. The plan outlines the goals and objectives and how we will follow up. Mr. Ward met with the beginning teacher case manager to review and update the plan. We want to support the teachers we have!

We are moving along and working to finish the quarter. We are looking at ways to keep students engaged. Teachers are meeting with students remotely, touching base, talking with parents and working on ways to get a new robust communication system because we realize there are some limitations with Remind, so we are looking at a system that integrates with Power School so we can have accurate information that parents don’t have to sign up for but get automatic updates in ways they choose – phone call, email, text or maybe all three. We’re also looking at getting Zello, a platform that allows high school students to work on career planning, skills inventory, get recommended courses, helping them think about the future and their goals and planning. Mr. Creech asked Mr. Ward if he had gotten fully migrated into D-Suite. Mr. Ward indicated that he hadn’t. Mr. Creech asked if North Carolina offers technical education. Mr. Ward stated that he believes some online training is available and that he would look into it. Mr. Ward said there is one student that will be attending a manufacturing

program at Southeastern Community College. He noted that there were positive reactions from previous experiences with the program. Mr. Hewett noted that a former student in a similar experience had a particularly good experience working with a local business. Mr. Ward said that there had been a virtual career fair recently where students got to learn about the program and its offerings. We are trying to give them different options and for them to look beyond high school to two or four year college for additional support.

Board Action.....Board

The Chair stated that there were a couple of items requiring board action. The first item was the 2020-21 Parent/Student Handbook. Mr. Ward noted that the staff had made a few revisions to the handbook. Mr. Hewett stated that he had looked through the document and it looked good. There were a couple of things that he wanted to bring to everyone's attention: the school calendar wasn't included, the non-discrimination and anti-harassment, sexual harassment, and reporting policies were included twice. Dave Wyatt commented that this was a little out of his experience and was not sure what might be missing and was hoping Mr. Hewett, Dr. Grissett and our educational background folks had looked at it closely. Mr. Ward said plans are to add the document to the school website. Mr. Wyatt asked if this had to be submitted to the state for approval. Mr. Ward responded that it was good practice for the board to approve it but it wasn't required to be submitted to DPI. Dr. Grissett asked if there was an attorney that could read through it to ensure there wasn't anything missing. Mr. Wyatt stated that he didn't recall there being a board attorney. He said Boys and Girls Homes' attorney of record is Jim Hill and Linda Oldham, a board member is an attorney. Dr. Grissett asked if it would be a decent idea to have an attorney look through it make sure there isn't anything that would be a liability. Mr. Hewett said it would be good if an attorney could review the document to see if it was acceptable and that could make us feel better. Dr. Grissett said if we could have an attorney do a read through they could identify and correct any issues. Mr. Creech noted that he could make that happen by calling Mr. Hill. Becoming a "Sanctuary Model" site and regulatory agencies will require that various issues be addressed and included in the handbook he said. The Chair said he appreciated Mr. Creech's offer. Mr. Wyatt stated that he needed to contact Mr. Hill on another matter and would be glad to discuss reviewing the handbook with Mr. Hill if desired. The Chair noted that the Office of Charter Schools might be a resource in reviewing the document. There was consensus to hold off on taking action on the approval of the handbook until the reviews could be done.

The second item was action on the "Beginning Teacher Support Plan." Mr. Ward gave a brief reminder of the purpose of the plan. The Chair asked for a motion to adopt the plan for Thomas Academy. Dave Wyatt made a motion to adopt the Beginning Teacher Support Plan for Thomas Academy. Dr. Grissett seconded the motion. There was no discussion, and the motion was approved unanimously.

Membership Discussion (Adding additional members to the Thomas Academy Board of Education) The Chair asked if there were any reports from the groups working on this matter. Dr. Grissett stated that she thought we would delay making a decision until we clarified some issues related to this. She said she was leaning on Mr. Ward for help in identifying a parent to serve. Mr. Creech asked how many slots were open. The Chair responded that there could be three. Mr. Creech stated that in addition to a parent that we might want to reach out to a resident of Lake Waccamaw to represent the community as a means of improving community relations. An amount of discussion ensued concerning requirements for board members, applications, recommendations, etc. The Chair asked Mr. Creech what he felt would be an appropriate process for becoming a member of the school's board. Mr. Creech responded that with the school there are two different populations – the day students with certain criteria and the residential students having other criteria requiring that we meet COA standards and those of DSS. An application and resume are considered best practices. A new board member orientation is part of the process. Background checks would not be required because the member would never be alone with students. A resume would serve to inform everyone of what the new member would bring to the board. It's best practice and not cumbersome to do. Mr. Ward stated that he could work on a draft packet of what we would send to the prospect for the board to look at. Dave Wyatt asked if DPI might have any guidance for us. Mr. Ward said he planned to reach out to the Office of Charter Schools for that. Dr. Grissett suggested that the North Carolina School Boards Association might be a resource. Mr. Hewett asked if the parent representative would be someone whose child was currently in school or would continue to serve after their children were gone. Mr. Ward commented that you would want someone who could work with a broad perspective and not simply for their child, even continuing to serve after their child was gone. Mr. Wyatt asked for clarification on whether a formal resume could also be served by a bio. Mr. Creech said that would be sufficient.

The chair asked if the groups had identified any persons as potential members. Dave Wyatt noted that he knew of an interested person from the BGHNC board and Mr. Ward stated that he had a parent that had expressed interest. The Chair asked if we were ok with continuing to work on the process and have Mr. Ward report on that at our next meeting. There was consensus on that as a next step.

Board Comments The Chair asked if there were any comments from the Board. There were none.

Adjournment

The Chair asked for a motion to adjourn. Dave Wyatt made a motion to adjourn. Owen Robinson seconded the motion. There was no discussion, and the motion was approved unanimously.

The next meeting of the Thomas Academy Board of Education is scheduled for December 8 at three o'clock p.m.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Larry W. Hewett". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Larry Hewett, Chairperson, Thomas Academy Board

Thomas Academy
Board Meeting
December 8, 2020

Thomas Academy

CALL TO ORDER – Larry Hewett, Chairperson

The Thomas Academy Board of Education met December 8, 2020 by way of “Zoom” at 3 p.m. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Larry Hewett.

Roll Call.....Mr. George Ward, Director of Thomas Academy

Board members present by “Zoom” video conference: Sheila Boles, Larry Hewett, and Dave Wyatt. Dr. Grissett and Owen Robinson were not in attendance. **Staff members attending:** Mr. George Ward, Director of Education for Thomas Academy.

Approval of Agenda.....Larry Hewett, Board Chair

The Chair asked for a motion to approve the agenda for the Dec. 8, 2020 meeting. Sheila Boles made a motion to approve the agenda. Dave Wyatt seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Approval of November 10, 2020 Board Meeting Minutes Larry Hewett, Board Chair

The Chair asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the November 20, 2020 meeting. Dave Wyatt made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 10, 2020 meeting. Sheila Boles seconded the motion. There was no discussion, and the minutes were approved unanimously.

School Report (events/activities)

Chairman Hewett turned the meeting over to Mr. Ward for his report on school activities. Mr. Ward said they are in “full swing” getting ready for end of course tests and final exams. The state requires those to be “in person” and everybody is coming in to take those and we’re social distancing. End of course tests include math 1, math 3, and our biology EOC. Teachers are working to get everyone ready but it’s been a different year and the school experience has been inconsistent with quarantines and some students being remote so it will be interesting to look at our progress. The EOC’s will be on the 17th and 18th. The other thing we are doing is registering for next semester. One of the things we wanted to do was improve our elective offerings. Typically, we have offered things like art, theater, and P.E. This year we’ll be offering broadcasting, audio engineering, equine husbandry, a computer graphics animation class, and a yearbook class, really trying to expand our offerings. The second quarter ends next and it’s been a weird one! We hope we can have the distancing removed so students can come back because there is no substitute for face-to-face interactions. There have been some technology issues because nobody was ready to go “all” online – it’s been a real challenge. Teachers have been great, and we hope students finish strong. We have a lot of pieces built in for students to catch back up and show them there is a path for them to finish. Fortunately, we are small and can keep track of all the students. We will have one graduate now and will have six or so more in the spring. We will have about four students taking courses at Southeastern. We’ll have one student in the manufacturing program and we’re happy about that partnership. Things are looking good in spite of all the challenges. Mr. Ward asked if there were questions and continued by explaining how beneficial the elective offerings are for the students. Mr. Ward talked about how the elective offerings are achieved by utilizing the experiences and expertise of the existing staff and it has been great. Mr. Ward and Ms. Boles talked about the importance of athletics in keeping students involved and the difficulties in providing those experiences during the virus problems. The hope is to do more in the spring. There was a brief discussion on how to handle bringing students into school to take the EOC’s and exams. Mr. Wyatt noted that the Whiteville newspaper reported that a staff member at Thomas Academy was quarantined and Mr. Ward reported on that matter – noting that to this point there had been only one student that had been exposed. Mr. Ward said that when we look long term, he believes there will be an asterisk* by this school year in terms of student performance. Mr. Hewett asked Mr. Ward if he had any report on the Student Handbook. Mr. Ward said that we were waiting on some feedback from attorneys. Mr. Wyatt said that counsel for Boys and Girls Homes stated that it was not his area of expertise, but he would forward it to the counsel for the Columbus County Schools but that he hadn’t gotten any feedback on that. We will continue to look

at how to move with this issue. The discussion then turned to the Thomas Academy financial report. Mr. Ward shared the Thomas Academy Budget Report from his computer and talked about various budget numbers with the board members. The budget was developed with a projection of 118 students, but the actual number was 94. Mr. Ward gave reports on various budget items and stated that we are about where we should be at this time of the year. Mr. Wyatt indicated that the budget position looked good to him. The Chair asked if there was any information on the audit for Thomas Academy. Mr. Ward said the audit report wasn't ready yet and he would bring that when it was ready. We've got enough to get through the year on the plus side Mr. Ward said. It's about the teachers – we have some positions we haven't been able to fill and we have some that have taken on other responsibilities and that has helped. Mr. Ward reported on personnel. When Rosa Green retired, we found a person with heart to work with our students. Danette Baggett is from New Hanover County Schools and is very knowledgeable in the area of exceptional students and recommends her for the position of exceptional children's teacher.

Board Action.....Board

Sheila Boles made a motion to employ Danette Baggett as teacher of exceptional children. Dave Wyatt seconded the motion. Dave Wyatt asked about the spelling of her name and Mr. Ward clarified that. There was no further discussion and the motion to employ was approved unanimously.

Chairman Hewett stated the next item for board action was the board membership report. He stated that there were a couple of board members not present at this meeting and he wanted them to be a part of that discussion. The chair asked Sheila Boles if she had anything to report on the nomination of a parent member to the board and Ms. Boles indicated she was relying on Mr. Ward for leadership on the selection of a parent nominee for membership on the board. Discussion followed on the appropriate means of new board member selection, potentially involving application and recommendation, to comply with certification programs and regulatory agencies. Mr. Ward will be working on this process. At present there is a need to elect an additional member of the BGHNC board to serve on the Thomas Academy Board and to select a person as a representative of the Lake Waccamaw community and a parent to serve as a parent representative on the board. This would bring the number of board members to eight, the maximum number allowed by the school bylaws. Mr. Wyatt indicated that he had a board member in mind – Grace Thomas – to suggest for membership from the Boys and Girls Homes board and felt that we might want to talk with BGH board member Nancy Sigmon who is a Lake Waccamaw resident and Lake Waccamaw Mayor Daniel Hilburn about a person to represent the Lake Waccamaw community on the Thomas Academy board. The chair asked Mr. Wyatt to work with Mr. Ward to convey the ideas on getting a representative from the lake community to Mr. Creech and to continue working with Owen Robinson on the selection of a BTHNC board representative. Mr. Ward asked for clarification on getting the number of members to seven or eight. With the selection of an additional BGHNC board member, a community member, and a parent member the number would be at eight, the maximum number allowed by the bylaws. The chair indicated a need to work quickly on the selection of BGHNC board member in that we are out of compliance with the bylaws on that issue (hopefully by the January 2021 meeting) and the others as soon as possible. The chair added that the bylaws speak of an "Annual Meeting" in August and that when new members come on the board, within a month the board will have an organizational meeting, and officers of the board (chair, vice-chair, and secretary) will be elected. The chair opined that we would need to have an organizational meeting after the selection of new board members – not in August, but the month following the election of the new members. (Mr. Wyatt and Mr. Ward discussed getting together with Mr. Creech to work on selecting the community representative.)

Board Comments The Chair asked if there were any comments from the Board. There were none.

Adjournment

The Chair asked for a motion to adjourn. Dave Wyatt made a motion to adjourn. Sheila Boles seconded the motion. There was no discussion, and the motion was approved unanimously. The Chair said to those in attendance that it was a pleasure working with them and he appreciated what they bring to the board and your efforts to make the best opportunities for the children and thank you for that. Best wishes for the Christmas holiday season were expressed by all. The meeting was adjourned.

The next meeting of the Thomas Academy Board of Education is scheduled for January 12 at three o'clock p.m.



Larry Hewett, Chairperson, Thomas Academy Board