

The Alexander Local Board of Education held a special meeting on May 23, 2011 at the Alexander Library. Members present at roll call were: Mr. Fred Davis, Mr. Patrick Lawson, Mr. Mike Chapman, Mr. John Hutchison, and Dr. Gordon Brooks.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mr. Davis.

Public Participation

Gail Zalimeni Brooks stated that she and the other parents who submitted statements in opposition of hiring Denton Guthrie as varsity girl's basketball coach for next year wished to address the Board regarding their complaint.

11-05-19: Dr. Brooks moved, seconded by Mr. Chapman to enter into executive session for a complaint against an employee.

Vote: Mr. Chapman, yes; Mr. Lawson, yes; Mr. Hutchison, yes; Dr. Brooks, yes; and Mr. Davis, yes. Motion carried.

Time In: 6:06 PM

Time Out: 7:25 PM

Superintendent's Recommendation

11-05-20: Mr. Lawson moved, seconded by Dr. Brooks to accept the enclosed letter of resignation from Tricia Gomillion, effective at the end of the 2010-11 school year.

Vote: Mr. Chapman, yes; Mr. Lawson, yes; Mr. Hutchison, yes; Dr. Brooks, yes; and Mr. Davis, yes. Motion carried.

11-05-21: Dr. Brooks moved, seconded by Mr. Chapman to grant a supplemental contract for the 2010-11 school year to Rhonda Meeks, as ES/MS Play/Musical Director.

Vote: Mr. Chapman, yes; Mr. Lawson, yes; Mr. Hutchison, yes; Dr. Brooks, yes; and Mr. Davis, yes. Motion carried.

11-05-22: Mr. Chapman moved, seconded by Mr. Hutchison to employ the following supplementals for the 2011-12 school year, pending their meeting all state and local requirements:

Non-Certificated:	Lance Allison	HS Head Wrestling
	Mike Bobo	Ass't. Boys Varsity Basketball
	Laura Eling	Ass't. Varsity Volleyball
	Blaine Gabriel	Head Boys Varsity Basketball

Julie Haas	Ass't. Girls Varsity Soccer
Angie Malone	Head Cross-Country
Eliot Niceswanger	Ass't. Varsity Wrestling
Rick Olexa	Head MS Football
Mark Setzer	Volunteer Ass't. MS Football
Olivia Temmel.....	MS Volleyball
Ryan VanDyke	Ass't. Boys Varsity Soccer
Nick Wendt	Head HS Volleyball
Kelly West	Ass't. Girls Varsity Basketball

Vote: Mr. Chapman, yes; Mr. Lawson, yes; Mr. Hutchison, yes; Dr. Brooks, yes; and Mr. Davis, yes. Motion carried.

Dr. Brooks made the following statement: I want to explain how I'm going to vote tonight because I attended School Board meetings for about 2 years before being elected and I was frequently frustrated and disappointed that Board members would vote on controversial issues without explaining their reasons. I don't want there to be any confusion about my vote tonight.

First, a comment about the young ladies referred to in the Athens Messenger article. These young ladies are hard workers and are five of the best students in the school. All are in the National Honor Society and won multiple awards at the high school Awards Assembly I attended last week—they worked hard for these honors. They do not shy away from hard work, whether academic or athletic. They all played basketball in the Alexander system for several years before this year and had become familiar with the expectations of hard work required. Some played regularly on the varsity team that made it to Regionals in 2010 and were looking forward to this year immensely—and they knew what hard work would be expected of them. They participated in many spring and summer basketball activities, both with the team and individually, to continue to improve their skills. They loved playing basketball for Alexander.

These young ladies are not quitters and they are not weak—and the allegations brought by their parents should not be dismissed just because these young ladies left the team. Rather, I believe that these young ladies had the courage to leave a situation they could no longer tolerate and thought would not change—a situation that I understand to have involved violent yelling, angry outbursts, demeaning language, and intimidation. Whether we as adults agree that the situation was inappropriate for a high school team, based on the allegations brought by their parents, is the heart of the decision we face as a Board tonight—but the students believed it was. I have heard many times that it takes more courage to leave an abusive relationship than to stay in one. I am proud that our school district includes young women who have learned to stand up for themselves and against what they see as inappropriate behavior—despite the expectations of their parents and our society that they not quit. In this matter, I am proud that my daughter did something I did not want her to do. I realized later that she didn't leave the team because she couldn't handle it, but that she left the team because she should not have to handle it. I am

honestly ashamed that I wanted her to continue to play on the team that she and others believed had such a hostile climate.

Second, my position is not a personal vendetta toward Mr. Guthrie because my daughter left the team this year. I don't know him as more than an acquaintance—but too many people I respect have told me that he is a good person and has a good heart for me to think anything else. I believe he is a good teacher of the game of basketball and I have absolutely no problem with the fact that he demands hard work from student-athletes—in fact, I expect it. He has achieved positive results and has won many games. However, with apologies to Vince Lombardi, winning is **not** the only thing—methods matter, especially in high school, where co-curricular and extra-curricular activities are educational activities.

Third, I'm not saying that coaches, in the heat of the moment or to get a student's attention, should be completely prohibited from yelling at students. And I'm certainly not saying that coaches cannot demand hard work from student-athletes. I am saying that as employees of the school district, coaches should be expected not to scream at or demean or intimidate students during games and practices—and I'm also saying that a rare outburst can sometimes be forgiven. I believe that coaches in our district can strive for excellence and demand hard work without screaming, without verbal abuse, and without intimidating our students. Coaches, like all employees of the school district, should always treat all students with the utmost respect.

I'm talking about any coaches who call students "stupid" or cuss at them. I'm talking about any coaches who make students run or practice for punishment immediately after games. I'm talking about coaches who single out individual students during games, yell at them to "get over here," and then while they are standing two feet away scream at the students at the top of their voice for 10 or 20 seconds, or longer, in front of stands filled with observers. Based on my reading of OHSAA guidelines for coaches and also the "Respect the Game" program on their website, OHSAA does not condone such behavior from coaches and neither should we. Some people rightfully praise coaches for not yelling at officials and for treating opposing teams with respect—but I find it curious that these same people then say it is good that our coaches scream so much at our own students. I can only surmise that they believe that if a coach doesn't scream, the students will not work hard. I disagree.

I've been uncomfortable with Mr. Guthrie's behavior during games for a while. I didn't say anything before now because my daughter asked me not to—she persuaded me that it was not a problem, that there was no reason for me to take any action. She defended Mr. Guthrie despite her dislike of his approach to coaching. Yes, my daughter who left the team this year defended him previously. Now that I've learned more, however, it is much more than just game behavior that concerns me.

Mr. Davis told me when I joined the Board that I need to be able to look at myself in the mirror and believe that my decisions were the right decisions for students in this district. Because I believe a School District should expect better of its employees and therefore should not hire

anyone with a record of treating students in any of the inappropriate ways I've described, I would have voted no tonight. Based on what I've learned about the matter, I believe that the situation was abusive and I believe that the allegations brought by the parents are true. I believe that Mr. Guthrie's history of such behavior does not demand another chance. However, because my daughter was on the team and because my wife submitted the statement in opposition, I will abstain from voting tonight in order to avoid any accusations of conflict of interest.

My larger concern is that some of these same issues seem relevant to some other sports at our high school. I encourage students to develop a "Student-Athlete Bill of Rights" for consideration by the School Board—that after approval might become part of policy through the *Athletic Handbook*.

Finally, I also believe we need a district "Coaching Code of Conduct" policy that clearly defines acceptable coaching behavior toward students. OHSAA guidelines covered in their *Sportsmanship for Coaches* and "Coaches' Pledge" could serve as a foundation for this. And perhaps it should also become part of the *Athletic Handbook*. We expect much of our student-athletes, let's also expect much of our coaches.

Mr. Davis stated that the Messenger is not a reflection of the feelings of the Board.

11-05-23: Mr. Chapman moved, seconded by Mr. Hutchison to employ Denton Guthrie for the 2011-12 school year as Head Girls Varsity Basketball and Head HS Golf, pending his meeting all state and local requirements

Vote: Mr. Chapman, yes; Mr. Lawson, yes; Mr. Hutchison, yes; Dr. Brooks, abstain; and Mr. Davis, yes. Motion carried.

11-05-24: Mr. Lawson moved, seconded by Mr. Chapman that this meeting be adjourned.

Vote: Mr. Chapman, yes; Mr. Lawson, yes; Mr. Hutchison, yes; Dr. Brooks, yes; and Mr. Davis, yes. Motion carried.

Time: 7:34 P.M.

Board President

Treasurer