Observer Corp Report

New Hanover County Board of Education Meeting, Tuesday, July 12, 2016

The link below is a good account of the Board of Education meeting of July 12, 2016. The only additional noteworthy items were approval of the budget and approval of the strategic plan. The Star News report on the protest is correct.

<http://www.starnewsonline.com/news/20160712/hb2-protesters-storm-out-of-schools-meeting>

NEW HANOVER BOARD OF EDUCATION

HB2 protesters frustrated with board

Board did not take up law Tuesday

**By Cammie Bellamy**

StarNews Staff

WILMINGTON — For more than three hours, Hoggard High School student Kaylyn Koone waited for her turn to address the New Hanover County Board of Education. She listened to a budget update, employee contract approvals, and when the board approved air conditioning improvements at her school, she and her friends chuckled: “about time.”

But at 9:30 p.m., she took the podium and told board members about her classmate: a transgender boy who is still required to use the girls’ locker rooms and bathrooms.

“These are only some of the many issues transgender students face throughout their lifetime,” she said. “Those in charge seem to ignore problems they perceive to be only minute, yet it’s the actions that are small that can be taken to improve someone’s quality of life. And isn’t problem-solving what education is all about?”

Koone was one of about 50 people who came toTuesday's meeting in protest of North Carolina's House Bill 2, and seven speakers asked the board to take a stance opposing the law.

Signed by Gov. Pat McCrory in March, the Public Facilities Privacy and Security Act, also known as HB2, requires people in North Carolina to use restrooms that correspond to their birth certificate sex. The law's potential impact on schools drew federal outcry: in May, President Barack Obama's administration directed schools to accommodate transgender students in restrooms and locker rooms, though several states responded with a lawsuit.

Speaker T.R. Nunley, a transgender man, told the board because his birth certificate still lists him as female, he's required to use the women's restroom despite his identity and masculine appearance. He said for young kids, school is a time of often painful self-discovery and pressures.

'One more pressure: you don’t match everyone else's identity. What do you? What you don’t do is ignore it,' Nunley said.

At the end of the public comment session, some protesters angrily asked members, 'what are you going to say to us?'

Board chairman Don Hayes responded that the board had listened to them, then moved on to the rest of the agenda.

Hayes' response drew cries of 'shame' and 'cowards' as the crowd emptied from the meeting room.

**New principals**

During its meeting, the board also approved two principal appointments for the coming school year. Rachel Greer, currently an assistant principal at Bradley Creek Elementary, will become principal of Johnson Pre-K Center. Charles Broadfoot, an assistant principal at Williston Elementary, will take over as principal of Roland-Grise Middle School as current principal Sherry Pinto moves to a new role as the district’s dropout prevention supervisor.

Greer’s contract starts July 18 and Broadfoot’s starts July 30; both are in effect through June 30, 2018.

Board members also gave their blessing to a plan to bring home-schooled students back into the district through online courses.

Wendy Kraft, the district's supervisor of online learning, said the courses are currently available to middle and high school students in the district, and have a 93 percent pass rate. Home-schooled students can take the courses, but their families have to pay.

Kraft said home-schooling is increasingly popular and that parents are choosing it for religious regions and students with special needs - she said in the last school year about 50 students left the district to be home-schooled. If those students were allowed to re-enroll and take online courses from home for free, she said it would save those families money on course materials and give them access to district services.

'I do think it's going to take some huge building trust,' Kraft said. 'We can support them virtually, and a lot of the same needs could be met without them physically having to come onto campus.'

Kraft said the outreach will start small - this year just one or twohome-schooled students but grow to as many as 30 next school year.*-Reporter Cammie Bellamy can be reached at 910-343-2339 or Cammie. Bellamy@StarNewsOnline. com.*