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Originally set behind closed doors, review of salary scales will happen before the public

From staff reports
Mar 20, 2022

Halifax County School Board plans to review salary scales and salaries for employees when they meet Monday at 1 p.m. for a work session in the school board office conference on the first floor of the Mary Bethune Office Complex.

The meeting was originally a closed meeting to discuss personnel matters.

However, The Gazette objected to the meeting being closed to interim superintendent Valdivia Hall and school board chair Kathy Fraley on Thursday. A revised agenda was then released on Friday to include a discussion of salary scale adjustments in open session.

A representative with the Virginia Press Association informed The Gazette on Thursday that discussions of salary scales do not fall under personnel.

Closed meetings are appropriate for personnel discussions under Virginia code 2.2-3711(A)(1) “when the privacy concerns for specific identifiable persons are at issue. It is not intended to conceal budget discussions or other meetings whose subject affects a group of employees.”

In November, the school board approved salary scale adjustments for all school employees.

The fiscal year 2022 teacher scale had a year one teacher making \$42,752 a year and that salary did not change until a teacher reached year seven. At year seven, the salary increased to \$42,875 a year.

Under the new approved scale, a first year and second year teacher will make \$42,752, and a third year and fourth year teacher will make \$42,875.

Therefore, with the new approved salary scales, third and fourth years teachers received a yearly increase of \$123, or \$10.25 a month.

Under the new approved scale, a fifth year teacher will now make \$43,016, an increase of \$265, and a 10th year teacher will now make \$45,124, an increase of \$2,249.



In November, the school board said with the new plan, an aid would see an increase of \$5,386 raising their salary to \$22,943; a custodian would see an increase of \$2,532 raising their salary to \$22,917; and administration would see an increase of \$5,772 raising their salary to \$75,505.

Since then, it has been made public that some staff received much greater increases than what was proposed.

Information provided by director of student services Jeff Davis show increases for principals ranged from anywhere from a \$467 yearly increase to a \$7,482 yearly increase.

Associate principals received increases that ranged from \$2,219 a year to \$12,450 a year.

Meanwhile, directors received increases ranging from \$8,992 a year to \$28,910 a year.

The school board also met on March 9 in a closed meeting to discuss a sole item on their agenda, personnel. But, it was a meeting to discuss the salary increases.

After the meeting, the board released a statement saying, “After reviewing the recent salary scale adjustments, it was confirmed that there were inconsistencies in the application of the increases.

“Based on this, Mrs. (Lacey) Shotwell made a motion that the central office gather the requested information and that the school board review and revise the salary scales in a worksession on Monday, March 21, at 9 a.m. Mr. (Jay) Camp seconded the motion, and the motion passed by a 6 to 0 vote. Mr. (Freddie) Edmunds and Mrs. (Melissa) Hicks were absent from the meeting.”

The time of Monday’s meeting has since been changed.

ALERT

Talks continue on changes in school salaries

ASHLEY CONNER

Mar 11, 2022

One meeting was not enough for Halifax County School Board to review recent salary scale adjustments that were implemented toward the beginning of the year.

School board members met in closed session on Wednesday to discuss the adjustments that had been pitched by school board members to Halifax County Board of Supervisors and the public as a way to increase teacher pay, but were later scrutinized for large increases that were given to directors, principals and other central office staff.

ED-6 trustee Lacey Shotwell confirmed on Wednesday that they found “inconsistencies in the application of the increases.”

Therefore, she made a motion asking central office to gather information for the school board to review and set a meeting for March 21 at 9 a.m. to review and revise the salary scales. That motion was seconded by ED-4 trustee Jay Camp and unanimously approved by the board at a 6 to 0 vote.

ED-3 trustee Melissa Hicks and ED-5 Freddie Edmunds were absent from Wednesday’s meeting.

When they meet on March 21, interim superintendent Valdivia Hall said the board will be reviewing salary scales of surrounding areas.

The new salary scales were approved in November and new contracts went out in either January or February, depending on if the employee is a 10-month employee or 12-month employee.

The Gazette has attempted to receive all employee salary scales since March 2.

Jeff Davis, director of student services, said the emailed request was overlooked and that they would be treating the request for salary scales as a Freedom of Information Act request.



A mailed response from Davis said they would be unable to fulfill the Gazette's request within the five business days allowed by FOIA, and that he would provide the information by March 18.

Another FOIA request was made by the Gazette on March 2 to receive all employees' salary. A response was received by the school system that also says that the Gazette would have that information by March 18, as well.

A school board member confirmed some salary adjustments that have been made public and were submitted to the Gazette.

It shows a \$28,910 increase for director of transportation Tammy Moore; a \$23,185 increase for director of maintenance and operations Steve Brumfield; a \$7,482 increase for principal Dennis Seamster; and a \$7,348 increase for principal Kasie Whitt.

When the salary scales were approved, school board members said they were trying to address the “middle” of the scales.

Moore has 18 years of service; Brumfield has 17; Seamster has 19; and Whitt has 18.

Pamela Eakes, director of federal programs/gifted education, who has 39 years of service, received an increase of \$9,323 to bring her salary to \$96,834.

Linda Owen, principal of Sydnor Jennings Elementary School, who has 38 year of service, received an increase of \$467 bringing her salary to \$93,885.

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Ashley Conner

ALERT

Salary scale adjustments prompt trustee meeting

ASHLEY CONNER

Mar 7, 2022

Criticism of salary scale adjustments for some Halifax County Public School employees has led to a special Halifax County School Board meeting to be held Wednesday.

The primarily closed meeting will be held Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. in the public meeting room of the Mary Bethune Complex in Halifax for the board to address salary scale adjustments.

While any decision the board makes will be revealed in open session, the discussion of these salary scale adjustments will be held in closed session. After the closed session, the board will resume in open session to either make any changes or adjourn.

The meeting will also be streamed on YouTube. The link to the meeting is available on the Halifax County Public Schools_Virginia Facebook page.

The meeting was called by board members after photos of salary scale adjustments for some directors, coordinators and principals of the school system began circulating in the public eye.

Interim superintendent Valdivia Hall said she began receiving calls and emails within the past couple of weeks with concerns over “significant increases” within the salary scales.

Attempts to receive the salary scales and salaries of all Halifax County Public Schools employees were unsuccessful as of press time Sunday.

However, the Gazette does have a copy of some of the salary increases.

Some of the larger salary increases were given to director of transportation Tammy Moore, who's salary increased from \$60,895 in January to \$89,805 in February, and director of maintenance and operations Steve Brumfield, who's salary increased from \$66,058 to \$89,243. Moore has 18 years of service while Brumfield has 17 years of service.

Former director of finance Robert Aylor, who resigned at the end of January, had worked to create these salary scale adjustments prior to his resignation.

Hall was unsure who else worked on these salary scale adjustments.

Halifax County School Board approved these salary scale adjustments in November at an attempt to increase teacher pay.

With the previous teacher pay scale, teachers had to work with the school system for seven years before they received a salary greater than a first year teacher.



Under the new approved scale, a first year and second year teacher will make \$42,752, and a third year and fourth year teacher will make \$42,875.

However, teachers have said their increases have been minimal, such as an extra \$10 a month.

When the scales were approved in November, it was said that the new scales would reflect an increase of \$5,386 for an aid; a custodian would see an increase of \$2,532 raising their salary to \$22,917; and administration would see an increase of \$5,772 raising their salary to \$75,505.

When supervisors reviewed the scales and the requests for funding from the school board, the supervisors' finance committee recommended allowing the school board to use funding from \$3.2 million in capital carryover funds to supplement putting teachers and support staff on new salary scales starting in January and February.

The supervisors' finance committee had suggested not supplementing administration at this time.

According to information submitted to the Gazette by a Halifax County School System employee, principal Kevin Neal's salary increased from \$79,655 in January to \$85,183 in February. Principal Linda Owen saw an increase of \$467, and principal Dennis Seamster saw his salary increase from \$72,015 to \$79,497 from January to February. Neal has 30 years of service, while Owen has 38 and Semester has 19.

The salary increases went into effect at different times; 12-month employees received their new contract with the salary scale adjustment in January while 10-month employees saw their increase in February. Most 10-month employees are teachers and paraprofessional.

One of the primary goals of addressing the salary scales was to address the middle of the scales.

Hall said some who have contacted her with concerns about their salary scale increase may have already been “on target” and didn’t see much of an increase.

Halifax County School Board vice chair Roy Keith Lloyd and ED-6 trustee Lacey Shotwell both confirmed on Sunday that they also had received calls and emails from people concerned about the salary scale adjustments.

Shotwell acknowledged that the scales need to be addressed.

Multiple attempts to reach school board chairwoman Kathy Fraley by press time Sunday were unsuccessful.

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