

Meeting Minutes
May 5, 2025

ATTENDEES:

Brenda Robertson – Chair
Walter Martin – Vice Chair
Mark Fleming – Secretary
Steve Moody - Treasurer
Chris Farrell – Board member
Marcia Simmons- Board member
Natalie Wright – Board member
Scott Sides – K12
Kristina Rodrigues – Interim HOS
Stacey Bryant – AA NCVA
Lea King – AA NCVS
Tasha Parnell – AA NCVA
Kelly Shanahan – AA NCVA
Chad Long – K12
John Kramer – K12

Brenda called the quorum and asked that the meeting come to order. She asked for a motion to accept the agenda and meeting minutes from the previous board meeting.

Mark made the motion; Walter seconded it; Brenda called for the vote: it was unanimous.

Brenda asked if there were any public comments to be made.

Hearing none, Brenda asked for a motion to approved the consent items: updates to the 410 policies; tuition reimbursement for the teachers; and approval of the administrative withdrawals. Steve made the motion; Natalie seconded it. Brenda called the vote: it was unanimous.

Brenda asked Kristina to present the HOS update.(she included a powerpoint presentation)

Kristina said the enrollment is at 3248 breaking down into 1325 in High School; 898 in MS; and 1034 in Elementary.

Kristina said there are many changes happening in the school – in the coming year the school will be changing to three new platforms: Power School to Infinite Campus; Total View to Power School and OLS/OMHS to Canvas. These are big changes, and all teachers and staff are now being trained in preparation for next year.

Kristina reminded everyone of upcoming dates:

Week of 5/5: Teacher appreciation week
5/9: School wide Art and Talent show
5/19: EOY Testing
6/9: MS Dance and Prom
6/10: Graduation

This year Amy Delany was voted the Support Staffer of the Year and Rebecca Brown was voted the Teacher of the Year – both were from the Elementary School. Honorable mentions were: Denise Wall, Chelsea Spiker and Chris Caldwell. A Big Thank you and Congratulations to all of them!

Kristina said she has been looking at caps given the increase in students by 380 this year. She did not have the most recent enrollment numbers, but will get them to us by the end of the week.

Regarding hiring positions: all openings to date are open except 2 who are teachers that are not returning next year. Once Kristina has the final number of FTE's needed, she will look to fill all the staffing needs.

Kristina gave an overview of the pros and cons of Varsity Tutoring Company vs Stride Tutoring Services. Both contracts are about equal in cost and both have advantages and disadvantages. Varsity's pros: Tutoring on Demand; cost based on per hour not on the number of students in the session

Varsity's cons: one more platform to sign into; teachers carry the burden of scheduling.

Stride pros: Familiar with the curriculum; direct access link makes easier to access; will have scheduling on student calendars once they are assigned a time

Stride cons: changes between one student and a small group session; still working on some of the programs and concerns around servicing volume; no on demand tutoring

In the end, very similar, but given we are experiencing so many changes this year, the question for the board is do we want to add one more change with everything else?

Mark asked Kristina what she would recommend, and Kristina said normally she would say Stride and she expects that by next year Stride will have all the bugs worked out and would go with them then, but for this year, she said Varsity is a known entity and we have enough changes for this year already. Marcia asked if either of the programs have a writing upload program to provide tutoring for writing – she is seeing a huge challenge developing with students not knowing how to write. Kristina said neither or the programs have a writing tutoring option.

Kristina moved on to discuss the change in stipends request to the board. Many of the stipends are very low and she is recommending an increase for on the spot bonuses, EOY site leads, Outing leads, Summer School teachers and leads and Club sponsorships. Brenda asked the smallest size of the clubs and Kristina was not sure but believes it is somewhere between 10-15. She also asked if teachers are promoting their clubs and Kristina explained they have an open house opportunity for teachers to promote their clubs to all the students. Marcia asked about the computer clubs/Skills USA and discussed how they attend competitions and should have descent stipends since the club is year long. She also mentioned the e-sports team and how they are now nationally ranked.

Brenda then asked Chad for the finance report.

Chad began by going over the March report giving an executive summary on the enrollment and its affect on the budget. Because the board closed rolling enrollment this year, we are seeing a monthly decline as students leave and are not replaced. Our budget \$37.1 million funded by \$22.7 from the state; \$3.9 million additional state funding for growth; \$7.9 million from LEA funding. We are on track to have a \$4.9 m surplus. Brenda asked if we have collected all the funding from the LEA's and Chad said there are still some that are outstanding; however most have been collected and also, some are still out there, but they are not pass due. He expects we will receive all of them.

Chad said the invoice summary shows in April we were paying out about \$1.2m less than this month which was in line with what we were expecting. There are no major items to point out.

Chad asked if the board had any more questions for him and there were none.

Chad moved on to there end of fiscal year filings.

The 990 filing date is 5/15 and we will have everything in by the deadline.

The 401k audit found that the 3rd party who does our withholdings did not withhold payments from stipends and bonuses and they asked that it be done. It has been corrected and the additional withholding payments are being made to the accounts. This was found this year, but not last year and so there will be a correction payment of about \$49k into the accounts. He noted that this audit is not filed with the state, but is good practice which is why we have it done. In this case, it identified this error and we were able to correct it.

Brenda thanked Chad and asked Natalie to give an update on the Academic Committee.

Natalie told the board the committee has been meeting monthly. Last month, Kelly (AA for elementary school) presented on the AIG program they are developing. Kelly asked that the committee recommend the board approve this program in June and with it include 2 additional FTE's in the budget.

Natalie said the committee discussed switching to iReady for YOY tracking. The pricing is in the budget from Chad who said it will cost approximately \$125k. The committee voted to recommend this to the board and is hoping they will vote on it tonight. Kristina said she would like to get this going as soon as possible.

And the last order of business for the Academic Committee was discussion around the Elementary Master Schedule. Natalie said Kelly had made some changes but noted while there was some effort to reduce the time gaps between live classes, addition of Science and Social Studies classes, and an increase in open office hours to 5 days a week, there are still concerns especially for grades k-2 and she asked that they look at fewer teachers rotating in for different classes and use one or two teachers to teach all classes for a minimum of K-2. Natalie thank Kelly and said there was some progress but we are still looking for more.

Brenda asked Sara for the Executive Director's update.

Sara said we need to update the Tuition Reimbursement Policy for teachers who are continuing their education. She will have it for the board's approval at the June meeting. Currently, we have 3 teachers seeking reimbursement for classes they have taken.

Next up was the slate of officers. The following board members agreed to serve: Walter for Chair; Chris for V. Chair; Natalie for Secretary; and Steve Moody will remain as the Treasurer. Sara asked that they be voted in this evening.

Sara explained there needs to be a vote tonight on the tutoring contract. We have been discussing between Varsity Tutors whom we have been using for the past 4 years and Stride Tutoring which is a new product they are offering. Both programs have their own benefits and cost approximately the same. Mark asked Kristina which she thought would be better for our school and Kristina said that

because of the huge changes happening in our school with the addition of multiple new platforms being changed at the state and school level and the changes expected in Elementary school, she recommended we stay with Varsity this year and next year shift to the Stride service since it will have the bugs worked out and will provide a direct link in the student platform for tutoring as well as the tutoring sessions will show up on their schedule.

Mark recommended we stay with Varsity for this year and change next year. Marcia agreed. Steve asked if we have a one year contract with Varsity and Kristina said we do.

Sara asked the board next about scholarships. Last year we provided 3 - \$3k scholarships for college/university bound students; 2 - \$2k scholarships for students attending a community college; and 1 - \$1k scholarship for students attending an OCS program. Kristina explained there are more students applying to 4 year college/universities this year and we only have 1 candidate for the 2 year program and 1 candidate for the OCS program.

Brenda asked Tasha how many college candidates applied for the scholarships and she said there were 14 applicants. She said it was a difficult selection process as there were 5 who were all good candidates and narrowing down was difficult. Sara suggested increasing the number of scholarships to 4 for the college/university. Chris asked her if we should increase it to 5 scholarships and Tasha was happy for that recommendation. Chris suggested 5 scholarships of \$8,000.00 each to be dispersed as \$2k per year for 4 years. Brenda confirmed we would increase the scholarships to 5 – 4 year scholarships of \$2k per year for 4 years provided they remain enrolled in school and there would also be 1-\$2K scholarship for a 2 year program and 1- 1K scholarship for an OCS program.

Sara then gave an update of her conversation with David Hostetler and Cory Droughon. Cory is a financial manager which we would need should we move forward with this endeavor. David suggested I get permission from the Board to seek a proposal from Cory on how he can help with our goals. Both of them recommended we seek to create an LLC with a mission to support NC Learns accomplish their mission.

Brenda then suggested the board go into closed session in accordance with GS 143-318 (a) 5 (ii) Which states: To establish... (ii) the amount of compensation and other material terms of an employment contract or proposed employment contract.

Mark made a motion to enter into closed session; Walter seconded the motion; Brenda called the vote: it was unanimous.

The purpose of the closed session meeting was to discuss Sara's performance for the year and possible compensation. Brenda kept the minutes for the meeting they are presented below. Sara recused herself from the meeting:

During NCVA's monthly meeting on May 5, 2025, the Board entered closed session to evaluate Sara Struhs' performance as the Board's Executive Director.

After much discussion of an Executive Director's salary, Mark made the suggestion of \$160,000 to be voted on during open session. All agreed. Brenda stated for clarification that Sara should be included in the \$5,000 bonus given to NCVA's staff that would be voted on.

The board members discussed Sara's performance as the Board's Executive Director. The following points were noted regarding Sara's performance:

Consistently easy to work with

Communicates effectively and is readily available, including evenings and weekends

Open and accepting of others' opinions

Considers all perspectives—including those of K–12/Stride, lobbyists, legal counsel, school staff, and the Board Proactive in her communication

Completes tasks in a timely manner

Keeps the Board focused and on track

At this time, no areas for improvement were identified.

A motion was made and seconded to go back to open session. All voted in favor.

Sara contacted Chad to ask him to return to the meeting.

Sara explained there were several votes to be taken and given they had already discussed the issues, they would move directly to voting:

Brenda asked for a vote to approve the monthly bill. Steve made the motion. Walter seconded the motion. Brenda called for a vote: it was unanimously approved.

Brenda asked for a vote to reimburse tuition for the three teachers who qualified in accordance with the policy and federal laws. Marcia made the motion. Steve seconded the motion. Brenda called for a vote: it was unanimously approved.

Brenda asked for a vote to approve the slate of officers for next year. Mark made the motion. Marcia seconded the motion. Brenda called for a vote: it was unanimously approved.

Brenda asked for a vote to renew the contract with Varsity Tutors for the coming school year. Marcia made the motion. Mark seconded the motion. Brenda called for a vote: it was unanimously approved.

Brenda asked for a vote to explore the LLC and ask for a proposal from a financial manager. Steve made the motion. Walter seconded the motion. Brenda called for a vote: it was unanimously approved.

Brenda asked for a vote to approve a \$5,000 bonus for all teachers and staff, including Sara. Steve made the motion. Marcia seconded the motion. Brenda called for a vote: it was unanimously approved.

Brenda asked for a vote to approve the budget for 2025-26. Walter made a motion to approve the budget for 2025-26 with an enrollment of 4000 students and hiring the number of FTE's needed for a 4000 student body. Marcia seconded the motion. Brenda called for a vote: it was unanimously approved.

Brenda asked for a vote to obligate forward \$2m for CTE department development and \$1m for the credit recovery department. Steve made the motion. Mark seconded the motion. Brenda called for a vote: It passed with Chris a Brenda asked for a vote to approve the monthly bill. Steve made the motion. Walter seconded the motion. Brenda called for a vote: it was unanimously approved.

Brenda asked for a vote to approve a recommendation to Stride that Kristina be hired as the next Head of School. Steve made the motion. Mark seconded the motion. Brenda called for a vote: it was unanimously approved.

Brenda asked for a vote to approve end of year stipends for clubs including SKILLS USA. Chris made a comment asking the Board to consider giving the coach for the e-sports team pay equivalent to coaches pay in traditional brick and mortar schools. He coaches both JV and Varsity for the esports team and they are nationally ranked. Marcia made the motion that the stipends be approved and that the esports coach get paid separately for the JV and the Varsity qualifying him for two stipends. Chris seconded the motion. Brenda called for a vote: it was unanimously approved.

Brenda asked for a vote to approve using iReady platform k-8. Steve made the motion. Marcia seconded the motion. Brenda called for a vote: it was unanimously approved.

Brenda asked for a vote to approve a Director or Dean of Academics position. Steve made the motion. Walter seconded the motion. Brenda called for a vote: it was unanimously approved.

Brenda asked for a vote to approve a salary increase for the Executive Director to \$160,000.00. Walter made the motion. Mark seconded the motion. Brenda called for a vote: it was unanimously approved.

Brenda asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mark made the motion and Walter seconded it. Brenda called for the vote: it was unanimously approved.

The meeting ended at 7:30 pm

