MINUTES OF THE DIVISION TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE MEETING

A meeting of the Division Technology Advisory Committee was held on Monday, March 23, 2009, at 9:30 a. m. in the School Board Office.

Mr. Rickey W. Parker, Assistant Superintendent for Information Technology, called the meeting to order.

The following members were in attendance:

Rickey W. Parker, Assistant Superintendent for Information Technology
Lamar Jeter, Analyst
Darrell Wilkerson, Network Administrator/Lead Technician
Cathy Scolpini, Lead Instructional Technology Resource Teacher
Dr. Lillian Holland, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction
Clarke Scott, Director of Middle School Education
Ann Cassada, Director of Secondary Education
Nancy Towler, Director of Elementary Education
Melanie Wade, Teacher, Chatham High School
Patricia Porter, Teacher, Dan River Middle School
Kendra Hardy, Teacher, Tunstall High School
Deloise Harris, Teacher, Union Hall Elementary School
Andrea Johnson, School Nurse, Stony Mill Elementary School
Robin Holley, Administrative Assistant, Gretna Middle
Patricia Wilkerson, Administrative Assistant, Dan River Middle.

The following members of the committee were not in attendance:

Dr. Brad Bryant, Director of Career and Technical Education
Jimmie Tickle, Principal, Career and Technical Center
Ellen Bass, Parent/Community Representative, Dan River High School
Joan Davis, Bus Driver, Southside Elementary
Cynthia Allen, Teacher Aide, John L. Hurt Elementary
Valerie Dawson, Teacher, Gretna Middle
Nathan Lumpkins, Assistant Principal, Chatham High.

Mr. Parker opened the meeting with an overview of the proposed federal stimulus package and its impact on Pittsylvania County Schools. Because the details of the package and its funding allocations are unknown, it is difficult to determine its impact on our division at this time. It is hoped that bond money will be sufficient to equip the newly renovated high schools with necessary technology and that money received through the stimulus package can then be directed toward our middle and elementary schools.

He then explained in detail the plans to equip our four high schools with Voice over IP (VoIP) phone service and IPTV. IPTV is the future of TV. PCS realizes that the renovation of our four high schools affords us the opportunity to create 21st century learning environments for our students. With this in mind, plans for the infrastructure and technology must be "cutting edge." VoIP and IPTV are two such technologies.   With IPTV, digital and HD signals are sent directly to the computer and can be viewed on the computer or displayed to students via the projector. Certain educational channels would be

selected, and access will be limited to these channels. A Video on Demand (VoD) server will house programs recorded by teachers for viewing during instruction. This procedure will insure copyright compliance because any recording will be initiated by the teacher for use in instruction. Recorded programs will automatically be deleted from the VoD server when the associated term specified by copyright passes.

Mr. Parker stated that the department would make every attempt to minimize disruptions to the high schools during renovation; however, it is anticipated that some interruptions in service will occur as the renovations progress.

Mrs. Scolpini presented the Educational Technology Plan for Pittsylvania County Schools for the years 2009 – 2011. Normally, a plan encompasses a period of three to six years. This plan is the interim plan required by the Virginia Department of Education and will cover this period while the VDOE revises their plan for the state. Once the VDOE has finalized the state's educational technology plan, each school division will be required to write a new plan based on that format. Plans for PCS during this period include:

- Connecting the Tunstall region to the Danville MSAP via fiber
- Replacement of computers in middle school labs
- Replacing switches in all schools
- Creating "21st century" classrooms at all levels*
  *Dependent upon funding; will continue into the next plan's period
- Implementation of PowerSchool, PowerTeacher, and the Parent Access portal

Realizing the need for learning environments which provide increased access to technology, the division's plan is to create multi-purpose classrooms in our renovated high schools and to equip all classrooms with projectors, interactive whiteboards or wireless slates, response systems, and/or document cameras. Funding remains the obstacle to purchasing these technologies. It is hoped that money from the renovations will cover our high schools and that stimulus money will afford us the opportunity to provide this equipment in middle and elementary schools. The committee was reminded that state technology money is strictly categorized and can only be spent on certain items. Classroom technologies such as those mentioned cannot be purchased with state money. The locality (Board of Supervisors) must provide the school system with money for these purchases, and our school system receives only the bare minimum in local technology funding, leaving very little money with which to make these purchases. Likewise, the cost of replacement parts (bulbs, batteries, pens, toner cartridges, etc.) cannot be covered by state funding. Pittsylvania County must plan for these costs.

Mrs. Scolpini will email a copy of this new Educational Technology Plan for Pittsylvania County Schools to all committee members.

The impact of budget cuts on the division was discussed. The Technology Department has carefully examined its budget and has decided that Blackboard, our current course management system, has become too expensive to continue using. For this reason, we will transition to Moodle, an open source course management system, during the summer and early fall of this year. Information on training will be provided first to those teachers/administrators who are avid users of Blackboard. Assistance will be provided to these individuals as we move course content into the new system. Training for new users will begin this fall. The elimination of Blackboard will save the technology department $28,000 or more each year. The renewal of Atomic Learning was also discussed. Mrs. Scolpini is monitoring its use by employees, students, and family members to determine whether the expenditure is justified by use.

While it is a valuable training resource, its cost (approximately $11,200 annually) must be considered carefully in light of other budget restrictions. Mrs. Scolpini will send all committee members the instructions for using Atomic Learning. Members were encouraged to express their thoughts on this product when completing the annual technology survey online in April.

Mrs. Melanie Wade, teacher at Chatham High School, expressed concern that the ceilings in the science wing often leaked around the LCD projectors. She indicated that work orders had been submitted and the roof had been repaired, but that there was evidence that it continued to leak. Mr. Parker asked her to email him with her concerns. She also asked if the older classrooms in the high schools would receive the technology such as projectors and laptop carts proposed for renovated areas. Mr. Parker stated that it was anticipated that laptop carts would be shared within the building once wireless access is in operation.

Members were reminded of the next meeting on October 19, 2009. There being no other concerns, the meeting was adjourned at 10:30 a.m.