

Hamlet, North Carolina
July 11, 2024

The Richmond County Board of Education met in regular session on July 11, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. The meeting was held at the Central Office in Hamlet, North Carolina.

The members present: Cory Satterfield, Chairman, Bobbie Sue Ormsby, Vice-Chairman, Jerry Ethridge, and Daryl Mason Bess Shuler and Ronald Tillman. Scotty Baldwin as absent but joined by phone.

The administrators present: Dr. Joe Ferrell, Superintendent, Dr. Julian Carter, Associate Superintendent of Auxiliary Services of Operations and Athletics, Dr. Kate Smith, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, Melvin Ingram, Assistant Superintendent of School Safety and Support Services, Dr. Tesha Isler, Executive Director of Human Resources, Dawn Jordan, Executive Director of Finance, Steven King, Director of Maintenance, Cameron Whitley, Executive Director of Communications and Eva Dubuisson, Board Attorney.

Meeting Commencement

After noting that a quorum was present, Cory Satterfield, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 15:06 p.m. Jerry Ethridge, requested a Moment of Silence and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes

Jerry Ethridge made a motion to approve the (open and closed) minutes of June 24, 2024, a seconded was made by Daryl Mason. Bobbie Sue Ormsby inquired whether the names of those who voted for and against the nominees for school board chairman and vice chairman were to be recorded in the school board minutes. An amendment was proposed to modify the original motion. The amended motion to approve the July 24, 2024, (open and closed) minutes was made by Jerry Ethridge, seconded by Daryl Mason. All seven board members were in favor of the amendment; the motion carried.

Policies for Approval

Melvin Ingram proposed that the 30-day review period for Policy Code: 4316, which addresses the Student Dress Code, be waived. He urged the board to promptly adopt an amendment to remove the phrase "top attire must be mid-thigh length and cover student's backside if leggings/jeggings are worn" from Bottom Attire: item 1, subsection c, Leggings/Jeggings. Melvin Ingram shared, that school administration cited difficulties in enforcing this rule clearly and fairly. Mr. Ingram emphasized the need for urgent approval to ensure inclusion in the 2024-2025 student handbook.

On a motion by Ronald Tillman, seconded by Bobbie Sue Ormsby, the board voted unanimously to suspend the 30-day review for Policy Code: 4316.

Ronald Tillman made a motion to approve the amendment for Policy Code: 4316 regarding the dress code of conduct. Daryl Mason seconded the motion, and the board unanimously voted to adopt Policy Code: 4316 as presented.

School Fees

Melvin Ingram proposed that the 30-day review policy be waived for the Richmond County Schools 2024-2025 school fee list. Melvin Ingram shared that the school district has recently been awarded a grant to purchase laptops and requires restating the one-to-one laptop initiative and allows students to take home laptops. Mr. Ingram requested the board to approve a motion allowing students to be charged for damages to school technology devices that are taken home.

Ronald Tillman made a motion to waive the 30-day review, seconded by Daryl Mason, the board voted unanimously to waive the 30-day review.

On a motion made by Ronald Tillman, seconded by Bobby Sue Ormsby, Vice-Chairman, the board voted unanimously to approve the 2024-2025 school fee list as presented.

Introduction of New School Board Attorney

Cory Satterfield, Chairman, introduced Eva Dubuisson from Tharrington Smith as the new school board attorney. Ms. Dubuisson expressed her gratitude and commitment to the board.

Board Member Compensation

Dr. Joe Ferrell, Superintendent, introduced the agenda item regarding board member compensation. Dr. Ferrell referenced the email he distributed to the board members containing a link received from Eva Dubuisson, Board Attorney, underscoring recent discrepancies noted among school districts in North Carolina. Considering this discrepancy and the lack of a compensation increase here in over twenty-three years, Ms. Dubuisson is present tonight to offer guidance if the board chooses to discuss this issue. The superintendent turned the discussion over to Chairman Satterfield.

Chairman Cory Satterfield suggested that, following a review of comparative data from neighboring districts, the board should consider adjusting compensation to stay competitive and acknowledge the time and dedication required from its members.

Several board members conveyed discomfort with proposing an increase in board member compensation at this time, citing the district's inability to raise salaries for other certified positions deemed more critical.

Chairman Satterfield recognized existing budgetary limitations concerning staff salaries but recommended addressing board compensation as a separate consideration. Scotty Baldwin agreed stating, if we don't do something now it will just put us further behind surrounding counties which will ultimately affect future board members.

Bobbie Sue Ormsby, Vice-Chairman, inquired about the source of board member compensation. Dr. Ferrell clarified that it is funded from local funds. Ms. Dubuisson explained that board member compensation is governed by county commissioners, and any change would require their approval, with funds coming from the school district's local budget. She noted that while this year's available funds would be determined by the school

district's finance officer, future allocations would be included in the district's budget, like current board member compensation.

Chairman Satterfield suggested a gradual approach to increasing compensation over a two-year period. His proposal aimed to align with neighboring districts and recognize the board's extended tenure without recent compensation adjustments.

A motion was made by Daryl Mason, seconded by Bess Shuler to table the discussion on school board compensation pending further financial information. The motion passed on a 4 to 3 vote. Scotty Baldwin, Bess Shuler, Bobbie Sue Ormsby and Daryl Mason voted in favor of tabling the discussion, while Ronald Tillman, Jerry Ethridge and Chairman Satterfield opposed.

Chairman Satterfield citing NCGS 143-318.11(a)(3),(6) requested a motion to go into closed session.

On a motion by Scotty Baldwin, seconded by Jerry Ethridge, the board voted unanimously to go into closed session at 5:40 p.m.

The board returned from closed session at 5:53 p.m.

Dr. Tesha Isler presented the personnel report, and the addendum.

On a motion by Bobbie Sue Ormsby, seconded by Ronald Tillman, the board voted unanimously to approve the personnel report and addendum as presented.

There being no further business, on a motion by Scotty Baldwin, seconded by Bess Shuler, Chairman Satterfield adjourned the meeting at 5:55 p.m.