CASWELL COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES
WORK SESSION
January 27, 2025

The Caswell County Board of Education met in a work session on Monday, January 27, 2025 at 3:30 p.m. in the Administration Building of Caswell County Schools. Members present: Chairman Mel Battle, Vice Chair Joel Lillard, Vennie Beggarly, Nicole Smith, Nicole McGhee, Lisa Johnson-Knight, and Trudy Blackwell. Others present include Interim Superintendent JoAnna Gwynn. Connie Kimrey recorded the minutes. (*Note: Others may have been present but did not sign the roster or names were not legible*).

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Mel Battle.

Board of Education Related Items

- Evaluation Instrument for Superintendent.

  Chair Mel Battle reviewed the new timeline that was proposed and shared information to new board members regarding the evaluation process.

  JoAnna Gwynn questioned if any part of this evaluation aligned with the State. Chair Mel Battle shared that some of it did. When looking at the evaluation with the state it was required that all members participate in training and that has not occurred. The board developed an instrument that worked best for them. Chair Mel Battle shared that the former superintendent composed an artifact book that coincided with each item on the evaluation. Trudy Blackwell shared she has never seen the copy of the state superintendent evaluation and would like to have a copy. Chair Mel Battle shared that with the timeline proposed it would be helpful to keep this out so you can be reviewing it as the year progresses.

  JoAnna Gwynn shared she will be meeting with board members one on one and asked if contract negotiations could begin in April. Joel Lillard shared that any board member can bring it up for review for discussion and noted that any changes require a unanimous vote. Ms. Gwynn shared a handout of similar districts and salaries of superintendents.

  All agreed with the evaluation and timeline.

- School Board Committees

  It was discussed to have board members serve on committees and noted that currently the SHAC and Calendar both have board members. Upon review the following was agreed upon:

  SHAC (School Health Advisory Committee) – Mel Battle will finish out the year (as former board member Tracy Stanley served)

Finance = Joel Lillard and Lisa Johnson-Knight

Safety = Nicole Smith and Trudy Blackwell

Calendar/Scheduling = Vennie Beggarly and Lisa Johnson-Knight

Employee Recognition = Nicole McGhee

- Board Member Observations

  Mel Battle suggested that the wording be changed on the agenda from Board Member Observations to Board Member Comments.

  Vennie Beggarly moved, seconded by Nicole Smith, to change the wording on the agenda to reflect Board Member Comments. The motion carried unanimously.

- Polling of Board Members

  Discussion was had regarding polling and JoAnna Gwynn shared she had spoken with the Chair and Vice Chair and noted that she does not prefer to poll unless it is an emergency and prefers to make a phone call to explain what the situation is and answer questions. Vennie Beggarly shared an email should also be sent so there is something in writing and shared that sending a text to alert the board there is an email they need to look at is helpful.

  Joel Lillard shared concerns and felt that polling is not official until you basically vote and if someone wanted to change their mind at the meeting when it is officially approved they could. This could create concerns if board members changed their minds after polling. Mel Battle shared he has never known that to occur but it could. Discussion was had regarding replying to emails and replying to "all" as to replying to only Ms. Gwynn. No definite decision was made but it was agreed that polling should be only done in the true event of an emergency. Board policy only references polling when there is a need to call a special meeting to confirm a quorum will be present.

- Policy # 2122, Role of Board Members in Handling Complaints

  JoAnna Gwynn shared she wanted to make sure the board members were aware that we have a policy in place when handling complaints and that everyone is following the process. Ms. Gwynn shared she does not have a problem with board members calling principals if they receive complaints or to call her and she will look into the situation.

Joel Lillard shared he understands there is a process to follow; however, that board members are elected officials by the citizens of Caswell County and that anyone has the right to talk to a board member without retaliation and should feel comfortable in doing so. Vennie Beggarly commented that she wants staff to feel comfortable in talking to board members and does not want principals sharing that they cannot. Lisa Johnson-Knight shared that when she was in the school, staff would share that they never see many board members in the school before but felt that they are glad to see them.

JoAnna Gwynn shared that when board members receive complaints they need to keep in mind that they may not be hearing the entire story or context of what has occurred. She shared that principals need to be allowed to do their job. She advised to be careful when listening.

- Listening Tours

Joel Lillard shared he would like to have listening tours for the Board at each school beginning on February 3, 2025. He shared this is not meant to be negative but would allow staff to talk freely with no repercussions and shared what the board can do to make things better within district. The board cannot fix everything; however, if there are things that can easily be put in place to build a better morale within our system, he felt the board owed it to our employees to listen. If you have a good working environment it creates a much better workplace and it is a win-win for all. He stressed again, that this is not meant to be negative but to allow staff to voice concerns as well as share the positives that are occurring.

Trudy Blackwell shared that Ms. Gwynn has invited two board members to attend the listening tours she holds. Joel Lillard shared he was aware of that but only two can attend and the listening tours the board will hold will be posted as open meetings law requires us to do so if a quorum is present. These meetings will not include the superintendent or any administration so that staff will feel comfortable in talking with the board.

Further discussion took place regarding the pros and cons of having the listening tours. In conclusion, the board was in favor in pursuing the tours and will be held as follows:

February 3, 2025	NL Dillard Middle
February 10, 2025	South Elementary
February 17, 2025	Bartlett Yancey Sr. High School
February 24, 2025	Oakwood Elementary
March 3, 2025	Stoney Creek Elementary
March 10, 2025	North Elementary
March 17, 2025	Principals/Directors / Central Office Classified

Mel Battle suggested that Connie Kimrey and JoAnna Gwynn coordinate the schedules and reach out to principals to secure a room for the listening tours to be held.

Bartlett Yancey Sr. High School Items

- Exam Exception Process

  Discussion took place with the exam schedule and Ms. Gwynn shared she has spoken with Principal Lance Stokes and noted that this past time was very confusing especially with wording which was included in student handbooks. The form students were required to complete was confusing to some and there were discrepancies. It was agreed that the process was complicated. Discussion took place regarding students who were exempt from taking exams but if they did not go to school they were counted absent in PowerSchool and in years past this has not been the case. Board members shared they received numerous complaints from parents. There was also the case with new teachers who did not understand the underlying protocol for exempt students. Ms. Gwynn is working with Mr. Stokes to make this process less confusing in the future.

- Bathroom conditions at Bartlett Yancey Sr. High School

  Vennie Beggarly shared that she asked for this to be discussed and Mel Battle shared he asked for the information on the breakdown of custodians and assignments. The number of work orders is concerning with problems that occur on repairs that are needed with this being a brand-new school. If students are continuing to damage the building they need to be held accountable and pay for damages. It was concerning and felt it is not being monitored. It was shared that when walking through NL Dillard the custodian is sitting in a chair at the front door and it was questioned is this part of the job description. Mel Battle shared it comes down to supervision and there are concerns that custodians are standing around when they could be working on areas that need cleaning.

  Joel Lillard questioned when we would receive the inspection report from Saffelle. Ms. Gwynn shared she has not received any and will look into this with Maintenance Director.

- College Advisor for Bartlett Yancey Sr. High School

  Nicole Smith asked if there is anything that can be done to assist our students with assistance for preparing for college. She noted that in the past, college tours were held. Mr. Stokes indicated that it is costly and she asked if there is funding available to help with this as she felt it is worthwhile especially for students who do not have assistance at home. It was agreed for Ms. Gwynn to look into this and also see if any grant opportunities are available to assist in funding college tours, etc.

- School Start and Stop Time

  Discussion was had regarding the times that was included on the upcoming calendar. It was shared that the start and stop times are a board decision and felt adding the changes to the calendar created unnecessary confusion.

  Joel Lillard proposed the times as follows:

Elementary	8:10 a.m. to 3:10 p.m.
Middle	7:45 a.m. to 2:45 p.m.
High	8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

  He felt this would allow the extra time needed at the elementary level. Others felt this would work well as a later start time at the high school would present a problem with student athletes missing fourth period. It was also shared that if an elementary student is late on a daily basis it is easier for that student to regroup versus a high school student missing their first period class daily.

  All agreed with the times as proposed and will be voted on at the regular meeting which will follow the work session.

Budgetary Items

- 2025-2026 Budget Process

  Mel Battle reviewed the budget process with new board members and suggested that Finance Director review with new board members and serve as a review for all board members at the meeting in February. It was agreed that this will be on the agenda for the evening meeting in February. Beginning in March, the board will begin working on the budget.

  Vennie Beggarly asked that when doing the budget, we remember we have added track at the middle school and with not having a principal to make sure this is factored in.

- Capital Repairs

  A listing was shared with the board on repairs that have been completed and those that still are needing repair. It was discussed if the board wanted to proceed with the lottery application for repairs needed at the Page Gym and noted that the roof is a priority. It was mentioned to wait until the new board members were sworn in on the Board of Commissioners and now that this has been done the board agreed to move forward with pursuing the application for lottery funds which requires approval from the Board of County Commissioners.

It was shared there is room in the East Wing of the high school which is not being used and suggested looking to see if PCC has any needs to use it and if there are additional courses that can be brought to the students at the high school.

Other

- Policy # 1750/7220, Grievance Procedure for Employees
  JoAnna Gwynn shared this was already handled with discussion earlier

- Meeting with County Manager & Superintendent
  JoAnna Gwynn shared she has a meeting scheduled with the Interim County Manager as well as PCC President Dr. Senegal.

- Vennie Beggarly asked if the board can receive unofficial testing results as they have in years past. JoAnna Gwynn shared that can be arranged and shared she has heard good things.

- It was shared that the scrubber machine at NL Dillard is not working and it was requested to please have this repaired for the custodians to use.

- Lisa Johnson-Knight shared she attended the teacher advisory meeting and felt that teachers were very comfortable in sharing their concerns with the Superintendent. It was very good communication and felt it was a very positive meeting. She shared that she heard good comments when board members visit schools and shared that North would love to have board members visit. Concerns shared in teacher advisory included staff not understanding timekeeper and questioned why teachers who are salaried have to sign in. She felt that leave time is not fully explained to newly hired teachers and staff.

- Discussion took place on the school calendar and the two options that will be presented. JoAnna Gwynn shared the calendar has to be approved in order to plan for Infinite Campus training.

ADJOURN

Joel Lillard made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:20 p.m., Nicole Smith seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. The next regular meeting of the Board of Education will be held on January 27, 2025 at 6:30 p.m. in the Caswell County Schools Administration Building.

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Mel O. Battle
Chairman

JoAnna Gwynn
Superintendent