

Hamlet, North Carolina
February 11, 2025

The Richmond County Board of Education met in regular session on February 11, 2025, 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, Ronald Tillman, Daryl Mason, Scotty Baldwin and Bess Shuler.

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, Cameron Whitley, Executive Director of Communications and Eva Dubuisson, Board Attorney. Dawn Jordan, Executive Director of Finance was absent.

Meeting Commencement

After noting that a quorum was present, Cory Satterfield, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 5:10 p.m. Ronald Tillman requested a Moment of Silence and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes

On a motion by Jerry Ethridge, seconded by Daryl Mason, the open session minutes of January 14, 2025, and the quarterly work session minutes of January 28, 2025, were unanimously approved.

Recognition of Inspiring Excellence Awards

Cameron Whitley introduced Joy Harrelson, Principal of Richmond Early College High School, who presented plaques to two of her staff members: Michelle Butler and Sandra McDonald. Next, Cameron Whitley introduced Joy Watson, Principal of West Rockingham Elementary School, who presented plaques to two of her staff members: Tammy Locklear and Rita Woolard. These recipients were honored for their outstanding contributions and dedication to students and the school community.

Special Recognition

Cameron Whitley recognized School Board Member Ronald Tillman for receiving a special honor. Mr. Tillman was recently awarded the Badge of Excellence by the North Carolina Department of Public Safety, the department's highest honor. This award is given to individuals who make outstanding contributions to their communities and the state.

Mr. Tillman was selected in the category of Public Service Volunteerism, which honors individuals who make significant contributions through community and public service projects driven purely by commitment to serve, without expectation of reward or recognition.

Cameron Whitley noted that this definition perfectly describes Mr. Tillman's dedication and service. On behalf of the district, she expressed appreciation for Mr. Tillman's

commitment to advocating for students and supporting schools. The board acknowledged his invaluable contributions and thanked him for his service.

Recognition of MLK Poster and Essay Contest Winners

Melvin Ingram recognized the first-place winners of the Martin Luther King Jr. Poster and Essay Contest, an annual event sponsored by the Richmond County Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration Foundation in collaboration with Richmond County Schools.

This year, students submitted essays and posters reflecting the theme: "Mission Possible: Protecting Freedom, Justice, and Democracy." Mr. Ingram commended the outstanding quality of the submissions and noted that some of the artwork is displayed in the reception area of the central office. He expressed gratitude to the teachers, particularly the leadership of the art teachers and mentor Karen Good, for their guidance and support.

On January 20, two students were recognized at the MLK Jr. Celebration Luncheon for winning first place in their respective categories:

- ☆ First Place Poster Winner: Brayan Huerta, an 8th-grade student at Hamlet Middle School. His artwork is displayed in the reception area.
- ☆ First Place Essay Winner: Adryan Southall, a 9th-grade student at Richmond Early College. She shared her essay during the board meeting.

The board congratulated both students for their outstanding work.

Farm Bureau Grant

Regina Uribe, CTE teacher at Ellerbe Middle School, shared an update on the EY 30 pilot program, which focuses on career exploration and introduces students to various career pathways.

Ms. Uribe, whose background is in business, explained that this year, her 8th-grade students are engaged in Plant Systems, Animal Systems, and Sustainable Agriculture. As part of this initiative, she applied for and received a \$500 grant from Farm Bureau's Classroom Program. The grant was used to purchase a greenhouse, shelving, and a variety of seeds. Currently, students have carrots sprouting and cabbage plants growing, and soon, they will be able to take cabbage and cilantro home.

Additionally, Ms. Uribe noted that 6th-grade science teachers at EMS use microscopes to study plant leaves. She hopes that the Farm Bureau grant will help provide plants with leaves that will support their science curriculum.

The board acknowledged Ms. Uribe's efforts and commended the program for enhancing student learning and hands-on career exploration.

eSports Team Recognition

Mark Bell, CTE teacher in the Graphic Arts Department, highlighted the achievements of Richmond Senior High School's first eSports team in its inaugural year. With the support of Melvin Ingram, the program quickly developed into a competitive and dedicated team.

Despite lacking a gaming lab, the Raider eSports team competed against well-established programs across North Carolina and finished third in the state. Their

success was a testament to their teamwork, resilience, and determination, as they practiced and competed using personal devices and makeshift setups at home.

Mr. Bell introduced William Bayless and team captain Jovani Steele, who played a key leadership role in coordinating with school officials and state representatives. The team is one game away from going to the state championships in Chicago.

The board recognized and congratulated the students for their impressive accomplishment.

Athletics Recognition

James Johnson, Athletic Director, recognized the achievements of two teams and one individual athlete:

- Hamlet Middle School Cross Country Team – Won the conference championship this year, marking a significant accomplishment.
- Richmond Senior High School Cheerleaders – Won the NCHSAA 4A State Title in the Division I Co-Ed Non-Tumbling bracket.
- Kmauri Morgan – A standout football player who competed in the East-West All-Star Game. He also won his conference wrestling championship in his weight class and will compete in regionals this weekend, with a strong chance of advancing to the state championship.

Rescheduling March BOE meeting

Dr. Kate Smith requested rescheduling the March 11, 2025, school board meeting to March 10, 2025, to accommodate the Richmond County Schools Art's Alive program. This change would allow those attending the board meeting to also support the Art's Alive event.

On a motion by Daryl Mason, seconded by Bobby Sue Ormsby, the board voted unanimously to approve the change.

2025-2026 School Calendar

Dr. Kate Smith presented the proposed 2025-2026 school year calendars and requested approval from the board.

On a motion by Ronald Tillman, seconded by Scotty Baldwin, the board voted unanimously to approve the traditional and early college academic calendars for the 2025-2026 school year as presented.

RSHS New Course Offerings 2025-2026

Dr. Kate Smith presented new course offerings for RSHS for the 2025-2026 school year and requested board approval. The proposed courses include:

- ☆ The Freshman Experience (Grade 9, 1st Semester): A course designed to help students transition into high school by focusing on academic skills, social-emotional learning, career literacy, and leadership.
- ☆ Introduction to AI (Grades 9-12, 2nd Semester): An introduction to artificial intelligence concepts, applications, and ethical considerations.
- ☆ Principles of Information Technology (Grades 11-12, 2nd Semester): Covers IT fundamentals, software applications, digital tools, security, and career exploration.

- ☆ Athletic Management (Grades 10-12): Introduces sports event coordination, athletic facility management, and leadership.
- ☆ Athletic Management - Honors (Grades 10-12): An advanced version emphasizing sports administration, leadership, and event logistics.
- ☆ Lifetime Sports (Grades 10-12): A physical education course focusing on lifelong recreational and competitive sports.
- ☆ Lifetime Sports - Honors (Grades 10-12): An advanced version incorporating fitness planning, leadership, and strategy development.

On a motion by Jerry Ethridge, seconded by Daryl Mason, the board voted unanimously to approve the new course offerings at RSHS as presented.

E-Rate Proposal for Wi-Fi on High School Buses

Katherine Bendell presented a proposal to the board seeking approval to install Wi-Fi on 17 buses at Richmond Senior High School as part of the district's Digital Equity Grant initiative. This initiative aims to enhance student connectivity by extending internet access beyond the school environment to support digital learning.

The district solicited proposals for Wi-Fi services on up to 65 buses, allowing flexibility in the number of installations as needed. Contracts will be awarded for a three-year term.

The procurement process followed E-rate requirements, and proposals were evaluated based on industry standards and district specifications. After reviewing four bids, Lockstep was identified as the highest-ranked vendor and selected for the contract.

On a motion by Jerry Ethridge, seconded by Ronald Tillman, the board voted unanimously to approve installation of Wi-Fi on 17 buses, with potential expansion in the future.

Construction Updates

Steven King presented an update on projects at Mineral Springs Elementary School, Fairview Heights Elementary School, and Richmond Senior High School.

- **Mineral Springs Elementary School**
 - A few punch list items are left to complete.
 - Storm boxes and storm piping will be flushed in the coming weeks.
 - A utility pole was obstructing the service room design. Initially, shifting the road 10 feet north was proposed at a cost of \$10,000, but instead, the pole was removed for \$400, avoiding the road shift.
 - Topsoil, seed, and straw have been added around the new building to finalize the landscaping.
- **Fairview Heights Elementary School**
 - Only a few tasks remain.
 - The canopy needs to be reinstalled.
 - Storm boxes and storm piping must be flushed out to remove any construction debris.
- **Richmond Senior High School**
 - Work continues on heating and air, electrical, plumbing, sprinklers, and roof trim, with steady progress.
 - Interior ceilings and walls are being installed.

- Drywall and bathroom ceilings are currently being put in place.
- Block filler is being applied to the concrete block interior walls.
- Light fixtures, interior doors, hardware, and plumbing fixtures have been delivered.
- The county has allocated funds for a washer and dryer for the laundry room, and the procurement process is underway.
- The weight room flooring and equipment have been ordered, with an estimated completion in late April.

Policies for Adoption

Melvin Ingram presented the conclusion of the 30-day review period, asking the board to adopt amendments for the following policies.

Policy Numbers:

- 4040/7310 Staff-Student Relations
- 4120 Domicile of Residence Requirements
- 4329/7311 Bullying and Harassing Behavior Prohibited
- 5022 Registered Sex Offenders

On a motion by Scotty Baldwin, seconded by Bobby Sue Ormsby, the board voted unanimously to adopt policy amendments 4040/7310, 4120, 4329/7311, and 5022.

Policies for Review

Melvin Ingram presented the following policies for a 30-day review.

Policy Numbers:

- 6430 Purchasing Requirements for Equipment, Materials, and Supplies
- 6450 Purchasing of Services
- 7650 Employee Travel and Other Expense Reimbursements
- 8305 Federal Grant Administration
- 9125 Participation by Minority Businesses

Field Trips

Melvin Ingram presented the field trips.

- Hamlet Middle School – BETA to Greensboro, NC – February 2, 2025 – February 4, 2025
- Richmond Senior High School – Senior Trip to Orlando, FL – March 28, 2025 – April 1, 2025
- Richmond Senior High School – Baseball to Shallotte, NC – April 21, 2025 – April 23, 2025

Board Members Comments

Scotty Baldwin

- Shared that he attended the Richmond Senior High School Football Banquet, highlighting the outstanding job done by Coach Densen and Mr. John in organizing the event. Several board members they were particularly impressed by the emphasis on academics, noting that the high GPAs of student-athletes were “mind-blowing.”
- Shared that he did a walkthrough at LJ Bell Elementary School to assess the condition of the building since it is one of the school’s being discussed in the

facilities study. He urged all board members to visit aging buildings and emphasized the need for a long-term facilities plan.

Bobby Sue Ormsby

- Recognized Cathrine Blackwell a former educator who had a significant impact on her life and students' lives, shaping both their careers and personal growth.
- Gave a brief report was provided on the Education Foundation meeting, which discussed the Empowering Educators Grant. Every school participated, and grant recipients will be announced soon. She encouraged everyone to attend the upcoming Clay Shoot on April 4th, if possible.

Ronald Tillman

- Echoed Scotty's remarks about the RSHS Football Banquet, emphasizing how impressed he was with the athletes' academic achievements. He noted that it says a lot about Coach Denson.
- Raised concerns from parents about exempt students being marked as absent on their transcripts. He suggested finding a solution to ensure these students are not penalized.
 - Dr. Smith clarified that students who are exempt from exams are only excused from taking the exams, not from attending school. Students are still welcome to come to school, where alternative activities will be available. However, if they choose to stay home, they will be marked absent.
 - Chairman Satterfield noted that exam exemption was introduced years ago to improve attendance and academic performance.
- Shared that he spoke with a couple custodians, and they expressed that they would like some training to learn the proper procedures on doing the floors.
- Expressed his gratitude to the board for recognizing his achievement in receiving the Badge of Excellence from the North Carolina Department of Public Safety. He shared that his wife encouraged him to embrace moments of praise from others.

Jerry Ethridge

- Shared that he and Bess attended the SHAC meeting on January 28. He appreciated seeing the large number of people working together in Richmond County Schools to create opportunities for students. He praised Dr. Wendy Jordan for her great rapport with the community.
- Highlighted the dedication of Levi Marenda, the new band director, for his hard work with the students. He noted the significant improvements they have made in a short period under his leadership.
- Shared that he attended the district Spelling Bee on January 28 and enjoyed seeing students demonstrate strong spelling skills. He remarked that while it's great to have tools like Google to assist with spelling, it's also a shame that reliance on technology has reduced the need for people to learn spelling the traditional way. He reflected on his own school days when students had to master spelling both on paper and out loud.
- Praised the football banquet emphasizing the positive atmosphere and camaraderie among everyone.

Chairman Satterfield

- Shared his experience of reading to two students at LJ Bell Elementary School (LJB), calling it one of the most rewarding parts of his week.
- He noted that during his walkthrough of LJB, he was impressed by the cleanliness of the school, despite its age. He specifically praised the custodian for maintaining gorgeous floors and keeping the building in excellent condition.
- Regarding the floor training for custodians, there are companies that provide both supplies and training for custodial staff.
→ Dr. Carter noted that for the past five years, the district has been bringing in an external professional to train all custodians.
- The football banquet was great.

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Ferrell

- gave a shoutout to a former Richmond County educator Dennis Quick, recognizing him for his many contributions to the district.
- Tonight at 7:00 p.m. at the Cole Auditorium, there will be a Black History program organized by Author Gilliam. Last year's program was outstanding.
- On Friday, February 14, in Fayetteville, we will be honoring Ms. Jenny Lee, our Teacher of the Year, and Ms. Angel Mabe, our Principal of the Year.

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

On a motion by Daryl Mason, seconded by Scotty Baldwin, the board voted unanimously to go into closed session at 6:18p.m.

The board returned from closed session at 7:04 p.m.

Personnel Report

Dr. Tesha Isler presented the personnel report and addendum, requesting an amendment to include two principal contracts.

On a motion by Scotty Baldwin, seconded by Ronald Tillman, the board unanimously approved the amended personnel report and addendum.

Adjournment

There being no further business, on a motion by Scotty Baldwin, seconded by Bobby Sue Ormsby, Chairman Satterfield adjourned the meeting at 7:10 p.m.