CASWELL COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES
July 14, 2025

The Caswell County Board of Education met in regular session on Monday, July 14, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. in the Administration Building of Caswell County Schools. Members present: Chairman Mel Battle, Vice Chair Joel Lillard, Vennie Beggarly, Nicole Smith, Lisa Johnson-Knight, Nicole McGhee, and Trudy Blackwell. Others present include Interim Superintendent Lance Stokes, Matt Tedder, John Berdine, Jennifer Wallace, Jerome Wilson, Lucinda Wilson, Terri Gullick, Gladys Garland, Joan Brandon, and Board Attorney Ron Bradsher. Connie Kimrey recorded the minutes. (*Note: Others may have been present but did not sign the roster or names were not legible*).

I. A. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Mel Battle. A moment of silence was observed, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

I. B. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chair Mel Battle shared a revised copy of the June 30, 2025 minutes were provided noting that there were some inconsistencies with the coaching information and this was pulled from the minutes. Coaching information will be brought back to the board at the July 28th meeting. Upon no further discussion, Joel Lillard moved, seconded by Lisa Johnson-Knight, to approve the minutes of the June 30, 2025, regular meeting as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

I. C. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Interim Superintendent Lance Stokes recommended approval of agenda as presented. Nicole Smith moved, seconded by Joel Lillard, to approve the agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

I. D. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Interim Superintendent Lance Stokes extended thanks and gratitude to Jerome Wilson who was asked to attend the meeting. Mr. Wilson is a true champion for education and for students. He has stepped in and assisted Caswell County Schools numerous times and most recently filling in as the Interim Principal at NL Dillard Middle School. Mr. Stokes shared we need more educators with his ethics, morals, and dedication. In appreciation of his commitment to Caswell County Schools he was presented with a rocking chair. Board members also shared their sentiments of thanks and what a wonderful job he has done for the district.

Mr. Wilson shared thanks and shared that Caswell feels like home to him as well and shared stories of how touching it is to impact a child and make a difference. He emphasized that it is all about the children.

I. E. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None at this time.

II. REPORTS

- Athletic expenditures for 2024/2025 were reviewed for Bartlett Yancey Sr. High School and NL Dillard Middle School. Upon review, the following items were requested:
  - Itemized listing for apparel for cheerleading
  - Breakdown of coaches who were paid to drive activity bus

  Discussion took place regarding looking at using debit card at the concession stand and that options need to be explored. Also, ticket sales were reviewed and the amount suggested by the athletic conference and looking at options to best assist our community and continue to look at options to make this work.

- Caswell County Civic Center Report
  Discussion took place and the board would like to receive a monthly report showing all deposits and what the rental was. It was shared that the board needs to take a strong look at this as the cost of utilities are high and continue to keep running.

- Budget Update
  Local current expense was shared. At this time, we have not received an official letter from the Board of Commissioners with exact amounts and allocations. Mr. Stokes anticipates having a budget at the July 28th meeting.

III. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None at this time.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

1. Consent Agenda

   Interim Superintendent Lance Stokes recommended approval of consent agenda as presented. Trudy Blackwell moved, seconded by Vennie Beggarly. The motion carried unanimously.

   - Federal Programs Board of Education Acknowledgements
   - Charter Bus Listing for 2025-2026
   - Insurance Renewals
   - PCC Career & College Promise (2025-2026)
   - Child Nutrition Service Agreement

   <u>Federal Programs Board of Education Acknowledgements</u>
   Certification regarding debarment, suspension, ineligibility and voluntary exclusion – lower tier covered transactions were shard with the board.

Charter Bus Listing – 2025-2026

Academy Bus, LLC
(PO Box 11345, Durham, NC 27703)

Blue Diamond Transportation, Inc.
(6512-A Chapel Hill Road, Raleigh, NC 27607)

First Class Tours, Inc.
(1411 Bridgton Road, Winston-Salem, NC 27127)

Holiday Tours, Inc.
10367 Randleman Road, Randleman, NC 27317

Sunway Charters
(3636 N. Glenn Avenue, Winston Salem, NC 271050

W&W Luxury Limousine Service
(2332 N. Main Street, Danville, VA 24540)

Carolina Livery
(2913 New Raleigh Hwy., Durham, NC 27703)

Insurance Renewals

NC Dept. Ins.	**24/25 Cost**	**25/26 Cost**	**Increase/Decrease**
Property Insurance	$80,894.00	$91,496.00	$10,602
Total NCDOI Coverage	$80,894.00	$91.496.00	$10,602

Surry Ins. Covg.	**24/25 Cost**	**25/26 Cost**	**Increase/Decrease**
Auto & Garage	$30,955.73	$32,865.50	$1,909.77
Inland Marine	$250	$250	-
Workers Comp	$44,041	$53,040	$8,999
Boiler & Machinery	$7,835	$8,073	$238
Cyber Liability	$9,305	$9,304	($1)
Volunteer Accident	$340	$400	$60
Total Surry Coverage	$92,726.73	$103,932.50	$11,205.77
Young Group Ins.	**24/25 Cost**	**25/26 Cost**	**Increase/Decrease**
Student Accident	$9,487.50	$9,487.50	--
Total Young Group	$9,487.50	$9,487.50	

PCC Career & College Promise (2025-2026

Child Nutrition Service Agreement = Refrigeration Equipment Service & Maint.
North Carolina Procurement Alliance
Vendor = Elite Refrigeration
Hourly Rate = (Reg. Service Hours) = $95.00
Hourly Rate – Outside Regular Service Hours = $142.50
Travel Charge = $130.00
Markup percentage (Supplies & Parts charges) – 35%
Preventative Maintenance = two times a year
Guaranteed response time for same day on emergency calls
Guaranteed response time for same day on for service calls outside of regular service hours

2. Orkin Contract

Interim Superintendent Lance Stokes recommended approval of the Orkin Contract as presented. Trudy Blackwell moved, seconded by Vennie Beggarly. The motion carried unanimously.

Spraying at all schools (one time / inside and outside) = $4,130.00
Per Service Visit (as needed) = $40.00
**(this will take place during summer when no students/staff are in the building)*

3. Tiered Bus Routes

John Berdine, Transportation Director, gave an overview of a tiered bus route plan which will assist the district due to the shortage of bus drivers. Mr. Berdine also asked Transportation Director, Dr. Mett Teddler, from Stokes County to be at the meeting who implemented this system in Stokes County. Dr. Teddler shared information on the cost savings as well as the benefits for academic growth with having the tiered routes. This plan will require staggered starting times. The current approved bell times for the district this year will not allow total effectiveness; however, Mr. Berdine shared that routes will be tiered that can and will require cooperation with principals to allow students to arrive at school earlier. This will require additional staff to supervise the children but with the shortage of drivers it should work effectively and would like a consensus to move forward for the 2026-2027 school year.

Stokes County was contacted due to the similar size of the county and challenges they were facing. Dr. Teddler shared that this was difficult to initiate; however, after a few years the system is working very well and bus drivers are remaining due to more hours and receiving benefits. With the tired routes, the best scenario is to have students arrive

twenty minutes prior to the bell schedule. The other benefit is the efficiency rate and funding with NC DPI. When questioned what is the best timeframe for staggered entry to make this work correctly, Dr. Teddler shared that an hour and ten minutes is the best option.

Dr. Teddler shared that not every route is ideal and they do their best to work with families to make things work noting that if another bus stop works, the family can bring their child to that bus stop. Other situations are looked at by a case to case basis. He shared that currently the Stokes County district has 40 or more on the morning routes and according to NC DPI this is very efficient. He shared he will be willing to work with Mr. Berdine to set things up and/or answer any questions he has.

Interim Superintendent Lance Stokes shared that the district will have to begin to think outside of the box to make things work with the continuing challenges due to the lack of bus drivers. He shared this is a huge shift to work on and implement and would like board approval for the Transportation Department to work on this scheduling plan for the 2026-2027 school year. He shared he didn't want to devote this much time to planning this out if the board was not in consensus to move forward.

Trudy Blackwell moved, to approve moving forward with planning the tiered routes.

Although a second was not given, it was shared that this did not require the board to vote to act as bus routes fall under the Transportation Department.

4. Policy # 4318, Use of Cell Phones & Other Electronic Devices

The cell phone policy was reviewed due to recent House Bill signed by Governor Josh Stein. Interim Superintendent Lance Stokes polled principals on their thoughts of the cell phones and all ware in agreement to continue to keep the wording in the district's current policy. Upon discussion, it was shared that the biggest issue that the district has is having the policy enforced and not being consistent. Other concerns included having some guidance for staff noting the visibility of their phones and carrying them around in their pockets.

Upon further discussion it was suggested to change the wording of the cell phone policy which included specific times that students have phones out to academic (or instructional) time due to the recent change in bell schedules. This would prevent having to change the policy again if times change next school year also.

Joel Lillard moved, seconded by Nicole Smith, to change wording in Policy # 4318, Use of Cell Phones and Other Electronic Devices, to include academic time and remove the exact times listed. The motion carried unanimously.

Lisa Johnson-Knight questioned if there is a problem with the phones being out can this policy be revisited and it was confirmed that it could.

Board Attorney Ron Bradsher advised if cell phones are confiscated it may be best practice to have a signed receipt acknowledging the condition.

Mel Battle moved, seconded by Joel Lillard, to take a ten-minute break. The motion carried unanimously.

5. School Handbooks 2025-2026

Elementary handbook was reviewed and Interim Superintendent Lance Stokes shared there was some discussion to only give out handbooks to certain grade levels; however, Mr. Stokes shred that it is best practice to distribute handbooks to all students.

Middle school handbook was reviewed.

It was requested to have insurance information included in the handbooks so that parents will be aware.

The grading scale also needs to be updated.

It was requested to have the same wording regarding volunteers in elementary be included in middle and high school.

Other concerns included uniforms and if students cannot afford them that the school work with students on a case by case situation and students not be penalized. Also ,it was requested that the school counselor be contacted if a situation like this occurs.

It was requested to make sure principals are keeping their opt-out listing current regarding publication forms included in handbooks. David Useche will review with principals prior to the beginning of school.

High school handbook was reviewed. A change this year was to allow students to wear hats. Lengthy discussion took place with board members expressing their thoughts. It was shared that the proposed change goes against the district's dress code policy. Interim Superintendent Lance Stokes shared that having dealt with this at the high school level there is a large amount of time spent on enforcing this rule and to some level it is a "status" thing as well as peer pressure, etc. Upon more discussion, some board members agreed to allow this as others were not proponents of having students wear hats in school. Other concerns included staff dress and the unprofessionalism that is being demonstrated. Teachers and administrators need to be setting a good example.

It was agreed that before this change, if approved, can be made, that the district policy would need to be reviewed and changed. The dress code policy will be brought back to the next meeting for discussion.

Exam exemptions were discussed next in depth with the proposed recommendation for the high school and board members expressed their thoughts. The wording included no exam exemptions for grade 9-11.

Trudy Blackwell moved, seconded by Lisa Johnson-Knight, to approve the current wording recommended in the high school handbook for exemptions. The motion failed 3-4 with Battle, Lillard, Smith and Beggarly voting "No."

Joel Lillard moved, seconded by Nicole Smith, to allow exam exemptions for grades 9-12 with criteria to include an "A" grade along with including attendance requirements.

Nicole Smith questioned was there a reason staff didn't implement the attendance and questioned if this is additional work. Lance Stokes, Interim Superintendent, shared that it is a lot of work on staff and especially with excused and unexcused absences. He shared that medical hardships are reviewed and students are asked to provide documentation.

Upon questions, Joel Lillard amended his motion, seconded by Nicole Smith, to allow exam exemptions for grades 9-12 for grades of "A" and all other wording remain the same and not include the attendance portion. The motion carried 5-2 with Blackwell and Johnson-Knight voting "No."

Other concerns included student parking and Interim Superintendent Lance Stokes shared this is being addressed and in the process of numbering the parking spots.

Joel Lillard moved, seconded by Nicole Smith to approve the elementary and middle school handbooks as presented with changes as noted. The motion carried unanimously.

6. Caswell County Civic Center

Chair Mel Battle requested this be added to the agenda for discussion. He referenced the policy (5031) with rentals not being allowed until after October 1st. He shared concerns with the summer months for rental and concerns he has heard. He felt this may be something the board needs to review at a future work session. It was shared that the reasoning for this was to allow school staff to be able to schedule school events before the community confirms rentals as there were multiple conflicts which prompted the wording change to the current policy.

V. SUPERINTENDENT UPDATES

Interim Superintendent Lance Stokes shared a draft proposal for back to school events for the district and also broken down by groups. He shared a back to school giveaway will be held on August 23, 2025 and the Parks and Recreation Center. Other dates which included open house and convocation were mentioned and shared that the district is working together. Mr. Stokes also invited anyone to participate in the July 28th call with NCSBA and if interested to let Connie Kimrey know.

Mr. Stokes wished other districts dealing with floods and losses heartfelt wishes and will look at opportunities to partner with them in the future. Mr. Stokes also shared thanks to Stoney Creek AME Church for their invite. He enjoyed the service yesterday and felt it was a great way to communicate with the community and surrounding districts.

Finally, Mr. Stokes shared he will recognize birthdays at the beginning of each month and today Mel Battle was wished well wishes in honor of his upcoming 80th birthday on Thursday.

VI. ATTORNEYS REPORT

None.

VII. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Board members who attended the church service at Stoney Creek AME church shared positive comments and expressed thanks for the invitation to attend and thanks to Tasha Miles for organizing this event. It was also shared to remember the family of Tony Dabbs, who recently passed away, noting he and his family were very instrumental in assisting with Special Olympics. Information was shared on the upcoming Farmer's Lake Fishing Day which will be held on August 16th beginning at 8:00 a.m. A flyer will be shared with board members and shared on the district Facebook page. Anyone that would like to volunteer that day is welcome to participate.

VIII. CLOSED SESSION

Vennie Beggarly made a motion to go into closed session at 12:25 p.m. for the purpose of considering a personnel action that involves an officer or employee of this Board (NC General Statute 143-318.11(a)(6); and for the purpose of discussing information that is privileged, confidential or not a public record (NC General Statute 143-318.11(a)(1) and to confer with legal counsel. Nicole Smith seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

IX. OPEN SESSION

Joel Lillard made a motion to return to open session. Vennie Beggarly seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

X. PERSONNEL LISTING

Mr. Stokes recommended approval of personnel listing with the exception of Item # 6 along with recommendation for Child Nutrition Assistant. Trudy Blackwell moved, seconded by Nicole McGhee. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Stokes recommended approval of personnel listing Item # 6 (HR Director) as presented. Joel Lillard moved, seconded by Nicole Smith. The motion carried 6-1 with Beggarly voting "No."

Mr. Stokes recommended approval of Child Nutrition Assistant as presented. Nicole Smith moved, seconded by Trudy Blackwell. The motion carried 6-1 with Beggarly voting "No."

Resignations	
South Elementary	Rosa Pressley – Custodian= Eff. 5/14/25
Employment	
South Elementary	Megan "Harley" Westbrooks = 2nd grade Teacher = Eff. 8/18/25
NL Dillard Middle School	Miceia Brown = 6th grade Math Teacher = Eff. 8/18/25
Bartlett Yancey Sr. High School	James Atambire = Math Teacher = Eff. 8/18/25
Central Office	Jane Frazier = HR Director = Eff. 8/1/25
	Bonita Crandol Stephenson = Child Nutrition Admin. Asst. = Eff. 7/17/25
Transfers	
Stoney Creek	Casey Evans = 4th Grade Teacher (Currently Media Coordinator) = Eff. 8/18/25
	Julie Sladky = EC Teacher (currently EC Teacher at Oakwood) = Eff. 8/18/25

XI. ADJOURN

Joel Lillard moved to adjourn the meeting at 1:35 p.m., Nicole Smith seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. The motion carried unanimously.

The next regular meeting of the Board of Education will be held on July 28, 2025 at 5:30 p.m. in the Caswell County Schools Administration Building.

Mel O. Battle	Lance Stokes
Chairman	Interim Superintendent