

Hamlet, North Carolina
April 14, 2026

The Richmond County Board of Education met in regular session on April 14, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. The meeting was held at the Central Office in Hamlet, North Carolina.

The members present were Cory Satterfield, Chairman; Bobbie Sue Ormsby, Vice-Chairman; Jerry Ethridge; Ronald Tillman; Scotty Baldwin; Bess Shuler; and Daryl Mason.

The administrators present were Dr. Joe Ferrell, Superintendent; Dr. Julian Carter, Associate Superintendent of Operations and Athletics; Dr. Kate Smith, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction; Melvin Ingram, Assistant Superintendent of School Safety and Support Services; Dawn Jordan, Executive Director of Finance; Cameron Whitley, Executive Director of Communications; and Eva DuBuisson, Board Attorney. Dr. Tesha Isler, Executive Director of Human Resources, was absent.

Meeting Commencement

After noting that a quorum was present, Cory Satterfield, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 5:11 p.m. Bobbie Sue Ormsby requested a Moment of Silence and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes

On a motion by Ronald Tillman, seconded by Daryl Mason, the open session minutes of March 10, 2026, and the work session of March 24, 2026, were unanimously approved.

Recognition of Inspiring Excellence Awards

Cameron Whitley introduced Dr. Theresa Gardner, Principal of Mineral Springs Elementary School, who presented plaques to two of her staff members: Heather O'Tuel and April Smith. Next, Cameron Whitley introduced Monica Robinson, Principal of Hamlet Middle School, who presented plaques to two of her staff members: Ralph Butler and Howard Estridge. These recipients were honored for their outstanding contributions and dedication to students and the school community.

Crime Stoppers Poster Contest Recognition

Melvin Ingram introduced the Richmond County Crime Stoppers Board, including Chuck Cobb, President; members Renee Gryzbowski, Teresa Goodwin, and Chief James Carsto. He thanked them for their continued partnership and commitment to student engagement, community safety, and crime prevention across Richmond County Schools.

He highlighted the organization's efforts, including the annual student poster contest designed to engage students in spreading the message of crime prevention.

He also recognized the following winners of this year's poster contest:

- ★ 1st Place – Carolina Flores, 11th Grade, RSHS
- ★ 2nd Place – Aneema Owens, 12th Grade, RSHS
- ★ 3rd Place – Lydia Ellerbe, 12th Grade, RSHS
- ★ Honorable Mention – Kelby Morrison, 8th Grade, HMS

Each winner was presented with a monetary gift from the Crime Stoppers organization.

Melvin also thanked Karen Good, along with the middle and high school art teachers, for their outstanding work in leading this effort and encouraging meaningful student involvement.

Proposed Community Athletic Complex Update

Dr. Ferrell introduced Derek Howell and Hal Shuler, representing the Richmond County Athletic Complex Group, who provided an update on a proposed community athletic complex.

Hal Shuler spoke on behalf of the group and introduced its members, including Chairman Derek Howell, Ronald Tillman (RCS Board member), Brian Baucom, Vegas Jackson, Mary Kate Lambeth, Coach Earl Nicholson, Nikki Wells Smith, Coach Taneika Reader, and Jean Way.

Hal explained that the group has been meeting for approximately three and a half years to explore the development of a county-wide athletic complex for youth, travel teams, and community use. He noted that Dr. Will Cooley initially approached the group regarding a 119-acre parcel of land acquired from CF Smith Group (Kenneth and Claudia Robinette), located off U.S. Highway 1 North near Moore County and approximately half a mile from the racetrack. While not a formal board member, Dr. Cooley has contributed significant volunteer time, including land clearing and demolition of an existing structure.

The group has obtained 501(c)(3) status and is actively pursuing grants and fundraising opportunities. A sign has been placed on U.S. Highway 1 identifying the future site, and the group plans to meet with municipalities across the county to ensure inclusive community involvement.

Hal shared the organization's mission, which focuses on fostering healthy competition, reducing strain on government resources, easing neighborhood tensions through sports, and providing safe, supervised after-school opportunities. The complex is also intended to serve as a feeder system supporting middle and high school athletics.

He stated that the group will return with more detailed plans and requested the Board's support of the overall vision.

Derek Howell then addressed the Board, emphasizing the long-standing need for a county-wide sports complex and the group's goal of supporting both athletic and academic development. He highlighted concerns about limited opportunities for youth and the need for structured, positive environments after school.

Derek explained that the facility would integrate athletics with educational resources, including access to technology and learning spaces, and would promote belonging for children of all backgrounds and abilities. He stressed that the complex is intended to complement, not compete with, existing schools and municipal programs.

He further noted that after-school programming would be free for county youth, with funding generated through travel sports tournaments and events hosted at the facility.

In response to a question from Board member Bobbie Sue Ormsby regarding funding, Derek clarified that the school system would not be responsible for project costs. He explained that revenue from travel sports would support operations, keeping local spending within the community rather than going to other counties.

Derek outlined initial development plans, including a first-phase facility (Building "E") consisting of an approximately 100,000-square-foot structure with an additional 6,500-square-foot space for computer labs, classrooms, and a library. He also noted discussions with county commissioners regarding transportation options, including coordination with Area of Richmond Transit (ART).

He added that the group has met with Amazon representatives, who expressed support for the concept and indicated potential involvement after construction, though not in initial building costs.

Additional discussion included the possibility of conservation efforts on the property, including the pond area, which may qualify for conservation grants.

The Board thanked the presenters for the update.

Construction Updates

Steven King presented the following construction updates to the Board:

<p>RNGA to an Elementary School</p>	<p>Painting, cleaning, floor refinishing, new playgrounds, awnings, exterior door painting, marquis sign painting, rubber wall base – WIP Safety vestibule – WIP Basketball goal height adjusters – 4-30-26 Fencing – Install after playgrounds are complete 2 New Flex spaces in old weight room – Quoting subcontract work Stakeholder site meeting – Wednesday 4-22-26</p>
<p>RSHS Running Track Reno</p>	<p>Punch list walkthrough – Friday 3-27-26 Track was turned over to RCS for use – Monday 4-30-26</p>
<p>RSHS Partial Roof Replacement</p>	<p>Area over CIC – Complete Area over D Pod – WIP</p>
<p>Various Projects</p>	<p>RMS auditorium remodel – Summer 2026</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Painting – PO issued ○ Concrete floor resurfacing – PO Issued ○ Carpet replacement – Quote received ○ Seating – On order <p>New LJB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We are under contract with Mosely for design services ○ We are working with Moseley to get surveying, geochemical and traffic engineering started ○ Moving logistic – WIP ○ CM at Risk – Interviews were conducted – 3-31-26

*WIP = Work in Progress

Bobbie Sue Ormsby asked about the RMS auditorium seats currently listed for sale on GovDeals and whether the Daily Journal or Richmond Observer could include this information in their reporting to help inform the public. Steven responded that he would speak with Cameron Whitley about promoting the sale on social media.

Bobbie Sue also inquired about how the district plans to publicize the brick sale. Steven stated that no decision has been made yet regarding that.

Construction Manager at Risk

Steven King presented the Construction Manager at Risk recommendation for the new LJ Bell Elementary School replacement project and requested Board approval. Steven reported that the district issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for Construction Manager at Risk services and received four responses by the March 16 deadline. Steven, Dr. Ferrell and Dr. Carter reviewed all submissions and conducted interviews with each of the four firms on March 31.

Following the interview process, administration recommended Bordeaux Construction as the Construction Manager at Risk for the project. Steven noted that Bordeaux currently has eight active projects with Moseley Architects and has partnered with Moseley on numerous occasions. He further shared that Bordeaux has completed 241 K–12 projects throughout the company's history and currently serves 23 North Carolina public school clients.

Steven highlighted Bordeaux's robust safety program, stating that he was particularly impressed with the firm's safety practices. He also noted that Bordeaux previously constructed the Richmond County Courthouse approximately twelve years ago and has successfully completed four North Carolina public school grant-funded school construction projects.

Additionally, Steven described Bordeaux's use of Matterport laser scanning device, a three-dimensional laser scanning system used to capture precise measurements and structural details of existing facilities. He explained that this technology will be especially beneficial for renovation and integration work involving portions of the existing campus to remain, as it provides real-time dimensional data and minimizes construction errors.

Steven noted that Bordeaux shared the potential for tax credit revenue opportunities associated with the project, which administration plans to explore further.

Based on the evaluation process and qualifications presented, administration formally recommended Bordeaux Construction as the Construction Manager at Risk for the new LJ Bell Elementary School replacement project.

On a motion by Jerry Ethridge, seconded by Ronald Tillman, the Board voted unanimously to approve Bordeaux as the Construction Manager at Risk for the new LJ Bell Elementary School build.

Scotty Baldwin inquired whether Bordeaux prioritizes the use of local subcontractors. Steven responded that Bordeaux expressed support for engaging local businesses whenever possible.

Field Trips

Melvin Ingram presented the field trip.

- Richmond Senior High School – 2026-27 Senior Trip to Orlando, Fl. – March 19-23, 2027

Facilities Optimization and Long-Range Planning

Dr. Ferrell opened the presentation by addressing the Board and audience, emphasizing his commitment to reflection, transparency, and continuous improvement in decision-making. He acknowledged that during the March 24 budget work session, he presented the option of closing Ellerbe Middle School without fully explaining all alternatives that had been considered. He apologized to both the Board and the Ellerbe community for not providing complete context at that time.

Dr. Ferrell noted that the previous request was only to approve a study, not to close the school.

Dr. Ferrell explained that the district is facing ongoing financial challenges, including the use of approximately \$1 million annually from the fund balance, which has now declined to just under \$2

million. He noted that student enrollment has decreased by more than 1,000 students in recent years and is projected to continue declining. Over the past two years, the district has implemented nearly \$3 million in budget reductions through attrition. Central office reductions accounted for approximately \$345,000 of those savings, with additional reductions made across all schools and departments. Despite these efforts, further cuts are necessary due to continued enrollment declines and anticipated state funding reductions of approximately \$770,000 for the 2026-2027 school year. Dr. Ferrell emphasized that the district remains committed to avoiding a reduction in force (RIF) and will continue to pursue cost savings through attrition and staff reassignment.

He also outlined several potential options for consideration, including conducting closure studies for Ellerbe Middle School and West Rockingham Elementary School, as well as the possible relocation of Ashley Chapel Educational Center. Additional cost-saving measures discussed included reducing assistant principal positions, instructional support positions, and athletics programs at both the middle and high school levels.

Dr. Ferrell noted that the presentation and the previously completed facility study would be shared publicly, and feedback would be collected from both the Board and the community. He plans to return at the May Board meeting with a comprehensive list of options for consideration, at which time the Board will determine which studies to pursue.

Board Discussion

Bobbie Sue Ormsby questioned if the Board's previous vote to conduct a closure study for Ellerbe Middle School could be reconsidered.

Eva DuBuisson noted that under Robert's Rules, the Board may reconsider prior action since the study has not begun, requiring a majority vote.

Bobby Sue Ormsby made a motion to rescind the previous approval of the Ellerbe Middle School closure study. The motion was seconded by Scotty Baldwin and carried by a 4–3 vote, returning the matter to a "blank slate."

Bobby Sue Ormsby, Scotty Baldwin, Jerry Ethridge, and Bess Shuler voted in favor of the motion. Chairman Satterfield, Ronald Tillman, and Daryl Mason voted against the motion.

Board members said that they will review all the information presented and bring forward additional ideas for potential studies before the next meeting.

Discussion concluded with acknowledgment of the district's financial challenges, including limited fund balance projections, and the necessity of making timely, informed decisions to avoid more severe consequences in the future, such as state intervention.

Surplus

Dr. Ferrell requested board approval for the following items to be listed for sale on GovDeals:

TRANSPORTATION

- CAR# 8731 - asset # 29388 2005 Ford Taurus
- CAR# 8732 -asset # 29383 2006 Ford Taurus
- CAR# 7086 -asset# 29259 1995 Ford F-150 truck
- Used 1989 Chevy bus engine (8.2-liter Detroit Diesel)
- Used 1990 Chevrolet Activity bus

On a motion by Jerry Ethridge, seconded by Daryl Mason, the board voted unanimously to approve listing the surplus items for sale on GovDeals.

Board Members' Comments

Chairman Satterfield

- Hopes the administration continues having community visits.

Bobbie Sue Ormsby

- The Education Foundation had a good meeting today.
- Education Foundation Clay Shoot fundraiser is May 1st
- The Education Foundation is open to funding some of the computers for RSHS.
- Attended Arts Alive and there was good attendance
- Shout out to SECU for conducting a 2 day "Reality of Money" for all ninth graders.
- Attended several athletic events

Jerry Ethridge

- New playground equipment at LJB looks nice
- Attended a wedding of one of RCS teachers
- LJ Bell and Mineral Springs will have a STEM night on Thursday.

Scotty Baldwin

- Attended and was very impressed with the Richmond Raider Band "Wrestling with a Purpose" fundraiser at RSHS. "It took me back to my childhood."

Bess Shuler

- Attended the Leak Street Community Center visit.

Cory Satterfield citing NCGS 143-318.11(a)(1) and (6) requested a motion to go into closed session.

On a motion by Scotty Baldwin, seconded by Bobbie Sue Ormsby, the Board voted unanimously to go into closed session at 6:50 p.m.

On a motion by Jerry Ethridge, seconded by Scotty Baldwin, the Board voted unanimously to reconvene into open session at 7:18 p.m.

Personnel Report

Dr. Julian Carter presented the personnel report and addendum.

On a motion by Scotty Baldwin, seconded by Jerry Ethridge, the Board voted 6-1 to approve the personnel report and addendum, with Daryl Mason voting nay.

Return to Open Session

There being no further business in open session, on a motion by Scotty Baldwin, seconded by Jerry Ethridge, the Board voted to return to closed session at 7:30 p.m.