

CASWELL COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES

January 20, 2021

Work Session Minutes

The Caswell County Board of Education met in a work session on Wednesday, January 20, 2021, beginning at 9:00 a.m. in the Caswell County Schools Administration Building of Caswell County Schools. Members present: Chairman Wayne Owen, Vice Chair Gladys Garland, Donna Hudson, Tracy Stanley, Mel Battle, and Trudy Blackwell. Vennie Beggarly was absent. Others present include Superintendent Dr. Sandra Carter and Board Attorney Ron Bradsher (Amy Chandler and Andy Tyrrell attended via computer). Connie Kimrey recorded the minutes.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Wayne Owen at 9:00 a.m.

1. Scholarship Funds - Community Foundation

Discussion took place regarding the \$50,000 received from the County Commissioners and how to use these funds going forward for a scholarship fund. Dr. Carter shared information from the Community Foundation and reminded the board of the 3.75% interest rate with the Community Foundation. Discussion included that the higher interest rate with the Community Foundation is a positive; however, there are stipulations. It would be difficult to use a local bank and earn that amount of interest as well as the issues of sustainability. Concerns with using the Community Foundation included the decision making noting that the Board of Education would have no control except for developing a rubric for the committee to use.

Board members expressed their thoughts on which route is the best to take. Memorials or donations can be made toward the scholarship fund if the decision to use the Community Foundation is made and they send out acknowledgements to individuals. Discussion was had noting that if the board will need to develop a rubric for the committee to follow why not look into having a scholarship through Caswell County Schools and set an amount to distribute each year with hopes that donations or memorials would be made to assist with sustainability.

Board Attorney Ron Bradsher shared that the Community Foundation is the best use of the money as the return is tremendous; however, once the rubric is completed, the board will not have control over the process at that point.

The Board of Commissioners did not set any specific restrictions on how to use the \$50,000. Board Attorney Ron Bradsher shared that the board could decide to develop their own scholarship and set an amount to distribute each year until the money is depleted. Whichever route the board takes, the board will need to set direction, adopt measures and establish a committee in which the Board of Education will have to manage. An agreement will need to be created and the money will be placed in that specific scholarship fund account.

Upon continued discussion, Tracy Stanley moved, seconded by Gladys Garland, for the \$50,000 given by the Board of County Commissioners to be used with the Community Foundation to set up a scholarship. The motion failed due to a tie vote. (Yes = Stanley, Garland, Hudson / No = Battle, Owen, Blackwell).

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Concerns shared included that community members may be more inclined to contribute if it were a local scholarship.

Mel Battle moved, seconded by Donna Hudson, to table this item until the next board meeting when all members are present. The motion carried unanimously.

Dr. Carter was asked to bring back the amount of contributions that have been made to our current scholarships over the past and also entail what specifics are needed.

2. Bid Announcements

Discussion took place regarding placing advertisements in local papers for bid announcements. One suggestion was to list the basic information in the paper to assist with costs and refer them to the Caswell County Schools website for more specific information. Discussion was had regarding the use of social media, lack of people seeing the information in the paper, looking at sending out emails to parents in the district when bid opportunities are available, and establishing a list of all local businesses asking them to submit their request if they would like to be included on a listing when opportunities are available.

Upon discussion it was agreed that going forward an advertisement will be placed in the local papers sharing that if a company would like to be considered for upcoming bids to please check the website as well as submit an email address and contact information to be alerted when opportunities arise as well as sending out an email to staff and parents.

3. Covid-19 Updates

Dr. Carter shared that the board will revisit returning to school at the next board meeting on January 25, 2021. Updated data was shared with the board and at this time the positivity rate in Caswell County is 15.8%. As of today, Caswell County Schools has three teachers that have tested positive and seven that are quarantined (handouts were shared with the board). Discussion was had regarding the misinformation that the public is receiving and felt that there is a discrepancy in the CDC (Center for Disease Control) and the county percentages. Assistant Superintendent Andrey Tyrrell shared that he is pulling the information received from reliable sources though the Caswell County Health Department and checks the numbers weekly. Mr. Tyrrell was asked to include this information when making future calls to parents alerting them of updated quarantine information within the schools.

Question was asked if Plan B begins on February 22, 2021, how many days students will actually be in school. Dr. Carter shared if students return on February 22, with Plan B, a student will be in class 26 days.

A survey was recently done regarding vaccines. Mr. Tyrrell shared the survey results come to the school first then he forwards to Caswell County Health Department and the vaccine portal.

Mr. Tyrrell was asked to share these numbers with the Board of Education.

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4. Athletics

A board member shared input on concerns with waiting until school begins on February 22, 2021 for students to start conditioning noting that football would have to forfeit several games. The question was asked if practice could begin sooner as other surrounding counties are doing this. It was shared that all Covid-19 precautions and guidelines will need to be followed and if they are not followed, practices, games, etc. would be cancelled and individuals held responsible. The request was made to start earlier than the board agreed upon at the meeting sharing that it will be very confusing on the first day of school for all of this to take place. February 8, 2021 is the first day of football in the North Carolina High School Athletic Association (NCHSAA) and paperwork, physicals, and conditioning needs to take place. Other concerns included if the students are not allowed an opportunity to participate that scouting recruits will not be able to watch them and some of our seniors are depending on this to assist with college opportunities.

Dr. Carter shared that if the date is moved up it would be difficult to occur before February 1 due to the guidelines, paperwork, protocol procedures and training to be provided.

Other concerns shared included that the board voted at the last meeting not to begin before school starts. This will need to be addressed at the January 25th meeting if a change is needed. It was also shared that athletics is optional. The sports that will be considered included: football, girls soccer, softball, baseball, track and field, girls tennis and wrestling has been moved to the end of the school year at this time. Other concerns included bus drivers and precautions that will be needed to transport students and lack of gate funds to pay officials. A board member shared that the North Carolina High School Athletic Association was supposed to use \$4 Million endowment and give to schools; however, they were unsure if that has occurred.

The Board of Education requested to see a listing of what other surrounding schools are doing (going to school with athletics or no athletics) before the meeting on Monday as well as a list of what protocols are in place for athletics once they begin.

Question was asked if athletics begins would this carry over to other school organizations, i.e., Beta, FFA, etc. noting these clubs are voluntary as well.

All agreed this will be a tough decision to make. The requested information (listing of surrounding schools athletics and safety guidelines/protocols for sports) was asked to be given to the board prior to the meeting on Monday for review and assistance in their decision making.

5. Staff Supplements

Information was shared with the Board of Education on past history of teacher supplements. Information went as far back as 2003. All supplements are based on years of service to Caswell County Schools. Dr. Carter shared it is very difficult to recruit teachers when other districts offer supplements. We have tried to work with colleges to recruit student teachers; however, recruitment fairs are very difficult as others have supplements to offer.

A board member felt that we need to look into using fund balance to offer some type of supplement to our teachers and look at years of service sharing that something is better than nothing. It was shared

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that every year the teacher supplement is placed on the budget submitted to the county commissioners. If fund balance was used, sustainability would be an issue and fund balance would be depleted quickly. It was also shared that the year the commissioners did not fund the supplement, Caswell County Schools lost money in small schools low wealth funding from the state. Suggestion was to use fund balance and look at it on a year to year basis and if there were no emergency situations to look at funding supplement. Attorney Ron Bradsher shared that one issue to consider is that the auditors look at your fund balance for auditing purposes and that would need to be taken into consideration. Suggestion was if the Board of Education was looking at using their fund balance to give out supplements perhaps the commissioners would see this as a plus and consider offering assistance as well. Discussion continued and it was shared that the fund balance needs to be maintained in the event of emergency funds and those are hard to predict. All were in agreement that we need to recognize our teachers but pulling from fund balance isn't an option on a continued basis.

6. Board of Education Goals

Discussion was had regarding the board setting goals. Some suggestions included (after Covid) to visit schools more and be visible to show support to our children and staff and to give praise when we see good things happening within our schools.

Chairman Owen asked that board members submit suggestions to himself or to Dr. Carter and they will share with the board.

7. Board of Education Professional Development Opportunities

Information was shared on training offered through the North Carolina School Boards Association for Master Board Training. Other opportunities included ethics training with Chris Campbell. A listing will be shared with board members to select courses they would be interested in taking as a board. The board chair will gather the information and bring back to the board.

8. Broadcast Meetings / Board Minutes

Discussion took place on the board going to remote meetings and wanted information shared to the public that the board will still actually meet in person; however, the Zoom streaming will offer opportunities to the public and stay within Covid guidelines.

The public comments portion of the meeting will be revisited once Covid restrictions have lifted; however, for now, indoor gatherings consist of ten people. Continued discussion took place regarding the official board minutes and having a recording via Zoom. Board Attorney shared information noting that the Zoom will be a verbatim account of what is said at the meetings and the minutes do not have to be word for word; however, should show an accurate account of what took place in the meeting for someone that was not there. The board attorney will check into finding out if the recordings need to be stored. The board was in agreement that a hard copy of the minutes would continue in the same format as they currently are received.

It was also agreed to look at the volume of participants once Zoom has been used for several times and compare that with how many actually attended live meetings in the past.

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A recess was taken for lunch.

CLOSED SESSION

Gladys Garland made a motion to go into closed session 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). Tracy Stanley seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

OPEN SESSION

Gladys Garland moved, seconded by Tracy Stanley, to return to Open Session. The motion carried unanimously.

Other

Dr. Carter shared that the Federal Leave Act will be reviewed on Monday based on the board's decision to return to school noting there may be issues with those that are currently teleworking from home. Other concerns included children who are not logging on and paperwork, phone calls and continued messages have taken place. The next step will be to have the School Resource Officer deliver the compulsory attendance notice to the parent to stress the importance of this.

It was shared that the vote on Monday will be difficult and it will not make everyone happy. Updated Covid numbers will be shared with the board on Monday and Dr. Carter was asked to share with the board prior to the meeting on Monday what the in person testing requirements are and what procedures will be for end of course and end of grade testing. Dr. Carter said she felt like we would know within two weeks as a second waiver for the accountability measure will be submitted to the state.

Chairman Owen shared with the board to continue to send emails to him on things that may need to be improved, etc.

ADJOURN

Gladys Garland moved, seconded by Donna Hudson to adjourn the meeting at 1:15 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.

Wayne Owen
Chairman

Dr. Sandra Carter
Superintendent