PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF ROBESON COUNTY

Board of Education Meeting – 4320 Kahn Drive

Summary of Minutes

February 18, 2020

The Board of Education for the Public Schools of Robeson County convened in a regular scheduled meeting on February 18, 2020 – 6:00 P.M. – Central Office, Lumberton, NC.

John Campbell, Chairman - Absent

Charles Bullard, Vice Chairman

Dr. Linda Emanuel

Brenda Fairley-Ferebee

Brian Freeman

Craig Lowry

Randy Lawson

Steve Martin

Dwayne Smith

Mike Smith

Also in attendance were Superintendent Dr. Shanita Wooten; Dr. Robert Locklear, Karen Brooks-Floyd, Melissa R. Thompson and Jennifer Freeman, Assistant Superintendents; Erica Setzer, Chief Finance Officer, and Attorney Grady Hunt.

**ORDER OF BUSINESS**

1. **Call to Order:** Superintendent Dr. Shanita Wooten

2. **Invocation:** Mr. Randy Lawson

3. **Adoption of the Agenda:** Vice-Chairman, Charles Bullard. The Board approved the revised agenda.

4. **INFORMATION ITEMS**

**A. Certified/Classified Employees of the Month**

Ms. Melissa Thompson, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, recognized the Certified and Classified Employees of the Month.

**Certified Employee of the Month:**

**Ms. Cherelle Foxworth – Fairmont Middle School**

**Classified Employee of the Month:**

**Ms. Wanda Hammonds – Rowland Norment Elementary School**

**Bus Driver of the Month**

Mr. Robert Guzman, Director of Transportation, recognized the Bus Driver of the Month

**Ms. Jacqueline McNeill – Red Springs Middle School**

**Bus Driver Appreciation**

Mr. Robert Guzman, Director of Transportation displayed a slide presentation for all of his staff bus driver and everyone in the transportation area

**B. Policy Update**

Board Member Craig Lowry said that last month you received information on policy 7241 (Drug and Alcohol Testing of Commercial Motor Vehicle Operators) and 4240/7312 (Child Abuse and related Threats to Child Safety). The policies came from the state towards the end of the year in December and the state, wanting us to approve them and include them in our policies. A motion was made to move this to an action item for approval tonight. The Board set aside policy and approved the Policy updates for 7312/4240 and 7241.

**C. Surplus Property**

Board Member Dwayne Smith said, as you are aware that West Lumberton has been vacant for a while and we need to move forward through the protocol on our next step on West Lumberton. Attorney Hunt gave a brief update as far as real property on the procedures for the board to declare it surplus than the county commissioners have the right to a first refusal on any property. If they want to accept the property, they would pay like anybody else the fair market value. If they choose not to purchase the property for fair market value, it would come back to the Public Schools of Robeson County. We would then go through the disposition process. Mr. Dwayne Smith, Board Member asked, if we need to do this surplus all together. Attorney Hunt said that whatever property you intend to surplus I would surplus it all as a group than we would send a standard letter to commissioners to see if they would like to purchase the properties. If they decide, they would not like to purchase than it would come back to us.

Ms. Brenda Ferebee Fairley, Board Member would like to move this to an action item. Attorney Hunt said what properties that we are looking at to make sure we all are on the same page. (Discussion). Mr. Steve Martin said that in Allenton, we own about ten acres and for the last twenty-five years, apparently the county commissioners felt like they owned the property and it looks like they did. The gym burn several years ago and the county commissioner’s collected the insurance money on the property.

The county commissioners have been real, good to us through the years and I would like to be good back to them. In the last several years, they built a new community building on the property. Beginning Saturday, they would be renting the building for one-hundred and fifty dollars for each event. The money does not come to us it would go to the county commissioners. I also have other concerns in other townships in District 7 wanted to know why we built a community building on school property and when will they get there. I feel like at this point this property needs to be declare surplus and if the county wants it, they need to reimburse us because we need the money. (Discussion) Dr. Linda Emanuel, Board Member said, how would Green Grove Elementary fit into this? Attorney Hunt replied that if the board declare it surplus it would be surplus property too. (Discussion) I have not heard of anything happening with Green Grove Elementary. (Discussion) Dr. Shanita Wooten, Superintendent when we have our construction and finance meeting we can discuss any potential uses for that particular site. (Discussion) Dr. Linda Emanuel said that you are thinking that there might be use for Green Grove as well. Dr. Wooten said that it could be we would have to have a discussion at the Construction and Finance Committee Meeting.

Attorney Grady Hunt said so are you proposing Dr. Wooten to pull surplus property all together until your committee meeting. Attorney Hunt said that if we declare Allention, surplus tonight until we will get to more information. Mr. Charles Bullard asked Ms. Erica Setzer if she has something to say about West Lumberton Elementary School. Ms. Erica said that with West Lumberton it was including part of our alternative procedures and FEMA does not say that we cannot surplus and sale the property but they say if we do we may have to pay FEMA the money. (Discussion) I just want to remind everyone about this and that we will get some clarity on that because none of the alternative procedures have been finalized for Matthew. But West Lumberton was included as part of those alternative procedures. Policy was set aside to approve Allention as surplus property.

**D. Senate Bill 399**

Ms. Erica Setzer, Chief Finance Officer gave the overview of Senate Bill 399. Senate Bill 399 allows school system to employ retired teachers in a different way than what we have been hiring retirees. Currently we have employed retired teachers at various rates depending on the job that they are doing. There still consider a retiree and the retirement system paid their health insurance and they have to work less than thirty hours a week in our district. Senate Bill 399 gave districts the option to employ retired teachers in a more quote on quote full time capacity without it impacting their retirement. They would get a reduce salary which would be lower than a beginning teacher but more than what they would earn working thirty hours or less within that thirty hours a week. Part of Senate Bill 399 required that the district would have to assume the cost of the health insurance for that retiree we found out about this around September 12 or 13, 2019. We were told by the retirement division through the state treasurer that we have to opt in or out of this by September 15, 2019. At this point the general assembly has allowed the retirement division fifty thousand dollars to get a private letter ruling from the IRS because they are not sure if this new law would have an impact and it may jeopardize tax status of the teacher state employee retirement system and that has not been clarified what the means but in general terms that means that if they find that it does jeopardize tax status they could be finding penalties access not only the state of North Carolina but each individual districts who decided to use this program. They did not give us any idea what those fines and penalties would be or any idea what amount they would cost and the IRS has not responded yet to the general assembly on the ruling. Because of unfunded mandate and we do not know if they would be penalties and what the district would have to pay and the fact that we would have to pick up the six thousand three hundred and six dollars in health insurance the district opted out of participating in Senate Bill 399 until more information is presented. That is not final because the district could opt in or out at any given time. I was actually in Greensboro last week in a conference with around four hundred and fifty people it was asked if any school districts was using this program and only one person raised their hand. And the reason they were using it because they have a fund balance available if any penalties and fines they have funds in reserves to cover that. Dr. Linda Emanuel. Board Members said that she must have missed something I read Option I/II. Ms. Erica Setzer, Chief Finance Officer said that option I was the current way that we are employing retirees, which they must have a clear certification and only work 29.5 hours a week. (Discussion) Dr. Emanuel, Board Member asked if this information about the options given to the board. Ms. Erica said no, we only had a three-day turnaround in order to respond to the state maybe four days. The notice came to us around the September 12 or 13 and we had to the September 15, 2019 to give a response. Ms. Melissa Thompson said that we are employing at Option I. We only had one person that inquired about option II and that individual were advised that we opt out. We do know if the board so choose we can hire under the provisional of Senate Bill 399. We currently have tutors that is on the personnel list for approval this evening.

**E. Child Nutrition Administrative Review**

Ms. Charlene Locklear Bookkeeper/Supervisor for Child Nutrition present the report in reference to the Administrative Review (AR) Conducted of the Public Schools of Robeson County Child Nutrition Program January 13-16, 2020 The School Nutrition Administration, Supervisors, Central Office staff and school-based School Nutrition employees demonstrated exceptional hospitality, cooperative and accommodating to the Administrative Specialists team. They were attentive, receptive to suggestions for improvement and advocates for the School Nutrition program. In all the Administration set clear expectations, establish exemplary procedures, conduct in depth reviews, set achievable goals for Managers and staff and evaluate performance. The School Nutrition Program was commended on the performance of following the School Nutrition Program regulations in all the areas of: • Financial Management: Bid Procurement, vendor invoices, equipment quotes and purchases. • Professional Standards tracking- meet requirements for Central Office/School staff. • Smart Snack compliance- resource includes production specifications sheet, a recipe and Smart Snack Calculator confirmations. • Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) recognized a 100% rate of accuracy • Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Program (FFVP) the district participation of the program with 20 schools. Excellent stewards of annual grant funding wisely utilizing 100% of allocated award. • USDA Foods –Excellent utilization to enhance the financial operation of the School Nutrition Program. • Menus & Planning- Food served is of high quality, nutritious and well presented. Offering a wide variety of appealing choices daily for students at breakfast/lunch. In conclusion, the Administrative review team contacted Dr. Lynn Harvey, RDN, LDN, FAND, SNS Director, School Nutrition and District Operations and commended Robeson County on the improvements from the Administrative review five years ago

Mr. Craig Lowry, Board Member said that he had the opportunity to speak with Lynn Harvey who is the director of this program in the state. She just expressed from her colleagues, this is by far one of the best reviews they have ever had the opportunity to be a part of.

**F. Action Items**

**A Financial Report**

Ms. Erica Setzer, Chief finance officer presented the financial report that you receive in your packet for approval. Mr. Charles Bullard, Vice-Chairman said how much more money do FEMA owe us. Ms. Erica Setzer, Chief Finance Officer said that would be hard to say because we have an alternative procedures application on the table that we are going to talk about as Dr. Wooten indicated in the finance meeting and construction meeting about those alternative procedures and expectation of funds and that is only dealing with Matthew. We will have some more of those numbers once we get there. At this moment, it is close to ninety billion dollars that we expect at some point to receive. When that will be I able not sure because we are in about four years out from Matthew. (Discussion) There was a motion and a second to approve the finance report.

5. Motion that the Board of Education for the Public Schools of Robeson County go into closed session for the purposes of discussing certified and classified personnel (N.C. Gen. Stat.§143-318.11 (a) 1 (6), student transfers (N.C. Gen. Stat. §115C-402 and N.C. Gen. Stat. §143-318.11 (a) (1) The Board approved the motion.

6. Motion to come out of closed session. The Board approved the motion.

7. Motion to approve personnel as presented. The Board approved the motion.

8. Motion to adjourn. The Board approved the motion.

**B. Public Comments**

Mr. Jeff McNeill said in reference to policy 1010, which is hiring a superintendent. When we have policies of discrimination, harassment and bulling which is around 7 or 8 pages and 1710/4021/7230 my question is why we could not simplify that.

School system employees, volunteers and visitors, are to behave in a civil and a respectful manner. The board prohibits unlawfully discrimination, harassment and bulling the other key word is unlawful. We can hold people to a zero tolerance by saying no bulling, discrimination or harassment. With the word unlawful, we are saying Dr. Wooten can simply intimidate a principal because she has that authority too as long as she stay within reason. A principal could intimidate a teacher as long as they stays within reason. A teacher can intimidate a student also because they justify so I ask the board tonight to go back review some more procedures especially this one along with the parental involvement and selection of textbooks. I would recommend that we go back to the communities and see if we can change some of the wording.

Respectfully submitted,

John Campbell, Chairman

Dr. Shanita Wooten, Secretary