

Graduation pressure eases with delay set for July

BY DANIEL KENNEDY

RANDOLPH COUNTY — With the pressure of determining a course of action for graduation this year having subsided, school officials have had time to reflect in May on the last two months of isolation.

Stephen Gainey, superintendent of Randolph County Schools, addressed parents and students, along with the rest of the community, last week. His scheduled remarks were included in a series of videos produced at the behest of Randolph County government, which has worked to keep residents abreast of important information relating to COVID-19.

“As we’ve moved through this time of crisis and school closure, different things have developed,” Gainey said. “I’ve been a middle school and high school



Photo courtesy of Randolph County

Stephen Gainey, superintendent of Randolph County Schools, provides an update on how the schools intend to proceed in the next phase of addressing COVID-19.

principal, and I’ve loved both of those jobs. I love everything about public schools.

“I will tell you there’s great events, from a child entering kindergarten to their exiting 12th grade, but there is no greater event than high school graduation.”

Gainey said the five most special events in his career have been the graduation ceremonies he observed as a high school principal, taking in the moment a graduating class enters the room during each ceremony.

“Watching a graduating class process toward

the stage, it’s just something I’ll never forget,” Gainey said.

A tough discussion was had, the superintendent said, on what to do regarding the Class of 2020. High school principals, board of education members and the seniors were all consid-

ered, the superintendent said. He reiterated that all vested interests had to be at the forefront of his attention throughout the process of setting a plan for graduation.

Wrestling with the decision for several weeks, Gainey said, the administration ultimately turned their attention to the seniors, surveying the individuals who made up this graduating class.

“We put a survey out there on April 29, April 30 and May 1,” Gainey said. “And in three days, 71% of our high school seniors responded. Eighty-two% of those responses said to please delay this until later in the summer, late July or early August.”

At a special called board meeting earlier this month, members of the Randolph County Board of Education decided to move graduation to Saturday, July 25.

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UPDATE

Coronavirus cases reported so far:

Centers for Disease Control at press time

• **N.C. cases:** 23,964 (754 deaths)

• **Randolph County:** 613 (10 deaths)

• **Guilford County:** 1,092 (53 deaths)

• **Forsyth County:** 977 (9 deaths)

• **Davidson County:** 359 (11 deaths)

