Caswell County Board of Commissioners
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Commissioners Tim Yarbrough, Frank Rose, John Claggett, Finch Holt, Greg Ingram, Tony Smith, Brian Totten

BOC and BOE MINUTES | Special Called Joint Meeting

January 13, 2026, 6:00pm, Gunn Memorial Public Library

BOC MEMBERS PRESENT
Tim Yarbrough, Chair
Frank Rose, Vice Chair
John Claggett
Finch Holt
Greg Ingram
Tony Smith
Brian Totten

BOE MEMBERS PRESENT
Mel Battle, Chair
Joel Lillard, Vice Chair
Vennie Beggarly
Trudy Blackwell
Lisa Johnson-Knight
Nicole McGhee
Nicole Smith

COUNTY EMPLOYEES PRESENT
Scott Whitaker, County Manager
Stephanie Williams, Deputy Clerk
Keith Horton, Finance Officer

CCS EMPLOYEE PRESENT
Brooke Underwood, Chief Financial Officer

Caswell's Board of Commissioners (BOC) and Board of Education (BOE) are connected via funding and a shared goal of quality education. It's important that both boards understand needs and resources in relation to Caswell County Schools (CCS), and the purpose of this meeting was to share information and maintain an effective working relationship. The meeting was open to the public. The Board of Commissioners and the Board of Education for the County of Caswell, North Carolina met in a joint special call meeting on Tuesday, 1/13/26, at 6:00pm at Gunn Memorial Public Library,161 Main St., Yanceyville, NC.

Welcome: Chair Yarbrough called the meeting to order for the BOC and Chair Battle called the meeting to order for the BOE. All were invited to pause for a moment of silent prayer and to recite the Pledge of Allegiance. The meeting agenda was accepted.

Announcements and recognitions: BOE Chair Battle recognized the school board members and announced that January is National School Board Appreciation Month.

Presentations:

Completing Access to Broadband (CAB) updates: Jeff Brooks from N.C. Department of Information Technology (NCDIT) discussed broadband in detail as it is related to the State and Caswell. Currently for Caswell, the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program will fund 270 locations, 135 with fiber and 135 with satellite. Six of the satellites will be Starlink and the remaining will be Amazon products. All broadband programs being funded in Caswell must be completed by 12/31/26.

Commissioner Totten asked if the build-out process includes both fiber and satellite. Brooks stated the BEAD Program includes the two types of satellites, which do not include installation, and fiber, which does include installation. Each individual address is awarded one type of technology, but that does not necessarily prevent an address from getting the other technology.

BOE Chair Battle mentioned being advised of a different timeframe regarding the completion date and not being aware he had an option about fiber or satellite. He asked about the cell phone services issue lacking in the County. Brooks stated that cell service emanates from cell towers and is not related to broadband.

Commissioner Smith wanted to know their reason for the shift from fiber across the board to satellite in many locations. Brooks advised about the influence from Washington and that satellite is cheaper to install compared to fiber, and topography affects fiber costs.

BOE Vice Chair Lillard asked about the next wave being complete 2031 leaving 500 customers without the ability to have access. Brooks stated as of November, data showed 10,992 locations had access leaving 1,544 without access. The location breakdown is as follows: BEAD with 270, another group 85, and 344 that fall under existing overage leaving approximately 500 locations with no access.

CCS celebrations and highlights: BOE Vice Chair Lillard shared a record high graduation rate last year at 88.5%, up 13.1% from years 2016–2025. The school system had exited the low performance district status this year, 83% of the schools met or exceeded growth, and four out of six schools improved their performance grades. North Elementary placed within the top 25% of elementary school's growth within the state. South Elementary placed in the top 10 of elementary schools with growth in the state and was also recognized by the Piedmont Triad Education Consortium as a signature school. Currently Caswell County Schools has 2,341 students enrolled.

CFO Brook Underwood discussed charter schools. The school system gets an invoice monthly from a given charter school with their Average Daily Membership (ADM) for a child who lives in Caswell that goes to a charter school. The money Caswell receives locally is divided among the enrolled students and the charter school. If a child leaves for a charter school and then returns to CCS, CCS does not receive that money back. Currently there are 346 students from Caswell enrolled in charter schools, but that number changes monthly. Last year the school system paid $300K to charter schools.

BOE Chair Battle stated there are home-schooled children within the county, charter schools do not have to provide transportation, teachers do not have to be certified, and they do not have to accept exceptional children.

Commissioner Smith referenced the handout provided and asked when school payments started to the charter schools. Underwood advised the document started in July, went through 1/12/26, and reflected the total amount sent so far.

BOC Chair Yarbrough wanted to know the number of home-schooled kids. Underwood advised it was a base dollar amount that changes monthly. They did not keep a record of home-schooled kids but could get an estimated number. They also did not have the number of kids in private schools or enrolled in Virginia schools.

"2025 Year in Review" presentation: County Manager Whitaker expressed that a similar goal that both Boards share is quality education and both have recently been through substantial leadership changes. He shared the presentation that is available on the county's Facebook page and highlighted keys items with some examples being: broadband improvements; audits being current through FY24 and FY25 currently being worked on; school system investment and supplements; hiring of key staff positions; a grant for laptops and training for citizens; and multiple Parks & Recreation grants.

Discussion items:

Oakwood Elementary—needs-based grant update: BOE Chair Battle stated that Oakwood Elementary was over sixty years old and has been remodeled multiple times throughout the years and it currently has the largest student population of the four elementary schools. The school system received grant of $18.8M in December 2025.

Underwood stated the updates will focus more on mechanical renovations, examples being electrical updates, roofing, and a new HVAC system as the school currently runs off thirty individual HVAC systems. The updates will start this year and take about two years. It is possible that students will have to be moved to a different school during the construction phase.

Commissioner Smith asked if some of the funds could go to help with the traffic on Firetower Road (Oakwood) due to excessive car riders. BOE Chair Battle stated North Elementary faced the same problem as there are more car riders than bus riders. BOE Vice Chair Lillard stated that NCDOT is currently studying that situation. Oakwood is landlocked and has the largest population of students (364) of all four elementary schools.

CCS funding overview: Underwood reviewed budget highlights for the 25–26 school year. After recent review of the quarterly report, revenues and expenditures look as expected but the school system will always have capital outlay needs. There has been no state budget for two years, which impacts the local budget. Examples are increases in the State health plan by $500 per person and retirement contributions. Current expenditures as of end of December were 56.82%, which includes two reimbursables that have been received and will be in the third quarter report. The capital outlay needs expenditures are higher due to not being able to repair some things and having to replace them. She answered all questions from the Commissioners about the handout that was provided.

CCS capital reserve update: Underwood referenced a handout and stated all quotes should be in by the end of the month. South Elementary is currently having problems with their water system. The replacement will take place this summer while there are no students in the building for an estimated $70K. BOC Chair Yarbrough asked if this was a new item for the water treatment repair for South and where the money was originally going to be spent. Underwood advised it was a new item, and originally to be spent at Oakwood prior to the grant. BOE Vice Chair Lillard mentioned that South Elementary's water filtration system is very important due to it being well water, and currently the situation is only a temporary fix.

BOC Vice Chair Rose asked if the Bartlett Yancey High School roof leaks had been repaired. Underwood advised these had been fixed at the school's cost.

Commissioner Smith asked about the lead time once all the capital project proposals are received. BOE Vice Chair Lillard responded that projects must be completed by the end of the fiscal year.

BOE Chair Battle referenced the closure of multiple elementary schools over the years currently leaving four. One is Stoney Creek with an enrollment of 145 students. BOC Chair Yarbrough asked about the number of students enrolled in the other schools. BOE Vice Chair Lillard provided the number of students: North: 307; South:234; Stoney Creek: 140; Oakwood: 364, NL Dillard: 419; and Barlett Yancey: 598. North and South are not at capacity and each can hold 700 students. There were several concerns expressed about taking a closer look at Stoney Creek because of the increase in bus route times and the increase in the number of housing permits in the district. BOE Vice Chair Lillard wanted to know if the building permits could be shared quarterly with the BOE for a better understanding of surrounding housing growth within school districts.

County budget development calendar and CSS-related dates: County Finance Director Horton reviewed the adopted FY26–27 Budget Calendar and highlighted the key dates of 1/7, 1/16, 3/16, 3/25, 5/12, and 7/1. He advised how budget development related to the school system. Manager Whitaker explained that CCS has a 3/25 deadline to submit its budget requests, although the statutory deadline is around 5/15, which can make it hard to plan a budget. BOE Vice Chair Lillard wanted the boards to meet again to discuss the budget before submitting.

General question-and-answer session: BOC Chair Yarbrough asked what it meant that South Elementary was a "signature school." BOE Vice Chair Lillard said that it was a recognition by the Piedmont Triad Education Consortium as being a top elementary school within the state.

Manager Whitaker referenced the building permit report from the 1/5 BOC agenda package. BOE Vice Chair Lillard asked about a geographical map of the permits to better plan for additional students.

Commissioner Smith wanted to see more use of the Civic Center for the community and felt that it could be a great economic development tool. BOE Chair Battle stated that CCS loses money operating it and stated there had been discussions about turning it over to the county. The potential of a split-funded position for the county and school system was mentioned to have someone full-time to run and promote the Civic Center. Whitaker mentioned making the ED Ken Bowman more aware of what the building offers.

Action item:

Regular meetings between the BOC and BOE—setting a schedule: BOC Chair Yarbrough stated it was the first time in years that the Board's had a joint meeting. Multiple ideas of how often and when were discussed with the decision to meet twice a year in April and October. Manager Whitaker and Interim Superintendent Stokes are to work out further details.

Adjournment: Commissioner Ingram moved, seconded by Vice Chair Rose, to adjourn the meeting of the BOC. The motion carried unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:45pm.

Vice Chair Lillard moved, seconded by Lisa Johnson-Knight, to adjourn the meeting of the BOE. The motion carried unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:45pm.

Stephanie Williams
Stephanie Williams
Deputy Clerk

Tim Yarbrough
Board of Commissioners Chair

Connie Kimrey
Connie Kimrey
Administrative Assistant

Mel Battle
Board of Education Chair