

CASWELL COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES

March 23, 2026

The Caswell County Board of Education met in regular session on Monday, March 23, 2026, at 5:30 p.m. in the Administration Building of Caswell County Schools. Members present: Chairman Mel Battle, Vice Chair Joel Lillard, Vennie Beggarly, Lisa Johnson-Knight, Nicole McGhee, Nicole Smith, and Trudy Blackwell. Others present include Interim Superintendent Lance Stokes, Brook Underwood, Jane Frazier, Sharon Jones, Amy Howard, Mattie Howard, Brittany & Nick Pearson, John Claggett, Daniel & Brittany Crisson, Michael & Amy Willis, Allyson Boles, Jeffrey Allmon, Tina Allmond, Casey Evans, Troy & Trace Evans, Adam Evans, Steve Jones, Elizabeth Barnwell, Heather Barnwell, Donna Barnwell, Laura Campbell, Laura & Patrick Steele, Shannon Moretz, Brandi Boaz, Angie Wilson, Stephen Wilson, Levin Wilson, Elin Claggett, Ollie Graves, Paul Robinson, Katherine Hubbard, Carl Hubbard, Brantley Hubbard, Melissa Wise, Clinton Kimble, Cicely Alston, Harley Chandler, Pamela Turner, Alice Robinson, Shirley Stanfield, Nate Moore, Dr. Jones, Robert Brown & family, Andy Stanley, Amanda Merry, Travis Berill, Paul, Jasmine, Palona, Bellame Higgins, Ophelia Willis, Melissa & Justine Boone, Finch & Sherry Holt, Elois Sellars, Larry Sellars, Flossie Graves, Jeffrey Graves, Monica Alexandra, Jennifer Sparks, Jasmine Graves, Nikki Cole, Melanie Pinto, and Board Attorney Ron Bradsher. Connie Kimrey recorded the minutes. *(Note: Others may have been present but did not sign the roster or names were not legible).*

I. A. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Mel Battle. A moment of silence was observed, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

I. B. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Nicole Smith moved, seconded by Lisa Johnson-Knight, to approve the minutes of the March 9, 2026 regular meeting as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

I. C. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Interim Superintendent Lance Stokes recommended approval of agenda as presented. Nicole Smith moved, seconded by Trudy Blackwell, to approve the agenda. Joel Lillard requested Item # 11, Naming of Softball Field, to be added. With no other changes, the motion carried unanimously.

I. D. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Interim Superintendent Lance Stokes shared he participated in the installation of the PCC President on Friday and shared the school district was represented well noting several high school students were in attendance. He shared the traffic study for the high school is in the final week and information will be brought to board members. Additional studies are taking place at Oakwood and North and will shared potential options that have been identified. Mr. Stokes shared the Teacher Working Condition Survey is out and is encouraging certified staff to take the survey noting the deadline of March 31, 2026.

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Cicely Alston with Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., Eta Eta Zeta Chapter of Yanceyville, North Carolina, presented two grants in support of educators with Caswell County Schools.

Avery Artis, Principal at North Elementary received the Eta Eta Zeta Legacy of Excellence Scholarship (School Level) Beginning Teacher Support Program in the amount of \$1,000.

Jadasha Stewart, Beginning Teacher at North Elementary received the Eta Eta Zeta Legacy of Excellence Scholarship in the amount of \$500.

I. E. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Steve Jones shared he is a member of the Cherry Grove community and is also a firefighter. He shared the fire department is engaged with Stoney Creek Elementary and the school is a family, friendly place. The students are engaged and the educators are as well. If the plans are to close Stoney Creek, it will cause a disruption to the community. Stoney Creek is a small town feeling and if possible, perhaps there are grants to look into writing to find additional funds to keep the building in place. He asked the board to have a clear vision and seek prayers quoting James 1:5. He shared he as well as many feel passionately about this school.

Allyson Boles shared she is the PTO Vice President of Stoney Creek and her children have attended this school since kindergarten. She asked the board to reconsider closing Stoney Creek noting her child is excited to attend this school. Serving in the role as PTO Vice President she has seen firsthand that the students are engaged and teachers go above and beyond as well as the principal. Small schools are not a weakness but are a strength. The community supports each other. She noted 440 signatures on a petition who believe in this school and asked the board to consider what cannot be measured in numbers along. If you choose to close this school, you not only losing a school but disrupting a community noting Stoney Creek is more than just a school.

Amy Howard shared she has served as PTO President and also has had two students in Caswell County Schools. She is sharing thoughts of many and asked the board not to approve the proposed starting times noting it will be difficult for working parents and shared not all schools have a before and after school program. She, as well as others, are not in favor of this.

Mrs. Howard also asked the board to reject any plans to close Stoney Creek. The Interim Superintendent wrote a letter to the board sharing there has been significant discussion. She questioned why repurpose a functional school. She agreed that the school needs repairs but nowhere near other schools and shared it has been maintained. If closing the school, this would result in longer bus rides and she also noted this school has the largest percentage of Hispanic students. She shared numerous sub-divisions are being built and the population will continue to increase. Stoney Creek is known by its name and the community has a strong connection and pride

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in this school. She asked the board to please say no to start times and no to closing this school. Leaders are those who protect and not dismantle.

Nicole Smith stated that in the letter it indicates significant discussion; however, she is only aware of one meeting in 2025 in which this was mentioned.

Mandy Howard shared she is dually enrolled at the high school and PCC and her sister attends Stoney Creek. She is against closing this school noting the school has the best teachers. She referenced a June 7, 2022 joint meeting and why Stoney Creek does not have a Pre-K. She shared comments made from that meeting by Mel Battle noting less is better and it is a long run if you live near Williamsburg and that funds could be diverted as well as a long haul on a bus for 2 ½ to 3 hours and closing this school would only make things worse.

Laura Steele shared she attended this school since kindergarten and she now has her own kids who are and will be attending. Stoney Creek is a strong staple in the community and if closed the driving time for parents is a major concern. She shared many of her thoughts have been shared earlier and noted the community wants the school to remain open.

Paul Robinson, Sr., shared he was a former teacher at Bartlett Yancey and works with the County Outreach Ministry. He thanked the school for the partnership with them to pass out Gatorade and bottled water to the track team. He thanked Mr. Stokes for helping to get this organized and shared they gave out ten cases of bottled water today and fifteen cases of Gatorade.

Stephanie Wilson added similar sentiments to what had been shared regarding Stoney Creek. She shared she was around when they closed Cobb School down and how the drive affected surrounding districts.

Dr. Frank Jones, Senior Pastor of Browns Chapel and a representative of the National Baptist Convention shared his thoughts on closing Stoney Creek. He shared that this is a burden on behalf of the people and it is not just about logistics or education but for the well-being of the children. If bus rides are two and a half hours or more this is too big of a burden for these small children. Long commutes impact minds and bodies. It is proven that small children need nine hours of sleep especially for Pre-K and Kindergarten and if not, they experience hunger and fatigue. This has been documented. This decision is not only an educational issue but a decision that carries influence and can be a paralysis in the life of a child. Closing schools will prevent businesses to come. He asked for a call to your conscience as this is a moral decision, a spiritual and community defining decision. He shared he loves everyone and asked if this is something necessary when it can be harmful.

Robert Brown shared he has lived in the community all of his life and concurred with all the other statements shared for Stoney Creek. He noted the community feel that Stoney Creek has and noted other schools have lost that feeling. He shared a note from his daughter to the board.

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Mel Battle read loud comments that were emailed prior to the meeting.

Patrick Vernon

When local elementary schools were consolidated in the 1990s school leaders realized the value of keeping Stoney Creek open especially the geographic location of the other schools. The southwestern corner of Caswell County has a significant population that benefits from the school. The school has long and strong ties to the community. Current leaders should make it staying open a priority.

Tommie Stanfield

I was in this fight over 20 years ago. Seems people want to bus little kids for a long way. Kids should not have to be part of the solution. I have been in this school several times over the past few years and it seems to be a great school. I think it's great when the school is small enough for friendships to be formed. So proud of what Principal Hilary is doing there.

Nikki (from Elon)

When North Elementary and South Elementary Schools were built in our county they tried to close Stoney Creek. The community, parents, teachers and staff rallied to keep it open then, and we will rally to keep it open now! Instead of spending \$18 million on renovations at Oakwood (\$900,000 of which the school system or County Commissioners would have to pay) why wasn't Stoney Creek considered to receive that grant? Oakwood has been "renovated" since North and South were built. Was closing Stoney Creek in the plans all along? We have been asked to vote on new starting and ending times for our elementary, middle, and high schools for next year so that we can run buses to allow for shorter ride times. This is not going to help the situation if Stoney Creek is closed. You will just be adding back longer ride times for elementary students from the southwestern part of the county to travel to South/North/Oakwood. If the question that keeps recurring is "how many students are enrolled at Stoney Creek." Consider redistricting by putting more students at Stoney Creek and reduce the number of students at the other three elementary schools. There are so many other possibilities. Stop jumping to the option of closing Stoney Creek. I could go on and on, but I'll stop here for now.

Angela Wilson

Closing Stoney Creek would negatively impact students, families, and the surrounding community. The school serves as a safe, supportive environment and a cornerstone of local engagement. We urge decision-makers to consider the long-term consequences and keep the school open.

My name is Tasha Miles; I am sorry that I was unable to attend this meeting. I felt I needed to express my concern in regards to closing down Stoney Creek Elementary School. I believe that it would be a terrible decision to close it, the school plays an important role in the community and

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comes with a lot of history. The school has been beneficial and this will call for longer bus routes for them to be transported to another school. They have an awesome group of staff and they work hard so that the students can be successful. The leadership that has been there have made things happen when people thought otherwise. The community helps them when they need items for students and enjoy volunteering and supporting them anytime. I think you all need to really be mindful of who will be affected, not think about adults but the babies are the ones that will be hurting the most.... I know the feeling of having my elementary school close down (Anderson Elementary) and then being transported to South Elementary, I may have been young but it was hard and with the climate of society now, we need to think about our kid's mental health. I hope that you will pay attention to the community and not make this decision based on what others may not have experienced.

Finch Holt, Board of County Commissioners, District 2

Mr. Holt shared he disagreed strongly with the closing of Stoney Creek. He shared that two years ago a joint meeting was held and a commissioner brought up closing Stoney Creek and someone on this board explained why we cannot close it sharing information in which they shared it would cost more if it was closed. Mr. Holt questioned what has changed? He shared that building permits in Caswell has tripled and referenced the bypass on the southwest side of the county. He shared that we need this school and cannot shut it down as it would bring hardships to kids in this school district. As a County Commissioner he opposes the closing of Stoney Creek strongly.

Jennifer Sparks shared she is an advocate for Stoney Creek and felt that everyone has given testimonies from their hearts. She shared she could work elsewhere; however, she loves this community and noted the staff at the schools do so much with so little. She has many grievances referencing the installment of the acting superintendent and noted that bullyness rides down. She shared he speaks evasively and dismissively and does not allow others to speak. She shared Oakwood is overburdened and when concerns were brought to his attention his response was to buy our teachers nice gifts to make them feel good. She felt people are displeased with his dishonesty regarding the grant and sharing information with the county. She referenced the information regarding closure of Stoney Creek and shared it needs repairs/renovations; however, the answer should not be quick to shut the school down. She shared she serves on a SHAC committee and he was quick to shut her down when she spoke in public comments previously.

At this point, she continued to speak; however, a recess was taken by Chair Mel Battle.

Vennie Beggarly shared she has been on the board since 2019 and she does not recall any in depth discussions regarding Stoney Creek except for the bathroom renovations until information was shared with the board this week.

The board reconvened at this time.

II. REPORTS

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None at this time.

III. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Capital Outlay 888

Updates were shared with the reserve funds. Mr. Stokes shared that the commissioners created the 888 fund and a spreadsheet was given with the status of where we are. A smaller spreadsheet was shared with the commissioners during the last joint meeting and Mr. Stokes shared that since then changes have taken place noting that our maintenance team was able to repair the HVAC in the welding area. Mr. Stokes shared the water issues at South was not in the initial scope of work.

Vennie Beggarly questioned what happened to the East Wing as it was the plan for PCC to use it and they received a grant to do the upgrades needed regarding HVAC work. Mr. Stokes shared that the Golden Leaf grant supported the program; however, there was not enough to do all of the rooms needed. PCC supported electrical upgrades and there are rooms that were not utilized or upgraded. Joel Lillard questioned when the board was going to be informed of this as he was not aware of it. Mr. Stokes referenced the spreadsheet and shared the board can decide on what to do as there are several needs listed. Mr. Stokes shared the East Wing is not used all the time but heavily used during testing. During the winter the rooms are cold. Additional questions were brought up regarding the HVAC units at the Civic Center. Questions were asked regarding why this was not shared earlier and Mr. Stokes asked Mr. Alan Poteat, Maintenance Director to come to the podium. Mr. Stokes shared the middle of the Civic Center is not working and noted the building is not utilized daily. Mr. Poteat shared in 1978 the Civic Center heating and air was never hooked up and not completed. HVAC units have been replaced and repaired. Other upgrades have taken place and during the summer the maintenance department works to keep the air conditioning on. He referenced the stage has been redone, new curtains, and new carpet in the small auditorium.

Discussion took place regarding what has been shared with the commissioners and recent updates the board recently were made aware of. Concerns mentioned included the list of capital reserve needs should be approved by the Board of Education and shared with the Board of County Commissioners and continue to be transparent. Joel Lillard shared he felt like the board should have been aware of the problems at East Wing and that the grant did not cover the entire wing as the board was led to believe. Mr. Poteat shared he submitted reports in 2023 to the superintendent but was not sure if this was shared with the board in regards to HVAC issues at the Civic Center.

Joel Lillard suggested including a walk through on Monday when the commissioners are scheduled to walk through Oakwood.

Needs Based Grant

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Interim Superintendent Lance Stokes shared there has been much conversation, confusion and lack of communication and he shared he is held accountable as he was asked a series of questions and it has been very difficult. When questioned if board members were aware of the 5% match he said yes and he should have said that the board was aware of matching funds. It was not his intent to have both boards at odds.

Mel Battle shared that in 2023 and 2024 the same grant was applied for and the board approved to comply and noted that the application had to go to Raleigh and both years the application required the Board Chair's signature from both boards. He was not aware that the board saw the entire grant application on either of those years. Mr. Battle referenced the September 8, 2025 minutes in which the Board of Education voted to proceed with the grant and the minutes reflect there will be matching funds. Now that we have received the grant we are aware of the amount. He admitted he signed it without seeing the entire application and the chair for the Board or Commissioners has shared he did not see the application as well and signed the application which required both signatures. Mr. Battle shared in hindsight it should have been a joint meeting with both boards and explained that there is a 5% match. The grant was written for Oakwood specifically and noted that during the repairs the roof will need to be removed and children will need to be moved to another site.

Joel Lillard had concerns in which Mr. Stokes was asked by the Board of County Commissioners if the Chair to the Board of Education was aware of the 5% match and he responded yes. It is reflected in their minutes and on two different times he was questioned. Joel Lillard shared that Mr. Battle has said he was not aware of the 5% match and this, in his opinion, is very concerning. Mr. Battle responded that he was not aware of the amount. Joel Lillard shared he felt someone is not being truthful. Mr. Stokes shared in his earlier comment that he felt he cleared this up and shared he spoke in error and asked the Board of Education to hold him accountable.

Trudy Blackwell shared that we have received the \$18.8-million-dollar grant and now we are aware of the amount of matching funds. This is the largest grant we have ever received and we need to look at areas in our budget and reach out to the commissioners to try and find ways to work together as we do not want this funding to go back to the State. Trudy Blackwell also shared that she began working in Caswell at Stoney Creek and agrees it is a wonderful place to be and is all for looking at grants for repairs needed at this school also.

Vennie Beggarly referenced the recent Board of County Commissioners meeting in which it was stated that Mr. Stokes indicated he would not be asking for the capital outlay money that they gave us last year and was not at the meeting to ask the county to come up with the money. Mr. Stokes shared the capital outlay he was referencing is money that comes from the State, ADM, and Lottery and would help with the Needs Based Grant and felt it may have been interpreted incorrectly. Nicole Smith shared she felt that it was, as one commissioner asked you if you would not need any funding next year for capital outlay and you replied yes. She shared that the matching funds were

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not explained noting it is to be paid over a one, two and three-year period and felt this needs to be communicated and clarified with the commissioners. Mr. Stokes shared the 5% is to be paid over a stretch of three years. The first year is a lesser amount and the second and third are more of a challenge when looking at the building construction and the economy going up. Joel Lillard questioned the contract that the county attorney has and asked if the board has seen this. Mr. Stokes shared that he was asked to send all correspondence to their attorney for review and noted the paperwork is due by the first of April. He sent it to the interim county manager and she shared with the county attorney. Joel Lillard questioned why their board has it but we do not and again referenced transparency. Joel Lillard also shared that when questioned from the commissioners Mr. Stokes referenced Connie Kimrey gave Mr. Yarbrough the paperwork to be signed; however, Mr. Yarbrough shared that he saw Mr. Stokes and wanted this to be clear for the minutes noting another discrepancy.

Nicole Smith made a motion to contract with Dr. Doug Barker to be a consultant to the board and help us with managing this grant along with helping us with our budget and other projects. Vennie Beggarly seconded the motion.

Discussion took place on what exactly Dr. Barker would do and other questions were asked regarding the high school project and if a project manager was hired. It was confirmed that Bill Powell was the project manager and was the liaison for the board and the county with information and invoices, etc.

At this time, Mel Battle questioned County Commissioner Holt (who was in the audience) and asked if he had seen the application. Mr. Holt shared his board is aware but no decision or commitment has been made.

Mel Battle amended the motion to hire a consultant to work with the budget and grant and other funds as needed using local funds. Nicole McGhee seconded the motion.

Vennie Beggarly questioned could this not be Dr. Barker and why not include him in the motion. Mel Battle shared if he is not in agreement to do this the vote would still stand to look at other options.

Upon the amended motion by Mel Battle, seconded by Nicole McGhee, to hire a consultant to work with the board with budgets and the Needs Based Grant and other funds as needed, the motion carried 4-3 with Lillard, Beggarly and Smith voting "No."

The original motion made by Nicole Smith, seconded by Vennie Beggarly, to contract with Dr. Doug Barker to assist with budget, grant, and other projects as needed failed 3-4 with Battle, Blackwell, McGhee and Johnson-Knight voting "No."

It was shared that the consultant could be Dr. Barker if he is in agreement.

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IV. NEW BUSINESS

1. Consent Agenda

Nicole Smith moved, seconded by Lisa Johnson-Knight, to approve the consent agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Requests for Transfer

Mathis, Natalie	Caswell	to	ABSS (6 th)
Padilla, Natalia	Caswell	to	Rockingham (K)
Padilla, Oscar	Caswell	to	Rockingham (1 st)

Title I Parent Survey

K-5 Resources Survey

Professional Development = Lance Stokes

June 17-19, 2026 = Summer Leadership Conference = Asheville, NC

2. Instructional Coach NL Dillard Middle 2026-2027

Joel Lillard moved, seconded by Vennie Beggarly, to approve the instructional coaches for NL Dillard Middle School using Title I allotments. The motion carried unanimously.

3. Capital Outlay 888 Projects

Based on earlier discussion, this item will be put on hold until after the walk through scheduled for March 30, 2026 and brought back as unfinished business.

4. Budget Amendment # 3

Per board discussion it was agreed that if emergencies occurred that the board would be polled and opted not to move any money at this time.

5. Policy # 2310, Public Participation at Board Meetings

Nicole McGhee had requested this be on the agenda. She shared her concerns in which parents and community members speak in public comments and felt Part C should hold people accountable if deemed necessary and as a board to maintain professionalism. She

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hoped going forward the public comments portions aligns to the governance of the board's role and how concerns should be handled. Joel Lillard shared this particular policy was discussed at the recent spring law conference and the board cannot stop anyone from speaking unless there are specifics listed in our policy and legally you cannot do anything about it noting we currently have no specifics in our policy.

Upon more discussion, it was agreed to look at this policy at the next work session.

6. 2025-2026 School Calendar

Interim Superintendent Lance Stokes shared due to missing a day of school on March 16th, changes are needed to the calendar. He reviewed that we are in need of an additional four hours to make up. He suggested extending the elementary day by five-minutes. Vennie Beggarly shared she would have liked to have input from the elementary principals and also shared that all schools are not dismissing at the same time currently.

Lengthy discussion took place regarding options and members who were in the audience voiced their concerns with extending the day by five minutes noting that staff would be going into comp time by working over their normal hours and referenced already coming in ten minutes earlier in the mornings.

Upon more discussion on options for making up the four hours it was shared that no answer will make everyone happy.

Joel Lillard moved, seconded by Lisa Johnson-Knight to make June 9th a full day and only elementary students will attend on June 10th with an early release at 10:00 a.m. The motion carried 6-1 with Beggarly voting "No."

7. Beginning Teacher Support Program Plan

Personnel Director Jane Frazier reviewed the Beginning Teacher Support Program Plan and shared it uses Title II funds. It was questioned if the mentor bonuses are paid out of this. Jane Frazier responded they are; however, she will bring that portion of it back to the board.

Joel Lillard moved, seconded by Nicole Smith, to approve the Beginning Teacher Support Program Plan as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

8. Resolutions

Mel Battle read aloud the resolution for James (Pat) Neal. Joel Lillard moved, seconded by Trudy Blackwell. The motion carried unanimously.

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Resolution in Memorial and Appreciation
Of the Life of
James Patrick (Pat) Neal

WHEREAS, James Patrick “Pat” Neal was born February 28, 1946, and resided in Little River, South Carolina, at the time of his death on March 7, 2026, and

WHEREAS, Pat Neal, was a faithful and loving individual, husband, father, grandfather, and friend to many and his family’s welfare was his major and constant concern; and

WHEREAS, Pat Neal was a graduate of Fike High School and went on to earn an undergraduate degree, a master’s degree, and a six-year degree in education from East Carolina University. These achievements laid the foundation for a career in educational leadership; and

WHEREAS, Pat Neal’s career in educational leadership, as a principal began at New Dotmond Elementary School in Caswell County. He later served as principal at Peterson Elementary School and Red Springs High School in Red Springs, North Carolina. His leadership journey continued at Northeastern High School in Elizabeth City and concluded with roles at Bertie County High School and Bertie Elementary School in Bertie County; and

WHEREAS, Pat Neal, embraced life with passion. In his late 20’s and 30’s he played rugby in Caswell County and Red Springs, enjoying the camaraderie of the sport. Pat loved traveling and spending time sailing and most of all cherished time with his family. Pat’s legacy as an educator, family man, and friend will live on through those who knew him; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Caswell County Board of Education wishes to honor the memory of Pat Neal and expresses its sympathy to his family by causing a copy of this Resolution to be spread upon the official minutes of the Board of Education and a copy forwarded to the family.

This the 23rd day of March 2026.

Nicole McGhee read aloud the resolution for local boards urging the passing of budget. Vennie Beggarly moved, seconded by Trudy Blackwell, to approve the resolution to urge the passing of the budget. The motion carried unanimously.

Local Board Resolution Urging Budget Passage

WHEREAS, North Carolina General Statute § 143C-4-1 states the General Assembly shall create a budget for two fiscal years beginning on July 1 of each odd-numbered year; and

WHEREAS, it is nine months into Fiscal Year 2026 and a Current Operations Appropriations Act has not yet been enacted by the General Assembly; and

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WHEREAS, Caswell County Schools receives approximately 92% of its funding from State appropriations and builds its budgets according to those appropriations; and

WHEREAS, the 2026 Short Session convenes on April 21, less than one month before local boards must submit their budgets to county commissioners; and

WHEREAS, Caswell County Schools and Caswell County Government have had to plan the Fiscal Year 2027 budget without knowledge of State appropriations for the current fiscal year, let alone the next one; and

WHEREAS, the amount of State appropriations impacts the allocation of Federal and Local funds as well as the requests made of Local governments within the budget process for expenditures including teacher supplements; and

WHEREAS, despite the provision in North Carolina General Statute § 143C-5-4(b) for budget continuation of recurring funds at the level of the previous fiscal year, the failure to pass a biennial budget has forced Caswell County Schools to operate with significant budget uncertainty well into the current fiscal year; and

WHEREAS, the Caswell County Schools has been forced to adopt an interim budget resolution, which impacts, e.g., delays planned expenditures including teacher supplements, restricts hiring, and prevents our district from committing funds for capital projects and other operational needs; and

WHEREAS, despite provisions for step increases, without passage of an appropriations act, salaries of approximately 382 employees in Caswell County Schools are frozen at 2024-2025 levels; and

WHEREAS, the lack of a budget and frozen pay scales coupled with a rise in premiums for district employees participating in the North Carolina State Health Plan, has resulted in a net pay decrease for teachers and school employees in Caswell County Schools; and

WHEREAS, Caswell County Schools strives to meet nationally recommended staffing ratios for school health personnel, requiring sufficient state appropriations to do so; and

WHEREAS, the enrollment of exceptional children in Caswell County Schools is 18.6 percent but state funding is capped at 13 percent, requiring the district to allocate approximately \$40,000 in local funds annually to cover the gap; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, *that the Caswell County Board of Education does hereby request that the North Carolina General Assembly immediately pass a 2026 Appropriations Act that:*

- *Mirrors the House proposal for all school employee salaries in the second year of their proposed budget (SB 257, Version 6), includes step increases at every level, and provides education-based salary supplements;*
- *Increases the Public School Repair & Renovation fund from \$50 million to \$70 million as proposed in both the 2025 Senate and House budget plans;*
- *Allocates \$27.9 million in recurring funds for 320 additional school health personnel positions;*
- *Implements a weighted funding model for Exceptional Children funding (approximately \$92.6 million (R) & \$27.2 (NR) per DPI), or in its absence, a minimum increase of the cap to 13.5% of allotted ADM at a cost of \$20 million in recurring funds.*

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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that:

The School Board Chair and Interim Superintendent of Caswell County are authorized to disseminate this Resolution to members of the North Carolina General Assembly and the Governor; and

The Board encourages parents, students, and other community members to contact their North Carolina legislators requesting that the General Assembly pass a State budget that includes the items listed above.

9. Stoney Creek Elementary

Interim Superintendent Lance Stokes shared a packet of information was included for the board to review and information regarding the water tower. Mr. Stokes shared Stoney Creek has great bones and is a beautiful site; however, it is an aging infrastructure and things need to be repaired and Mr. Poteat has been working with DEQ (Department of Environmental Quality) to pass inspection. Mr. Stokes shared Stoney Creek has the cleanest water and multiple recommendations have been made about the water tower. Maintenance Director Alan Poteat shared the water tower is required to be inspected every 3-5 years and he looked back and cannot find anything that has been done in the past. He shared we are under the same restraints as the Town of Yanceyville and he reached out to the inspector who does theirs and was given a reference who in turn came and inspected it. He shared a cost of what it will need to be repaired and when looking back over the years it appears that a hydrostatic tower was suggested but nothing was done. Mr. Poteat shared that option would be even more costly. At the present the water tower needs to be fixed or repaired and the ponds and sewer pumps as well. He shared that the recent storms have damaged the ponds and upon DEQ inspection they are having to go in and drain and dredge the ponds. He also noted this has been deemed as hazardous waste and there is a treatment process involved in that as well.

Lengthy discussion took place with the issues with the water tower, ponds, and sewer pumps. Nicole Smith shared looking at the GIS map is shows there is approximately 65 acres behind Stoney Creek and it is concerning to receive this information on Friday at 9:30 a.m. and prior to this the board was not aware of any concerns. According to the reports included in the packet there is nothing that indicates there are problems. Pricing was discussed but it was shared not quotes with pricing were included in the packet.

Interim Superintendent Lance Stokes shared that inspection is required every three to four years and this has not occurred and concerns with water tower and septic system if inspection report came back negative and the time constraints to repair is a factor. He also shared we have received preliminary allotment information and the projections are not good. With decreased enrollment there will have to be discussion and school closing procedures were included in the packet. He shared the cost of operation and will need to

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present the challenges to the Board of Education and at this time wanted them to be aware as well as concerns with water.

It was requested for Board Attorney Ron Bradsher to look into the amount of land.

Discussion continued over what is recommended versus required and at this time nothing has been deemed required.

This finished the discussion and no decision was made at this time. A short break was taken by the board.

10. ABA Services – Memorandum of Understanding

EC Director Calla Wilson shared information regarding ABA Services (Applied Behavior Analysis). She shared that ten companies responded after a request was made. David Useche, Mrs. Duncan and herself reviewed the quotes and all were in agreement on the top three. Calla Wilson will be responsible for managing the contracts and individuals within the building who will be working with individual students. She recommended proceeding with two companies.

Joel Lillard moved, seconded by Trudy Blackwell, to approve the top four companies and have memorandum of understandings provided by Tharrington and Smith. The motion carried unanimously.

The companies include: Amergis, Blue Gems, PDS, and SpringHealth.

11. Naming of Softball Field

Discussion took place at the last meeting in regards to a request by Donna Hudson to name the softball field for a former employee, Jack Pointer. The board discussed and will need to take formal action.

Vennie Beggarly moved, seconded by Trudy Blackwell, to name the softball the Jack L. Pointer Softball Field. The motion carried unanimously.

The unveiling will be held on March 31, 2026 at 5:00 p.m. Mel Battle has reached out to have the sign made and reached out to local media. Maintenance Director Alan Poteat will install the sign and family has been invited. Donna Hudson, Mel Battle and Lance Stokes will share a few words at the event.

V. SUPERINTENDENT UPDATES

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- Mr. Stokes shared we met all program requirements with federal funds for the Strong Connections Grant (PRC 145). He thanked Alyson Beavers and Dr. Medina Jones on their work.

VI. ATTORNEYS REPORT

None.

VII. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Trudy Blackwell visited South and met with the principal and shared they are doing a great job of getting things ready for the end of the year and staying focused. She shared that we do see the needs at Oakwood as well as other schools and thanked the community for being here. She hopes we can continue to find grants to assist with funding as well as finding the matching funding for the Needs Based Grant. Trudy Blackwell also shared that God can make a difference and this was a Jesus moment.

Nicole McGhee attended soccer, softball and baseball all in one evening. She thanked the sorority members here tonight and shared the grant was one of her initiatives in supporting schools and beginning teachers and shared she did not feel the love in regards to the funding that was given noting it was to be a positive for the school system.

Joel Lillard thanked Nicole and the sorority and shared he didn't think it was explained well earlier for all to understand. He gave congratulations on the naming of individuals in the school system for the teacher of the year categories. He gave a shout-out to the principal and athletic director at the high school for working the concession stand. He questioned if results were in regarding the starting times for schools. Mr. Stokes shared David Useche was handling this but thought the deadline is this week. Joel Lillard shared that principals deserve time off just as anyone; however, if a principal is out for an extended time he felt the board should be aware as they do not know who the go to person is for that school. He also asked if schools could try to work together and not schedule events on board meeting days (or times) noting an event that was occurring today.

Nicole Smith thanked all who came out tonight in support of Stoney Creek and she felt the love and support given by that community. She also shared she attended the NAACP event which was nice and noted that Gary Williams who was the emcee did a wonderful job. She thanked all of our staff for the work they do daily.

Lisa Johnson-Knight shared she also attended the NAACP banquet and shared Nicole McGhee did an excellent job at the event. She attended North for the Math/Science night which was nice. She also has been seeing employees who are being recognized for the end of year teacher of the year awards and congratulated all who have been selected. She

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participated in the law conference and was very impressed with the Dare County presentation and wish we could have that in Caswell.

Vennie Beggarly shared she attended NL Dillard Middle School family night, attended the soccer/softball/baseball games and volleyball game at NL Dillard. She also assisted Mrs. Chavez at North with art and the kids really enjoyed working with clay. Vennie Beggarly also shared that the laptops are nice to have; however, with the amount of the packet she preferred a hard copy.

Mel Battle shared information was at your place and also sent via email regarding the general statutes. He asked Connie Kimrey to follow-up with the school board on what is required when going into closed session. He referenced the information he reads aloud prior to receiving a motion and shared it is required. Any items discussed in closed session are required to be announced during that motion.

VIII. CLOSED SESSION

Nicole McGhee 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) and to confer with legal counsel. Lisa Johnson-Knight seconded the motion.

Joel Lillard requested that discussion take place regarding the Exceptional Children program also. The motion carried unanimously.

IX. OPEN SESSION

Vennie Beggarly made a motion to return to open session. Lisa Johnson-Knight seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

X. PERSONNEL LISTING

Mr. Stokes recommended approval of the personnel listing as presented for Items # 1-4. Nicole Smith moved, seconded by Lisa Johnson-Knight. The motion carried unanimously.

Resignations	
	Shanisha Smith, Bus Driver = Eff. 3/20/26
Retirement	
Oakwood Elementary	Dale Stewart, EC Self Contained Classroom Teacher = Eff. 6/30/26

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Rescind Resignation	
NL Dillard Middle School	Dawn Suitt, Instructional Coach = Eff. 3/24/26
Substitute	Kelvin Conyers = Eff. 3/20/26

COMMUNICATIONS

It was shared a joint meeting with the Board of County Commissioners is scheduled for Monday, March 30, 2026 at 5:00 p.m. to tour Oakwood Elementary and then go to Bartlett Yancey Senior High School and reconvene at the Central Office for a meeting.

XI. ADJOURN

Vennie Beggarly moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:45 p.m., Lisa Johnson-Knight seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

The next regular meeting of the Board of Education will be held on April 13, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. in the Caswell County Schools Administration Building.

Mel O. Battle
Chairman

Lance Stokes
Interim Superintendent