

Gaston County Schools
Operations Committee
Monday, March 2, 2026

MINUTES

The Operations Committee met in a regular session on Monday, March 2 at 12:30 p.m. at the Central Office Board Room, 943 Osceola Street, Gastonia, NC. Those Board Members in attendance were: Chairman Brent Moore, Dot Cherry, Lee Dedmon. Mr. Tod Kinlaw was not in attendance.

Additional attendees included: Chairman Josh Crisp, Board, Superintendent Dr. Morgen A. Houchard, Attorney Sonya McGraw, Assistant Superintendent of Operations Bessie Harvey, Executive Director of Human Resources Beth Suber, Chief Communications Officer Todd Hagans, Chief Technology Officer Curtis Poplin, Chief of Staff Tom Nencetti, and Board Clerk Cindy Beck.

Chairman Brent Moore called the meeting to order at 12:38 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

Approval/Correction of Minutes

Motion to adopt minutes of December 1, 2025 as presented was made by Mr. Lee Dedmon; seconded by Ms. Dot Cherry; motion carried unanimously. (3-0)

Superintendent Comments -Information

Superintendent Houchard recommended that the next Operations Committee meeting be rescheduled to Monday, March 30, as the first Monday in April falls during Spring Break. The committee members agreed to the proposed change.

The NCSBA Spring Law Conference is available for Board Members and will be held on March 19th and 20th, and broadcast at the Central Office.

Finance Updates - Information

The Gaston County Board of Commissioners approved a \$3.2 million transfer of funds from the School Capital Allocation Balance to the General Fund. This transfer will assist in covering expenditures that are not capital in nature and will help address current operational obligations.

Superintendent Houchard announced and outlined the details of a spending freeze that will remain in effect for the remainder of the school year.

On Thursday, an Allotment Meeting will be held with our administrators to discuss the LEA State Allotment and review funding allocations for the upcoming school year.

Superintendent Houchard recommended that a feasibility study be conducted to examine consolidating several GCS locations. One such study would explore the options of sending the 4th graders from W.B. Beam Elementary to Cherryville Elementary and sending the 5th

graders to Chavis Middle School. The continued use and purpose of the existing facility for GCS business would be included in the study.

The feasibility study would also consider “housing” the K-5 students of Gaston Virtual Academy at McAdenville Elementary to be served by the support staff of McAdenville Elementary. The study would also examine the possibility of combining Gaston Virtual Middle and High School students with Stuart W. Cramer High School for support services.

An update was provided regarding the interview process for the Chief Financial Officer position, noting that the search is ongoing.

TSS Updates - Information

-Engineers continue to take a proactive approach daily to investigate and mitigate phishing attempts, whether through emails or shared documents. Employees need to be vigilant in reporting suspicious emails to TSS and not clicking on suspicious links without verification of their authenticity.

-TSS Technicians are actively working to salvage components to repair devices that were collected during the Chromebook initiative.

(View Presentation)

Human Resources Update - Information

Ms. Beth Suber presented the January and February Human Resources Reports:

-ESS Update-Substitute Fill Rate: January: 96%; February: 93%

-Teacher Vacancy Update District Wide: January: 55; February: 57

-New Partnership for Mental Wellness Services with TAVA

-Request to move June 1, 2027, Optional Work Day to August 4, 2026, as an Optional Work Day (This Calendar Change will be presented at the BOE March 16, 2026 Regular Meeting)

-Board Policy 7820: Reduction in Force will be presented and likely implemented for hiring strategies in the 2026-2027 school year. This will be recommended for approval at the March Board Meeting.

-Notification of Increase in premium for our self-funded dental insurance of 3% for the October 2026-September 2027 term to cover the deficit in costs

(View Presentation)

Operations Updates - Information/Action

Assistant Superintendent of Operations Bessie Harvey presented the following:

An annual NCDPI Safety Transportation audit was conducted the week of February 9th

Ms. Harvey provided project updates on lighting projects and security vestibules, and the SCHS Wall repair.

There were two items presented to name the school facilities. Both items contained information that the school-based committees had vetted and recommended the name changes. The following proposals were made:

1. Proposed Renaming of Memorial Stadium to Henry Jones Stadium at Cherryville High School.
2. Proposed Naming of the Basketball Court at North Gaston High School after Hal White.

Motion: The Motion was made by Mr. Lee Dedmon; seconded by Ms. Dot Cherry, that the Board **Approve the Proposed Renaming of Memorial Stadium to Henry Jones Stadium; And, that the basketball court at North Gaston High School be named after Hal White.**

And that these items be placed on the Consent Agenda for the March 16, 2026 Board Meeting for full Board approval.

A vote was taken and the item as presented carried unanimously. (3-0)

Ms. Harvey recommends approval of the General Contractor Selection (CM@R) Belmont ES/New Hope ES

Motion

The Motion was made by Ms. Dot Cherry; seconded by Mr. Lee Dedmon that the Board **Approve the General Contractor Selection (CM@R) Belmont ES/New Hope ES to be placed on the Consent Agenda for the March 16th Board Meeting**

A vote was taken and Motion to recommend the item as presented carried unanimously. (3-0)

The committee received an update on the status of the Mount Holly Middle Auditorium Renovation.

Change Orders – Information

The following change order was reviewed and recommended for approval:
-Grier Turf

Contract Review – Action

The following contracts were reviewed and recommended for approval:

1. Google Workspace Contract (TSS)
2. Cherryville ES LED Light Conversion
3. Lawn Care Service Amendment
4. U-5821 051 (NCDOT) S. New Hope Rd. Widening
5. Ida Rankin (5) Rooftop Unit Replacement
6. Page ES (5) Rooftop Unit Replacement
7. Stadium Field Maintenance
8. Stuart Cramer Baseball and Softball Field Renovations

Motion: The Motion was made by Mr. Brent Moore; seconded by Mr. Lee Dedmon that the Board

Approve Contracts to be placed on the Consent Agenda for the March 16th Board Meeting

A vote was taken and Motion to approve the item as presented carried unanimously. (3-0)

(View Presentation)

Legal/Policy - Information

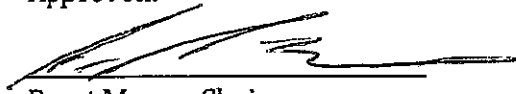
There were no updates or new information to present at this time.

Adjournment

All business being conducted, Motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Lee Dedmon; seconded by Ms. Dot Cherry motion carried unanimously. (3-0)

The Operations Committee Meeting adjourned at 2:05 p.m.

Approved:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brent Moore', written over a horizontal line.

Brent Moore, Chairman

Date Approved: 5/4/26

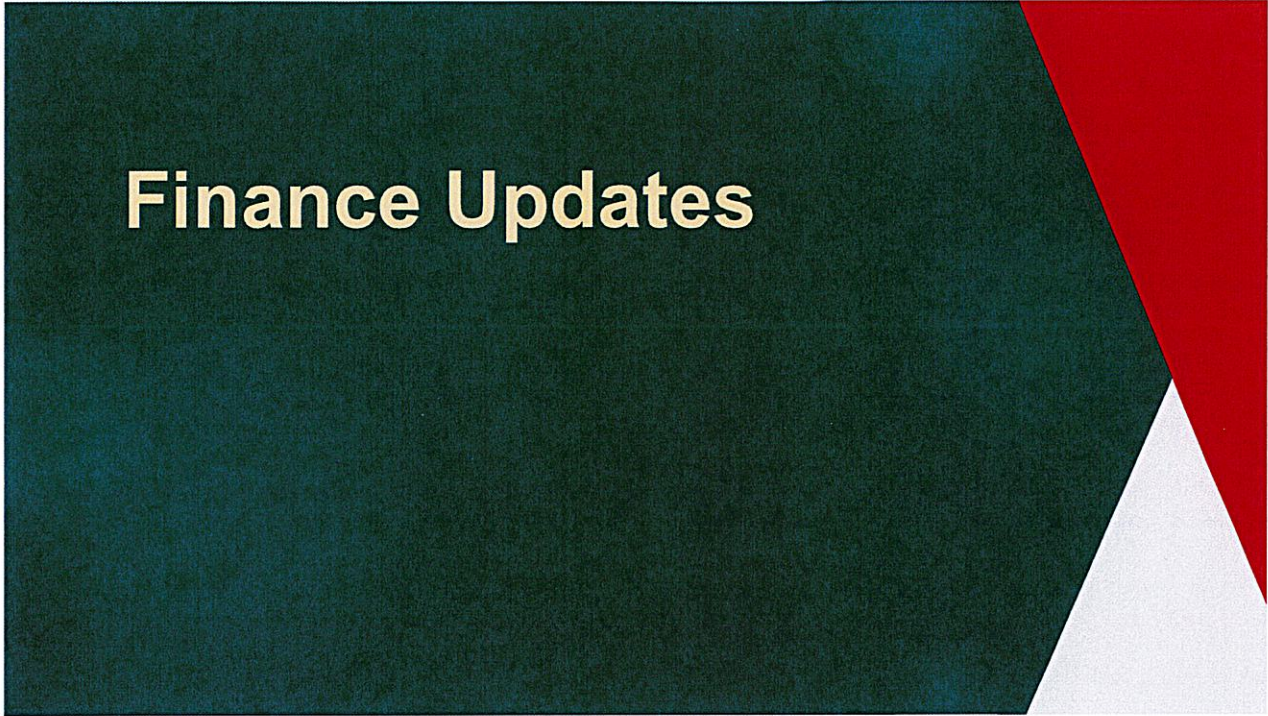
Board of Education

Operations Committee Meeting

Central Office Board Room
March 2, 2026

Operations Committee Agenda

- Call to Order
- Review and Approve Minutes
 - **February 2nd meeting canceled due to inclement weather.**



Finance Updates



Discussion

TSS Updates

Curtis Poplin
Chief Technology Officer

TSS Updates

Engineers

1.75

average investigations a day from attacks evading defenses.

- 1000's of phishing attempts each day through Email and Document Shares
- These incidents average approximately 2 hours a piece for 2 engineers to investigate and mitigate each incident
- We have remediated 194 impacted users from incident response investigations In the month of February

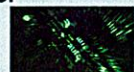


Technicians

2,500+

broken devices have been collected during the Chromebook initiative.

- TSS technicians are actively working to salvage components from these devices to create functional units, maximizing our existing hardware investment.
- Our request is for each school to develop and implement clear, consistent procedures for holding students accountable for Chromebook damage and breakage.
- Video link to support this endeavor



Links

- Phishing/Social Engineering Incident Response by TSS
- Combatting Device Breakage
- TSS News Handout

Discussion

Human Resources Updates

Beth Suber

Executive Director of Human Resources

Human Resources Updates

Present Monthly HR Report

(copy provided in your folder)



ESS Mid-Year Update

Points of Interest:

- ▶ ESS has hired 140 new substitutes
- ▶ Jobs are being filled and subs are asking to work
- ▶ January 2026 fill rate: 96%
- ▶ Lowest filled day was Friday, January 16th, at 88%
- ▶ ESS Area Supervisors are visiting schools and building relationships
- ▶ First semester focus was hiring subs and filling absences
- ▶ Spring semester focus will be on recruiting and being more involved with the schools they serve

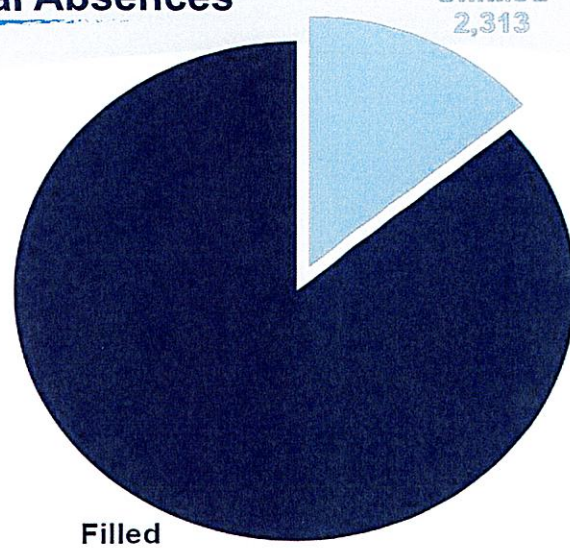
Key Measures & Results

August 2025 - December 2025	
Filled Absences	14,288
Unfilled Absences	2,313
Fill Rate %	86%

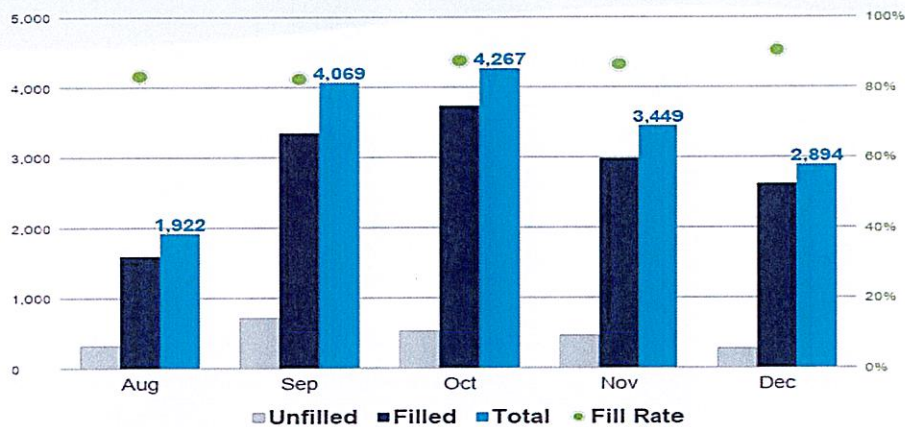
August 2024 - December 2024	
Filled Absences	14,360
Unfilled Absences	3,096
Fill Rate %	82%

All Positions – Total Absences

Total Absences 16,601
Total Filled 14,288
YTD Fill Rate 86%



All Positions – Total Absences by Month



Month	Unfilled	Filled	Total	Fill Rate
Aug	323	1,599	1,922	83%
Sep	718	3,351	4,069	82%
Oct	531	3,736	4,267	88%
Nov	466	2,983	3,449	86%
Dec	275	2,619	2,894	90%
Total	2,313	14,288	16,601	86%

Board Policy 7820: Reduction in Force:

Should there be a need for a reduction in the workforce, the Superintendent shall present to the Board his recommendation, to include:

- The grounds for a reduction
- Positions to be reduced
- Background data/rationale that supports the recommendation

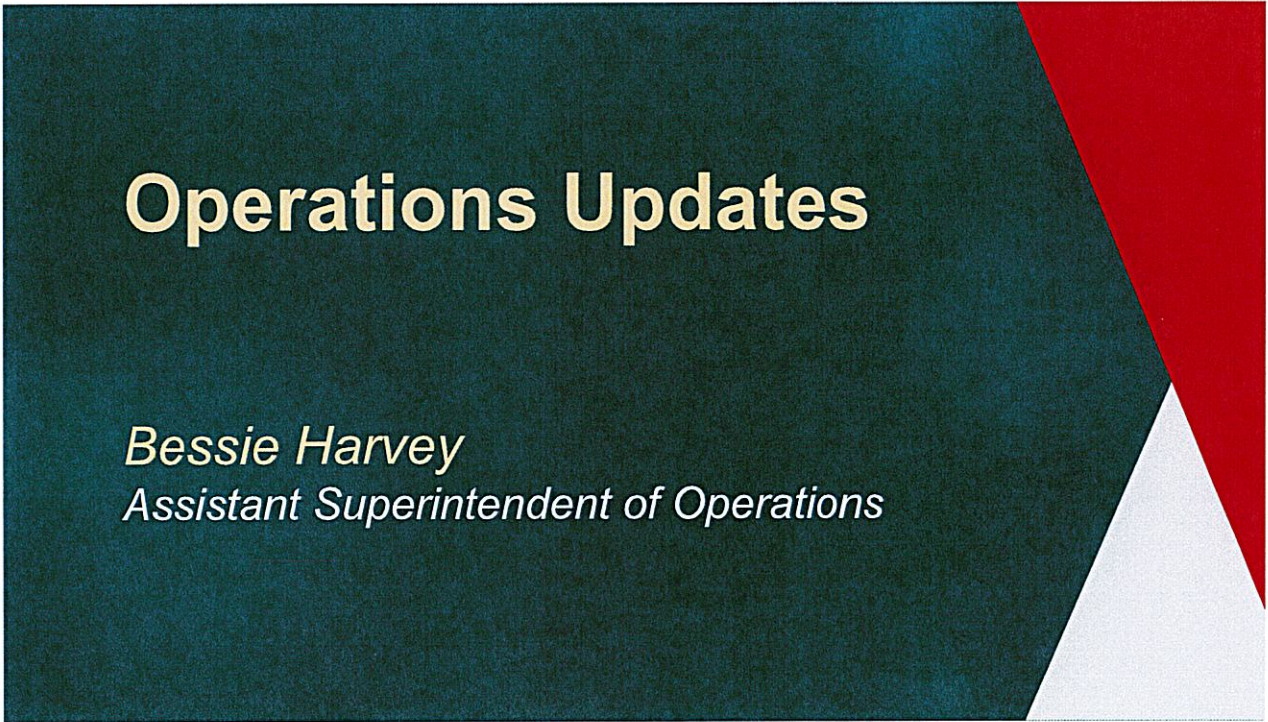
Other Topics to Mention:

- ▶ Request to move June 1, 2027 Optional Work Day to August 4, 2026 as an Optional Work Day
- ▶ Increase in premium for our self-funded dental of 3% for October 2026-September 2027 term

Plan Type	25-26 Rate	26-27 Rate
Employee Only	\$38.20	\$39.35
Employee+One Dependent	\$77.88	\$80.22
Employee & 2+ Dependents	\$113.67	\$117.08



Discussion



Operations Updates

Bessie Harvey
Assistant Superintendent of Operations

Department Updates

- Annual NCDPI Safety Transportation conducted week of Feb 9th.
 - 10% of our yellow fleet
 - 10% of our white fleet
 - Audit conducted on our parts inventory and office related DPI processing.
- School Nutrition comprehensive technical review conducted February 23rd - February 25th
 - Review of overall processes, financials procedures and documentation as well as school based cafeteria compliance, training and federal compliance requirements.

Project Updates

Emergency Radio Project

COMPLETED SITES

New Hope Elementary School
Forestview High School
Sadler Elementary School
WA Bess Elementary School
Cramerton Middle School
Gardner Park Elementary School
Hawks Nest STEAM Academy
N. Belmont Elementary School
Warlick Academy

SITES IN-PROGRESS

Brookside Elementary School
Lowell Elementary School
HH Beam Elementary School
Page Primary
W.C. Friday Middle School
Belmont Central Elementary
Stuart Cramer High School
Southwest Middle School
East Gaston High School

FUTURE SITES

Ashbrook High School
Belmont Middle School
South Point High School
North Gaston High School
Stanley Middle School
Pleasant Ridge Elementary School
Catawba Heights Elementary School
Mt. Holly Middle School
Ida Rankin Elementary School
Pinewood Elementary School

Project Updates

Lighting Upgrades

- Cherryville Elementary School
- Costner Elementary School
- Gardner Park Elementary School
- Lingerfeldt Elementary School
- Rankin Elementary School

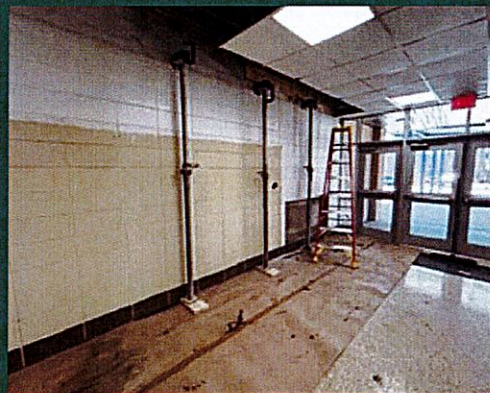
Audits for bid processing completed for all schools.

Project Updates

Security Vestibule Upgrades



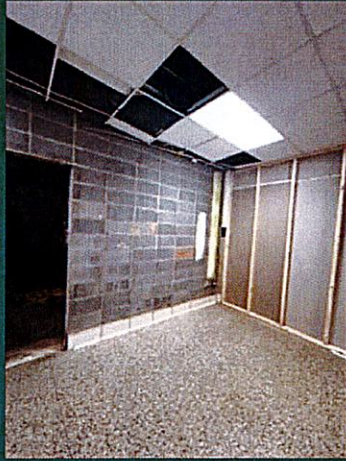
Ashbrook High School



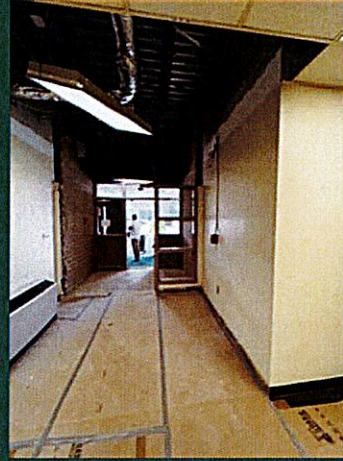
East Gaston High School

Project Updates

Security Vestibule Upgrades

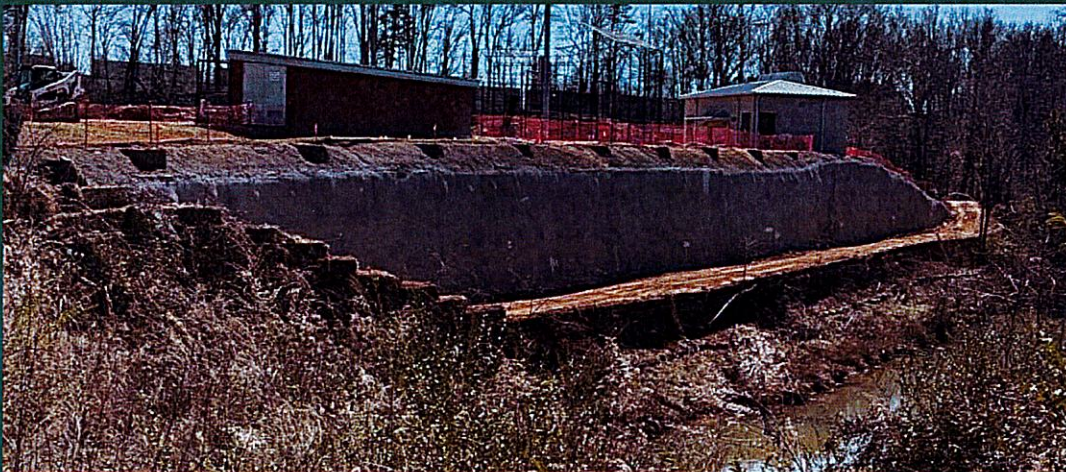


Sherwood Elementary School



Bessemer City Primary

Stuart Cramer Wall Repair



Completed Soil Nail Wall 4

Grading for wall 4 to be completed and final finishing for both walls.

Committee Agenda Items

Proposed Naming

- **Proposed Renaming of Memorial Stadium in Cherryville to 'Henry Jones' Stadium**
 - Coach Jones dedicated over 30 years of service to Cherryville HS. Serving as head coach for 34 years.
 - 542 career wins and 6 state championships
- **Proposed Naming of the Basketball Court at North Gaston High School to 'Hal White Court'**
 - Served dedicated over 25 years of service to North Gaston HS
 - 327 career win, leading 13 of the 16 winning seasons.

Construction Management @ Risk

Timeline:

- December 15 - Issued Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for Construction Management At Risk Services for Multiple Elementary School Additions and Renovations

The additions and renovations would include, but may not be limited to:

- Additional classrooms (up to 10 at each school)
- Cafeteria
- Kitchen
- Media Center
- Gym/Auditorium
- Secure vestibule
- Façade improvements
- Site improvements

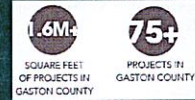
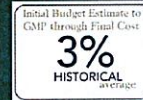
GCS is considering addition and renovation projects at Belmont Central Elementary School and New Hope Elementary School.

- Belmont Central Elementary School
 - Construction Budget: \$13M - \$14M (subject to change)
 - Construction Duration: 12-14 months (subject to CM input)
- New Hope Elementary School
 - Construction Budget: \$15M - \$16M (subject to change)
 - Construction Duration: 12-14 months (subject to CM input)

Construction Management @ Risk

Timeline:

- January 15 - Deadline for RFQ Responses
- January 21 - Nine (9) Responses Reviewed and three (3) selected for interviews
- February 10 - Interviews conducted with Clancy & Theys, Edifice, and Whiting-Turner
- March 2 - Present selection of Edifice to Operations Committee and notify Edifice



Construction Management @ Risk

Timeline:

- March 2 - April 3 - Draft Owner/Construction Manager (CM) Agreement & Pre Construction Proposal for Review and Negotiation
- April 6 - Present Pre-Construction Proposal and CM Master Agreement with Recommendation to Award on April 20
- April 20 - Contract Award (Master Agreement) to Edifice for Preconstruction Services for Belmont Central Elementary and New Hope Elementary

Construction Management @ Risk

Timeline:

- Fall 2026 - Edifice begins process of developing Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP)
 - Trade Bid Packages
 - Trade Contractor Prequalifications
 - Reconcile Design Phase Estimates with Trade Bids and Finalize GMP
- Winter 2026 - Present Construction GMP and Recommendation for Contract Award to Edifice for Construction Services (Amend Master Agreement)
- Early 2027 - Early phases of construction commence

Mt. Holly Auditorium

Timeline

- 9/24 - Meeting was held at Mt. Holly MS to include GCS team members, City of Mt. Holly Mayor, Town Manager, and other City employees.
- 12/24 - RFQ for Design was sent out
- 2/25 - Smaller meeting was held
- 5/25 - Roof Assessment was completed
 - Significant signs of deterioration
 - Has reached the end of its serviceable life. Continued degradation will lead to increased risk of interior damage, higher energy costs, and potential structural compromise.
 - Spot repairs are no longer cost-effective.
- 12/25 - Meet with Architect firm to discuss next steps

Grier Turf



- ❑ April 2024 Committee approved \$750K change order in partnership with the city for a Turf field
- ❑ Total cost estimated discussed was \$1.3M
- ❑ Total cost as of February 2026 is \$1,554,846

Grier Turf

GCS Investment

Total Cost of field to include turf, underbase, drainage, equipment (high jump/pole vault, shot put), sidewalk.

\$1,554,846 - Total cost of field as of 2/26

\$1,269,000 - Total estimated cost

\$285,846 - Cost variance between estimated and actual

\$1,554,846 - Total cost of field as of 2/26

-\$750,000 - City of Gastonia contribution

\$804,846 - GCS Investment

Grier Turf

GCS Investment

Turf will be funded through saving achieved from bond projects.

Total Estimated Project Cost - \$2,600,000 (Bond Project)

Actual Project Cost - \$1,503,400

\$1,097,000

Grier Turf

Student Benefits

- Provides a consistent outdoor space for daily physical education classes, recess, and structured movement activities
- Even playing surface reduces risks associated with uneven or worn grass fields.
- Year-Round Usability
- Durability & High Usage Capacity
- Less overall maintenance

Contract Discussions

- Google Workspace Contract (TSS)
- Cherryville ES LED Light Conversion
- Lawn Care Service Amendment
- Ida Rankin (5) Rooftop Unit Replacement
- New Hope U-5821 051 (NCDOT) S. New Hope Rd. Widening
- Page ES (5) Rooftop Unit
- Stadium Field Maintenance
- Stuart Cramer Baseball and Softball Field Renovations

Discussion

Contract Recommendation

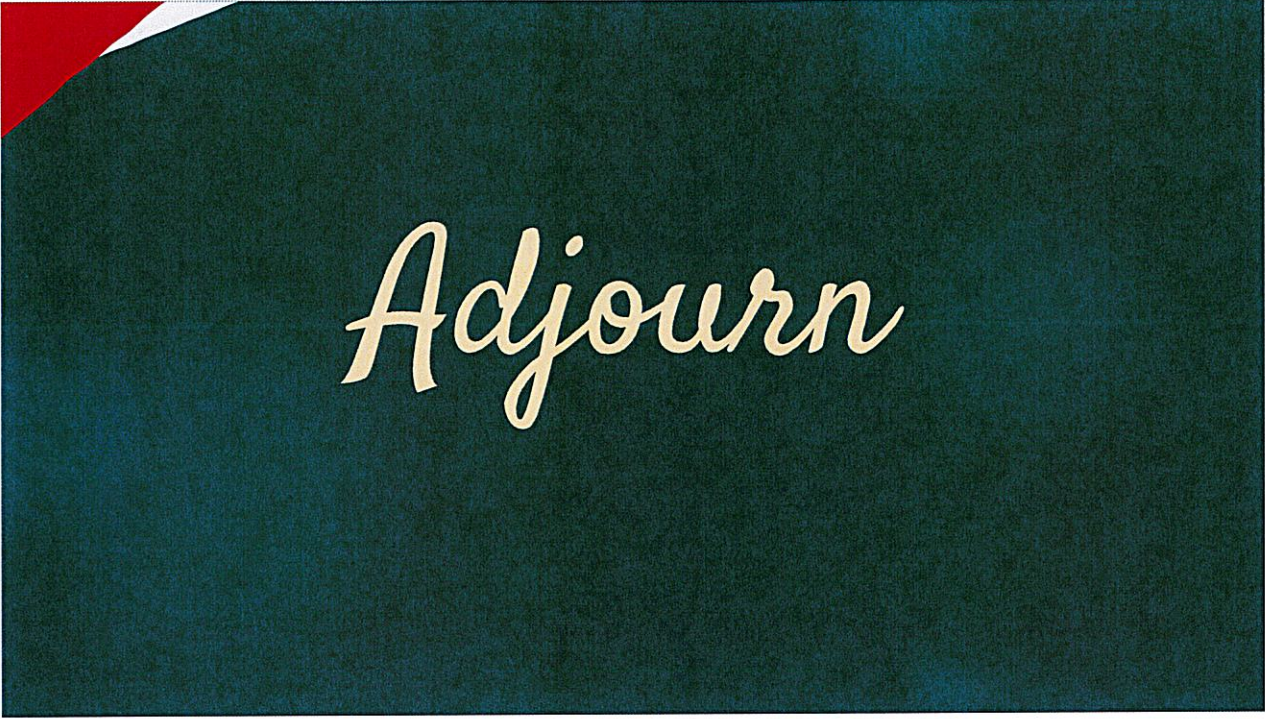
- Motion to Recommend All Contracts for Approval at the Next Regular Board of Education Meeting

Legal/Policy Updates

Sonya McGraw
Board Attorney

Other Business

- Superintendent Comments
- Next Operations Committee meeting will be on Monday, TBD at 12:30pm in the Central Office Board Room
- Motion to **Adjourn**



Adjourn