CASWELL COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES
Special Called Meeting
June 8, 2026

The Caswell County Board of Education met in a special called meeting on Monday, June 8, 2026, at 4:30 p.m. in the Administration Building of Caswell County Schools. Members present: Chairman Mel Battle, Vice Chair Joel Lillard, Vennie Beggarly, Nicole Smith, Nicole McGhee, Lisa Johnson-Knight and Trudy Blackwell. Others present include Interim Superintendent Lance Stokes, and Attorney Ron Bradsher. Connie Kimrey recorded the minutes.

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Mel Battle.

II. CLOSED SESSION

Lisa Johnson-Knight made a motion to go into closed session for the purpose of consulting with board attorney and discussing information that is privileged, confidential or not a public record (NC General Statute 143-318.11(a)(1). Vennie Beggarly seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

III. OPEN SESSION

Joel Lillard moved, seconded by Trudy Blackwell, to return to open session. The motion carried unanimously

IV. SUPERINTENDENT CONTRACT

Trudy Blackwell moved, seconded by Lisa Johnson-Knight, to approve a two-year contract with Lance Stokes as Superintendent of Caswell County Schools effective July 1, 2026 and ending June 30, 2028.

Discussion:

Joel Lillard shared the following:

I want to clearly explain the reasons I cannot vote in favor of Mr. Lance Stokes superintendent contract.

1. Starting Salary & Experience

   At the proposed salary of $140,000, Mr. Stokes would be the highest-paid starting superintendent in the history of Caswell County Schools while also having the least amount of experience serving in that role. While I respect Mr. Stokes and appreciate his willingness to serve, I do not believe this level of compensation is justified based on his current experience.

2. Impact on Local Funds

   The amount above the State-funded salary for a beginning superintendent is approximately $12,000 annually, plus associated benefits. This additional cost must be funded with local county dollars. At a time when every local dollar is critically important, I am not comfortable committing additional local funds beyond what the State provides for a superintendent at this level.

3. Financial Crisis and Budget Priorities

   Both Caswell County and Caswell County Schools are facing significant financial challenges. The School System is already being forced to make difficult decisions, including:

   - Eliminating positions
   - Reducing expenditures; and
   - Identifying additional areas for budget cuts

   Given these circumstances, I cannot in good conscience support a contract that exceeds the State's recommended starting compensation for a superintendent. We are a small district with six schools, and I believe our spending decisions should reflect the same financial realities that we are asking our employees, students, and taxpayers to accept.

4. Concerns Regarding Process and Policy Compliance

   Finally, I have serious concerns regarding the manner in which the superintendent interview process, candidate selection, and subsequent vote were conducted. In my opinion, these actions were not carried out correctly or fairly in accordance with Board Policy # 7100 (Recruitment and Selection of Personnel). Additionally, I believe false or misleading information was presented during the process, which, if accurate, would constitute a violation of Board Policy # 7110 (Information Provided by Applicant or Employee).

   Because of these concerns regarding both procedure and transparency, I do not feel I can support this contract.

   (I respectfully request that this statement be entered into the official minutes of the meeting in its entirety.)

Nicole Smith shared the following:

After careful consideration, I have decided not to support this contract for Mr. Stokes for Superintendent of Caswell County Schools. My decision is based on concerns about experience, leadership, and fiscal responsibility during a challenging time for our school system.

At a time when Caswell County Schools faces state and federal funding reductions that may require difficult decisions regarding teachers and staff, I believe strong, proven leadership is essential. I am concerned that Mr. Stokes does not have prior experience serving as a district director or in a comparable leadership positon that would prepare him for the responsibilities of leading an entire school system.

I am also concerned about the salary being offered for a first-time superintendent, particularly when our schools are facing budget pressures and potential staffing cuts. In my view, taxpayers, teachers, parents, and students deserve confidence that district resources are being managed carefully and that leadership decisions are guided by experience and accountability.

My vote is based on what I believe is in the best interest of Caswell County Schools and the students, employees, and families who depend on them every day.

Vennie Beggarly shared the following:

I want the public to know that, due to budget cuts, we may be forced to eliminate or combine positions.

At the same time, we are considering paying Mr. Stokes a higher salary, even though we do not have to do so. If approved, he will become the highest paid superintendent we have had. This salary would be higher than what we paid Dr. Carter, who had significantly more experience and qualifications. It would also exceed the salary earned by Ms. Gwynn. Mr. Stokes has much to learn and may grow into the position over time, but I do not believe this proposed salary is justified.

I also have concerns about the interview and selection process; however, I will not go into those details at this time.

For these reasons, I will vote no.

The motion made by Trudy Blackwell, seconded by Lisa Johnson-Knight, to appoint Lance Stokes as Superintendent effective July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2028, carried 4-3 with Lillard, Smith and Beggarly voting "No."

V. BUDGET AMENDMENTS # 5 AND #6

Mr. Stokes reviewed the budget amendments. Mel Battle questioned why it has taken so long regarding the fines and forfeitures. Mr. Stokes shared that he had the finance officer look into this when we informed of it and she had difficulty finding when the deposit was made. Once the information was found, she had to make sure the funding was in the account and funds will need to be pulled from fund balance. Joel Lillard expressed that even with that, it has taken an extremely long time and it is embarrassing to the board with the delay in making the payment and should have been taken care of.

Trudy Blackwell moved, seconded by Nicole Smith, to approve Budget Amendment # 5 as presented. The motion carried unanimously

Joel Lillard moved, seconded by Nicole Smith, to approve Budget Amendment # 6 as presented. The motion carried unanimously

Mel Battle questioned when this will be paid. Mr. Stokes said the check will be cut tomorrow and taken over to the Clerk of Court. After which, they will release the fines and forfeitures that are to come to us.

CASWELL COUNTY SCHOOLS **BUDGET AMENDMENT # 5**

Caswell County Board of Education made the following resolution:

Be it resolved that the following amendments be made to the
Budget Resolution for the fiscal year ending June 31,2026

#	Account Code							Description	Debit	Credit
1	2	6910	801	361	000	000	00	BOE Membership	-	8,593.38
	2	6910	801	462	000	000	00	BOE Non Computer	8,593.38	

1 BOE Laptops

Funding Source: Local

Total appropriation in current budget:	$3,903,515
Amount of increase/decrease of amendment:	$0
Total appropriation in amended budget:	$3,903,515

Passed by majority vote of the Caswell County Board of Education
on the 8th day of June 2026

CASWELL COUNTY SCHOOLS **BUDGET AMENDMENT # 6**

Caswell County Board of Education made the following resolution:

Be it resolved that the following amendments be made to the
Budget Resolution for the fiscal year ending June 31,2026

#	Account Code							Description	Debit	Credit
1	2	4910	000	000	000	000	00	Fund Balance	67,500.00	
	2	6920	802	374	000	000	00	Settlement		67,500.00

1 Fines and Forfeitures charge back

Funding Source: Local

Total appropriation in current budget:	**$3,903,515**
Amount of increase/decrease of amendment:	**$67,500**
Total appropriation in amended budget:	**$3,971,015**

Passed by majority vote of the Caswell County Board of Education
on the 8th day of June 2026

VI. ADJOURN

Joel Lillard made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Nicole Smith seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. The next regular meeting of the Board of Education will be held on June 29, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. in the Caswell County Schools Administration Building.

Mel Battle
Chairman

Lance Stokes
Interim Superintendent