

**Gaston County Schools
Operations Committee
Monday, August 3, 2026**

MINUTES

The Operations Committee met in a regular session on Monday, August 3, 2026, at 12:30 p.m. at the Central Office Board Room, 943 Osceola Street, Gastonia, NC. Those Board Members in attendance were: Committee Chair Brent Moore (who joined at 12:52 P.M.), Dot Cherry, Lee Dedmon, and Tod Kinlaw.

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

Vice Chair Dot Cherry called the meeting to order at 12:42 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

Approval/Correction of Minutes

Motion to adopt minutes of the June 1, 2026, Operations Committee Meeting, as presented, was made by Mr. Lee Dedmon; seconded by Mr. Tod Kinlaw. Motion carried unanimously. (4-0)

TSS Updates - Information

Chief Technology Officer Curtis Poplin updated the Committee members on the TSS Team progress over the summer months.

- 100% completed WAN installs at 38 locations: Administrative and Elementary sites
- As of July 30th, techs have assessed and repaired 5,732 of the Chromebooks that were collected last semester to confirm they are usable and up-to-date for the 2026-2027 school year

(View Presentation)

Academic Updates - Information

Associate Superintendent Tonya Kales presented the Opening of Schools Support Plan for 2026-27.

(View Presentation)

Human Resources Update - Information

Executive Director of Human Resources Beth Suber updated the Board on current staffing and vacancies across the district.

Tava Health was introduced as a new mental health support option available to all staff members and their families.

(View Handout)

Finance Update - Information

Interim Chief Finance Officer Bryan Denton presented information on the State Budget that our governor signed into law on July 7, 2026.

Dr. Denton additionally provided a summary of projected salary increases and bonuses along with the timelines.

Furthermore, updates regarding the local budget were detailed:

The commissioners allocated an extra \$5 million in local funding for Gaston County Schools' operations on July 14, raising the total local support for the 2026-2027 term to \$59 million.

Additionally, \$1.2 million was designated by the county for annual capital funds.

In accordance with state regulations, roughly 12 percent (equivalent to \$600,000) of the newly approved \$5 million for Gaston County Schools must be allocated to charter schools.

(View Presentation)

Operations Updates - Information

The key summer highlights executed by the Operations Department were outlined by Bessie Harvey, Assistant Superintendent of Operations:

- Bottle Filler Replacement (Cherryville ES, Lingerfeldt ES, McAdenville ES and Robinson ES)
- Ceiling Grid/Tile Replacements
- Emergency Radio (BDA)
- Flooring Replacements
- ES Lighting Upfits (Cherryville ES, Costner ES, Gardner Park ES, Lingerfeldt ES, and Woodhill ES)
- Life Safety (camera, intercom, and fire alarm systems) (Belmont Central, Catawba Heights, Cherryville Elementary, and Kiser Elementary)
- Minor and Major HVAC Repair and Renovation
- Minor asphalt/pavement Repairs
- Waterless Urinal Replacements
- Vestibule Installation (Ashbrook HS, Bessemer City Primary, Cherryville ES, East Gaston HS, and Sherwood ES)
- Forestview HS Football Field
- Stuart Cramer HS Baseball Fields

Ms. Harvey also presented the Operations Projects in Review:

- Belmont Central Elementary/New Hope ES School Addition
- Bottle Filling Station Replacements – Identifying the next phase of schools for implementation.
- Bessemer City HS/South Point HS Concession Stand Replacement
- Elementary School Lighting Upgrades – Identifying the next phase of schools
- Life Safety System Upgrades – Identifying the next phase of schools
- Minor and Major HVAC Repairs and Renovations – Ongoing district-wide assessment

- Secure Vestibule Installations – Identifying the next phase of schools to enhance campus security
- CTE and Science Laboratory Renovations – Reviewing project scope and programming requirements

Process-driven Operations Highlights:

- Developed custodial and School Nutrition operational guidelines to clearly define cafeteria and custodial responsibilities, ensuring consistency across all district schools.
- Established a Campus Site Visit Check-In process for Area Supervisors to strengthen customer service, increase operational accountability, and promote consistent support for schools.
- Realigned custodial school assignments to provide Innovation Schools with appropriate staffing, improved coverage, and enhanced operational support.
- Expanded the utilization of in-house Facilities staff to identify and complete maintenance projects that were previously outsourced to contractors.
- Conducted Transportation cohort meetings to review staffing vacancies, identify operational challenges, develop collaborative solutions, and identify opportunities to better align with the district's service model.

(View Presentation)

Contract Review – Action

The following contracts were reviewed and recommended for approval:

- Amendment- Cropper GIS
- Amendment- South Point HS Header Repairs
- Mt Holly Middle Shop Building Demolition
- North Gaston HS Boiler Replacement
- School Nutrition Sole Source Approval
- Stuart Cramer HS AHU Controller Upgrade
- WC Friday Fire Panel Inspection Certification
- Temporary Construction Easement Stuart Cramer HS

Contracts with Intent to Renew

Previously approved on 8/15/25

- Trash Removal - Allied Services LLC (Republic Services) - \$400,000.00; Pest Control - Home Paramount Pest Control Company - \$160,000.00
- Minor Roof Repairs - Carver & Sons Roofing, Inc. - \$150,000.00
- Playground Mulch for all GCS Playgrounds Mulch Life -\$115,961.25

Previously approved on 7/21/25

- Heavner's Lawn & Landscaping - \$113,850.00
- Oak Ridge Lawncare & Landscaping - \$115,650.00
- Lawns Unlimited - \$96,600.00 (Approved 6/15/26)
- Mullis Lawn & Landscaping - \$80,013.00
- Clean Cuts Lawn & Landscaping, LLC - \$97,200.00

Motion:

The Motion was made by Ms. Dot Cherry, seconded by Mr. Lee Dedmon, that the Board
Approve the presented Contracts

A vote was taken, and Motion to approve the items as presented carried unanimously. (4-0)

These items will appear on the Consent Agenda at the August 17, 2026, Regular meeting for consideration and approval by the full Board.

Superintendent's Comments

Superintendent Houchard advised that there is currently a "For Sale" sign on the property of the Teacher Resource Center (TRC).

Earlier today, the Administrators Back to School Conference was held, where representatives from Legal, Finance, Operations, and HR briefed the Principals on preparations for the upcoming school year.

Superintendent Houchard expressed appreciation to Chief Finance Officer Bryan Denton for stepping into the role and providing stability.

The next Operations Committee meeting will be held on Monday, September 14, 2026, at 12:30 p.m.

Adjournment

All business being conducted, Motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Dot Cherry; seconded by Mr. Lee Dedmon, motion carried unanimously. (4-0)

The Operations Committee Meeting adjourned at 1:55 p.m.

Approved:



Brent Moore, Chairman

Date Approved: 9-14-26

Board of Education Operations Committee Meeting

Central Office Board Room
August 3, 2026

Operations Committee Agenda

- Call to Order
- Review and Approve Minutes
 - **June 1st Meeting**

Opening of Schools

Academic Services
Tonya Kales

Opening of Schools Support Plan

Elementary			Secondary			Specialized		
SCHOOL	PRINCIPAL	EXEC. DIR.	SCHOOL	PRINCIPAL	EXEC. DIR.	SCHOOL	PRINCIPAL	EXEC. DIR.
Beam, HH	Crosby	Henderson	Belmont	Beckham	West	Warlick	Lefevers	Powers
Beam, WB	Falter	West	Bessemer Middle	Reese	Henderson	Webb Street	Williams	Millis
Belmont Central	Kiser	West	Chavis	Gomto	West	GVA	Wilson	Doran
Bess	L. Clark	West	Cramerton	Tolleson	Doran			
Bessemer Primary	Poag	West	Friday	McKay	Doran			
Bessemer Central	Miller	West	Grier	Mellon	Kales			
Brookside	Jennings	West	Holbrook	Winston	West			
Carr	Stefaniak	West	Mount Holly	Mitcham	Henderson			
Catawba Heights	Glenn	Henderson	Southwest	D'Avria	Doran			
Chapel Grove	Harvey	Henderson	Stanley	Rhyne	Henderson			
Cherryville Elem	Black	West	York Chester	Bradley	Kales			
Costner	Brusie	Henderson	Ashbrook	Rikard	Doran			
Gardner Park	Stamey	Henderson	Bessemer High	Bromley	Doran			
Hawks Nest	Lawson	West	Cherryville High	M. Allen	Doran			
Kiser	Gust	Henderson	East Gaston	Huffstetler	Doran			
Lingerfeldt	Cabe	Henderson	Forestview	Mims	Doran			
Lowell	Conley	Henderson	Gaston Early College	Cook	Doran			
McAdenville/GVA	Lavinder	Henderson	GEC Medical Sciences	Bowman	Doran			
New Hope	Goff	West	Highland	Redmond	Doran			
North Belmont	M. Clark	Henderson	Huss	Elms	Doran			
Page Primary	Kessler	West	North Gaston	Willis	Doran			
Pinewood	Tessnear	Henderson	South Point	J. Allen	Doran			
Pleasant Ridge	Hubers	West	Stuart Cramer	Steiner	Doran			
Rankin	LaRusch	Henderson						
Robinson	Morris	West						
Sadler	Barr	Henderson						
Sherwood	Beam	Henderson						
Springfield	Buchanan	Henderson						
Tryon	Knick	West						
Woodhill	Wallace	West						

TSS Updates

Curtis Poplin
Chief Technology Officer



TSS Updates



Engineers

100% Completed WAN installs at 38 locations
Administrative and Elementary sites

- In order to rectify an issue with how AT&T set up our accounts during last summer's changeover project, 38 Administrative and Elementary sites had to be re-visited
- The Engineering team coordinated with and worked through obstacles with AT&T in order to complete the project by July 22nd

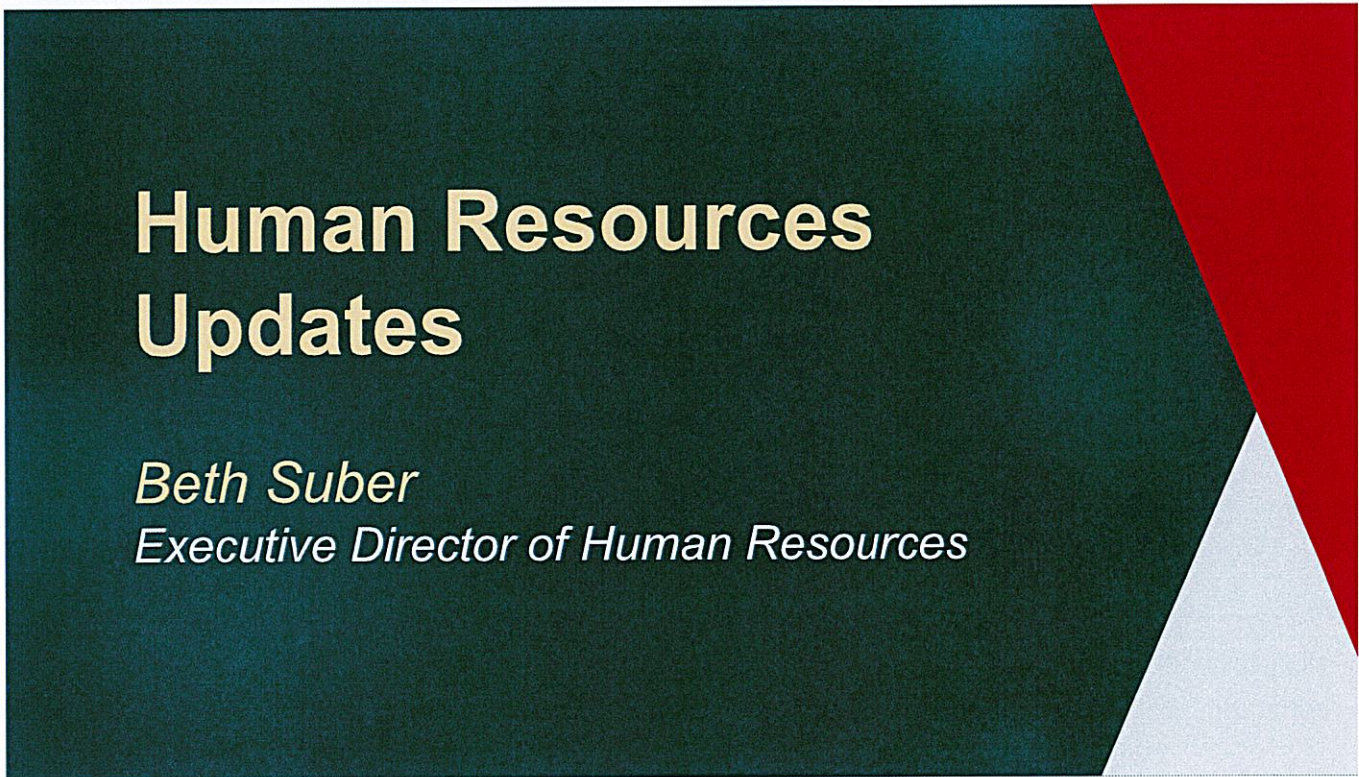
Technicians

5,732 Number of Chromebooks
Technicians have verified this
summer

- As of July 30th, techs have assessed and repaired 5,732 of the chromebooks that were collected last semester to confirm they are usable and up-to-date for the 2026-2027 school year
- [Chromebook Management Guide](#)
- [Combating Device Breakage](#)



Discussion



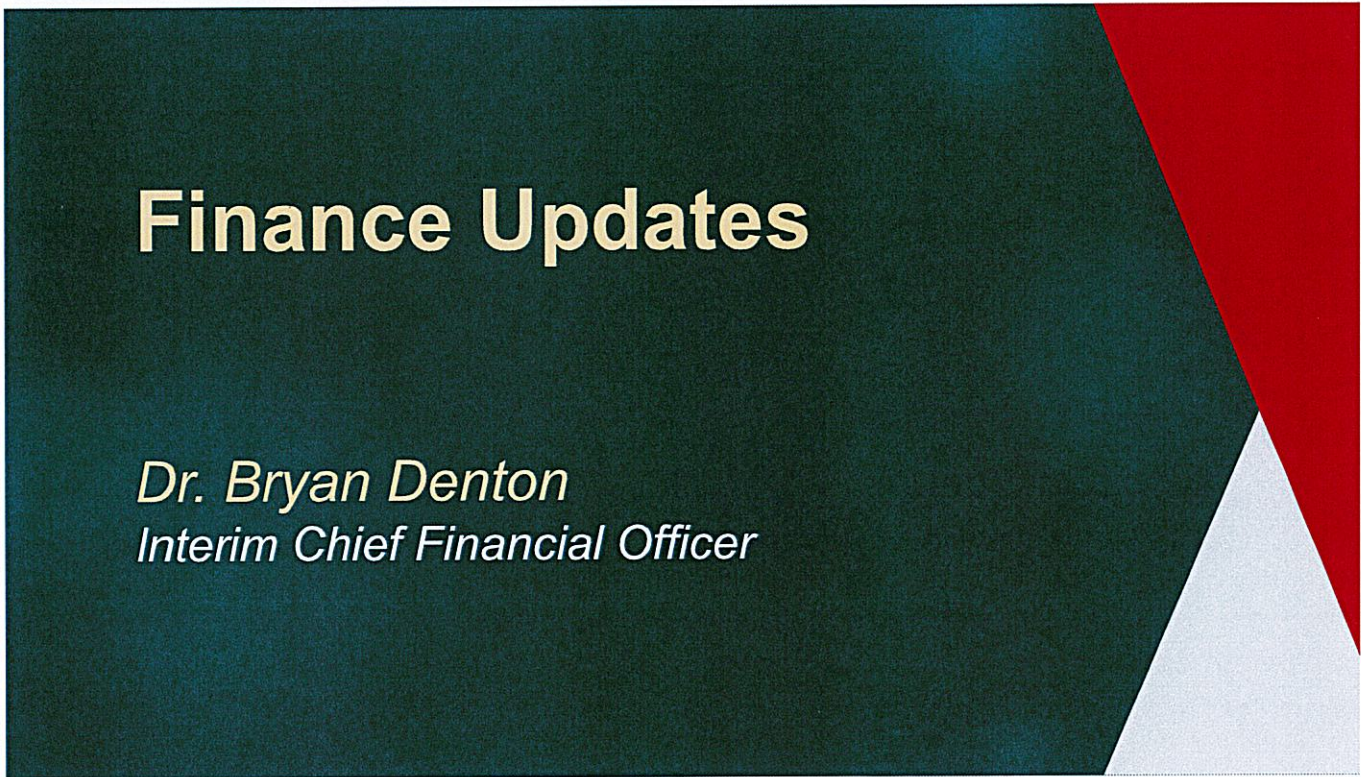
Human Resources Updates

Beth Suber

Executive Director of Human Resources



Discussion



Finance Updates

Dr. Bryan Denton
Interim Chief Financial Officer

State Budget Update

- The state legislature passed a comprehensive budget on July 2, 2026.
- The governor signed the budget into law on July 7, 2026.

Pay Increases & Bonuses

- **Teachers & Instructional Support Personnel**
 - Average 8% raise
 - \$48,000 starting base pay for teachers; \$59,000 base pay for teachers with 25+ years of experience.
 - Provides a one-time \$500 bonus for those with 0-15 years of experience and \$1,000 for those with 16+ years of experience.
- **Assistant Principals**
 - Salary increases tied to the teacher pay schedule, plus a one-time \$500 bonus for those with 0-15 years of experience and \$1,000 for those with 16+ years of experience.

Pay Increases & Bonuses

- **Other School Employees**
 - 3% raise for state employees, principals, central office employees, and non-certified staff.
 - Provides a one-time \$1,750 bonus for employees earning \$65,000 or less, and a \$1,000 bonus for employees earning more than \$65,000.
 - The state specifically funded these bonuses for custodians and School Nutrition staff.
- **Pay Increases & Bonuses - Timeline**
 - Salary increases should be reflected in the August 2026 paycheck
 - Retroactive pay for July 2026 for affected employees should be reflected in the August 2026 paycheck
 - Bonuses should be reflected in the October 2026 paycheck; this will likely be on the second bi-weekly paycheck for employees paid on that schedule.

Local Budget Update

- Our original budget request to the County Commissioners was \$60.4 million in local operating funds and \$4 million in local annual capital funds.
- The County Commissioners initially approved \$54 million in operating funds and stated their intent to engage school district leaders in further discussion about financial needs.

Local Budget Update

- On July 14, the commissioners approved an additional \$5 million in local funds for the operation of Gaston County Schools, bringing the local funding total for 2026-2027 to \$59 million. The county also provided \$1.2 million for annual capital funds.
- Of the additional \$5 million approved for Gaston County Schools, approximately 12 percent of it (or \$600,000) must be sent to charter schools, per state law.

Local Budget Update

- Of the remaining approximately \$4.4 million, the following allocations will be made:
 - **\$2,100,000** will be used to increase the local teacher and other certified employee supplement – this increases the average supplement for Gaston County Schools and gets us a closer to the state average and our neighboring districts.
 - **\$1,280,000** will be used to cover the state-mandated increases in health insurance premiums and retirement contributions for employees.
 - **\$800,000** will be used to ensure employees paid with local funds will receive a pay increase that is in line with state-approved raises for employees.
 - **\$220,000** will be used for the operation of W.B. Beam Intermediate School in Cherryville for the 2026-2027 year.

Hiring & Budget Limits

- As of July 22, 53 vacant positions, as identified by school principals, will not be filled at this time. This includes:
 - 27 classroom teacher positions
 - 14 regular education teacher assistant positions
 - 8 custodian positions
 - 2 school media specialist/librarian positions
 - 1 school counselor position
 - 1 school clerical position
- Hiring at the central department level is strictly limited to positions that are deemed critical to school system operations.
- Additionally, 11 positions in Facilities/Maintenance are vacant and have not been advertised for hiring.
- Central department supervisors/directors have been advised to anticipate a 10 percent decrease in department budgets for 2026-2027.

Discussion

Operations Updates

Bessie Harvey

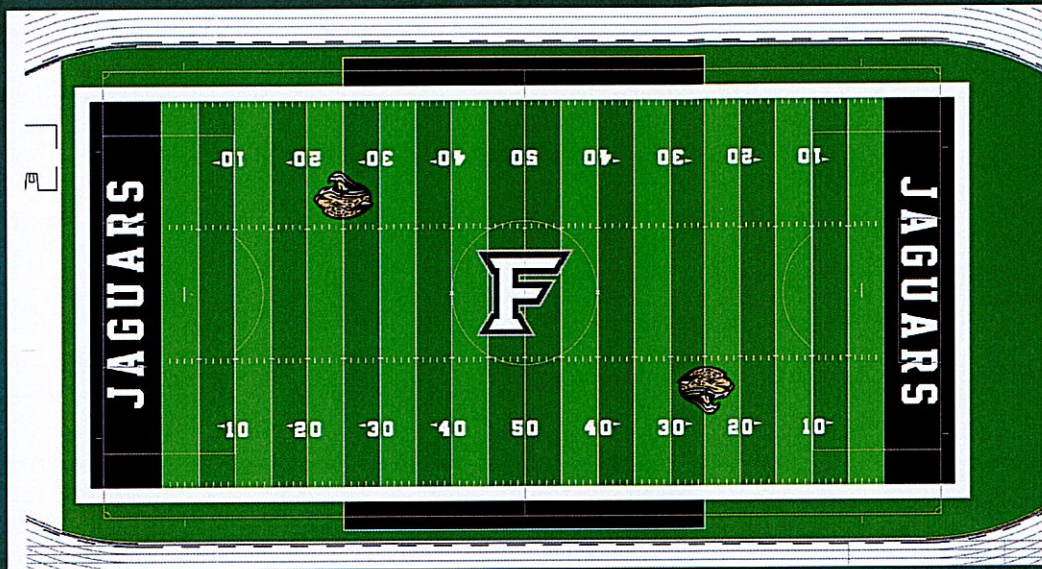
Assistant Superintendent of Operations

Summer Projects

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Summer Projects

Forestview HS



Summer Projects

Stuart Cramer HS Baseball Fields



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Discussion



Consent Agenda Items

Contract Consent Agenda Items

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Contract Consent Agenda Items (Intent to Renew)

Approved on 8/15/25

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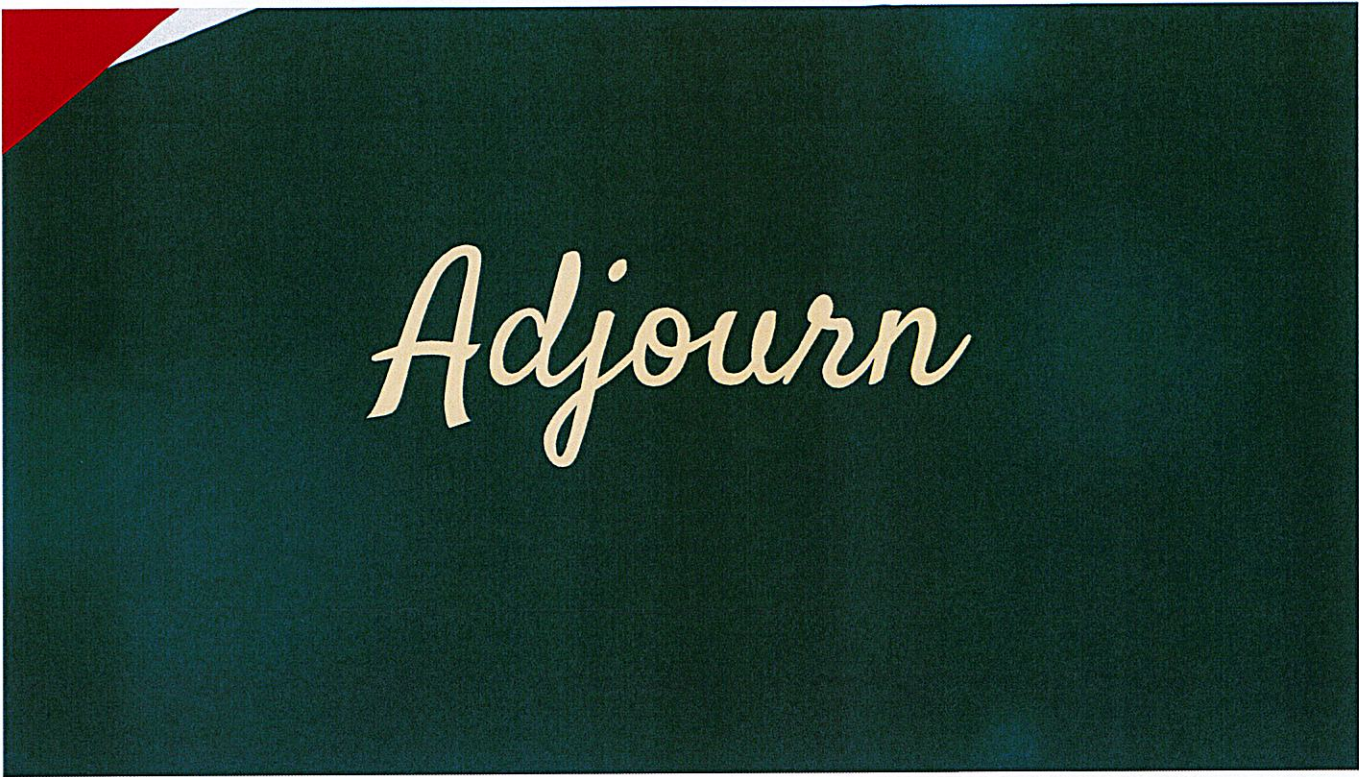
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Contract Recommendation

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

Other Business

- Superintendent Comments
- Next Operations Committee meeting will be on Monday, September 7th at 12:30pm in the Central Office Board Room
- Motion to **Adjourn**



Adjourn