

CASWELL COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Regular Session
February 17, 2025

MEMBERS PRESENT

OTHERS PRESENT

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Tim Yarbrough, Chair
Frank Rose, Vice Chair
Ethel Gwynn
Greg Ingram
Tony Smith
David Wrenn

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Renee Paschal, County Manager
Melissa Williamson, Deputy County Mgr.
Russell Johnston, County Attorney

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The Board of Commissioners for the County of Caswell, North Carolina met in a Regular Session meeting scheduled on Monday, February 17, 2025 at 6:30 pm at the Gunn Memorial Public Library, 161 E. Main Street, Yanceyville NC.

Welcome:

Chairman Yarbrough called the meeting to order. All were invited to pause for a moment of Silent Prayer and to recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comments:

Latoya Thurston-Griggs, a nonresident of Caswell County and former employee of the County, spoke about her termination from the Department of Social Services. She asked the Board to listen to three recordings related to her termination. She indicated that she would be filing an additional grievance for discrimination and retaliation.

Rev. Bryon Shoffner, Spokesperson for the Anderson Community Group, submitted the following email for public comments:

Dear Caswell County Commissioners and Planning Director:

We appreciate the time and effort the Board puts into making decisions that shape Caswell County's future. As residents who rely on **private wells and septic systems**, we are reaching out to ensure that **environmental safeguards remain a priority** as new developments move forward.

The projects outlined in the latest **Board agenda** raise important questions about **potential water contamination risks**, and we respectfully ask for clarification on how these concerns are being addressed.

County Oversight & Transparency

Agenda Item: HIDO Expansion & Economic Development Strategy

- How is the county ensuring that **industrial projects comply with environmental safety laws** to protect private wells?
- What oversight measures are in place to monitor industries for **offsite sedimentation, stormwater runoff, and well or surface water contamination**?

Industrial Development & Water Protection

Agenda Item: Economic Development Priorities

- The agenda mentions an **80-acre site in Yanceyville** and a **63-acre site in Pelham** being considered for industrial development. What industries are being recruited, and how will they be vetted for **environmental responsibility**?
- What **environmental impact studies** have been conducted on these properties, particularly regarding their impact on **groundwater and nearby wells**?
- How will the county ensure that industries **follow HIDO regulations** to minimize **contaminants entering local waterways**?

Pelham Water System & Industrial Impact

Agenda Item: Pelham Water System Fiscal Review

- The report states that **Cherokee Tobacco and CEAD** will be connected to the Pelham Water System. Have these industries been assessed for their **potential impact on water quality**?
- Given the county's **previous water study from the early 2000s**, has there been an **updated study** considering current and future industrial use?
- How will the **Pelham Water System's expansion** impact local wells and septic systems?

Street Closing & Road Abandonment Concerns

Agenda Item: Resolution to Abandon 0.07 Miles of Hatcher Road

Agenda Item: Resolution to Abandon 0.02 Miles of Hatcher Road

- Will abandoning these road sections alter **stormwater drainage** and potentially increase erosion in the area?
- How will changes in water flow affect **local creeks, groundwater, and private wells**?
- The agenda notes that the road **was previously removed during the US 29 interchange project**. Has an **environmental impact assessment** been conducted to ensure that past removal efforts did not affect **groundwater flow**?
- If **underground pipes or culverts** exist near these abandoned roads, will they **remain in place or be removed**?

Solid Waste & Landfill Oversight

Agenda Item: Solid Waste Enterprise Fund Review

- How often is **groundwater tested near county landfills**, and are the results publicly available?
- What steps are in place to **prevent landfill leachate from contaminating nearby wells**?
- Can the county require industries to **conduct and share environmental impact assessments** before operations begin?

HIDO Expansion & Industry Vetting

Agenda Item: HIDO Expansion & Economic Development Strategy

- Will the **HIDO expansion** require new industries to **undergo an environmental vetting process**?
- Can you provide records of **industries' past environmental compliance** in other communities before permitting their operations here?
- What specific **protections are included in HIDO** to prevent industrial well water contamination?

Transparency & Community Oversight

We recognize that **the Board faces the difficult task of balancing economic growth with environmental protection.** Given that **Caswell County residents rely heavily on well water,** we ask that the Board:

- 1. Make Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) publicly available** for all projects that could impact groundwater.
- 2. Hold public hearings before permits are granted** to industries with a history of environmental violations.
- 3. Ensure compliance with HIDO regulations** by requiring routine water testing **near industrial sites, abandoned roads, and landfill areas.**

This is an opportunity for the Board to demonstrate leadership in **protecting the long-term environmental health of Caswell County.** We trust that these concerns will be taken seriously, and we look forward to your response.

Recognitions:

Commissioner Smith thanked the Finance Department for providing updates on how the County is faring.

Commissioner Wrenn recognized Commissioner Gwynn's service.

Chairman Yarbrough presented Commissioner Gwynn with a picture of the historic courthouse on behalf of the Board and thanked her for her service on the Board.

Commissioner Gwynn thanked each of the Board members.

Agenda:

A motion was made by Commissioner Wrenn and seconded by Commissioner Ingram to approve the Regular Session agenda. The motion carried unanimously.

Consent Agenda:

6. Motion to approve January 21, 2025 Board of Commissioner minutes
7. Motion to approve January 25, 2025 Board of Commissioners Planning and Budget Retreat minutes
8. Motion to approve Caswell Fiscal Policy
9. Motion to approve Leasing Co-Square Space to Health Community Alternatives Program for a term of three years and a monthly payment of \$2,500
10. Motion to approve a contract with Johnna Sharpe for financial services

- 11. Motion to abolish the Caswell County Cemetery Board of Trustees
- 12. Motion to approve Resolution to Abandon .07 miles of Hatcher Road
- 13. Motion to approve Resolution to Abandon .02 miles of Hatcher Road

Chairman Yarbrough stated that item #9 would be pulled for discussion by the County Manager. He asked if there was a desire to pull any additional items for further discussion. There were no additional items to be pulled.

A motion was made by Vice Chair Rose and seconded by Commissioner Gwynn to approve items 6-13 (with the exception of #9) of the Consent Agenda. The motion carried unanimously.

Public Hearing:

A motion was made by Commissioner Smith and seconded by Commissioner Gwynn for a public hearing on amendments to the Caswell County Flood Damage Prevention Regulations Ordinance. The motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Yarbrough stated that no one signed up to speak. A motion was made by Commissioner Gwynn and seconded by Vice Chair Rose to close the public hearing. The motion carried unanimously.

Planning Director Jason Watlington distributed a copy of the Environmental Regulations to the Board. He provided a brief history. In October 2022, FEMA provided Caswell County with preliminary copies of the flood insurance rate maps. A community meeting was held in Milton NC.

On December 4, 2024, a letter was sent to the Chair and the County Manager indicating that FEMA was placing two public notifications in the Caswell Messenger on December 11 and December 18 to inform the public that they would have a 90-day appeal process that would last thru mid-March 2025. During the appeal period, any property owner who feels his/her property rights might be adversely affected by the proposed changes to the flood hazard terminology or flood maps could appeal. FEMA noted that the sole basis for such appeals was the possession of knowledge or information that the proposed flood hazard determinations were scientifically and technically correct.

Mr. Watlington developed a flyer that was sent out by the Manager via email and posted on the county website stating that any citizen who wanted to view the proposed changes to the floodplain could come to his office for an explanation. Very little changes were made that would cause negative impacts. The proposed flood maps, when finalized, will become the basis for the floodplain management measures that the County must adopt and show evidence of having in effect to qualify for participation in the national flood insurance program.

Part of the process includes updating the Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance. The State provided a courtesy review of the Ordinance and made suggestions for amendments.

Mr. Watlington reviewed the proposed changes:

Pg. 2 – 10.1.3. Three objectives were added to explain why the regulations were in place.

10.1.3.6 Minimize damage to private and public property due to flooding;

10.1.3.7 Make flood insurance available to the community through the National Flood Insurance Program;

10.1.3.8 Maintain the natural and beneficial functions of floodplains

Pg 3 - He added that the most important change was included in 10.2.2. where the maps will be incorporated by reference rather than having to adopt maps each time they are handed down by the State.

Pg 4 – 10.3.1 – A statement was added which describes the administrator’s role. In instances where the Floodplain Administrator receives assistance from others to complete tasks to administer and implement this ordinance, the Floodplain Administrator shall be responsible for the coordination and the community’s overall compliance with the National Flood Insurance Program and the provisions of this ordinance.

Page 6 – 10.3.2.1.2 – Mean sea level is being replaced with NAVD 1988. NAVD 1988 was created to eliminate errors in water level measurements. This will provide consistency.

Page 7- 10.3.2.2.1 – A description of all development to be permitted under the floodplain development permit (e.g. house, garage, pool, septic, bulkhead, cabana, pier, bridge, mining, dredging, filling, paving, grading, excavation or drilling operations, or storage of equipment or materials, etc.)

Page 7 - 10.3.2.2.6 – The model ordinance was amended to fit the Caswell County Ordinance. ...unless the requirements of Section 10.4.5 have been met.

Page 7 – 10.3.2.2.7 – added Zone X which is notified as yellow on the flood insurance maps.

Page 7 – 10.3.2.2.8 – A statement that all materials below BFE/RFPE must be flood resistant materials.

Page 8 – 10.3.2.3.1 – Elevation Certificates – The old FEMA form numbers are changed to reflect the new numbers.

Page 9 – 10.3.2.4 – Determination for Existing Buildings and Structures – This describes individuals who remodel structures located in a floodplain. The Building Inspector and Planning Director will base the remodel intentions on the market

value of the house. If it is greater than 50 percent of market value, the ordinance will have to be followed. If it is less than 50 percent, the ordinance will not have to be followed.

Page 19 – 10.4.1.16 – Fill dirt is prohibited in the flood zone.

Page 24 – 10.4.2.9 – Tanks is added (underground or above ground propane tanks, etc.)

Page 25 – 10.4.2.10 – Other Development is added pertaining to fences, sidewalks and roads.

Page 28 – 10.4.7 – Standards for Areas of Shallow Flooding (Zone AH) was added.

After the 90-day period ends and the State has heard from the Planning Director that there have not been any appeals, a date will be established that the ordinance is to be adopted. Once the Chair signs off, the changes will become part of the UDO.

Mr. Watlington asked the Board to approve the Ordinance amendments so that portion can be sent to the State and let them know that the Ordinance is up to date.

Action Items:

Motion to Approve the Amendments to the Caswell County Flood Damage Prevention Regulations Ordinance

A motion was made by Commissioner Smith and seconded by Commissioner Ingram to approve the amendments to the Caswell County Flood Damage Prevention Regulations Ordinance. The motion carried unanimously.

Motion to Approve Medical Contract with Southern Health Partners

County Manager Paschal stated that this item was an amendment to the Southern Health contract. Southern Health provides medical care to inmates in the detention center. In June 2024, Commissioners approved using opioid settlement money to hire an additional nurse through Southern Health partners and to cover the cost for opioid treatment for inmates. The fiscal impact will be \$37,120.51 annually and will be paid through the opioid settlement funds.

Commissioner Wrenn questioned the amount of funds in the opioid settlement funds. Deputy Manager Williamson indicated that the money should last for approximately 18 years. She offered to provide an update at a future meeting.

A motion was made by Commissioner Wrenn and seconded by Commissioner Gwynn to approve the amendment to the Southern Health Partners contract. The motion carried unanimously.

Motion to Approve Budget Amendment #17 to Repay NCDOT 50 Percent of Proceeds from Transit Vehicles Sold Since November 2021 from the CATS Fund Balance

County Manager Paschal recapped the item from the January 21, 2025 meeting. The item was tabled because the budget impact was greater than \$10,000. She stated that

none of the funds would come from the General Fund. They would come from the CATS enterprise fund.

A motion was made by Vice Chair Rose and seconded by Commissioner Ingram to approve Budget Amendment #17 to repay NCDOT 50 percent of proceeds from transit vehicles sold since November 2021 from the CATS fund balance. The motion carried unanimously.

Motion to Notify NCHIP of Acceptance of FY 2026 Health Insurance Renewal

County Manager Paschal recapped the presentation from the February 3 Work Session where an NCHIP representative explained that two years of claims (2023/24) exceeded the County's payment to the pool and therefore exhausted reserves to pay claims. If Caswell County had remained with Blue Cross, the expenses would be closer to \$4 million instead of \$2.5 million. There has been a savings of approximately \$6.1 million over the past seven years since being with NCHIP. If the County leaves the pool, it would still be responsible for unpaid claims costing approximately \$200,000. The 6 percent increase in premiums is approximately \$142,000. NCHIP has a policy that limits increases to 6 percent annually. Staff recommended that the County continue to participate in the pool.

Commissioner Smith asked about the possibility of reducing the annual increase. Manager Paschal stated that once the reserves were reached, there could be a percentage reduction in the annual increase.

A motion was made by Commissioner Ingram and seconded by Commissioner Gwynn to approve the acceptance of NCHIP for the FY 2026 Health Insurance Renewal. The motion carried unanimously.

Motion to Approve Budget Amendment #19 to Cover the Expense of the Audit Contract

County Manager Paschal stated that the Board approved the 2024 audit contract at its last meeting. The financial consultant has looked at the funds budgeted in 2025 and has estimated that \$19,500 will be needed from the fund balance to cover the audit contract.

A motion was made by Vice Chair Rose and seconded by Commissioner Smith to approve Budget Amendment #19 to cover the expense of the audit contract. The motion carried unanimously.

Motion to Approve an Amendment to the Caswell County Personnel Ordinance to Require Supervisor Approval Before Leave is Taken

County Manager Paschal stated that at the February 3 Work Session, Commissioner Wrenn asked that an amendment to the Personnel Policy be placed on the agenda for the current meeting to require supervisor approval before leave is taken.

Manager Paschal referred to Section 9.1 of the Personnel Policy, Scheduling Work. She highlighted current language from the policy. She proposed a sentence be added to the section that read “The leave must be approved by the supervisor before it is taken, except in cases of emergency.”

Commissioner Wrenn was opposed to the proposed sentence. He stated that his request was to obtain approval from the supervisor before leaving the job. Manager Paschal stated that she had encountered circumstances where employees had to leave the job because of family or serious situations that did not allow them to first obtain approval. She added that she was comfortable with adding “extreme” emergencies. Commissioner Wrenn suggested using “family emergencies.”

A motion was made by Commissioner Wrenn to amend the Personnel Policy to require supervisor approval before leave is taken except for family emergencies. There was no second. The motion failed.

Chairman Yarbrough mentioned an amendment to the personnel policy to address county employees who were also members of fire departments. He read the following proposed amendment. “Caswell County local government supports local volunteer fire departments in the County as the backbone of public safety. Therefore, any County employee who is a member of a volunteer fire department in Caswell County shall be allowed to respond to calls for service during their work hours. The only requirement is that they will not be on the clock and will notify their supervisor as soon as possible and no later than by the end of the day.” He asked the Board to think about the proposal and it would be discussed at a future meeting.

Board Appointments

- A. Billy Carden to Caswell County Hunting & Wildlife
- B. Sara Broadwell to Library Advisory Board
- C. Rochelle Woodruff to Caswell County Board of Health

A motion was made by Vice Chair Rose and seconded by Commissioner Gwynn to approve the aforementioned Board Appointments. The motion carried unanimously.

County Manager Updates:

Manager Paschal noted that a joint meeting between the County and the Town scheduled for Thursday had been cancelled due to inclement weather. The meeting has been rescheduled for March 6 at 6:00 pm in Milton.

Staff received the Forestry budget request. The request was 7 percent over the current year's budget.

The Manager will post the Audit Tracker on the County's website and send a weekly report to the Sunshine List.

Manager Paschal asked that the Co-Square item be pulled from the Consent Agenda to elaborate on issues. Some of the improvements needed for the Health Department's move, especially sound, will need more planning. The item will be brought back once the cost is determined. It is estimated at \$12,000. There may also be more relocating of offices in the rear to make improvements to the heating and air.

Manager Paschal discussed a proposal regarding Co-Square. The Arts Council would like to use Co-Square for a dedication ceremony for the new art mural. The dedication is scheduled for Sunday, March 23 from 2-4 pm. The agenda would include comments from a Caswell County commissioner. She asked the Board to allow the County to co-host the event by offering the space free of charge and doing a grand reopening of Co-Square at the same time.

Commissioner Wrenn felt the Arts Council should pay rent for the facility.

Manager Paschal added an additional request that the Arts Council would like to temporarily use a suite for a featured artist exhibit. The artist is Mike Stanley, a Caswell County resident. The reception for the mural will also feature his work. The Arts Council would like to use the space free of charge from March 23 – April 30. The Manager felt the event would help promote interest and traffic for the facility.

Commissioner Ingram did not have a problem with the request. He felt it would help move forward with the facility.

Commissioner Smith agreed that the event would provide exposure.

Vice Chair Rose agreed and if a potential tenant needed the space, the Arts Council would have time to vacate.

A motion was made by Vice Chair Rose seconded by Commissioner Gwynn to allow the Arts Council reception on March 23 and offer space for a gallery from March 23 – April 30 at no charge unless a tenant was interested at which time the Arts Council would vacate.

Commissioner Wrenn commented that the County was giving away revenue.

The motion passed 5-1. Commissioner Wrenn opposed.

County Attorney Updates:

Attorney Johnston shared an update on delinquent tax contracts. A delinquent tax sale will be scheduled for Friday, February 21 at 12:00 noon. The property is located at 2851 Wagon Wheel Rd. He will provide an update of the overall properties at the March meeting.

Commissioner Comments:

Commissioner Smith announced that he had officially been appointed to represent the County on the Piedmont Triad Rural Planning Organization.

Vice Chair Rose thanked the Board of Transportation and fire departments on their efforts.

Commissioner Gwynn expressed appreciation to Commissioner Smith on his appointment to the PTRO.

Announcements and Upcoming Events:

Chairman Yarbrough announced that the Board will meet on March 3 for a Work Session at 5:00 pm in the Caswell County Historic Courthouse. The Board will meet in Regular Session on March 17 at 6:30 pm in the Caswell County Historic Courthouse.

Closed Session:

Vice Chair Rose made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Smith, to adjourn to Closed Session to consult with an attorney employed or retained by the public body in order to preserve the attorney client privilege between the attorney and the public body, which privilege is hereby acknowledged NCGS 143-318.11 (a) (3); to discuss matters relating to the location or expansion of industries or other businesses in the area served by the public body, which privilege is hereby acknowledged in NCGS 143-318.11(a) (4); and to consider the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, conditions of appointment, or conditions of initial employment of an individual public officer or employee or prospective public officer or employee, which privilege is hereby acknowledged NCGS 143-318.11 (a) (6). The motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Rose moved, seconded by Commissioner Gwynn, to open session. The motion carried unanimously.

Adjournment:

Commissioner Smith moved, seconded by Commissioner Gwynn, to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Renee Paschal
Interim Clerk to the Board

Tim Yarbrough
Board Chair