



Caswell County Board of Commissioners

144 Court Square, Yanceyville, NC 27379

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BOC MINUTES | Regular Session Meeting | May 19, 2025, 6:30pm, Historic Courthouse

MEMBERS PRESENT

Tim Yarbrough, Chair
Frank Rose, Vice Chair
Finch Holt
Greg Ingram
Tony Smith
Brian Totten

OTHERS PRESENT

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

The Board of Commissioners (BOC) for the County of Caswell, North Carolina, met in a Regular Session meeting scheduled on Monday, May 19, 2025, at 6:30pm at the Historic Courthouse, Courthouse Square, 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: Chairman Yarbrough reminded the public that this time was for general comments and noted that budget comments would come later in the meeting.

Laura Pichardo, resident of Caswell County, GOP treasurer, supported her fellow candidates. Ms. Pichardo expressed concern about Co-Square not allowing political rallies as an acceptable use. She stated that it was costly to hold rallies and would hurt potential candidates. She asked the Board to reconsider the policy. For the Caswell County Tourism Development Authority, she supported having the Finance Director being a part of the Board. She felt that it would streamline the process and make it more efficient.

Recognitions: Commissioner Smith commended Interim County Manager Renee Paschal for her work on the proposed budget. Commissioner Ingram acknowledged National Emergency Medical Services Week (May 18–24). He thanked the first responders for their dedication to the community. Vice Chair Rose echoed Commissioner Smith's comments and thanked the Interim Manager for her work.

Consent agenda: This included the meeting agenda and open session minutes for 4/21/25 and 5/5/25. A motion was made by Commissioner Smith and seconded by Commissioner Ingram to approve the consent agenda. The motion carried unanimously.

Board of Equalization and Review (BER): A motion was made by Vice Chair Rose and seconded by Commissioner Smith to recess as the BOC and convene as the BER. The motion carried unanimously. Tax Administrator Thomas Bernard announced that there were no appeals for the BER. A motion was made by Commissioner Ingram and seconded by Vice Chair Rose to adjourn as the BER and reconvene as the BOC. The motion carried unanimously.

Public hearing for FY25–26 budget: A motion was made by Vice Chair Rose and seconded by Commissioner Totten to go into a Public Hearing about the FY25–26 Budget. The motion carried unanimously. Manager Whitaker

announced that Interim Manager Paschal had presented the budget 5/5 and would present it provide further budget information. He announced that the entire budget proposal could be found online.

Interim Manager Paschal reiterated her support for County employees. The employees were always looking for ways to save the County money. She noted that Caswell County was a good deal for taxpayers. The County's spending is 43% less than other counties with a similar tax base. Overall, the General Fund revenue declined \$643,000. Expenses increased by approximately \$13,000. To fund the difference, she proposed to raise property taxes 3 cents to cover the deficit. The County's tax rate is 5 cents below the average. The tax would generate approximately \$640,000 in revenue. She proposed that all residents and businesses pay \$125 for solid waste. Salaries increased \$788,897. Benefits increased \$264,002. Debt service increased \$331,172. Transfers to other funds increased \$191,326. The budget realigns resources in the General Fund. Some departments were increased while others were reduced. The realignments were based on FY24–25 spending.

Regarding Caswell County Schools, the budget request was not received in time to incorporate into the proposed budget and presentation on May 5. Ms. Paschal indicated that she met with the former Superintendent and requested that the school budget be submitted by the third week in April. She recommended the school budget remain the same as funding in FY25. A total of \$2.2 million increase in county appropriation was requested by the schools. The reason why the county appropriation increased is that the schools are not appropriating any fund balance. She questioned what the fund balance was.

She indicated that the budget addressed the Board of Commissioners' goals including \$50,000 for a contract economic developer instead of filling that position; \$21,850 for due diligence on the Pelham site; and \$48,000 for land use development plan to increase commercial and industrial development in Caswell County. Interim Manager Paschal thanked the Board for the opportunity to work in Caswell County. There were no questions from the Board.

Manager Whitaker recognized speakers who were present to speak on the budget.

Lance Stokes, Superintendent of Caswell County Schools, and resident of Caswell County and Guilford County stressed that the needs of the school system were essential. He requested that the Board reexamine the \$1.1 million repairs needed for a safe environment. He requested support of the school personnel who work many jobs to take care of their families. He asked for a partnership to help retain personnel by funding the capital investment and consider a salary supplement for educators.

Amy Carter, school nurse at Oakwood Elementary, stated that she was not a County resident. She was present in support of her colleagues and students. She spoke about deteriorating buildings. Nurses could not afford to come to Caswell County and have a \$30,000 pay cut. She spoke about frigid temperatures inside the classrooms as well as major leaks flowing down the walls. She spoke about the increase in students she saw daily as well as the mental health issues.

Candace Detweiler, a Caswell County resident, asked for more funding for the schools. She acknowledged that the funding may cause a tax increase and asked that the funds go to invest in the children of the County.

Amy Howard, a Caswell County resident and PTA president, stated that Caswell County needs to invest in schools. She noted that there were only two certified teachers at Dillard. Teachers need to be rewarded to avoid further turnover.

Emily Pruitt, Caswell County resident, served 25 years as a school counselor. She asked the Board to invest in students by adding a supplement to all Caswell County school personnel.

Angela Turner, a resident of Leasburg and teacher at South Elementary, asked the Board to consider a supplement for educators of Caswell County.

Terri Parker, an Orange County resident and Principal at South Elementary School spoke about the difference in pay in surrounding counties. She spoke about losing the best educators to other counties because of the pay. She asked the Board to support the schools' budget request.

Avery Artis, a resident of Guilford County and Principal at North Elementary, spoke about the urgent need for investment in the schools. Although the supplement was vital, he advocated for a safe environment. He spoke about functional infrastructure and updated equipment.

Courtney Smith, a resident of Caswell County, teacher and parent, reiterated the need for gyms to be funded. She added that PE teachers were expected to function without gymnasiums.

Rhea Ash, a resident of Caswell County and teacher, spoke about children's needs for dedicated teachers.

Mauriah Smith, a resident of Caswell County and librarian, spoke on behalf of the educators who leave the community and want to stay but cannot because of financial obligations. She noted that 18% of Caswell County children are home schooled. She spoke about leaking roofs, ongoing pest issues, even snakes appearing where doors don't seal properly. She added that there was only one functioning oven in the cafeteria and the school was facing critical staffing shortages.

Ean Whischol, a resident of Caswell County and teacher, reiterated the concerns of his peers.

Nicole Smith, a resident of Caswell County and member of the Board of Education noted that the school system's fund balance was under \$1 million. She stated that over the past year, the system bought an activity bus and boiler for the schools, multiple equipment for kitchens. She also stated that the Finance Director submitted the budget certified mail on May 2 to the County Commissioners.

Mel Battle, a resident of Caswell County and a member of the Board of Education expressed concern that the schools received the same amount of funding for four years in a row. He reminded the Board that the schools need funding.

Chairman Yarbrough thanked everyone for their comments. He indicated that further consideration of the budget would take place on Wednesday, May 28, at the Budget Work Session. A motion was made by Commissioner Smith and seconded by Vice Chair Rose to go back into Regular Session. The motion carried unanimously.

Presentation re: CAB/broadband results: Mr. Jeff Brooks representing the NC Department of Information Technology (NCDIT), provided an update on the Broadband Program for Caswell County. He spoke about the importance of broadband. He explained the changes in broadband since 1996. The speeds have increased exponentially. He focused on the funding and locations for broadband. Over the past few years, the focus is on individual addresses rather than census. The initial development of broadband is subsidized. In Caswell County, it will cost between \$40,000–\$80,000 per mile to build broadband service. The Federal government will subsidize approximately 70% of that cost. The remainder is subsidized by the service provider. He noted that the NCDIT does not subsidize maintenance.

If there is a state program, it is built out by NCDIT in 24 months and monitored for another 36 months to ensure that the service provider does what they said. Federal programs can take between 4–6 years. Programs will be finished in 2027. He showed examples of Charter coaxial/fiber coverage and Comcast coverage and shared projects that were currently underway in the County and the status. There are 266 projected stop gap eligible locations.

Commissioner Smith thanked Mr. Brooks for his presentation and the work he has done in Caswell County. He inquired about how many of the 8500 households were being covered under contracts for broadband. He also asked if additional funding would be required for stop gap and BEAD programs.

Presentation re: Child Fatality Prevention Team: Emily Hodges, Coordinator, and Danielle Elmore, Child Fatality Review Chairperson, presented their annual report. Ms. Elmore stated that the Team confidentially reviewed medical examiner reports and death certificates of deceased residents under the age of 18 in Caswell County. The purpose of the report is to give the Commissioners a summary of the cause of death, the number of cases reviewed that have been made and to share accomplishments.

The role of commissioners is to receive the report, advocate and appoint members to the local team. In 2024, the CFT reviewed one child death and 0 system problems—the death could not have been prevented. She shared some of the activities and accomplishments from last year. Annual reports were submitted to the Health Department, Board of Commissioners, and the State in a timely manner. A number of purchases were made using Child Fatality funds, including 24 smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms, five car seats, two Pack-n-Plays, bicycle helmets, knee pads, and gun locks. There were no questions from the Board.

Action Items:

CoSquare event policy and fees: Manager Whitaker stated that the policy was presented on May 5. The policy is designed to increase revenue. He requested that the Board wait to get security cameras installed prior to implementing the policy. The camera budget is available in the current budget. Chairman Yarbrough referenced the public comment regarding the permitted uses and political activity and related rallies. Attorney Johnston asked for additional time to further research. The Board deferred action until a June meeting.

Caswell County Tourism Development Authority (CCTDA) agreement: Manager Whitaker stated that the agreement allows the County to charge a 3% administrative fee (\$2700). It memorializes the arrangement between the County and the TDA. A motion was made by Commissioner Smith and seconded by Commissioner Ingram to approve the Caswell County Tourism Development Agreement. The motion carried unanimously.

Health Department roof contract: Manager Whitaker stated that the County received three bids for the roof project on the Health Department. Custom Coatings is the lowest bid at \$37,000. The bid requires Board approval because the amount exceeds \$25,000. A motion was made by Commissioner Smith and seconded by Vice Chair Rose to award the bid to Custom Coatings for the roof project at the Health Department. The motion carried unanimously.

Financial Performance Indicators of Concern (FPIC) to LGC: Manager Whitaker explained that local governments must provide a response regarding audits to the LGC. Ms. Sharpe prepared a response for the 2023 audit which requires Commission signatures. Commissioner Smith asked if there was enough manpower to do the things outlined in the audit response. Ms. Paschal stated that once the Finance positions are filled, it will be easier to address problems. A motion was made by Vice Chair Rose and seconded by Commissioner Smith to approve the financial performance indicators of concern to be signed and sent to the LGC. The motion carried unanimously.

Senior Services Veterans grant budget amendment: Manager Whitaker introduced the item. The amendment was for a grant that has a deadline of July 30, and \$18,280.97 is available by the NC Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. Senior Services has a plan for using the money, but to accomplish that, a budget amendment is necessary. There is no local match required. The July 31 date is a grant deadline for money to be spent and it is not a budget deadline. A motion was made by Vice Chair Rose and seconded by Commissioner Ingram to approve the Senior Services Veterans grant budget amendment. The motion carried unanimously.

HVAC unit at Guilford Mill location: Manager Whitaker explained that staff at Guilford Mills is in desperate need for air conditioning. Three bids were received. Barber Heat and Air submitted the lowest bid in the amount of \$20,658.59. Although the amount was in the range of approval for the Manager, he asked the Board to approve since it was not in the initial budget. Attorney Johnston has reviewed the request and prepared the contract.

Commissioner Smith asked if the Barber contract included 13.5 seer as the other bids stated. It was affirmed that the 13.5 seer was included in the Barber contract. Chairman Yarbrough asked if since the request exceeded \$10,000, if the rules had to be suspended. Manager Whitaker affirmed that funds were in place under Maintenance. A motion was made by Commissioner Smith and seconded by Commissioner Totten to approve the HVAC unit at the Guilford Mill location. The motion carried unanimously.

HVAC unit at Ag building location: Manager Whitaker explained that this request was similar to the previous request. Barber Heat and Air would be able to use the same crane which will be a savings. The contract amount is \$15,708.17. Funds are available in the existing budget. A motion was made by Commissioner Totten and seconded by Commissioner Ingram to approve the HVAC Unit at the Ag building location. The motion carried unanimously.

Appointments/re-appointments:

- SR Farmer Lake Advisory Board—Steve Eaton (alternate)
- SR Farmer Lake Advisory Board—Jerry Sykes (expires June 30/renewal)

A motion was made by Commissioner Totten and seconded by Commissioner Ingram to approve the appointments. The motion carried unanimously.

- Library Advisory Board—Cliff Matkins

A motion was made by Commissioner Totten and seconded by Commissioner Ingram to approve the appointment. The motion carried unanimously.

- Caswell County Tourists Development Authority—Rebecca Page

A motion was made by Vice Chair Rose and seconded by Commissioner Smith to approve the appointment. The motion carried unanimously.

- Piedmont Community College Trustees Board—Antonio Foster

A motion was made by Commissioner Ingram and seconded by Vice Chair Rose to approve the appointment. The motion carried unanimously.

Reports, updates, or comments:

Manager: Manager Whitaker stated that he continued to get acclimated and was trying to visit more departments. HR is still in the process of insurance open renewal. He referenced some planned changes to IT to improve citizens' viewing experience, including hopes to improve the video quality, projection, and website improvements. He noted that there would be an EMS dinner attended by some Commissioners with potential quorum; however, it was a social event and no County business would be discussed as a group.

Attorney: County Attorney Johnston updated the Board in the matter of Caswell County vs. Amy Morrell, a delinquent tax foreclosure. The last upset bid was filed April 28 and no additional upset bids were filed in the 10-day period for upset bids. The sale will be finalized and delinquent taxes will be paid to the Caswell County Tax Office.

Commissioners: Vice Chair Rose thanked everyone who came out to speak. He spoke on comments raised regarding the conditions of the schools and asked for a list of the problems at the schools. Commissioner Smith also wanted to know more about the schools' need and wanted to schedule meetings between the schools and staff. Commissioner Holt also questioned matters regarding the school system. Manager Whitaker relayed that he had asked for capital needs and that those be prioritized. He suggested possible field trips to assess needs. Other questions the Board had concerned the accurate amount of fund balance and if there where any ARPA funds remaining. Chairman Yarbrough stated that a budget work session would be held May 28, 8am–5pm, at the Library.

Announcements, events, and meetings: Various ones were announced as listed on the agenda.

Closed Session: Commissioner Smith made a motion, seconded by Vice Chair Rose, 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, and to consider and give instructions to attorney concerning the handling of a claim, which privilege is hereby acknowledged NCGS 143-318.11(a)(3). The motion carried unanimously. The BOC returned to Open Session.

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

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Respectfully submitted,

K. Scott Whitaker
Clerk to the Board

Tim Yarbrough
Board Chair