

**CASWELL COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

**Work Session**

**April 7, 2025**

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

**OTHERS PRESENT**

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Tim Yarbrough, Chair  
Frank Rose, Vice Chair  
Greg Ingram  
Rick McVey  
Tony Smith  
Brian Totten  
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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 Work Session meeting scheduled on Monday, April 7, 2025 at 5:00 pm 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:**

There were no public comments.

**Recognitions:**

Commissioner Smith thanked Thomas Bernard, Tax Director, and the Tax Department for the outstanding service provided to the County. The tax collection rate is one of the highest in the state.

**Swearing in of Commissioner Brian Totten:**

Interim Clerk Paschal formally administered the oath of office to Commissioner Totten. Commissioner Totten was officially sworn in on March 25, 2025. The Chair and Board welcomed Mr. Totten.

**Agenda:**

Chairman Yarbrough added agenda item #11 to Action Items:

- Approval of an Outside Firm for Legal Representation for the County

A motion was made by Commissioner Smith and seconded by Vice Chair Rose to approve the Work Session agenda with the addition. The motion carried unanimously.

## **Presentations:**

### Presentation on Opioid Settlement

Deputy County Manager Williamson introduced the item. She presented a PowerPoint presentation that outlined strategies for 2026. She noted that her presentation consisted of a collaboration of ideas and proposals from the Opioid Committee. She reminded the Board that the funds must be used to support individuals with opioid use disorder. She stated that the County had collected \$607,844.53 year-to-date. The County will continue to receive funds over the next 18 years. The strategies are designed to be funded for one year with the flexibility to evaluate their effectiveness at the end of the year. If the Committee or the Board feels the strategy is not yielding the desired outcomes, the County is not obligated to fund it for the following fiscal year. She added that the Opioid Committee will continue to monitor the strategies, making adjustments as necessary to have the greatest impact and success.

North Carolina will receive over \$1.4 billion between 2022 and 2038. 85 percent of the funds will go to counties and a few cities. Caswell County will receive over \$2 million. The payments will be reduced over time.

Ms. Williamson named options for settlement funds which include community planning, medication, treatment, and harm reduction, quality of life support and improvement, interventions for minors and support for individuals in the justice system.

The Opioid Advisory Committee recommended five strategies for approval. One strategy was approved by the board for funding from July 2024 through June 2026 – medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD) Program at the jail. The other four strategies were not approved at the time, but staff is asking for approval as part of the budget process.

MOUD in Jails (Exhibit A, Strategy 11) – approved by BOC in FY 2025 \$164,637 over two years. This would provide new offerings for incarcerated individuals, in line with ADA requirements to avoid potential lawsuits. Nurse coverage would be expanded to include Saturday and Sunday to administer medication and fulfill other needs. The Sheriff's Department has currently spent \$36,010.34. \$82,3518.50 will be available for FY 2026.

Reentry Program (Exhibit A, Strategy 12) – intended to connect individuals to treatment following release from jail; support in navigating benefit applications through Starting Point Rural Harm Reduction Coalition (SPRHRC); and funding for continued treatment through individual providers. The Committee recommends \$20,935 for medication support and \$5,000 for SPRHRC. She noted this would be beneficial once inmates were released to assist with opioid disorder.

Syringe Service Program (Exhibit A, Strategy 9) – Through the Solid Waste Department, safe sharp disposal boxes would be built and maintained at disposal sites. Through SPRHRC, connections to care and education would be provided; naloxone, and harm

reduction supplies would be offered to individuals who use drugs as well as their loved ones. The Committee recommends \$42,428 for Solid Waste for construction and upkeep and \$15,000 for SPRHRC for services and operating costs. She noted that these strategies work together in helping to reduce health risks—clean needles and safe disposal. The disposal boxes can also be used for insulin needles. It could help with needles being tossed into the landfill. Boards affixed at the sites would have educational resources available. Caswell County does not currently have a Syringe Service Program (SSP).

Early Intervention (Exhibit A, Strategy 6) – program offered through Piedmont Community College to identify and provide services to children/adolescents who may be experiencing an OUD or mental health issues in Caswell County Schools and beyond; provide training to other trusted adults to support these children and adolescents. The Committee recommends \$70,000 to fund a part-time position and other training and resource needs. The goal is to reach the individuals at an early age.

Collaborative Strategic Planning (Exhibit A, Strategy 1) – intended to support community engagement efforts; provide refreshments, space rentals, and other engagement tools. The Committee recommends \$6,000 to be used at the discretion of County administration.

Ms. Williamson stated that the presentation was an opportunity for the Board to hear about and discuss different strategies prior to budget approval. No action was requested at this meeting.

Vice Chair Rose asked if all the fire departments would have Narcan on their trucks. Ms. Williamson will have further conversations to be sure that every fire department knows that they have access to the Narcan. Vice Chair Rose suggested reaching out to the fire association. He expressed concern about the shelf life of Narcan on the trucks. He asked about the syringe program location. Ms. Williamson responded that if it is approved, the goal is to have it located where most calls are received. She stated that Pelham is one of the highest call areas. The mobile program will be kept in town. She added that the Board has discretion regarding the locations. Vice Chair Rose thanked Ms. Williamson and the group for their work on this matter.

### **Discussion Items:**

#### **Discussion on How to Allocate Increased Cost of Health Insurance**

County Manager Paschal introduced the item. She reminded the Board that the health insurance premiums would increase by 6 percent next year. The Board decided to remain with NCSHP. It would cost \$200,000 to pay back claims incurred in the current plan but paid after July 1 if the County changed providers. She stated that the final decision that the Board needed to make is what the employees' share of the health insurance will be prior to open enrollment and getting materials ready.

Ms. Paschal shared different cost scenarios for the Board to consider. The County could absorb the \$143,000 increase; the County and employees could split the cost 50/50 which would be \$71,760. Employees could pay 2/3, which would be \$46,800 and if the employees funded the entire increase, there would be no additional cost to the County.

Ms. Paschal spoke about the morale issue and turnover and suggested that the County absorb as much of the cost as possible.

Commissioner Ingram recommended that the County absorb the increase to help retain employees.

Commissioner Smith suggested an option that the County pay 90 percent, and the employees pay 10 percent. 125 employees are signed up for the basic coverage.

Chairman Yarbrough clarified that the County paid the same amount no matter which plan the employee selected. No employee receives more coverage than another.

Commissioner Totten mentioned that a family plan would be more and a person who made \$35,000 might find it hard to pay.

Commissioner Smith made a motion that the County pay 90 percent and the employee pay 10 percent of the \$143,000 increase. The motion died for lack of a second.

Commissioner Ingram made a motion seconded by Vice Chair Rose that the County absorb the \$143,000 increase.

Vice Chair Rose spoke about the difficult time the County has with recruiting and retaining employees. He acknowledged it was hard to compete with higher salaries.

Commissioner Totten asked if there was an increase last year. Manager Paschal replied that there was a 4 percent increase last year.

The motion carried unanimously.

#### Discussion on Economic Development Next Steps

County Manager Paschal recapped that economic development was one of the Board's major goals citing the need to construct shell buildings. She reached out to four major economic developers in the State. All four entities agreed that the next best step would be due diligence on the Pelham or Yanceyville site. Due diligence has not been done on either site. It is a precursor to site development. Golden Leaf has grant opportunities for both due diligence and site development. They will fund up to \$50,000 for due diligence and up to \$1.5 million for site development. They do not have any grant funding

opportunities for shell buildings. The State of North Carolina developed a pilot program for constructing shell buildings, and it is possible that the State will continue the funding in the future. If the sites are ready for construction, the County will be in a better position to take advantage of the funding.

Pelham may be the better site to begin with. A large part of the Yanceyville site is part of the same tract as the Senior Center. The first step there would be to subdivide the site from the Senior Center.

In speaking with David Ross, an engineer, he advised that both sites would not be funded. Golden Leaf will give the County up to \$50,000 for due diligence. The cost estimate is \$71,850 for due diligence for only the Pelham site. The remainder of the due diligence, \$21,850 would need to be included in the upcoming budget. Mr. Ross also provided the name of a grant writer, Joyce French, who has experience in writing grants for Golden Leaf. She has agreed to write the grant for \$5,000. The current economic development budget has sufficient funds to cover the cost of the grant writer.

A boundary survey to subdivide the Yanceyville property will cost \$12,000. If next year, the County decided to apply for due diligence, Golden Leaf would fund the boundary survey.

Administration recommended moving ahead with the grant proposal for \$5,000.

Commissioner Smith asked the deadline for submitting the application. Ms. Paschal responded that it was rotating, and no yearly date was set. If the County does not receive the grant, there will be a prototype for submitting the next grant application. Commissioner Smith reminded the Board that the County received approximately \$26,000 in timber sales which could cover the remainder of the due diligence. He added that it was a big step in working toward constructing shell buildings.

Commissioner Totten clarified that there would be a prototype if the funding was not received.

The Board gave consensus to move ahead.

#### Discussion on Personnel Policy Amendment

County Manager Paschal recapped the request from Chairman Yarbrough at the February 17, 2025 meeting to amend the personnel policy. The purpose of the amendment is to make it clear that employees who are volunteer firefighters may leave their jobs to respond to fires as long as they clock out from their County job. The amendment states:

*“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.”*

Chairman Yarbrough commented that Caswell County has a predominant volunteer fire service. During the day, those personnel can be stretched thin. He added that he does not have a problem with employees leaving their County job for fire calls as long as they are off the clock and notify their employer. He reiterated that these are volunteer positions and no pay is received for their service.

Commissioner Totten agreed with the Chair. He felt everyone benefited from the proposal.

Vice Chair Rose spoke as a 34-year firefighter volunteer. He noted that there are not many young people who sign up for the job. He supported the dedicated firefighters who serve the citizens of the County.

Commissioner Smith made a motion seconded by Vice Chair Rose to approve the amendment to the Personnel Policy. The motion carried unanimously.

**Action Items:**

Approval of Fee and Sponsorships for new Meals on Wheels Clients

County Manager Paschal stated that the current Block Grant funding does not allow the Senior Center to serve all eligible clients. There are 45 individuals on the waiting list. The Senior Center has been informed that the funding for next year will be flat or possibly reduced. The Senior Services Director would like to implement a private pay service for Meals on Wheels. By adding the private pay service, the Senior Center will be able to provide meals for those who can afford to pay while they wait to be served by the Block Grant. The Block Grant considers age—not income. The proposal is to charge a slightly higher fee to accumulate funds and possibly add additional clients.

Churches throughout the County would like to support the Senior Center and they would like to establish a sponsorship program whereby meals would be sponsored for a senior for a year. The cost of the sponsorship would be the County’s current cost for the meal.

The Board would have to set any fees that are approved. The Senior Center is requesting to charge \$6.50 per meal for private payees. The Senior Center proposes to charge sponsors \$5.21 per meal. The revenues would be accounted for separately.

Vice Chair Rose commented that the Wheels on Meals program was more than just meals. Someone actually checks on the meal recipient. If there is no response, a call is made to emergency personnel.

Commissioner Smith inquired about the number of days clients receive meals. Ms. Paschal confirmed that meals were received 5 days a week.

Chairman Yarbrough wanted to ensure that the additional meals would not overload the volunteers. Manager Paschal will follow up on the volunteer status. Action will be taken at the next meeting.

#### Approval of Outside Firm for Legal Representation in Possible Pending Legal Matter

Commissioner Smith made a motion seconded by Commissioner Ingram to approve an outside firm for possible legal representation. The motion carried unanimously.

#### **County Manager Updates:**

County Manager Paschal informed the Board that the photographer would be present at the next meeting at 6:00 pm for headshots.

Commissioners who have not taken the online class through the Local Government Commission must do so by April 15<sup>th</sup>. She will send a link out for the training.

County Manager Paschal informed the Board that she received a call from the Interim Finance Officer regarding an invoice from IRS in the amount of \$103,680. Penalties will incur if not paid by April 14<sup>th</sup>. The invoice results from actions taken in 2018. The Board will need to suspend the rules to appropriate the payment of \$103,680 from the fund balance.

Chairman Yarbrough asked for more detail. Manager Paschal felt the issue was a 1099 issue that caused the penalty assessment.

Vice Chair Rose asked if it was the first notice from IRS. Manager Paschal responded that it was not; however, it was the first that she and Interim Finance Officer Miller had been notified. The Interim Finance Officer checked the previous Finance Manager's emails and found evidence of correspondence with IRS.

Commissioner Smith asked if negotiations were an option. The Board wanted to know if this was an isolated incident or if there were more penalties to come. Manager Paschal will contact the IRS to find out if there are more penalties and if negotiation is possible.

A motion was made by Commissioner Smith and seconded by Commissioner Ingram to suspend the rules and appropriate \$103,680 from the fund balance to pay penalties assessed by the Internal Revenue Service. The motion carried unanimously.

**County Attorney Updates:**

In the matter of Public Service Company of North Carolina and Enbridge Gas of North Carolina v. Caswell County, this case has come to a close. A voluntary dismissal will be filed this week. Caswell County was only named as a party because the property owners owed delinquent taxes. The delinquent taxes have been paid.

In the matter of Caswell County v. Amy Lynn Murrell 24CVD379 in the Caswell County District Court Division regarding a tax foreclosure. The last upset bid was in the amount of \$12,730.02. The last day for the next upset bid is April 17<sup>th</sup> and the amount of the new upset bid is \$15,000.

**Commissioner Comments:**

Commissioner Smith thanked the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners for all the support given to Caswell County.

**Closed Session:**

Vice Chair Rose made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Ingram, 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 is hereby acknowledged NCGS 143-318.11(a)(3); 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; or to hear or investigate a complaint, charge, or grievance by or against an individual public officer or employee allowed under NCGS 143-318.11(a)(6); and 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 and give instructions to an attorney concerning the handling of a claim.

Commissioner Ingram moved, seconded by Vice Chair Rose, to return to open session. The motion carried unanimously.

The Board returned to open session and the following action was taken:

Commissioner Smith moved, seconded by Commissioner Totten, to set the date for public hearing for economic development incentives for an unnamed company, for April 21, 2025. The motion carried unanimously.

Vice Chair Rose moved, seconded by Commissioner Ingram, to amend the complaint in opioid litigation to withdraw action against 12 non PBM defendants. The motion carried unanimously.

**Adjournment:**

Commissioner Smith moved, seconded by Commissioner McVey, to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Renee Paschal  
Interim Clerk to the Board

Tim Yarbrough  
Board Chair