

CASWELL COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Regular Session
June 16, 2025

MEMBERS PRESENT

Tim Yarbrough, Chair
Frank Rose, Vice Chair
John Claggett
Greg Ingram
Tony Smith
Brian Totten

OTHERS PRESENT

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

The Board of Commissioners for the County of Caswell, North Carolina met in a Regular Session meeting scheduled on Monday, June 16, 2025, at 6:30 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:

Benton Covington-Thompson, 208 Blanch Road attended an informational session in Person County regarding the water impact from the Enbridge natural gas pipeline proposal. There were no Caswell County officials there. The next session is scheduled in Rockingham County on June 24, 2025 at 6:00 pm. She noted that there were no sessions scheduled for Caswell County and due to the lack of any industry in the County, she questioned any benefit of the pipeline to Caswell County. She expressed concern about the safety of Enbridge natural gas line and its effects on water, health and safety of residents.

Emily Pruitt, lifelong resident of Caswell County, employed with Caswell County Schools. She thanked the Board for visiting the schools and asked the Board to commit to invest in children by supporting staff and infrastructure in schools.

Myriah Smith, a resident of Caswell County, and employee of Caswell County Schools thanked the Board for visiting the schools.

Recognitions:

Board members Smith, Rose and Ingram congratulated the 2025 Caswell County graduates.

Commissioner Claggett recognized First Responders and the veteran population as June is PTSD Awareness Month. Coffee and conversation will be available for all veterans the 4th Wednesday of the month at 9 am at the Senior Center.

Consent Agenda:

- A. Meeting Agenda
- B. Open Session Minutes for 6/2/25

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

Discussion Items:**Creation of Economic Development Capital Reserve Fund (\$100k from Firebird/Cherokee Sale)**

Manager Whitaker stated that the County received approximately \$100,000 related to the Firebird/Cherokee project. The funds reside in the Capital Reserve fund according to financial policies. Commissioner Smith suggested moving the funds to a new Economic Development Capital Reserve Fund. There are pros and cons of moving the funds. The Manager's recommendation is to further research the pros and cons. Commissioner Smith felt it was important to have the funds available to the County for land acquisition, site prep and infrastructure. He desired to approve the item. Vice Chair Rose questioned if the Board moved the funds, if they could vote on how the funds are utilized. Manager Whitaker affirmed. There was consensus to allow the Manager to do further research and bring the item back at a later meeting. Vice Chair Rose desired to follow the recommendation of the Budget and Tax Center.

Action Items:**FY25-26 Budget Ordinance and FY25-26 Fee Schedule**

Ms. Paschal recapped the budget process for the FY 25-26 budget. A 4.2 cent property tax increase was proposed. 3 cents will offset the decrease in revenue, and 1.2 cents will go to the Caswell County Schools to fund a supplement and increased operating expenses. Changes to the Solid Waste fees are proposed including a \$55 availability fee to be charged to all residents and businesses in the County and a \$75 disposal fee to be charged to all residents and businesses without a town provided waste collection service. A 1.5 percent increase is proposed for all regular County employees.

Revenue - Appropriated fund balance in the General Fund increased by \$104,375. Property tax revenue increased by \$289,478. Total revenues are higher than the recommended budget.

Expenditure increases - The retirement rates increased. The cost is \$76,560 in the General Fund. Social Services retirement increased by \$18,866. Public Health retirement increased by \$12,626 and Library retirement was increased by \$2,071. Contingency was decreased by \$8,833 at the direction of the Board. The decrease to Family Services was \$9,993. Capital Outlay was decreased. Schools agreed to reduce normal capital outlay by \$65,000. Those funds are earmarked by State statute that must go to the school capital. \$888,000 will be appropriated to the schools. A transfer was made and there is no reduction in school capital. Retirement was left out of the budget for Soil & Water totaling \$3,672. The budget added a school supplement of \$240,500 and increased school operating fund by \$58,364. In Solid Waste, retirement was increased by \$1389 and decreased the transfer to capital reserve by the same amount. Caswell Area Transit system increased expenditures for retirement in the amount of \$1,784 and increased appropriated fund balance to cover that expense. Section 8 retirement was increased by \$921 and appropriated fund balance covered the expense. In Community Paramedic, revenue was increased by \$495 to balance the budget. The solid waste fees were not included in the recommended budget but were discussed at the budget work sessions. The County has been advised by LGC to adopt the budget ordinance and fee schedule separately.

A motion was made by Commissioner Smith and seconded by Commissioner Ingram to approve the FY 25-26 Budget Ordinance. The Chair called for Roll Call voting:

Claggett – No

Holt – No

Ingram – Yes

Rose – Yes

Smith – Yes

Totten – Yes

Yarbrough – Yes

The motion carried 5-2.

Manager Whitaker had a discussion with Yanceyville Manager regarding the solid waste fee. A proposed location for the recycling center in Yanceyville was confirmed.

A motion was made by Vice Chair Rose and seconded by Commissioner Ingram to approve the FY 25-26 Fee Schedule. The Chair called for a Roll Call voting:

Claggett – No

Holt – No

Ingram – Yes

Rose – Yes

Smith – Yes

Totten – Yes

Yarbrough – Yes

The motion carried 5-2.

Chairman Yarbrough presented Ms. Paschal with flowers and expressed appreciation on behalf of the Board for her service to the County.

Opioid Spending Authorization Resolution

Deputy County Manager Melissa Williamson stated that the County is required to have a spending resolution adopted by the Board before any funds can be spent beginning July 1st. No changes have been made. Goals are for one year and can then be revisited. \$241,682 will be spent next year.

A motion was made by Vice Chair Rose and seconded by Commissioner Totten to approve the Opioid Spending Authorization Resolution. The motion carried unanimously.

FY24-25 Year-End Budget Amendment

Ms. Paschal recapped that several General Fund departments would overspend their budgets in 2025 by more than the vacancy allowance. EMS and Sheriff budgeted vacancy allowances. In the case of Central Services, property and liability insurance premiums are much higher than budgeted. Interfund transfers to the school capital fund which is statutorily required were not included in the original budget. EMS revenues are running ahead of budget and it is anticipated that EMS will offset their costs. An appropriation from fund balance is required for all other departments to ensure the budget is not overspent. Otherwise, the County will receive an audit finding for budget violations as have occurred in the past. It is anticipated that savings from other departments will offset the increase.

Ms. Paschal spoke about the changes that need to be made in the General Fund. Staff proposed to increase General Fund revenues for FY25 by \$1,333,000. Expenditures in Central Services are proposed to be increased for insurance by \$250,000; increase Sheriff salaries by \$50,000; remove

Sheriffs vacancy allowance; increase detention salaries by \$250,000; increase EMS salaries by \$200,000; remove EMS vacancy allowance; increase the transfer to the school capital reserve; and increase the transfer to the fire district fund of \$60,000.

Commissioner Smith asked whether the \$1,333,000 was an acceptable range. Ms. Paschal responded that given the size of the budget, the amount was outside of the normal range. Vice Chair Rose asked if there were parameters that could be put in place to look at in 3-6 months of the new cycle. Ms. Paschal noted that the Public Safety problem was compounded by the vacancy allowance. In the jail, there was a reduction in revenue and overall inmate count has increased. That caused medical and food budgets to increase as well as salaries to backfill vacant positions.

Johnna Sharpe spoke about transfers to other funds. Those funds have to be adjusted to ensure they balance. She noted an increase in the schools' capital reserve, and an increase in fire tax districts because it is anticipated that more sales tax will be transferred from the General Fund to the Fire District fund. The Caswell Enterprise fund was a finding on the audit. The fund is in a deficit as a result of when Co-square was built because expenditures had been charged to another fund and were not covered. There are funds in the Revolving fund which the county has had sitting for some time. As they are both related to economic development, she recommended transferring funds from the revolving fund to the enterprise fund in order to eliminate the deficit and eliminate an audit finding. Occupancy tax is expected to exceed the original revenue budget because when the budget was built, it was not anticipated that the Town would begin levying the tax and those revenues are significantly more, so that funds need to be increased by \$80,000. Fines and forfeitures are set aside for schools and are running ahead by \$90,000. Schools will get additional funds this year but the County needs sufficient appropriation to transfer to schools. Section 8 will use some excess revenues as well as some fund balance appropriation so there is a need to increase expenditures. If departments exceed their budgets, that will result in an audit finding.

A motion was made by Commissioner Smith and seconded by Commissioner Totten to approve the FY24-25 Year-End Budget Amendment. The motion carried unanimously.

Johnna Sharpe Financial Consultant Contract Amendment

Manager Whitaker shared a summary of hours and a proposed amendment to Ms. Sharpe's contract. He provided the Board with the original contract and stated that the financial work was split between the County Commissioners' Association and Caswell County. Ms. Sharpe stated that the NCACC is committed to getting audits caught up. The County requested more of her time which is the reason for the contract.

Commissioner Claggett questioned whether the County was actively recruiting for a Finance Officer. Manager Whitaker replied that once the budget is passed, he will post the position this week. Commissioner Claggett inquired about the recent hire of a certified Finance Director – was there an exit interview conducted? Ms. Sharpe replied that the Finance Director was only there for two days and an exit interview was likely not conducted, although the Interim Manager had a conversation with him.

Chairman Yarbrough asked Ms. Sharpe about the increase in hours. Ms. Sharpe replied that she has taken on additional responsibilities that have slowed some of the work on the audit. There is currently no HR Director. She is the only person who knows how to process HR transactions. She and the Interim Finance Director have been doing extra work in order to keep things moving with the audit. If the FY24 audit is not complete by July, it could be delayed. The Chair asked if, given the staffing

shortages, if the audit report would be complete by July. Ms. Sharpe stated that she will know by the end of the month if things are on schedule for the July deadline. Commissioner Smith asked if there was any way to get additional help. Ms. Williamson was not sure because there would be such a learning curve for a new person.

Vice Chair Rose commented that it feels like the “goal post keeps moving.” He was concerned about what could be done as a Board. He recommended moving forward, there be cross training in departments. He asked if there were issues with the FY24 audit? Ms. Sharpe responded that there will be some budget violations and the biggest issue is getting the bank reconciliations done. She stated that allowing her to continue to work will help meet the July deadline.

Manager Whitaker interjected that as far as recruitment goes, it is top priority. There are six interviews lined up for the HR Director. Hopefully that position will be filled quickly.

Commissioner Smith asked whether the \$80,000 would change if staff was hired during the contract. Ms. Sharpe responded that the contract only goes thru June and could change.

A motion was made by Commissioner Smith and seconded by Commissioner Ingram to approve the contract amendment with Johnna Sharpe, Financial Consultant. The motion carried unanimously.

Caswell County Tourism Development Authority (CCTDA) FY 25-26 Budget Approval

Manager Whitaker stated that TDA has considered and approved the budget. As of June 30th, there is an estimated accumulated fund balance of \$145,000. The budget includes \$33,600 not yet allocated as a contingency. There is no direct financial impact to the County’s budget. The occupancy tax is part of the budget ordinance.

A motion was made by Commissioner Ingram and seconded by Vice Chair Rose to approve the Caswell County Tourism Development Authority FY25-26 Budget. The motion carried unanimously.

Danville/Caswell Water and Sewer Services Agreement Amendment

Attorney Johnston shared that in the course of research for Firebird/Cherokee project, there were some issues discovered in the water and sewer agreement that may make existing or potential customers to the industrial park uneasy. He referenced paragraph 2 in the agreement entitled “Term.” He proposed to delete language in paragraph 2A which states “and shall renew automatically for successive one-year terms unless terminated as herein provided.” In paragraph 2B, he proposed to delete language that states that “this agreement may be terminated by either party at any time after the initial term by giving the other party written notice three years in advance of the effective date of the termination.” By deleting the language, it is likely to further encourage development at the Pelham Park. If approved, the amendment will go to City Manager of Danville to present to its Council. If the City of Danville approves, there will be no limitation on terms for water and sewer.

A motion was made by Commissioner Smith and seconded by Vice Chair Rose to approve the Danville/Caswell Water and Sewer Services Agreement Amendment. The motion carried unanimously.

Construction of Training Facility and Firing Range

Manager Whitaker recapped the item that was previously presented on May 5. A new proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was presented. He stated that he recently visited the site and increased his comfort level. The MOU is between the Sheriff’s Office and County.

Attorney Johnston stated that the MOU is a work draft at this point. There has been no input from the Sheriff's Office. He highlighted major points in the MOU. The County will designate a Range Safety Officer, Tactical Medic and a certified Firearms instructor to promote safety. The facility must have the County's general liability insurance. An Operations Manual would dictate the rules of the range and would need the Sheriff's Office input. The term of five years for the MOU would be at the Board's discretion for a shorter or longer period. At the end of the MOU, each participant who participates at the shooting range must sign the Acknowledgement of Risk and Indemnity waiver.

Commissioner Holt asked if the positions were full-time. Attorney Johnston felt the employees would be Sheriff's staff. Commissioner Ingram stated that the employees were already working for Sheriff's Office and have had the proper training for the role. Commissioner Holt was concerned about three people being taken away from other duties. Attorney Johnston stated that funding would come from the Sheriff's Office and no additional County funds would be requested.

Attorney Johnston informed the Board that if they chose to move forward, a motion would be contingent on state and federal approval because of the gas vents at the existing landfill. Those are monitored by the State of North Carolina and because of the proximity of the shooting range to the gas vents, it would require state approval.

Commissioner Holt commented that promises were made to homeowners, and he didn't see where it's stated that once approved, the rules could be changed. Attorney Johnston stated that the Board could attach rules that the Sheriff's Office would have to abide by.

Vice Chair Rose spoke about decibel readings. He asked the Sheriff to perform decibel readings using the number of firearms that would be fired at one time which came in lower than the operations of the facility. He asked the County Manager to look at issue with other departments to come in to train and have a form agreement and liability arrangement. In May 2024, an incident occurred in the County that over \$1 million in personnel and equipment assisted Caswell County. He stressed that Caswell needed to be good neighbors to surrounding counties and facilities. He commented that the Board owes it to first responders to be the best they can be.

Commissioner Smith added that the MOU should include that decibels cannot exceed 65. Manager Whitaker responded that the plan is for an 18-foot berm and side berms for extra protection.

Attorney Johnston will need to make a modify the MOU regarding the 65 decibels. He added that the MOU currently includes language that only Caswell Sheriff employees can use the facility.

Vice Chair Rose asked the Sheriff his feelings about using outside agencies. Sheriff Durden commented that he wants to be friendly. Chairman Yarbrough asked if there was a problem with setting up the facility as only for use by Caswell, but if a request from neighboring county is received, the Board could revisit the request. Commissioner Holt spoke about the frequency of shooting. Sheriff Durden replied that the training would be two times a month with no Saturday, Sunday or holiday shooting. Commissioner Ingram commented that when you attend trainings, you are using someone else's facilities. He added that it is more than a shooting range, but also a training facility for law enforcement.

A motion was made by Vice Chair Rose and seconded by Commissioner Ingram to approve construction of the Training Facility and Firing Range Memorandum of Understanding contingent on State and Federal approval. The motion carried 5-2. (Claggett and Holt opposed).

Extension Agent Salary Increase Request

Manager Whitaker explained that an Extension employee has received her title promotion with NC State University and will be moved from an Associate Agent to an Extension Agent within the HR System at the college. She will be receiving an 8 percent State increase and requests the County to match the same percentage. The budget includes the increase in the Contingency Budget. It will cost the County \$4621.00. Vice Chair Rose clarified 8 percent with the State. It will be the same process if the State budget increases. The County increase does not affect State employees. The starting salary range starts at \$42,000-\$85,000 with a Masters degree. Her total salary will be in the \$70,000 range.

A motion was made by Commissioner Holt and seconded by Commissioner Claggett to approve the Extension Agent Salary Increase Request by 8 percent. The motion carried unanimously.

County Manager Updates:

Manager Whitaker stated that he had a surprise visit from OSHA last week. The visit revealed some safety shortcomings. Corrective actions have been taking place. He is awaiting a final report from OSHA and expects some fines. He submitted documents that addressed requests including safety programs and data sheets. The inspection focused on solid waste, EMS, Sheriff, and Emergency Management. Workers Comp liability rates are increasing significantly. Deputy Manager Williamson stated that staff received FY26 rates. She would like consensus for permission to sign the forms so the County will have insurance July 1. Rates went up \$5,741 compared to FY25. The Insurance is thru NCACC. She reached out and noticed it was an increase in law enforcement. The Rating factor was impacted by a bad loss year in 2023-24 where the County incurred \$733,000 in losses. The ratio is up by 15 percent. She will check to see what the next renewal will look like. There was a consensus to allow Ms Williamson to sign the forms.

Manager Whitaker stated that staff will be revisiting the Hunting and Wildlife Committee. The Board has been inactive. There will be a meeting July 8th to determine regularity. Department Heads are receiving training from Chatham County. NCACC also offers free training. The Manager will pursue every resource to make significant changes to safety program.

County Attorney Updates:

County Attorney Johnston reported on delinquent tax collection for 2024 taxes. Approximately 67 tax notices for delinquent tax properties have been received since April. Many of the parcels have been paid or are in payment plans. He shared a spreadsheet for the Board's records.

Commissioner Comments:

Commissioner Claggett commented that on Aug 21, 2023, the Deputy Treasurer over State and local government finances informed the Board that "the Finance Officer is required to prepare and report a financial condition to the board anytime it's asked for and I would strongly encourage you to set a schedule for that with your Finance Officer if you haven't already." Such a report has been requested by a member of the Board at least twice and has not happened. He added that he would like to see monthly or quarterly financial update in the agenda packet. He questioned whether Board consensus results should be a part of the meeting minutes. He referenced minutes from the February meeting and emphasized having complete minutes posted on the website.

Commissioner Smith asked if most of the OSHA findings had been corrected. Manager Whitaker responded that everything that could be corrected in short order has been corrected. Staff has been very responsive. What has not been addressed, staff is getting quotes on. Staff is awaiting the report from the Compliance Officer. A hearing will occur with Department of Labor to address some of the findings and fines.

Chairman Yarbrough echoed Commissioner Claggett on the Financial Report. He shared announcements on upcoming events.

Closed Session:

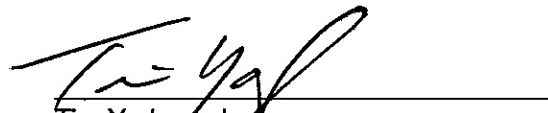
Vice Chair Rose made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Ingram, to adjourn to Closed Session to consult with an attorney employed or retained by the public body in order to preserve the attorney-client privilege between the attorney and the public body, and to consider and give instructions to attorney concerning the handling of a claim, which privilege is hereby acknowledged NCGS 143-318.11(a)(3); and to discuss matters relating to the location or expansion of industries or other businesses in the area served by the public body, including agreement on a tentative list of economic development incentives as provided under NCGS 143-318.11(a)(4). The motion carried unanimously.

Adjournment:

Commissioner moved, seconded by Commissioner, to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at pm.

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Respectfully submitted by Michelle Parker (*external Clerk contracted to prepare minutes on behalf of Caswell*)


K. Scott Whitaker
Clerk to the Board


Tim Yarbrough
Board Chair