

**AT A JOINT MEETING OF THE GLOUCESTER COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS AND SCHOOL BOARD, HELD ON TUESDAY, MARCH 18, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M., IN THE THOMAS CALHOUN WALKER EDUCATION CENTER, 6099 T. C. WALKER ROAD, GLOUCESTER, VA 23061:**

**1. Call to Order and Roll Call**

Mr. Smith called the meeting to order, and Ms. Steele took roll call for the Board of Supervisors.

**THERE WERE PRESENT:** Kevin M. Smith, Chair  
Ashley C. Chriscoe, Vice Chair  
Phillip N. Bazzani  
Christopher A. Hutson  
Kenneth W. Gibson  
Michael A. Nicosia  
Robert J. Orth

**THERE WERE ABSENT:** None

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Edwin "Ted" Wilmot, County Attorney  
Carol Steele, County Administrator

Ms. Arsenovic welcomed everyone on behalf of the School Board which had been in recess since 5:39 p.m. Ms. Parker then moved, seconded by Ms. Scruggs, for the School Board to reconvene in open session and to certify that the Gloucester County School Board, while in closed session, discussed only public matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements provided in Subsection A of Section 2.2-3711 and that only public business matters that were identified in the motion convening the closed session were heard, discussed or considered. The motion carried and was approved by the following roll call vote: Mr. Drew, Ms. Parker, Mr. Andersen, Ms. Saulman, Ms. Scruggs, and Ms. Arsenovic - yes.

**2. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance - Dr. Robert J. Orth - Supervisor, Abingdon District and David Washington - Peasley Middle School**

Dr. Orth gave an invocation and then David Washington, Peasley Middle School student, led all in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

Ms. Parker stated that David was an 8th grade student from Peasley and a member of the Peasley Student Council Association. He played piano, was an avid reader and loved to write his own short stories. She shared that he loved learning, was a model student, and his teachers shared that he had really blossomed as an 8th grade student this year. All in attendance gave David a round of applause.

**3. Approval of the Minutes - no minutes available for adoption**

**4. Adoption of the Agenda**

Mr. Chriscoe moved, seconded by Dr. Orth, to adopt the agenda for the Board of Supervisors. The motion carried and was approved by a unanimous voice vote.

Mr. Andersen moved, seconded by Ms. Parker, to adopt the agenda for the School Board. The motion carried and was approved by a unanimous voice vote.

**5. Approval of the Consent Agenda**

There were no consent agenda items.

**6. Matters Presented by the Board**

There were no matters for discussion.

**7. County Administrator / Superintendent Items**

Ms. Steele reminded the public that the Board of Supervisors would hold its first budget work session on Monday, March 24 at 6 p.m. in the Colonial Courthouse, and a budget town hall on Wednesday, March 26. Clean Gloucester Day was coming up on March 29.

Dr. Vladu stated that the Gloucester Educational Foundation annual race supporting public education was this Saturday, March 22 at 8:30 a.m.

**8. Public Comment Period**

**HOWARD MOWRY - YORK DISTRICT**

Mr. Mowry stated that he loved the nights with the two government entities sparring over funding for a county that was financially insolvent. He recommended for agenda item d [high school renovation and contingency update] that the one cent sales tax be used to pay for change orders 1-17. In item e [capital improvement update], he hoped that this evening additional information could be provided. In item I [decision on tax rate advertising], the County was being presented the annual tax increase and stated that 85% of the budget was to support salaries and benefits. He noted there was an annual discrimination of water and land. Water pays zero tax while land pays millions. Ten years ago, the Commissioner was to present information on whether businesses show an increase in revenue due to the zero-based tax operation [for boats]. No answer had been forthcoming. With a broke county, what justification could be presented to continue?

**LARRY COHEN - YORK DISTRICT**

Mr. Cohen stated that he notified the School Board of their violation of State Code section 24.2-228 by attempting to make an interim appointment of a School Board member. He further stated that the School Board was required to provide a list of candidates and resumes to the public at least seven days prior to making an appointment, and they were required to seek stakeholder comments. This law was violated by the School Board for many years. Whether they sought counsel on it or not, was to be determined. He noted that stakeholders had a right to comment on the candidates prior to appointment by the School Board. He noted that State Code Section 2.2-3707 governed how the notice was to be posted and reviewed those provisions. He stated that the meeting on the candidates should have been postponed and that the School Board was breaking the law.

**DIANE JONES - WARE DISTRICT**

Ms. Jones stated that the last time she spoke, she recommended that the Administrator balance the budget. She noted that there were many ways to do that. Volunteer groups could be put together to do things instead of hiring a contractor. Volunteers would be more than willing to spruce up Beaverdam Park. Students could learn landscaping by working around the high school. She stated that the School Board minimally fulfilled its obligation to notify the public about the candidates for the School Board replacement and did not meet the requirement of transparency.

**9. Work Session Agenda**

**a. Oratorical Award Winners Recognition - Dr. Diron Ford - Director of Secondary Education**

Dr. Ford presented information on the second annual oratorical competition. He stated that the art of oratory pertained to public speaking. He reviewed the structure of the competition. He began with a short video with highlights from the competition that took place on March 7. He then noted that student voice was very important. He advised that in putting the competition together, they looked at ways to connect to curriculum. He showed those areas in the curriculum that were supported through the competition. He then announced the winners: Paula Ochoa-Zapeda, 1st Place; Kaelyn Southworth, 2nd Place; and David Washington, 3rd Place. Ms. Ochoa-Zapeda and Ms. Southworth were not able to attend. Dr. Diron presented Mr. Washington with a plaque.

All in attendance gave Mr. Washington a round of applause.

Dr. Diron also presented a plaque to Ms. Carter-Mayo, one of the staff liaisons. He then stated that the competition could not have taken place without the support of the community and noted the support from the Woodville-Rosenwald School Foundation, the NAACP, and the Fine Arts Museum. He asked several representatives to speak.

Dr. Parker, Ms. Armstead, and Dr. White Brown individually thanked the teachers, and all those who assisted the students in participating.

Ms. Carter-May then thanked all the sponsors for making the opportunity available to the students. She also thanked the families for supporting their students in this competition.

**b. Presentation on Work Based Learning - Eugene Schoeck - Work Based Learning Coordinator**

Mr. Schoeck reviewed the information in the instruction and academic achievement strategic goal. He showed some pictures of students in the different types of career and technical education classes to include carpentry, health sciences, culinary, and auto mechanics. He discussed the leadership event that was sponsored in the fall. He reviewed the goals for work based learning to include bridging the gap between high school and high-demand, high-skill careers, building on classroom-based instruction to develop employability skills, and providing exposure to professional work settings. He reviewed enrollment in the top five courses and the

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types of learning opportunities. He invited several students to speak about their experiences.

Ms. Nester discussed her position as a nurse aide at Dockside.

Ms. Penn stated that she had been working at Gloucester House as a nurse aide for about a year and relayed some of her experiences.

Mr. Shelton stated that he was in the automotive technology program and had started to work at the Gazette Journal as a press mechanic learning to operate the press.

Mr. Schoeck stated that they received a lot of support from local businesses. He reviewed upcoming events to include a hiring event, signing day, and the summer skilled trades boot camp. He noted the next steps for the program included optimizing career and academic planning in middle school, increasing the number of learning experiences by 10 percent, and expanding the program to add welding and HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) as new courses.

Mr. Bazzani asked whether a degree was required to teach CTE (career, technical education) courses.

Mr. Schoeck stated that he was not an expert but most just needed an industry certification.

Dr. Vladu clarified that they were turning to industry professionals for some of these. However, they needed to develop teacher support and mentoring programs for those professionals. He noted that there was a difference between teaching fifteen students versus one.

Mr. Nicosia stated that he worked closely with Mr. Schoeck. He invited anyone who wanted to see what the kids were doing outside of the core subjects to come and visit. He advised that the CTE teachers requested things not to stockpile, but to invest in the students.

Ms. Arsenovic thanked Mr. Schoeck for what he was doing and all the business partners in the County who helped to make the program strong.

### **c. Opioid Settlement Funds FY2026 Expenditure Recommendations - Quinton Sheppard - Community Engagement and Public Information Director**

Mr. Sheppard stated that he was presenting on behalf of Mr. Wright. He was requesting approval to continue four of the five initial opioid abatement projects and to add two new projects for FY26. He reviewed the current projects and noted that the prevention and treatment specialist at the high school was one of the most successful ventures. He reviewed the other programs. He stated that it was recommended to include subsidized residential/inpatient bed fees and peer support certification training in FY26.

After a brief discussion, Mr. Chriscoe moved, seconded by Mr. Hutson, to approve the FY2026 opioid settlement fund spending plan. The motion carried and was approved by the following roll call vote: Mr. Bazzani, Mr. Chriscoe, Mr. Gibson, Mr. Hutson, Mr. Nicosia, Dr. Orth, and Mr. Smith - yes.

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE FY 2026 OPIOID SETTLEMENT FUND  
SPENDING PLAN

**WHEREAS**, the Commonwealth of Virginia is expected to receive opioid-related settlement funds by the settlement administrators each year until at least 2039;

**WHEREAS**, the Opioid Abatement Authority (OAA) was established by the Virginia General Assembly in 2021 as an independent entity to abate and remediate the opioid epidemic in the Commonwealth through financial support from the Virginia Opioid Abatement Fund in the form of grants, donations, or other assistance, for efforts to treat, prevent, and reduce opioid use disorder and the misuse of opioids in the Commonwealth; and

**WHEREAS**, and 55% of each settlement is to be sent to the OAA to be distributed in accordance with Code of Virginia §2.2-2374; and

**WHEREAS**, the Board of Supervisors adopted an initial spending plan for use of opioid settlement funds at its September 5, 2023, meeting; and

**WHEREAS**, based on outcomes of the initial projects and additional stakeholder input, an updated spending plan for FY26 has been developed that will be funded with direct opioid settlement funds as well as funds from the OAA; and

**WHEREAS**, the recommended plan would continue support for the Prevention and Treatment Specialist position, access to transportation for medication assisted treatment and therapeutic counseling, subsidization of costs for medication assisted treatment locally and through the Northern Neck Regional Jail Medication Assisted Treatment program, and production of a comprehensive resource guide; and

**WHEREAS**, the proposed spending plan incorporates subsidized residential/inpatient rehabilitation bed fees and scholarships for peer support certification training as new projects; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Gloucester County Board of Supervisors does hereby approve the attached FY2026 Opioid Settlement Fund Spending Plan.

FY26 Plan for Gloucester

Recommended Initiative	Estimated Cost
Prevention and Treatment Specialist (GCPS)	\$32,225.00
Comprehensive Resource Guide for Mid Pen Region	\$1,000.00
Ride to Recovery (subsidized transportation to therapeutic counseling/MAT)	\$40,000.00
Subsidizing MOUD/MAT locally and through Northern Neck Regional Jail	\$267,005.00
Subsidized Residential/Inpatient Rehab Bed Fees	\$15,000.00
Peer Support Certification Training Scholarships	\$5,000.00

Project Contingency	\$5,000.00
FY 2026 Proposed Budget Total	\$365,230.00

d. **Gloucester High School Renovation and Contingency Fund Update - Bryan Hartley - Deputy Superintendent**

Mr. Hartley provided an update on the high school renovation work. He reviewed the work on the stormwater system lines that was not originally anticipated. He showed pictures of that work and the ductile iron pipes that were originally in the ground. He showed a picture of the kitchen floor and noted that all of the electrical and plumbing had to be replaced, which was not expected. He discussed those issues in more detail.

Mr. Bazzani asked why the contractor had not identified the issues originally.

Mr. Hartley noted that Moseley Architects did the design and put together the information for the bid process. He stated that it was likely that the pipes under "C" hall would look the same as those under "A" hall. He continued his review showing some of the finished areas to include the chorus, band, and drama rooms. He reviewed the use of the contingency fund and stated that there was approximately \$1.3 million left. The project had about six more months before it would be completed.

There was additional discussion on the underground piping.

Mr. Andersen stated that this was an expected circumstance. He noted that Moseley had made it clear that it would be expected to find issues when the layers were peeled back and that the best scope would not be perfect.

Mr. Nicosia expressed a sincere thank you to ET Gresham. He stated that the group working on the renovation were very nice. They went out of their way to make sure that instructional time was not impacted and that they were not in the way of students or staff. He stated that it was very important for the public to know that the company doing the work was working well with the school staff.

Mr. Hartley agreed that it had been a very good working relationship.

After a brief discussion, Mr. Chriscoe asked if the piping on "C" hall was part of the original budget and for the cost for the remainder of the terrazzo flooring in the cafeteria.

Mr. Hartley stated that part of the pipe work on "C" hall was in the original budget. He advised that he would provide the information on the flooring cost to the boards.

Ms. Steele reminded the Board that the in previous discussions on the contingency, the Board had approved the use of any remainder for the outside area. She asked if there is any expectation that contingency funds would be left at the end to help with the extra terrazo or the outside improvements.

Mr. Hartley stated that they had hoped to have more contingency at this point than they had. He noted that the site work had been divided into east and west

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sections. He advised that the priority would be the east side. He noted that project would move the student parking lot over and away from the bus loop.

### **e. Update on Capital Improvement Projects - Bryan Hartley - Deputy Superintendent**

Mr. Hartley stated that the high school renovation was not the only project that had been in progress. He provided an update on the Peasley HVAC and Gloucester High School fieldhouse projects.

### **f. Presentation of School Board's Proposed FY2026 Budget and FY2026-FY2030 Capital Improvement Plan - Dr. Anthony Vladu - Superintendent of Schools & Cabinet**

Dr. Vladu stated that he was grateful to present the needs of the almost 5,000 students, their families, and 800 teachers. He would be remiss if he did not recognize the team that had crunched these numbers and to thank the County's finance team. He noted that the budget should never be created in a vacuum and input from stakeholders was very important. He reviewed in general the types and numbers of community input sessions. He reviewed the things that made an effective school division. He showed how Gloucester compared to the other divisions related to the percent of students in poverty and the performance ranking. In the region 2 and 3 ranking, Gloucester was a top ranking school. He reviewed the average daily membership trend projecting steady to declining enrollment through FY28. He showed the local composite index trend. He thanked the boards for fully funding transportation last year to increase the safety and readiness of the bus fleet. He stated that one of the new requests was for the fleet vehicles. He reviewed the characteristics of those vehicles. He noted that there were 26 vehicles with an average age of 15.6 years. He stated that the fleet vehicles were used to transport students and reviewed when that was needed. He stated that by using the fleet vehicles for those transports, there was a cost savings from not having to use a bus. Also, the driver of a fleet vehicle did not have to have a CDL (commercial driver's license).

There was a brief discussion on the opportunity for auto tech students to have training at the bus garage.

Dr. Vladu reviewed the five strategic goals, and the amount of increased funding requested to support each one. He discussed the increased need in Goal 1 - Instruction and Academic Achievement. He reviewed the totals for the compensation increase, health insurance increase, and other items.

Mr. Chriscoe asked for the separate amounts for the COLA (cost of living adjustment) and the step.

Dr. Vladu noted that information would be provided. He then continued his review with Goal 3 - Efficiency of Operations, Fiscal Responsibility, Transportation and Human Resources. He reviewed the items to include signage, fleet vehicle needs, maintenance parts and supplies, and food services support. Goal 4 - Ensuring Safe Schools and Secure Transportation included an additional amount for the compensation for bus drivers. He then reviewed the items in Goal 5 - Promoting

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Mental Health & Wellness including three elementary behavior interventionists and two school-based social workers. He reviewed the total of resources that could be allocated in FY26 were expected to be \$2.3 million. He noted items that contributed to that revenue amount to include staff reductions through attrition and non-payroll adjustments. In addition, it was expected that the division would receive an additional \$1.1 million in State funding. He then showed the overall FY26 budget outlook summary. He noted again that the additional requests as he had reviewed amounted to \$5.5 million in additional expenditures. The \$2.3 million revenue plus \$1.1 million from the State totaled \$3.5 million funding available leaving a gap of \$2.037 million for an increase to the local transfer request.

There were questions from Board members about the bus driver increase and staff attrition.

Dr. Vladu clarified that the compensation amount for the bus drivers was proposed to increase to \$20 per hour which was the 4.5% proposed COLA plus an additional \$0.28 per hour. Regarding staff attrition, he noted that they were not making changes to course offerings but looking at master scheduling efficiency. He advised that they were making sure that class sizes were appropriate.

There was additional discussion.

Mr. Nicosia asked if the decreases in staff positions would be on the positions posted but not filled.

Dr. Vladu stated that their analysis was on attrition only. Each year there were between 45-60 resignations and retirements. He advised that some of those positions would not be replaced. He stated that he did not want staff to be concerned about losing their positions.

Mr. Durin then provided an overall look at the FY26 budget request. He reviewed the anticipated federal, state and local funding for an overall total decrease of 0.37% from the FY25 budget. He advised that they would be setting up a grants fund. The total overall FY26 budget request was \$83,530,279. He reviewed the expected federal, state, and local grant revenues in more detail. He then discussed food services. He advised that given the uncertainty at the federal level they calculated funding based on worst, likely, and best case scenarios.

There was additional discussion on the free and reduced lunch program, declining enrollment, and possible future virtual learning.

After the discussion, Mr. Andersen moved, seconded by Ms. Scruggs, to adopt the FY26 recommended budget as presented. The motion carried and was approved by the following roll call vote: Mr. Drew, Ms. Parker, Mr. Andersen, Ms. Saulman, Ms. Scruggs, and Ms. Arsenovic - yes.

### **g. Supervisors / School Board Discussion**

Mr. Hutson stated that he had been hearing questions about what happened to the money for the fire station. He asked that at the Board of Supervisors meeting on



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Monday, staff provide a presentation on where the money was and what happened as a starting point for the Board's budget discussion.

### **h. School Board Adjournment**

As there were no other items for the School Board, Mr. Andersen moved, seconded by Ms. Scruggs, to adjourn. The motion carried and the School Board adjourned at 8:19 p.m. by a unanimous voice vote.

Mr. Smith called for a brief recess for the Board of Supervisors.

### **i. Decision on Tax Rates for Advertising and Authorization to Set Public Hearing - Carol Steele - County Administrator**

After the recess, Ms. Steele stated that she had been notified that there was an issue with the video streaming again. Staff will be checking into the issue, but the backup video will be converted and will replace the affected video tomorrow. She then stated that the Board had the information on the possible tax rates for advertising. The proposed budget would create the need for a 4.3 cent real estate tax increase. She stated that she was suggesting that the Board advertise an additional 6 cents on the real estate tax rate and a 10 cent increase on the personal property tax rate. She noted that with the budget that the School Board just adopted the increase would be an additional 3.6 cents above the 4.3 cents needed for the current proposed budget.

Mr. Chriscoe stated that the rate for advertising needed to be at 66.2 cents or the whole meeting tonight was a waste.

Dr. Orth asked whether the federal funding numbers for the schools were solid given information from Washington.

Ms. Steele stated that they were as solid as they could be at this point.

There was discussion on the value of 10 cents on the personal property tax rate and where the real estate advertising should be set.

Mr. Chriscoe stated that the State budget may contain language requiring a match from the locality for state funding. He noted that he had asked for the breakdown of the step and cost of living from the schools. He also noted that most businesses were giving a 2% salary increase. He stated that he was not sure where he would end up, but he did not want to lock himself into not being able to fund school items.

Dr. Orth noted the advertised rate was important because the Board could not go higher but could go lower.

Mr. Hutson reminded the Board that last year, fund balance was used to balance the budget. He noted that for easier calculation, 67 cents would be best.

Mr. Chriscoe agreed and moved to set the advertised rate at \$0.67 for real estate, manufactured homes and public service corporations and \$3.10 for the tangible personal property with the other rates staying the same. Mr. Hutson seconded the motion.

After a brief discussion, Ms. Steele polled the Board on the motion on the floor. The motion carried and was approved by the following roll call vote: Mr. Chriscoe, Mr. Hutson, Mr. Nicosia, Dr. Orth, Mr. Smith – yes; Mr. Bazzani and Mr. Gibson – no.

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR TO  
ADVERTISE FOR PUBLIC HEARING THE FY 2026 PROPOSED COUNTY  
BUDGET AND CY 2025 REAL ESTATE TAX LEVIES AND OTHER  
PROPOSED TAX LEVIES**

**WHEREAS**, the County Administrator has submitted to the Gloucester County Board of Supervisors a proposed annual budget for the County for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2025, and ending June 30, 2026, as required by Section 15.2-1541 of the State Code; and

**WHEREAS**, a brief synopsis of the budget is to be published and a public hearing to be held as required by the provisions of Section 15.2-2506 of the State Code; and

**WHEREAS**, a notice to establish the real estate and other tax levies for calendar year 2025 is required to be published and a public hearing to be held; and

**WHEREAS**, it is the wish of the Gloucester County Board of Supervisors that calendar year 2025 tax levies be advertised as \$0.67 for Real Estate, \$0.67 for Public Service Corporation Property; \$0.67 for Manufactured Homes, \$3.10 for Tangible Personal Property not otherwise set out; \$0.0000000000000001 for one motor vehicle owned or leased by a member of a volunteer fire department as specified in State Code 58.1-3506 (A)(15); and \$0.0000000000000001 for Boats; and

**WHEREAS**, it is also the wish of the Gloucester County Board of Supervisors that calendar year 2025 Ad Valorem tax rates be advertised as \$0.01 for the special service districts.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Gloucester County Board of Supervisors that the County Administrator is authorized to advertise for public hearing the FY 2026 Proposed County Budget and the suggested calendar year 2025 Proposed Tax Levies.

There was additional discussion on philosophy for setting the advertised tax rates with Board members noting the work on the budget that was ahead.

**10. Adjournment**

Mr. Hutson moved, seconded by Mr. Bazzani, to adjourn. The motion carried and the Board of Supervisors adjourned at 8:50 p.m. by a unanimous voice vote.

<hr/> Kevin M. Smith, Chair	<hr/> Carol E. Steele, County Administrator
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