

**NORTH CAROLINA HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION
BOARD OF DIRECTORS WINTER MEETING
Monday, December 1, 2025**

The winter meeting of the North Carolina High School Athletic Association Board of Directors was called to order by President Stephen Gainey at 8:15 a.m. at the NCHSAA Office in Chapel Hill. Members in attendance included Past-President Chris Blanton, Vice President Mark Garrett, President Stephen Gainey, Sam Jones, Allen Plaster, Jamie King, Eddie Doll, Henry Rice, Ericia Turner, Andy McCormick, Bryan Tyson, Larry Williford, Paige Badgett, Brett Lamb, John Williams, Dana Ayers, and Stefanie Phillips. Don Phipps was absent, as was Matthew Cheeseman who later joined the meeting after it had begun.

Affiliate members included Roy Turner representing the North Carolina High School Athletic Directors Association, Brad Alford for State Department of Public Instruction (SDPI), and Elbert Lassiter of North State Football Officials Association representing Officials and Regional Supervisors. Wendell Hall of NC State School Boards Association and Joe Franks of the North Carolina Coaches Association were absent.

NCHSAA staff in attendance included Commissioner Que Tucker, Karen DeHart, Eddie Simmons, Alfie Wheeler, Rhonda Dreibelbis, Janna Fonseca, Patrick Paye (morning session), Austin Fleming (afternoon session), Beth Zinkand (afternoon session) and Brandon Moree.

PRESIDENT'S REMARKS: President Gainey began the meeting by welcoming the Board members and NCHSAA staff as well as individuals listening via live audio stream at 8:16am.

Associate Commissioner Karen DeHart presented the Board minutes from meetings/session for 4/29/25, 4/30/25, 7/28/25, and 8/6/25. DeHart called for a motion to approve the Board of Director Meeting minutes as presented.

Garrett made a motion to approve and John Williams seconded. Motion approved 17-0 (Two voting Board members were not present).

Karen DeHart presented the Consent Agenda for approval, noting three new schools requested membership for the 2026-2027 school year. NCHSAA received 349 waiver requests of which 346 were approved. Three (3) were not waived and of these, one was appealed to the State Board of Education and was affirmed.

King made a motion to approve the consent agenda as presented and Ericia Turner seconded. Motion approved 17-0 (Two voting Board members were not present).

AUDIT REPORT: Rob Lewis provided a review of the 2024-2025 audit. The two (2) largest assets are cash and investments. Endowments are no longer part of the NCHSAA. Compared to 2023-24, assets are comparable. Liabilities increased by about \$200,000 from last year. Football and basketball playoff revenues were down by

\$100,000 while there was a slight increase in corporate sponsorship revenues. Expenses for programming differ because of the transfer of endowment funds prior to 6/30/24. There have been operating losses in 2024-2025 of \$350,000 and in 2023-2024 of \$390,000.

The Association is relying on investments to cover operating expenses. Returns are 11% this year versus 12% last year. As long as the Association is experiencing a 10% return on investments, this should cover expenses. There was an increase in gate receipts due to methodology with a higher ticket share revenue back to participating schools.

Playoff revenue was down and team expenses up; at a \$120,000 loss. Security, venue and other event expenses continue to rise which is why corporate revenue is important for operating. Having transfer of endowment to separate Foundation provides clearer picture of Association operations. Dr. Gainey thanked Rob Lewis for his report.

Motion to approve audit was made by Mark Garrett; Seconded by Chris Blanton.

Approved 18-0 (Matthew Cheeseman joined the meeting prior to this vote).

INVESTMENT MANAGER'S REPORT: Geoff Hudson and Jessica Standifer, The Fordham Group/Morgan Stanley provided a brief investment report. There was a twenty percent (20%) correction earlier in the year followed by a rally which took the market to all-time highs. Valuations are in the 95th percentile now. Performance - good news is the Association's portfolio has averaged over 10% in last three years which is not typical-would expect 7-8% return. Longer term, average is at 8% return. Money managers will look to move investments around to secure higher returns and minimize risk. Dr. Gainey thanked Geoff and Jessica for their work on behalf of the NCHSAA.

COMMISSIONER'S REMARKS: Commissioner Tucker addressed the Board and outlined the Board Meeting process for the benefit of new members. She introduced four new Board members: Matthew Cheeseman (region 1), Brett Lamb (region 8), Ericia Turner (region 6), Brad Alford, NCDPI. The Board and staff then introduced themselves. Commissioner Tucker then mentioned new staff member backgrounds.

Gainey moved the meeting into committee work at 8:47 a.m. until 1:00p.m. following committee work sessions and lunch.

MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS/DISCUSSION:

President Gainey reconvened the Board at 1:03p.m. for the afternoon work session of the full board.

The Commissioner first introduced an item submitted by the Smoky Mountain Conference regarding the removal of conference champion importance (and move solely to RPI ranking) with the eight classifications and worry that this diminishes the established history and tradition amongst member schools. They feel that conferences have been de-emphasized. Lamb, from Rosman High School, commented that this is a growing concern. Next the Commissioner presented an item from the NC Lacrosse Coaches Association requesting a review and change in how the bylaw reads relative to multi-class state championships. Tucker noted that in order to change a bylaw, there

must be an amendment change request sent forward from the membership (7 principals). Finally, a group of football Regional Supervisors made a request that there be an official as a voting member on the Board of Directors. This likewise necessitates a bylaw change regarding the make-up of the Board. The latter two items were submitted by a coaches' association and a regional supervisor group respectively, not from the member schools, which is required per the NCHSAA bylaws. Discussion ensued with reminder that the NCHSAA is a membership-driven organization and must follow its bylaws.

FINANCE & PERSONNEL COMMITTEE REPORT: Mark Garrett, chairperson, presented on behalf of the committee.

1. Account balances and Investment summary – Discussed a summarized report based on quarterly statements for NCHSAA investment accounts. Decoupling endowment funds from NCHSAA helps differentiate funds.
2. Audit Report, year ending 6/30/2025 – NCHSAA received a clean audit report from Blackman & Sloop. Association is currently operating at a loss and has budgeted for a loss in current fiscal year. This item was approved by the full Board on 12/1/2025 in full morning session following the Blackman & Sloop report.
3. 2025-2026 Operating Budget Report – Dealing with some challenges related to corporate revenue loss, 8 classifications and related expenses. Will take several years to realize what the actual impact is on the operating budget. Committee recommends approving the 2025-2026 Annual Operating Budget.
4. 2024-2025 Final Sports Comparison Report - Review of finalized sports comparisons from 2024-2025 year versus previous years. Football and basketball expenses increased and attendance numbers waned, negatively contributing to playoff revenues for 2024-2025 year.
5. Foundation Update from NCHSAA Foundation Board of Trustees - Updates regarding NCHSAA Foundation, Inc. provided from Bill Steed, the Foundation Chairperson, regarding distributions made to NCHSAA member high schools.
6. Personnel Update - Review of staff changes since Spring Board Meeting.

REVIEW & OFFICIATING COMMITTEE REPORT: Andy McCormick, chairperson, presented on behalf of the committee.

1. Violation Report - Review of comprehensive listing of violations (April 24 – November 14, 2025). Of the 50+ violations, the majority (16) were in football and the most reported violation reasons (5 or more) were scholastic requirement (7), lack of current physical (6) followed by ineligible participation (5), unauthorized assembly (5) and unauthorized practice (5).
2. Ejection Report - Review of the Ejection Report (April 24 – November 14, 2025); Sportsmanship continues to be an issue. We currently have over 567 ejections so far in the school year (surpasses last year's number of 900+). Men's soccer leads the way in ejections. Use of profanity is number one ejection. Many of the coaching issues come from sideline coaches rather than the head coaches.
3. Regional Supervisor Positions - Recommend approving Josh Milsaps as the interim Western North Carolina Baseball Officials Association regional

supervisor. Recommend approving Angela Morton as the interim Metrolina Softball Association regional supervisor.

4. Report from the Officiating Sub-committee - Discussion of Officiating Sub-committee work and consideration for term limits. Big topics include sportsmanship, compensation, implementation of term limits for sub-committee members and ensuring that all sports are represented on the sub-committee.
5. Review of Officials' fees – Received requests for review of fair compensation for lacrosse, volleyball and football officials. The committee will recommend a 5% increase, rounded to the nearest \$1 for the 2026-27 school year and development of a long-term plan for future officials' compensation to help get NC to the average level; NC is currently last in most sports for pay. Also, received a request for an increase in pay for regional assignors who have not seen a raise in ten (10) years, and suggest bringing this back for review at the spring meeting.
6. Official as a Voting Member of the Board of Directors- To consider a By-Law amendment to allow the Board of Directors voting rights for an official. Andy mentioned that he feels that there is a strong voice for the officials in the affiliate member who currently serves on the Board. There would need to be a By-Law change to address the Board of Directors' makeup.
7. Standardize Booking Agent (Regional Supervisors) Practices through DragonFly- The Committee will recommend approving a requirement for Regional Supervisors to add DragonFly as a payment option for booking fees.

POLICY COMMITTEE REPORT: Sam Jones, chairperson, presented on behalf of the committee.

1. Three calendar days between football games - In the cases of rescheduled football games, SMAC has recommended changing the handbook to read: "A minimum of 60 hours from conclusion of game one to kick-off of game two. There should be no contact practice between games, rescheduled games." The committee will recommend this to the Board for approval. SMAC also recommends that this same concept be applied to football scrimmages and that the handbook be changed accordingly. The committee will bring this item forward for Board approval.
2. Three separate days of football practice are required after five days missed due to injury or illness - Recommend removing "Student-athletes absent for other reasons (e.g., funeral, quarantine, school suspension, etc.) are not subject to this rule" from the NCHSAA Handbook.
3. Use of shoulder pads during summer football skill development – The committee will recommend that the use of shoulder pads during summer football 7 on 7 events be discontinued.
4. Flag Football Update - To provide an update on discussions and steps taken towards sanctioning flag football. The sub-committee has been reviewing this. From preliminary numbers, staff should prepare for the sanctioning of girls' flag football. 111 schools reporting. Districts report playing in different seasons. Kicking it back to the committee with a recommendation that most participation was in the fall and presented the least amount of conflicts for schools. Designate as a fall sport and sub-committee to set up the calendar, estimate officials' costs,

game and season limitations, and conferences, between now and the Spring Board Meeting. This committee would like to see a fall 2026 Invitational event, consistent with how girls wrestling developed. Discussion ensued. Dr. Gainey indicated that once more information is forthcoming, the Board can reconvene to discuss further.

5. Co-op teams – Reviewed the request to implement a Cooperative Team Agreement Policy that allows two or more schools to combine athletic programs in specific sports when one or more of the schools cannot independently field a full, competitive team due to limited participation, declining enrollment, or other challenges. Will not bring this out of committee with a recommendation.
6. Spring Individual Tennis Schedule- Move the men's individual tennis championship to Saturday, May 9, and Sunday, May 10 (currently scheduled for Friday, May 8 and Saturday, May 9). Will not bring this out of committee with a recommendation.

Gainey called for a brief break at 2:45 p.m.

SPORTS COMMITTEE REPORT: Larry Williford, chairperson, presented on behalf of the committee.

1. Adjust the men's individual tennis championships- Reviewed a request from the Cap 8 Conference to move the men's individual tennis championship to Saturday, May 9 and Sunday, May 10 (currently scheduled for Friday, May 8 and Saturday, May 9). Committee notes that while we have played on Sundays for weather issues, felt that it should be kept as an emergency play date only.
2. Rewarding Conference Champions an automatic playoff berth- Reviewed a request from East Carteret HS and Coastal Conference to reward conference champions in seeding for winning the conference only over a team in the same conference that has a higher RPI. Did not make it out of committee.
3. Adjust the NCHSAA handbook to clarify the qualifying field of golfers- Reviewed request to add the language "maximum" to the number of qualifiers for regionals and state championships. The committee will recommend this item for the Board's approval.
4. Adjust the field of qualifying golfers based on the number of team participants - Reviewed a request from the NC Golf Coaches Association to allow the next highest ranked individual player(s) to qualify for regionals and state championships if a school does not field a full team.
5. Regional qualification standards for men's and women's golf- Reviewed a request from the NC Golf Coaches Association to require a minimum of seven rounds to be played by male golfers in order to qualify for regionals. Will recommend that the minimum be the same as for women, five (5).
6. Tie-breaking procedures for conference tournament seeding- Reviewed a request from NCBCA to update the conference tournament seeding tiebreaking procedure to use the NCHSAA RPI ranking in place of step four, which requires a draw. Will recommend this item to the Board for approval.
7. Shot-Clock- Reviewed a request from NCBCA to allow schools to voluntarily use the 35-second shot-clock during scrimmages, regular season invitational

tournaments, and special event games (MLK, Play4Kay). This item did not make it out of committee. The committee will ask staff, NCBCA, and basketball regional supervisors to work together to find out how many member schools have an NFHS-compliant shot clock and number of officials per association who are shot clock trained and bring back to the Board at the spring meeting.

8. Sport season calendar- Reviewed a request from the Rocky River 4A/5A Conference to adjust the NCHSAA sport season calendar to reduce the number of weeks in the basketball season and increase the number of weeks in the baseball season. This item did not make it out of committee as they felt that you don't adjust a calendar based on one specific sport.
9. 2026-2027 Sports Season Calendar- Discussion on NCHSAA 2026-2027 Sport Season Calendar. The proposed 2026-2027 calendar will come to Board for approval and does allow for more practice time for spring sports and the season ends a week later.
10. Volleyball Season Limitations- Discussed volleyball regular season contests being set to align with other sports at 24 total contests. Discussion only.
11. Playoff Opt-Out Form Individual Sport Qualifiers- Discussed schools submitting an opt-out form for individual qualifiers that elect not to participate in post-season. Discussion only.

Dr. Gainey thanked the Board for their engagement today and their committee work.

Motion made to move into closed session by Mark Garrett for personnel discussion, seconded by Matthew Cheeseman. Motion approved: 18-0.

**NORTH CAROLINA HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION
BOARD OF DIRECTORS WINTER MEETING
Tuesday, December 2, 2025**

The winter meeting of the North Carolina High School Athletic Association Board of Directors was called to order by President Stephen Gainey at 8:36 a.m. at the NCHSAA Office in Chapel Hill. Members in attendance included Past-President Chris Blanton, President Stephen Gainey, Vice-President Mark Garrett, Sam Jones, Andy McCormick, Bryan Tyson, Larry Williford, Paige Badgett, John Williams, Henry Rice, Jamie King, Eddie Doll, Erica Turner, Stefanie Phillips, Brett Lamb, Matthew Cheeseman, Dana Ayers, Don Phipps, and Allen Plaster.

Affiliate members included Roy Turner representing the North Carolina High School Athletic Directors Association, Brad Alford of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, and Elbert Lassiter of North State Football Officials Association representing Officials and Regional Supervisors. Absent were Joe Franks of the North Carolina Coaches Association and Wendell Hall who represents the North Carolina School Boards Association.

NCHSAA staff in attendance included Commissioner Que Tucker, Karen DeHart, Rhonda Dreibelbis, Alfie Wheeler, Janna Fonseca, Austin Fleming, and Brandon Moree. In addition, Calla Lundberg, SAAC member, of Cedar Ridge High School.

SAAC REPORT:

President Gainey introduced the SAAC member, Calla Lundberg from Cedar Ridge High School. This year's focus was to gain more quantitative data from the student-athlete population. Sportsmanship, eligibility, and officiating areas of focus.

Prioritizing more meetings as the SAAC group and hosting meetings across different areas in the state. Seven members went to Indianapolis for the National meeting. The group has started planning the Leadership Summit at Camp Weaver. More SAAC members are taking initiatives at their schools to host. Identified the three areas of concern and areas to survey student-athletes (had approximately 200 responses).

Officiating: Most student-athletes were neither happy nor unhappy, citing issues with calls not being consistent. To fix it, not offering more money but shift to less Handbook subjective language. SAAC members recognize that officiating is important, although not perfect.

Sportsmanship: Long-time theme. Data from the survey showed that people were happy with sports environments at schools and felt supported by coaches. Handbook clarification regarding objective language related to sportsmanship. As games become higher stakes in playoffs, the ticket prices go up, so this is hard to make accessible. In schools, raise funds to allow students to get into the games. Hard to generate team spirit when games are not accessible.

Eligibility: Not completely determined at state level. Most students are aware of eligibility protocols. Jeopardizing eligibility is an important concern- it affects student-athletes' well-being. SAAC feels that focusing on these areas will empower student-athletes.

AFFILIATE REPORTS

NORTH CAROLINA COACHES ASSOCIATION: No report as Joe Franks was absent.

REGIONAL SUPERVISORS & OFFICIALS REPORT: Elbert Lassiter, Regional Supervisor for the North State Football Officials Association presented on behalf of the Regional Supervisors and Officials. *Elbert mentioned 9/12 football game and a call from a game official regarding a player hitting an official.* Since the Spring Board Meeting, various things have transpired. The sub-committee has met, officials across the state have received the list of members of the sub-committee for outreach efforts. Two primary issues that assignors have brought forward. First concern is safety and sportsmanship. Schools need to have a plan to protect game officials. Bad treatment of officials is one of main reasons that officials leave the profession. The behavior of assistant coaches towards the officials has been concerning. Game Day Administrators action/inaction is key and impacts the outcome of incidents. Second is compensation. There are over 7500 registered officials. Pay is lower than neighboring states. Officiating has never been better in terms of mechanics, enforcement of penalties, and professionalism. There are mechanisms in place for officials to be heard. Tough issues aren't resolved overnight. It takes commitment from the Board, schools, etc.

NORTH CAROLINA ATHLETIC DIRECTORS' ASSOCIATION: Roy Turner, Executive Director, presented on behalf of the group. The theme this year is 'Fill the Gap'. (Gratitude. Accountability. Purpose.) Turner reminded the group of the organization's mission, membership base (continued growth to 480, including middle school administrators), and goals. He then highlighted the newly created NCADA Vault. NCADA group leads the nation in utilizing online learning opportunities. Dates for NCADA Conference in Asheville: March 13-16, 2026. Summer Leadership Academy in July 2026 in Greensboro in conjunction with NCCA.

NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Brad Alford presented on behalf of the group. Alford shared the State Superintendent's strategic plan for Public Schools - Achieving Educational Excellence. Three (3) focus areas: High academics, character development, and being the best in public schools. 8 pillars. Appeals to State Superintendent – four (4) appeals with action; two (2) were heard, 2 were withdrawn. Reminder that all eligibility rules now fall to State Board of Education (SBE). Discussion regarding proposed rule amendments and the process for adoption by SBE, including adding definitions to the policy and various modifications. To date, there have been no cause from concern regarding the NCHSAA by SBE.

NORTH CAROLINA STATE SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION: No report.

President Gainey thanked the affiliate Board members for their respective reports and expressed appreciation for their continued support of and the value they add to the Association.

Gainey called for a break at 9:34 a.m. The Board reconvened at 10:00 a.m. Gainey expressed appreciation for the committees and chairs.

FINANCE & PERSONNEL COMMITTEE REPORT: Mark Gainey, chairperson, presented on behalf of the committee and thanked committee members.

1. Discussion only. Received a report from Morgan Stanley regarding account balances and Investment summary. Accounts are performing well and have helped offset losses as expenses increase and we have expanded classifications. Decoupling endowment funds from NCHSAA helps differentiate funds and provides a clearer financial picture.
2. The Audit Report for the year ending 6/30/2025 was provided yesterday by Blackman & Sloop, indicating a clean audit report. Association is currently operating at a loss and has budgeted for a loss in the current fiscal year. This item was approved by the full Board on 12/1/2025 in full morning session following the Blackman & Sloop report.
3. 2025-2026 Operating Budget Report – The NCHSAA is experiencing some challenges related to corporate revenue loss as a result of legislative actions, 8 classification expansion, and related expenses. \$1.5 million loss gap anticipated and using some reserves to operate the Association It will take several years to realize what the actual impact is on the annual operating budget. Future venue selections will need to be reviewed and may change/look different as a result of

revenue losses over time. Costs continue to rise for everything- security, uniforms, travel, etc. The committee recommended approving the 2025-2026 Annual Operating Budget.

Motion to approve made by Mark Garrett, seconded by Don Phipps. Motion approved: 19-0.

4. Discussion only. 2024-2025 Final Sports Comparison Report - Review of finalized sports comparisons from 2024-2025 year versus previous years. Auditors pointed out losses in football and basketball, resulting from increased expenses and low ticket sales across playoffs (timing of football due to hurricane, weather, participating teams, and community support, among other things), all of which negatively contributed to playoff revenues for the 2024-2025 year. Fall 2025 data has not yet been finalized and will be presented at the Spring Board Meeting. Alumni base and tradition affect attendance at events; chair Garrett encouraged people to support their local teams and go to playoff games.
5. Discussion only. The NCHSAA Foundation Board of Trustees provided an update courtesy of Bill Steed, the Foundation Chairperson, regarding distributions made to NCHSAA member high schools. In 2024-25, over \$1 million was distributed to NCHSAA member schools. Schools were also surveyed regarding distribution methods for future year-end funding to schools.
6. Discussion only. Personnel Update - Review of staff changes since the Spring Board Meeting. Garrett welcomed new staff members

REVIEW & OFFICIATING COMMITTEE REPORT: Andy McCormick, chairperson, presented on behalf of the committee.

1. Discussion only. Violation Report - Review of comprehensive listing of violations (April 24 – November 14, 2025). Of the 53 violations, the committee is concerned about the number of physical violations.
2. Discussion only. Ejection Report - Review of the Ejection Report (April 24 – November 14, 2025); Sportsmanship continues to be an issue. We currently have over 567 ejections so far in the school year (surpassing last year's number of 900+). 86% are for fighting and profanity, and this needs to be an area of focus.
3. Regional Supervisor Positions – The committee recommended approving Josh Milsaps as the interim Western North Carolina Baseball Officials Association regional supervisor and approving Angela Morton as the interim Metrolina Softball Association regional supervisor.

Motion by McCormick to approve, seconded by Henry Rice. Motion approved: 19-0.

4. Discussion only. Reviewed a report from the Officiating Sub-committee. Big topics include sportsmanship and fans in the stand and behavior of assistant coaches. As a membership, we need to ensure proper people are on the sidelines, setting good examples for student-athletes. McCormick commended Elbert Lassiter for his work.
5. Review of Officials' fees – The last across the Board fee increase was two years ago and it is time to review. The committee proposed a 5% pay increase, rounded to the nearest dollar for all officials in all sports for the 2026-2027 school

year. The committee also tasked the Officiating Sub-committee with developing a pay scale plan for officials' pay, over time, and a longevity plan for regional supervisors who have not had a pay increase in ten (10) years, to the Spring Board Meeting for review and action. Gainey apologized for the fact that regional supervisors have not had an increase in 10 years.

Motion to approve 5% officials' pay increase, rounded to the nearest dollar, effective 2026-2027, made by Andy McCormick; second by Dana Ayers.

Motion approved: 19-0.

A discussion was initiated by Commissioner Tucker regarding the review of the committee members (Officiating Sub-Committee and Regional Supervisor Committee) to review inclusivity for all sports and potentially expand committee numbers as needed. McCormick also reminded the Board that term-limits was an area for review as well. NCHSAA staff will work with Lassiter and Simmons to expand the membership on each committee.

6. Discussion only. Official as a Voting Member of the Board of Directors to consider a By-Law amendment to allow Board of Directors voting rights for an official. Andy mentioned that he feels that there is a strong voice for the officials in the affiliate member who currently serves on the Board. There would need to be a By-Law change to address the Board of Directors' makeup.
7. Standardize Booking Agent (Regional Supervisors) Practices through DragonFly Committee recommended approving a requirement for Regional Supervisors to add DragonFly as a payment option for booking fees, effective with the 2026-2027 school year. Clarification was made that this is an option, not the sole method of payment.

A motion to approve was made by McCormick to approve this item, seconded by Sam Jones. Motion approved: 19-0.

POLICY COMMITTEE REPORT: Sam Jones, chairperson, presented on behalf of the committee.

1. Three calendar days between football games - In the cases of rescheduled football games, SMAC recommends changing the handbook to read: "A minimum of 60 hours from conclusion of game one to kick-off of game two. There should be no contact practice between rescheduled games." SMAC also recommends that this same concept be applied to football scrimmages and that the handbook be changed accordingly. The committee recommended approval of these items.
Motion to approve made by Jones, seconded by Doll. Motion approved: 19-0.
2. Three separate days of football practice are required after five days missed due to injury or illness – Committee recommended removing "Student-athletes absent for other reasons (e.g., funeral, quarantine, school suspension, etc.) are not subject to this rule" from the NCHSAA Handbook.
Motion to approve this item was made by Jones; seconded by Mark Garrett. Motion approved: 19-0.

3. Use of shoulder pads during summer football skill development – Committee recommends that the use of shoulder pads during summer football 7 on 7 events be discontinued, effective in summer 2026.
Jones made a motion to approve this item and it was seconded by John Williams. After further discussion, the motion was withdrawn and the item was tabled until spring for further review by SMAC.
4. Discussion only. Flag Football Update – The Flag Football Sub-Committee will work to set up a calendar, estimate officials' costs, game and season limitations, conferences, and an FAQ flier between now and the Spring Board Meeting. Commissioner Tucker thanked the Carolina Panthers for their commitment to help school systems desiring to start flag football. Commissioner Tucker pointed out the inconsistencies in data and the lack of response from member schools to NCHSAA surveys on flag football. McCormick suggested that NCHSAA staff send a list of schools not responding and share it with superintendents and principals.
5. Co-op teams – Reviewed the request to implement a Cooperative Team Agreement Policy that allows two or more schools to combine athletic programs in specific sports when one or more of the schools cannot independently field a full, competitive team due to limited participation, declining enrollment, or other challenges. This item did not come out of committee.
6. Spring Individual Tennis Schedule- Cap 8 Conference requested that NCHSAA move the men's individual tennis championship to Saturday, May 9 and Sunday, May 10 (currently scheduled for Friday, May 8 and Saturday, May 9). This item did not come out of committee.

SPORTS COMMITTEE REPORT: Larry Williford, chairperson, presented on behalf of the committee.

1. Discussion only. Adjust the men's individual tennis championships- Reviewed a request from the Cap 8 Conference to move the men's individual tennis championship to Saturday, May 9, and Sunday, May 10 (currently scheduled for Friday, May 8 and Saturday, May 9). Committee notes that while we have played on Sundays for weather issues, felt that it should be kept as an emergency play date only.
2. Rewarding Conference Champions with an automatic playoff berth- Reviewed a request from East Carteret HS and Coastal Conference to reward conference champions in seeding for winning the conference only over a team in the same conference that has a higher RPI. This item did not make it out of committee.
3. Adjust NCHSAA handbook to clarify the qualifying field of golfers- Reviewed request to add back in the language of "maximum" to the number of qualifiers for regionals and state championships. The committee recommended this item for Board's approval.
Motion to approve made by Williford; seconded by Blanton. Motion approved: 19-0.
4. Adjust the field of qualifying golfers based on the number of team participants- Reviewed a request from the NC Golf Coaches Association to allow the next highest ranked individual player(s) to qualify for regionals and state

championships if a school does not field a full team. This item did not make it out of committee, given the passage of item #3 above.

5. Regional qualification standards for men's and women's golf- Reviewed a request from NC Golf Coaches Association to require a minimum of seven rounds to be played by male golfers in order to qualify for regionals. The committee recommended that the minimum number of rounds be the same for men as for women, which is five (5).

Motion to approve this recommendation by Williford, seconded by Rice.

Motion approved: 19-0.

6. Tie-breaking procedures for conference tournament seeding- Reviewed a request from NCBCA to update the conference tournament seeding tiebreaking procedure to use the NCHSAA RPI ranking in place of step four which requires a draw. The committee recommended this item to the Board for approval.

Williford brought this forward for approval as a motion, effective 2026-2027; seconded by Cheeseman. Motion approved: 19-0.

7. Shot-Clock - This request from the NCBCA was to allow schools to voluntarily use the 35-second shot-clock during scrimmages, regular-season invitational tournaments, and special-event games. This item did not make it out of committee after lengthy discussions. The committee asks NCHSAA staff, NCBCA, and basketball regional supervisors to collaborate to gather data regarding how many member schools have an NFHS-compliant shot clock and what is the number of officials by association who are shot-clock-trained and to bring back to the Board at the spring meeting. Williford encouraged Board members to reach out to member school administration and coaches to gauge intent.

8. 2026-2027 Sports Season Calendar- Committee recommended approval of the proposed 2026-2027 sports calendar.

Motion to approve by Williford, seconded by King. Motion approved: 19-0.

9. Sport season calendar- Reviewed a request from Rocky River 4A/5A Conference to adjust the NCHSAA sport season calendar to reduce the number of weeks in the basketball season and increase the number of weeks in the baseball season. This item did not make it out of committee

10. Playoff Opt-Out Form Individual Sport Qualifiers- Committee recommended requiring schools to submit an opt-out form for individual qualifiers who elect not to participate in post-season. Student-athlete, parent, and the principal/designee signatures are required for submission to the NCHSAA, effective with 2026-2027 school year.

Motion by Williford to approve use of this form effective 2026-2027; seconded by Turner. Motion withdrawn and restated.

Motion to approve recommendation, effective immediately by Williford; seconded by Turner. Motion approved: 19-0.

11. Discussion only. Volleyball Season Limitations- Discussed volleyball regular season contests being set to align with other sports at 24 total contests. The committee discussed and left as is, with 22 total contests.

President Gainey thanked the Board members, committee chairs, and the staff for their work throughout the meeting. Gainey expressed appreciation for their work and actions in support of the kids. He encouraged people to keep pushing forward and keep looking up. Reminded the Board that their role is to make sure the organization is here for future generations. He commended staff for their work.

President Gainey then introduced Commissioner Tucker for closing remarks. Tucker congratulated Don Phipps as the new superintendent of Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools. She also congratulated Ericia Turner for successfully defending her dissertation from UNC Greensboro, Turner is also an ordained minister. Tucker mentioned that she spoke to the School Board Association recently, which expressed concerns for charter schools and other school-related issues. She also recently spoke to the executive committee about delaying the due date for membership dues as a result of delayed ADM numbers; the new deadline is the end of January. Tucker then thanked the NCHSAA staff for their work, those assuming new roles and responsibilities, and dedication to membership and athletes. Finally, she thanked the Board for their support and the work they do on behalf of the student-athletes.

**The meeting was brought to a close at 11:30 a.m. with a motion by Mark Garrett to adjourn the winter meeting of the Board of Directors; seconded by King.
Motion to adjourn approved: 19-0**

A media session VIA Zoom followed.