NORTH CAROLINA HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION
BOARD OF DIRECTORS SPRING MEETING
Tuesday, May 5, 2026

The spring meeting of the North Carolina High School Athletic Association Board of Directors was called to order by President Dr. Stephen Gainey at 8:00 a.m. at the NCHSAA Office in Chapel Hill. Members in attendance included Dana Ayers, Paige Badgett, Past President Chris Blanton, President Stephen Gainey, Vice President Mark Garrett, Eddie Doll, Andy McCormick, Allen Plaster, Henry Rice, Bryan Tyson, Larry Williford, John Williams, Ericia Turner, Matthew Cheeseman, Brett Lamb, and Jamie King. Stephanie Phillips, Don Phipps and Sam Jones were absent as the meeting began.

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 and the Officials and Regional Supervisors Subcommittee were present. Wendell Hall who represents the North Carolina School Boards Association and Joe Franks of the North Carolina Coaches Association were absent.

NCHSAA staff in attendance included Commissioner Que Tucker, Karen DeHart, Rhonda Dreibelbis, Alfie Wheeler, Janna Fonseca, Tavares Toomer, Juli Kidd, and Brandon Moree. Attorney Dale Clemons of Ellis and Winters was also in attendance representing General Counsel Kelly Margolis Dagger. Media Member Joel Bryant from High School OT was also present.

PRESIDENT'S REMARKS: At 8:00 a.m, President Gainey began the meeting by welcoming the Board members and NCHSAA staff, as well as individuals listening via live audio stream. He thanked board members for their work throughout the year and wished them a happy ending to the school year. He thanked Commissioner Tucker and staff for continued leadership on behalf of the students and recognized her upcoming retirement and wished her the best in the remaining months. Gainey noted that there is a lot of work to accomplish in the next two days and he wants to focus on the best interests of the student-athletes of North Carolina.

Associate Commissioner Karen DeHart presented the Winter Board minutes.

President Gainey recommended approval of the Winter Board of Directors Meeting minutes.

Jamie King made a motion to approve the minutes from the Winter 2025 meeting as presented; Mark Garrett seconded. Motion approved 16-0.

Que Tucker, NCHSAA Commissioner, presented the Consent Agenda for approval.

Andy McCormick made a motion to approve the consent agenda as presented, seconded by John Williams. Motion approved 16-0.

INVESTMENT MANAGER'S REPORT: Geoff Hudson and Jessica Standifer from The Fordham Group provided a market update to the Board. Returns have been strong, averaging over 8%, but don't count on this continuing into the future. The market has been expensive since January and remains fairly expensive due to expectations of high earnings. Very uncertain path moving forward, and therefore need to remain diversified and take less risk. The current portfolio is 50/50 for the protection of assets and the ability to generate income to fund programming for schools. Growth is still robust and companies are beating expectations. The strategic forecast does not require as much risk to guarantee returns because of the returns on bonds. Commissioner Tucker thanked Hudson and Standifer for ensuring the NCHSAA continues to serve the student-athletes of North Carolina. Commissioner Tucker recognized the great work that Jessica and Geoff have done on behalf of the NCHSAA over the years.

Dr. Gainey turned the floor to Commissioner Tucker.

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COMMISSIONER'S REMARKS: Tucker introduced Dale Clemons, who is sitting in for Kelly Dagger as she is in trial. Dale will be floating during Committee work, but any Committee needing counsel should find him for legal advice. Tucker noted the location of breakout sessions.

Sam Jones joined the meeting as Board members were breaking for Committee work. Dr. Gainey then dismissed the Board into Committee work at 8:14 a.m.

Dr. Gainey reconvened the Board of Directors Meeting at 12:48 p.m. It was noted that Bryan Tyson left due to a family emergency.

Miscellaneous Agenda Items

Commissioner Tucker opened the discussion by providing background on how flag football started in Charlotte with the Panthers and CMS. She turned it to Janna Fonseca, staff liaison to the Policy Committee. Fonseca gave a review of the Flag Football Committee, which met several times in the past year. The group looked at various logistics related to adding flag football as a new sport. She outlined the work at various committee meetings.

One of the Committee's biggest concerns was the disparity in the playing season. 2024-2025: 117 teams of 442 (26%) participating; 2025-2026: 135 teams of 446 (30%) participating. This data meets the threshold of 25% of member schools participating. An FAQ was created.

The floor was opened to the Board for discussion. Turner indicated that although they play in spring, they are poised to play in the fall season if approved. Ayers mentioned that although she doesn't want to disparage new opportunities for students, as a rural, western school system, if approved, this will create logistical hurdles for them and other smaller districts. It will be really hard for a small district to field a team. Tucker indicated the financial constraints and sustainability of adding it as a sport. Panthers will provide start-up funds to any new schools that come on board but after this, it is questionable as to how they will be able to provide funds beyond the start-up. Bryan Tyson indicated via text to Dr. Gainey, that Panthers will provide some funding this year, and a new grant opportunity will be announced on a needs-based if this is approved tomorrow. Turner commented that from schools in which she has been a principal, those schools could not field lacrosse or girls' wrestling but it was available to the schools when the time came. Dr. Gainey indicated that if approved, there will be some planning needed at the school level. Garrett asked how long schools have been playing; Turner mentioned year five. Others have played for three years. He then mentioned how the Board has sanctioned in one year (i.e. 2026-2027) to start it another year (i.e. 2027-2028) to give schools time to budget and plan. Turner expressed that she thinks it's a race to sanction versus a race to start. This would give Panthers time to work out details related to funds. Gainey added there are two pieces to consider, will it be sanctioned and when will it be sanctioned.

Commissioner Tucker moved onto conversation regarding boys' volleyball which started heavily in the mountains, has taken off, and is growing across the state. Boys' volleyball group has been able to work through the logistics without a Board-appointed committee. Rhonda Dreibelbis provided background context related to boys' volleyball. Some schools have been playing for as many as ten years, and there has been some funding to assist schools through a grant process. This sport has always been played in the spring.They have had 26% the past 2 years and play a championships in Charlotte for the past 2 years. The NC Boy's Volleyball Association and NC Volleyball Association would merge and cover the facility fee if the sport is sanctioned. 117 have played this year (2025-2026). The floor was opened to the Board for discussion. Turner indicated that boys' volleyball is as popular in CMS as flag football. Cheeseman advocated for spring 2027, as there are athletes interested in participating now and there is a strong support network in existence. It was mentioned that in 2024-2025, they had 25% of 4A schools, not 25% of total number of schools. Jamie King pointed out that both sports should be treated the same way and is concerned that this is not the case in the current conversation. Tucker notes that Tyson would likely point out that the "goal posts" moved, boys' volleyball met the qualifications in 2024-2025, the qualifications changed, and then they met the qualifications again in 2025-2026.

Commissioner Tucker noted that the bylaw states that at the midpoint of the alignment is when you hear requests for changing classes or conferences. That would occur at the upcoming meeting in December. That criterion needs to be communicated to the membership prior to hearing those appeals. Gainey points out that those appeals do not affect 2026-2027.

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Preliminary Committee Reports

FINANCE AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEE REPORT: Vice President Mark Garrett thanked Dr. Gainey and his Committee.

1. Investment Summary: Discussion Only Item. Summary given earlier in the morning from The Fordham Group.
2. 2025-2026 Budget: Discussion Only Item. Eight classes change the game and growing pains in the budget cycle; FB came out better than anticipated. Still awaiting winter expenses/revenues. Bottom line: 75% through year, budget is tracking for the year.
3. 2025-2026 Sports Comparison: Discussion Only Item. Of note, some of the revenues/expenses in the sports comparison are not yet inputted into the budget. Reminder that the membership voted on eight classes.
4. Cash Option: Discussion Only Item. Logistic standpoint, it takes more time and an extra step; staff is surprised that as many people have been taking advantage of the cash option, but it has been a good move for the Association.
5. Senior Tar Heel Athletic Pass: Discussion Only Item. This has been a discount card since its inception through DHHS. It is not just an NCHSAA Card. For over 30 years the NCHSAA has allowed that card to be allowed for free entry to the playoffs with an ID. It is up to the member school to have a policy during the regular season.
6. Contract Renewal with TPG (Teall Properties Group): Approval of the contract renewals for TPG and adopted ball contracts. Current 5-year contract with Teall Properties Group (TPG) is up for renewal for them to continue serving as 'new partnership development' arm. Recommendation: Sign a 10-year extension for 2026/27 through 2036/37.
    - During earlier Board discussion and as an action item, the Board approved various recommendations. TPG is currently finalizing ball contracts to go into effect 2026-2027 for the sports of football, basketball, soccer, volleyball, softball and baseball.
    - Renewal of these contracts allows the Association, as an organization, to continue to expand new partnerships for the benefit of state tournament games while demonstrating positive returns that do not diminish existing partnerships/contracts (Legacy Partners). In addition, these ball agreements will provide product which the Association needs for hosting playoffs and/or state championship games.
    - This will be presented as a motion for approval.
7. Foundation Report provided by Chair Dr. Bill Steed: Discussion Only Item. The Foundation is a separate 501c3 with seven board members seeking two more. Dr. Bill Steed prepared the report for this board meeting. This Foundation can provide grants and scholarships to students. The NCHSAA cannot do that per state law. Since December 2025, they have approved $60,000 in scholarships and awards and recommended $118,940.88 in grants directly to schools. They will be calculating the year-end distributions based on how much is available. ADM, ISP, and the number of teams will factor into the year-end distribution; each member school will receive something from the Foundation. Looking to host a golf fundraiser with a silent auction in the summer of 2027.
8. Personnel Updates: Discussion Only Item. Hired Cindy Harrell from Macon County as Director of Sports and Championships. The search for a new Commissioner is underway with a Search/Selection Committee.

Additional note: ball adoptions for 2026-2027- contracts are being finalized now following previous Board input; staff will notify schools once completed. Balls will be used in playoffs in rounds where Association provides the game ball(s), not relative to regular season play.

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

1. Shoulder pads during summer football workouts from SMAC; SMAC recommended discontinuation of use in 7 on 7 skill development. This item will be tabled; need input and should seek joint recommendation from SMAC and Football Coaches' Association.
2. Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) Training. The committee will propose a recommendation that all head coaches complete a mental health program every three years.
3. Data Collection Method. The committee will recommend that, to make informed decisions, such as sanctioning new sports, the Association will be the official data collection repository, and the Board will respond to data that staff presents after compiling it, whether from internal or external sources. Effective Date: 2026-2027 school year.
4. Use of Backstroke Ledges. The committee will recommend approving the optional use of backstroke ledges in accordance with the NFHS allowance. Effective Date:2026-2027 school year
5. Course Requirements for Diving Judges. Will ask the Board to require the "Judging Springboard Diving" course on NFHS Learn for all diving judges/officials on an annual basis. The disparity in judging in diving is becoming more drastic.
6. Six-dive format for Regional and State Championships. The Committee will recommend to approve the 6-dive format now that the NFHS is allowing states to modify the number of dives performed by participants during a state meet. Note: One dive must be a "twist." Participation numbers for diving are already low. The current format of 11 dives limits the number of athletes who can complete 11 dives safely.
7. Proposals from the Four Rivers Conference and Carteret County to combine athletic programs for sports that could not be filled by a single school. These proposals are not coming out of committee. The Committee believes that a subcommittee that will work with the State Board and NCDPI to be ahead of this topic would be a good idea.
8. Enhancement to Scholar-Athlete Calculations. Will not come out of committee. The committee did not feel the need for a change.
9. Enhancement to Wells Fargo State Cup Criteria. Wells Fargo Points will only be awarded from the Dual Team Tournament, not the individual tournament. This will be recommended for a vote.
10. Editorial Changes for Current Rules. The committee will recommend an application note to the felony rule to clarify that "an adjudication of delinquency is not a felony conviction for purposes of that rule.
11. Playoff Qualification when not in a Conference. Did not make it out of committee. Ask that the Executive Committee review and make a decision, per the Handbook.
12. Penalties. Committee will recommend that Handbook section 3.3.6.c.19, be revised to read "participation in or hosting an in-or-out-of-state unsanctioned event" in the Level 3 infraction on the Penalty Code.
13. Participation in Combines, All-Star Contests, Showcases, etc. Discussion Only Item.
14. Women's Wrestling. The committee will table this item and ask that NC Wrestling Coaches Association gather more data.
15. Que Tucker Career Scholar-Athlete Award. This item is not coming out of the Committee. The board does not necessarily need to weigh in on the creation of an award.

2:33 Dr. Gainey adjourns for a 15-minute break.
2:50 Dr. Gainey reconvenes.

REVIEW & OFFICIATING COMMITTEE REPORT: presented on behalf of the committee.

1. Violation Report: Discussion Item Only.
2. Ejection Report: Discussion Item Only. As of 4/15, there were 1,007 ejections and between 4/16 and 5/4, there were 88 more, mainly for profanity. Men's soccer continues to be the main sport in which violations happen.
3. Regional Supervisor Positions. The committee will recommend approving Bob Landry as the Eastern Swimming & Diving Association regional supervisor. The committee will also recommend approving Ed Rewis as the interim Mountain West Volleyball Association regional supervisor. Effective Immediately.
4. Clarification of Assigning Fees. Only a discussion item. Asking staff for handbook clarification.
5. Increase Officiating Pay. Did not make it out of committee. School systems are getting hammered and cutting budgets and positions; teachers not getting raises in 2 years, etc. - there are many factors at play

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currently. Dr. Gainey notes that he appreciates the role of the officials; they are a vital part of the student-athlete experience. This is not a reflection of lack of appreciation.

6. Increase of Assigning Fees for All Sports. The committee will recommend an increase in assigning fees for varsity to $300 from $150.00 and for JV from $100 to $150. Williford notes that language could be adjusted to include the change fee instead of removing it.
7. Five-Person JV Football Crew. The committee will recommend changing the wording to "require five-person officiating crew for JV Football
8. Football Game Pay Increase. Did not come out of committee.
9. Increase in Varsity Football Game Pay. Did not come out of committee.
10. JV Football Game Quarter Lengths. Did not come out of committee.
11. Quarter Length Times for Junior Varsity Contests. Did not come out of committee.
12. Football Playoff Game Pay Increase. Did not come out of committee.
13. Single Game Pay in Varsity Lacrosse. Did not come out of committee.
14. Increase in Varsity Lacrosse Game Pay. Did not come out of committee.
15. Single Game Pay in Junior Varsity Soccer. Did not come out of committee.
16. Standardizing Volleyball Compensation. Did not come out of committee.
17. Dual Team Wrestling Officiating. The committee will recommend requiring two officials on every mat for dual team playoffs, beginning with round three and beyond.
18. Individual Wrestling Officiating. The committee will recommend two additional officials (plus the number of mats) for each individual regional tournament. This is an increase from one additional official.
19. Regional Wrestling Pay. The committee will recommend that if a regional originally scheduled for 2 days is changed to just 1 day, the officials shall receive 1 ½ days' pay for that event
20. Payment to Officials. The committee will recommend required payment, paid through DragonFly or any other method, be made within the next business day of the contest.
21. Officiating Assignments for Non-sanctioned Contests. The committee will recommend **clarifying** the NCHSAA position on using non-NCHSAA regional supervisors/associations to make assignments for non-sanctioned contests. **Require**: Each school must use only NCHSAA registered **and eligible** officials in all competitions and must work through an **NCHSAA**-approved regional supervisor. Effective 2026-2027 [**Blue font -** additional wording to existing language in Handbook.]
22. Lifetime Pass for 25-Year Officials. The committee will table so that the development of a plan can be implemented to issue a lifetime pass for officials who have officiated with the NCHSAA for 25 or more years for access to any sport.
23. Emphasis on Parking Spaces and Clean Locker Rooms for officials. Discussion Only Item.

SPORTS COMMITTEE REPORT: Larry Williford reported on behalf of the committee.

1. Daily Limitations for Swimmers/Divers. The committee will recommend increasing the number of daily contests for swimmers and divers from one to two.
2. Adjusting Qualifying Format for Regional Championships. The committee will recommend adjusting the number of qualifiers for swim and dive regionals to include the top 24 times/scores in individual events and the top 16 times in relays.
3. Adjust Format for Swim and Dive Finals. The committee will recommend conducting timed finals only at the state championship meets.
4. Restore 16-entry Bracket at State Individual Tournament. Did not make it out of committee.
5. Language for Seeding and Pairing Regionals. Did not make it out of committee.
6. Participation of Teams with Three or Fewer Players. The committee will recommend allowing schools with three or fewer individuals on their tennis team to compete for individual championships.
7. Calendar Adjustment for Postseason Competition. The committee will recommend extending the tennis postseason by a week.
8. Sanction Girls' Dual Team Wrestling. Table for data collection.
9. Wrestling Committee. Did not make it out of committee.
10. Align Girls' and Boys Postseason Calendars. The committee will recommend aligning postseason girls' competition dates with the boys.
11. Reduce playoff bracket size. Combined with #12. The committee will recommend reducing the playoff bracket size in all sports from 48 to 32 teams for classes 1A – 7A.
12. Reduce playoff bracket size. See above.

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13. Season Lengths, Participation Limits, and Playoff Bracket Size. Did not make it out of committee.
14. Adjust Baseball, Softball, and Basketball season dates. Did not make it out of committee.
15. 2026-2027 NCHSAA Sports Calendar. The committee will recommend adjusting the current 2026-2027 sports calendar for tennis and basketball.
16. JV Football Scrimmages. The committee will recommend allowing all sports to conduct stand-alone scrimmages.
17. Minimum Number of Contests to Qualify for Playoffs. Did not make it out of committee.
18. Shot Clock. The committee will bring forward for a vote the use of a shot clock to be approved on an experiential basis for the 26-27 school year during scrimmages, invitational tournaments, and special events
19. FAT Timing. Discussion Only Item.

Dr. Gainey introduced a special presentation by Mr. Steve Schwartz related to an independent survey he conducted with game officials regarding what they want to see in the next Commissioner.

Special Report – Steve Schwartz
Schwartz has been an official for 32 years. He believes that the officials should be asked for their opinion about what the NCHSAA should look for in the next Commissioner. Roughly 700 responses, 10% of officials.

Mark Garrett moves that the committee goes into closed session for Attorney-Client Privileged information. Allen Plaster seconded. Approved 14-0.
4:14 p.m.

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NORTH CAROLINA HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION
BOARD OF DIRECTORS SPRING MEETING
Wednesday, May 6, 2026

The spring meeting of the North Carolina High School Athletic Association Board of Directors was called to order by President Dr. Stephen Gainey at 8:38 a.m. at the NCHSAA Office in Chapel Hill and welcomed members of the public attending online. Members in attendance included Dana Ayers, Past President Chris Blanton, President Stephen Gainey, Vice President Mark Garrett, Samuel Jones, Eddie Doll, Matthew Cheeseman, Andy McCormick, Allen Plaster, Henry Rice, Bryan Tyson, Larry Williford, John Williams, Ericia Turner, Brett Lamb, and Jamie King. Don Phipps joined the meeting via Zoom. Paige Badgett and Stephanie Phillips were absent.

Affiliate members included Roy Turner representing the North Carolina High School Athletic Directors Association, Brad Alford of North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, and Elbert Lassiter of North State Football Officials Association representing Officials and Regional Supervisors. Wendell Hall who represents the North Carolina School Boards Association, was absent and Joe Franks of the North Carolina Coaches Association joined via Zoom to make his affiliate report.

NCHSAA staff in attendance included Commissioner Que Tucker, Karen DeHart, Rhonda Dreibelbis, Tavares Toomer, Janna Fonseca, Kim Newman, Juli Kidd, and Brandon Moree. Attorney Dale Clemons of Ellis and Winters was also present. Members of the media present included Joel Bryant and Ben McCormick of HSOT.

President Gainey recognized Austin Roberts, a football player from Providence High School, a junior SAAC member, accompanied by his father.

SAAC REPORT: Austin Roberts of Providence High School presented a report on behalf of the SAAC and thanked the Board for the opportunity to be with them this morning. He reported that the Student Leadership Conference was held on 4/30/26 with more than 200 student-athletes from more than 40 schools. He highlighted the Conference, noting a yoga opportunity which allowed the SAAC members to connect and get into the correct mental mindset. He spoke on the leadership opportunities that the group experienced during the conference and shared the focus on sportsmanship. The Conference included Jake Felding, who spoke on hyping their teammates and classmates, breakout sessions that included CPR training, a low ropes course, gaga ball, responsible social media and AI use, as well as a roundtable with officials, including Mr. Elbert Lassiter. Roberts served as a moderator in this session. Roberts learned from the conference that leadership is action and left encouraged by what happens when schools invest in student leadership. Roberts challenged the board to invest in student leadership opportunities. He closed out by thanking the Board for their support.

President Gainey commended Roberts and thanked Janna Fonseca for her work with SAAC. He noted that students like Roberts are a great reminder of what the work of this Board is all about.

NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Brad Alford presented on behalf of the group and thanked the Board for allowing him to report. Alford highlighted the pillars of NCDPI work. He reminded the group of the rules-making process relative to various rules/policies related to athletics and reviewed the various revisions to rules and policies that have been made. He touched on MOU, noting that 6 appeals were filed; 3 withdrawn and 3 were heard. The NCHSAA annual report and audit were supplied to NCDPI in a very timely manner. NCDPI is building a database including athletic directors and has an interscholastic athletics website. He also highlighted the monthly newsletter initiated through the Director of Athletics' office. Garrett asked what Alford feels has been going well and what can be improved. The biggest thing is that NCDPI has someone in place with contacts and knowledge of athletics and policies. There has been a more collaborative effort. Areas for improvement include continued collaboration and working together.

REGIONAL SUPERVISORS & OFFICIALS REPORT: Elbert Lassiter, Regional Supervisor for the North State Football Officials Association, presented on behalf of the Regional Supervisors and Officials. He highlighted Austin Roberts' efforts at the Leadership Conference. He congratulated Commissioner Tucker and shared his appreciation for her work. He talked about "navigating the noise". He mentioned that compensation is a part of all organizations and indicated that he sees the commitment by the Board, and he remains committed to advocating for the officials. He shared the football "train the trainer" sessions that will happen across the state. He shared that an assigner's basketball group holds a weekly podcast. The next step is leadership development and communication with coaches as we all work together to tackle the sportsmanship issue. Gainey asked what the main thing on the radar. The

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takeaway is that he will continue to have conversations with regional assigners, learn how to better communicate, and continuously improve. Williams mentioned discussions about improving fees/pays for officials. How do we improve the product on the field/court? Lassiter indicated it starts with Train-the-Trainer to get going in that direction. Conversations about pay also come with performance. He discussed classifications and rankings. Gainey mentioned the demonstrated pride that officials have for their colleagues and the support they exhibit. Mr. Roberts inquired about officials refereeing games for their own schools and how this can be filtered to eliminate bias. Lassiter indicated that they try not to assign officials to their alma mater. There are measures in place to address this.

NORTH CAROLINA COACHES ASSOCIATION: Joe Franks, Executive Secretary, presented via Zoom on behalf of the group and noted the collaborative effort between the Coaches Association, the NCADA and NCDPI with the NCHSAA (the "diamond"). This year's coaching clinic will be held on July 20-22, 2026. Franks thanked the NCHSAA staff for conducting the afternoon rules sessions. He also shared the numerous opportunities available to attendees and highlighted the accolades of the clinicians who will present this year. Franks highlighted the legal issues in the high school athletics newsletter that the NCAA provides. New initiatives include 'Tomorrow's 25 Coaching Fellowship' to recognize outstanding new coaches in the state. NC is the third state to conduct this effort. He highlighted 'My Coaching Tree', an organization that helps coaches with job placements. Franks closed out his report by thanking the Board for the opportunity to present.

NORTH CAROLINA ATHLETIC DIRECTORS' ASSOCIATION: Roy Turner, Executive Director, presented on behalf of the group. He shared NCADA President Brad Hinson's 2026-2027 theme, "Make Waves, Lead Boldly", a call to action challenging people to make change happen. Turner shared the NCADA Toolbox, a model for other states featuring a digital kit for athletic directors. He shared the newly launched NCADA video vault for previous key note presentations and presentations and the launch of an NCADA Marketplace featuring links to all vendors attending the NCADA Conference. Turner closed out with "Legacy Minded Leadership" and three lifetime skills from Lou Holtz. 1. Do what's right; 2. Do everything to the best of your ability; and 3. Show people you care. He challenged the group to make waves and lead boldly.

Dr. Gainey recognized the media (HSOT) and thanked them for covering the NCHSAA and continuing to promote interscholastic athletics.

Mark Garrett made a motion to go into closed session at 9:55 a.m. for attorney-client discussion, seconded by Jamie King. Approved 17-0.

The Board came out of closed session at 10:15 a.m. Dr. Gainey reconvened the meeting at 10:24 a.m. for committee reports.

FINANCE AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEE: Vice President Mark Garrett thanked the Committee members and staff liaisons.

1. Investment Summary: Discussion Only Item. The Fordham Group gave a favorable report based on the volatility of the market and their strategies for the portfolio.
2. 2025-2026 Budget: Discussion Only Item. The Association is on track with what was budgeted for the 2025-2026 school year. Highlights: With eight classifications, fall championship numbers are in but awaiting final numbers for winter sports to see the impact. Spring number forthcoming pending upcoming championships.
3. 2025-2026 Sports Comparison: Discussion Only Item. Expanded championships did drive up costs but difficult to analyze until we can see a year or two data points. In net positive at this point, but spring championships have not yet been included.
4. Cash Option during playoffs. Board implemented this option last year and it has proven to be beneficial for the spectators although it adds an extra step for reconciliation.
5. Senior Tar Heel Athletic Pass. Reminder that STHC, from DHHS, allows card holders with identification to attend playoff contests at no cost. It is up to local schools how they handle it during regular season.
6. Contract Renewal. Two options include a 5-year term or a 10-year term with incentives offered for the longer-term contract. The committee recommends a renewal of the contract with TPG for a ten-year term. **Motion by Garrett; second by Cheeseman. Approved: 17-0.**
7. NCHSAA Foundation Report. Report provided by Dr. Bill Steed. Reminder that the Foundation is a separate 501C3 entity with a separate Board of Trustees and can provide grants to NCHSAA member

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schools (which NCHSAA cannot). Trustees approved almost $60,000 in scholarships and awards for 2025-2026 and almost $119,000.00 in education-based grants. Year-end distribution calculations will be forthcoming, and all NCHSAA member schools will receive some distribution. Future goals are to complete the full Board panel and conduct a fundraising event in August 2027.

8. Personnel Updates. Hired a Director of Sports and Championships and Commissioner's retirement is upcoming. Search Committee is gathering applications due by 5/17/2026 with goal to name new Commissioner in summer months. Garrett thanked Commissioner Tucker for her service. He closed out with a reminder that contracts for balls are being finalized, and once completed, schools will be notified. Reminder that regular season is not under jurisdiction of NCHSAA; these balls would be used in playoff rounds where NCHSAA supplies the balls.

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

1. Shoulder pads during summer football workouts from SMAC. SMAC recommended discontinuation of use in 7-on-7 skill development. This item will be tabled and seek joint recommendation from SMAC and Football Coaches' Association due to unintended consequences.
2. Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) Training. The committee brings forth a recommendation that all head coaches complete a youth mental health first aid program once every three years. **Motion by Jones; second by Plaster. Approved: 17-0.***
3. Data Collection Method. The committee recommends that, to make informed decisions, the Association will provide the official data. **Motion by Jones; second by McCormick. Approved: 17-0.**
4. Use of Backstroke Ledges. The committee recommends approving the optional use of backstroke ledges in accordance with NFHS allowance. **Motion by Jones; second by King. Approved: 17-0.**
5. Course Requirements for Diving Judges. Committee recommends requiring the "Judging Springboard Diving" course on NFHS Learn effective 2026-2027 school year. **Motion by Jones; second by Blanton. Approved: 17-0.**
6. Six-dive format for Regional and State Championships. The committee recommends approving the 6-dive format; the required dive must be a "twist". **Motion by Jones; second by Turner. Approved: 17-0.**
7. Athletics participation when enrolled in a neighboring school. Did not come out of committee. Recommend formation of a subcommittee to work with both proposals and coordinate with NCDPI.
8. Enhancement to Scholar-Athlete Calculations. Did not come out of committee.
9. Enhancement to Wells Fargo State Cup Criteria. Committee recommends that in wrestling, only dual team wrestling points will count towards Wells Fargo Cup. **Motion by Jones; second by Tyson. Approved: 17-0.**
10. Editorial Changes for Current Rules.The committee recommends an application note to felony rule to clarify that "an adjudication of delinquency is <u>not</u> a felony conviction for purposes of that rule". Committee will recommend that enhance application notes to the felony rule
    a. Application Note 1.2.10 would read "an adjudication of delinquency is not a felony conviction for purposes of that rule."
    b. Add clarifying language to Statute of Limitations (3.3.12)
    c. Clarify how the grievance/internal remedy process operates for officials. (3.4.2)
        i. Provide examples of specific behaviors (3.6.d.26)

    Effective Date: 2026-2027 School Year and reflected in 2026-2027 NCHSAA Handbook. **Motion by Jones; second by Plaster. Approved: 17-0.**
11. Playoff Qualification when not in a Conference. Did not make it out of committee. Committee asks that the Executive Committee review and make a decision, per the Handbook.
12. Penalties. Committee recommends that Handbook section 3.3.6.c.19, be revised to read "participation in or hosting an in-or-out-of-state unsanctioned event" in the Level 3 infraction on the Penalty Code. **Motion by Jones; second by Williford. Approved: 17-0.**
13. Participation in Combines, All-Star Contests, Showcases, etc. Discussion Only Item.
14. Women's Wrestling. The committee tabled this item and asked that NC Wrestling Coaches Association gather more data.
15. Que Tucker Career Scholar-Athlete Award. Did not come out of the Committee. Board delegates this task to staff; the Board does not necessarily need to weigh in on the creation of an award.

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REVIEW & OFFICIATING COMMITTEE REPORT: Andy McCormick presented on behalf of the committee and thanked the committee members and staff liaisons.

1. Violation Report: Discussion Item Only. 29 violations; seasonal game limits are most often the offender.
2. Ejection Report: Discussion Item Only. As of May 1, there have been 1095 ejections; mainly in men's soccer for profanity and a large number of coach ejections for unsportsmanlike behavior.
3. Regional Supervisor Positions. Committee recommended approving Bob Landry as the Eastern Swimming & Diving Association regional supervisor and recommended approving Ed Rewis as the interim Mountain West Volleyball Association regional supervisor. **Motion by McCormick; second by Rice Approved: 17-0.**
4. Clarification of Assigning Fees. Discussion Only Item. Asked staff for clarification in the Handbook.
5. Increase Officiating Pay. Did not make it out of committee. Committee values officials and Association and Board are committed to improving pay.
6. Increase of Assigning Fees for All Sports. The committee recommended an increase in assigning fees for varsity to $300 from $150 and for JV from $100 to $150, effective 2026-2027 school year, inclusive of the change fee. Discussion ensued regarding the expectation that with pay increases comes higher performance standards from Regional Supervisors and more support for their officials. Responsibility of Director of Officiating Services is in supporting the Regional Supervisors and collaborating with them to provide the tools and resources they need to train effective officials. **Motion by McCormick; second by Doll. Approve: 15-2.**
7. Five-Person JV Football Crew. Committee recommended to change wording to "require five-person officiating crew for JV Football. **Motion by McCormick; second by Lamb. Motion Fails: 6-11.**
8. Five-Person JV Football Crew. Committee recommended to change wording to "require five-person officiating crew for JV Football. Combined with #7 above.
9. Football Game Pay Increase. Did not come out of committee.
10. Increase in Varsity Football Game Pay. Did not come out of committee.
11. JV Football Game Quarter Lengths. Did not come out of committee.
12. Quarter Length Times for Junior Varsity Contests. Did not come out of committee.
13. Football Playoff Game Pay Increase. Did not come out of committee.
14. Single Game Pay in Varsity Lacrosse. Did not come out of committee.
15. Increase in Varsity Lacrosse Game Pay. Did not come out of committee.
16. Single Game Pay in Junior Varsity Soccer. Did not come out of committee.
17. Standardizing Volleyball Compensation. Did not come out of committee.
18. Dual Team Wrestling Officiating. Committee recommended to require 2 officials on every mat for dual team playoffs, beginning with round three and beyond. **Motion by McCormick; second by King**. **Approve: 17-0.**
19. Individual Wrestling Officiating. The committee recommended requiring two additional officials (plus the number of mats) for each individual regional tournament. This is an increase from one additional official. **Motion by McCormick; second by Plaster. Approved: 17-0.**
20. Regional Wrestling Pay. The committee recommended that if a regional originally scheduled for 2 days is changed to just 1 day, the officials shall receive 1 ½ days pay for that event. **Motion by McCormick; second by Rice. Approved: 15-2.**
21. Payment to Officials. The Committee shifted this item to a "Discussion Only Item" based on Handbook policy. McCormick reminded people that it is courtesy and best practice to pay officials in a timely manner.
22. Officiating Assignments for Non-sanctioned Contests. The committee recommended clarifying the NCHSAA position on using non-NCHSAA regional supervisors/associations to make assignments for non-sanctioned contests. **Require**: Each school must use only NCHSAA registered **and eligible** officials in all competition and must work through an **NCHSAA**-approved regional supervisor. [**Blue font -** additional wording to existing language in Handbook.] Effective 2026-2027. **Motion by McCormick; second by Williams. Approved: 17-0.**
23. Lifetime Pass for 25-Year Officials. The committee tabled this item so that a plan can be developed by staff for the 2027-2028 school year for the implementation of a lifetime pass for officials who have officiated with the NCHSAA for 25 or more years for access to any sport.
24. Emphasis on Parking Spaces and Clean Locker Rooms. Discussion Only Item. McCormick highlighted that officials should be treated in a courteous manner and the Handbook lists points of emphasis for how schools should welcome officials to their respective campuses.

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SPORTS COMMITTEE REPORT: Larry Williford reported on behalf of the committee.

1. Daily Limitations for Swimmers/Divers. Committee recommended to increase the number of daily contests for swimmers and divers from one to two. **Motion by Williford; second by Blanton. Approved: 17-0.**
2. Adjusting Qualifying Format for Regional Championships. Committee recommended to adjust the number of qualifiers for swim and dive regionals to include the top 24 times/scores in individual events and the top 16 times in relays to include all classifications. **Motion by Williford; second by McCormick. Approved: 17-0.**
3. Adjust Format for Swim and Dive Finals. The committee recommended to conduct timed finals only at the state championship meets. **Motion by Williford; second by Plaster. Approved: 17-0.**
4. Restore 16-entry Bracket at State Individual Tournament. Did not make it out of committee.
5. Language for Seeding and Pairing Regionals. Did not make it out of committee.
6. Participation of Teams with Three or Fewer Players. Did not make it out of committee
7. Calendar Adjustment for Postseason Competition. Committee recommended to extend the tennis postseason by a week. **Motion by Williford; second by Rice. Motion Failed: 1-16.**
8. Sanction Girls' Dual Team Wrestling. Tabled for data collection.
9. Wrestling Committee formation. Did not make it out of committee.
10. Align Girl's and Boys Wrestling Postseason Calendars. The committee recommended to align postseason girls' competition dates with the boys, effectively scheduling the Individual Regionals for the same weekend. **Motion by Williford; second by Garrett. Approved: 17-0.**
11. Reduce playoff bracket size. Combined with #12. Committee recommended to reduce the playoff bracket size in all sports from 48 – 32 teams for classes 1A – 7A. Discussion ensued regarding that the Association is in the first year of eight classifications and 48-team brackets. Commissioner Tucker mentioned that the number of opt-outs has been an inordinate number so far this year (as compared to previous years) due to travel disparity, losing records, and economic conditions. Ayers pointed out that 32-team bracket makes the playoffs more competitive. **Motion by Williford; second by Plaster. Motion Fails: 7-10**
12. Reduce playoff bracket size. See #11 above.
13. Season Lengths, Participation Limits, and Playoff Bracket Size. Did not make it out of committee.
14. Adjust Baseball, Softball, and Basketball season dates. Did not make it out of committee.
15. 2026-2027 NCHSAA Sports Calendar. Committee recommended to adjust the current 2026-2027 sports calendar for tennis and basketball. **Motion by Williford; second by Tyson. Approved: 17-0.**
16. JV Football Scrimmages. Committee recommended to allow all sports to conduct stand-alone scrimmages. **Motion by Williford; second by Jones. Approve: 17-0.**
17. Minimum Number of Contests to Qualify for Playoffs. Did not make it out of committee.
18. Shot Clock. The committee recommended to allowing the shot clock on an experiential basis for the 2026-2027 school year during scrimmages, invitational tournament, and special events. **Motion by Williford; second by Lamb. Motion Denied: 0-17.**
19. FAT (Fully Automated Timing) Review. Discussion Only Item.

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

Dr. Gainey addressed the two outstanding sports-related topics regarding sanctioning and indicated that the Board has two things to do. First, will the NCHSAA sanction it and if so, when? **King made a motion for the NCHSAA to sanction flag football for the 2026-2027 school year. Rice seconded.** Lengthy discussion ensued. Garrett expressed that he supports sanctioning flag football but has concerns regarding implementation for 2026-2027 due to budgets being set for the coming school year. Ayers echoed support for Garrett's comments, specifically citing issues in rural districts such as fields. Tyson indicated that schools already participating should not be held back. Ericia Turner indicated that there may still be schools that don't participate after a year, similar to schools not playing lacrosse yet. **Vote: 9-8**

Tyson motioned to hold flag football in fall 2026; Turner seconded. Approved: 13-4

Dr. Gainey addressed boys' volleyball. **Motion to sanction boy's volleyball to start in the spring of 2026-2027. Seconded by Turner.** Garrett voiced the same concerns for boys' volleyball that he did for flag football. Tyson

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indicated that Queen's University has been reserved for the state championship. **Vote: 10-7. Motion carries.** Gainey expressed support from the Board and concerns for timing as well as staff capacity to carry these two new sanctioned sports. King asked if the NCHSAA had appropriate staff to support the new sports. Garrett noted that the time for that question would have been prior to the vote. Commissioner Tucker added that she believed in quality over quantity in terms of staff.

Commissioner Tucker thanked the Board for their efforts in the best interests of the student athletes. She thanked Past Board Members and staff for their work and loyalty and thanked the Board for their impact on her, personally, and the boys and girls in North Carolina.

Dr. Gainey expressed his appreciation to the Board and staff for their work throughout the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 1:32p.m. with a motion by Mark Garrett and a second by Jamie King.

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Minutes for meetings and votes of the NCHSAA Board of Directors happening between Spring 2026 and Winter 2026

On May 18, 2026 the following action was requested by staff to the Board: A 7-person selection committee was selected and charged with recommending a Regional Supervisor for the Northeast Basketball Officials Association. After reviewing 10 applications, a committee of athletic directors, and two basketball officials, chaired by Board Member Larry Williford, narrowed the list to five individuals for in-person interviews.

After the May 12 interviews, the committee selected Jared Taunton and forwarded their selection to Eddie Simmons.

Therefore, staff is recommending **Jared Taunton** as the Basketball Regional Supervisor for the Northeast Basketball Association, effective immediately for the 2026-2027 school year and moving forward.

Item approved.

On June 15, 2026, the Commissioner, in follow-up from the spring 2026 meeting, requested that Board members weigh in on the following item:
On behalf of Wilson's Mills, their request was and is to waive, for one year, 3.1.2(d)(2) and allow them to be eligible for team(bracketed) sports such as basketball, softball, soccer, volleyball, etc. as an independent member. (That allowance has historically been based on finish in the conference.) Their rationale centers on the fact that RPI is now the means for making the playoffs in those sports. Additionally, they know the Board will place them in a conference during the upcoming Board Meeting, being effective for the 2027-2028 school year. The Board needs to rectify this matter. In speaking with President Gainey, this should not be just an Executive Committee decision.

The Commissioner offered this recommendation:

*For **one year only**, Wilson's Mills High School will be eligible as an independent for playoff competition in individual **and team sports.***

_____ I approve this recommendation
_____ I do not approve this recommendation
_____ I abstain from voting

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Item approved.

On June 21, 2026, The Commissioner requested that the Board review the following recommendations based on recent information shared with the Board from the Calendar Committee:

1. That the 2026-2027 calendar as presented be approved
2. That the format for women's volleyball be approved
3. That the State Association Adoptions for flag football as shown in the chart be approved
4. That the format for men's volleyball be approved.

__ I vote to approve all four recommendations
__ I vote to not approve the following:
_ #1
_ #2
_ #3
_ #4
__I abstain from voting

All recommendations passed 19-0.

On July 30, 2026, two (2) items were brought to the Board of Directors for review and voting.

Number 1: Recommendation for playoff officials' fees

With a regular season Flag Football fee of $55 for three officials/game: Staff is recommending a $10 increase for rounds 1-2 to $65; a $10 increase for rounds 3-5 to $75; and then a $6 increase for state finals to $81. (Four officials will be used for the playoffs.)

Number 2: A position notice for the Regional Supervisor for the Metrolina Softball Association was posted on June 1, 2026. After conducting a zoom meeting with Angela, staff is recommending removal of the interim title and naming Angela Morton the Regional Supervisor for the Metrolina Softball Association.

Both items were approved by the Board of Directors.

On August 12, 2026, the Commissioner sent several action items to the Board of Directors for electronic vote.

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1. Two weeks ago, the Regional Supervisor for the Southeastern Wrestling Association—Charlie Jenkins**—**passed away suddenly. **The NCHSAA staff is recommending David Culbreth of Fayetteville to serve as the Interim Supervisor until a permanent replacement is named after this upcoming wrestling season.** (Note: David has been a long-time wrestling official and for many years a Coordinator of Officials during the state wrestling championships.)

2. The recently selected and then Board approved Northeast Basketball Regional Supervisor—Jared Taunton—resigned about three weeks ago. The original selection committee met via Zoom on August 11. After discussion of the next two top individuals to receive votes, **the committee is recommending Marshall Crumpler as the next Regional Supervisor for the Northeast Basketball Association.**

3. With the announced end of September retirement of current Board Member Dr. Don Phipps, the Board of Directors has the authority to appoint a successor.(Bylaw II.f; page 14-15 of the current handbook). With just this one year remaining in Don's four-year term, **President Garrett and I are recommending Sam Jones be appointed to complete this final year of the term representing Region 5**. (**Note**: Sam completed his four-year term on the Board in May 2026. This would be just a one-year appointment—2026-2027, providing continuity on the Board, and giving Education District/Region 5 its full representation. The nominating committee would consider a new nominee during its normal nominating process next spring.)

   All three items were approved.

On Wednesday, June 24, 2026, the NCHSAA Board of Directors convened for a called session at 1414 Raleigh Road, #300, Chapel Hill.

Present Board members included: Mark Garrett, Chris Blanton, Dana Ayers, Andy McCormick, Bryan Tyson, Larry Williford, Don Phipps, Paige Badgett, Eddie Doll, Sam Jones, Brett Lamb, Allen Plaster, Henry Rice, and John Williams. Absent: Brad Alford, Matthew Cheeseman, Joe Franks, Stephen Gainey, Wendell Hall, Jamie King, Elbert Lassiter, Stefanie Phillips, Roy Turner, and Ericia Turner. Kelly Dagger, General Counsel, and Karen DeHart, Associate Commissioner, were also present.

The meeting was called to order by Mark Garrett at 8:30 a.m. Don Phipps then made a motion pursuant to North Carolina General; Statute 143-318.11(a)(6), to go into closed

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session to consider the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, conditions of appointment, or conditions of initial employment of an individual officer or prospective officer or employee of the Association. The motion was seconded by Dana Ayers and unanimously approved. The Board went into closed session at 8:35 a.m. At 3:10 p.m. Sam Jones made a motion for the Board to come out of closed session. Don Phipps seconded and the motion carried, 14-0.

Phipps then moved to approve the recommendation of the Board of Directors, made in closed session, regarding the appointment of a prospective officer of the Association, pending the negotiation of contract terms with the prospective officer. If contract negotiations are successful, the Board of Directors will announce its final action appointing the officer. The motion was seconded by Jones and approved 14-0.
A motion was made by Henry Rice to adjourn the meeting at 3:15 p.m., seconded by Jones and approved 14-0.

On September 10, 2026, Commissioner-elect Brad Alford requested that the Board vote on a proposed Mid-Alignment Request Process for member schools seeking consideration of a classification change, or a classification and conference placement change, for the final two years of the current alignment period.

If approved, the staff will communicate the process during the NCHSAA Regional Meetings. Member schools will have an opportunity at those meetings to submit an **Intent to Request Reclassification** for planning purposes. Formal Mid-Alignment Requests, including all required supporting documentation, will be due **November 1, 2026**, consistent with the deadline for Board agenda items. Requests will then be prepared for consideration by the Board during the Winter Meeting.

Item approved: 16-0-2 abstained

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