

Anderson County Board of Education
907 North Main Street, Suite 202, Anderson, South Carolina 29621
June 15, 2026

Call to Order: Chairman Mr. Michael S. Upton called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance: Rev. Jason Dorriety gave the invocation, after which, everyone joined in the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

Board Members' Present: The following board members were present at the meeting: Mr. Michael S. Upton, Dr. Gary Burgess, Mr. C. Nakia Davis, Dr. Doug Atkins, Mr. Greg Balog, Mr. David Blanding, Rev. Jason Dorriety, Dr. Vaughn Parfitt, Dr. Mark Williamson, and Mrs. Susan Binninger ex officio.

Board Members Absent:

Approval of Agenda: Dr. Williamson made a motion to add executive session to be held before the consideration of budgets for Anderson County School Districts to the agenda. Dr. Parfitt seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously. Dr. Burgess made a motion to approve the amended agenda. Dr. Parfitt seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

Approval of Minutes: Mr. Balog made a motion to approve the May 15, 2026, meeting minutes and Mr. Blanding seconded the motion. They were approved unanimously.

Recognition of Media and Patrons / Public Comment Period: Mr. Upton welcomed the Anderson County School Districts' superintendents and financial officers: Dr. Seth Young and Ms. Cyndi Durham of Anderson School District One, Mr. Jason Johns and Ms. Laura Parnell of Anderson School District Two, Mrs. Kathy Hipp and Mr. Matthew Moore of Anderson School District Three, Mr. Dee Christopher and Mrs. Cristy Jablonski of Anderson School District Four, and Dr. Brenda Kelley and Ms. Amy Heard of Anderson School District Five. Mr. Upton also welcomed Mrs. Nancy Upton, Board Chair for Anderson School District One, and Mrs. Hanna Arnold, Board Secretary for Anderson School District Three.

Executive Session: The board members entered into Executive Session to receive legal advice from the attorney at 6:04 pm.

Rev. Dorriety made a motion to exit Executive Session at 6:32 pm and was seconded by Dr. Williamson. All board members approved unanimously. No action was taken during Executive Session, and it ended at 6:32 pm.

The Board reconvened in regular session at 6:33 pm.

Consideration of Budgets for Anderson County School Districts:

Dr. Seth Young stated that students in Anderson County receive a high-quality education regardless of which school district they attend.

Dr. Young reported that all the Anderson School Districts were able to provide a \$2000 increase to the teachers. Employees that are on a salary scale received a cost of living and a step increase. This was able to be done without any of the districts asking for a millage increase.

Dr. Young announced that Anderson School District One will be opening Oak Hill Elementary next fall. They were able to build a \$44 million facility without having to ask for a bond referendum by using the local option sales tax money that the district and previous superintendent had saved along with some other capital funds to make this happen. They were able to spend \$44 million without going to the taxpayers for a millage increase. There will be additional costs when opening the new school, they will be using their fund balance. The fund balance had gone from 25% to 28% last year because they knew that they would need to use between \$1 and \$1.5 million for additional staff and accommodating the operating cost.

Dr. Young stated that all auditors and state regulations recommend that the districts have between two and three months of operating expenses in their fund balances. This is so the employees and bills can be paid in the months of October through December. The districts try to keep 25%, 3 months of operating expenses.

Mr. Balog asked Mr. Young what type of decreases in expenditures did they absorb? Mr. Young stated that they cut several hundred thousand dollars to some of their supplies and materials for their instruction. They worked with their maintenance to make sure they were not spending anything from their general fund budget on equipment. The construction of Oak Hill Elementary may be under budget. Therefore, some of the money from the capital fund could absorb some of the maintenance budget that in the past was in the general fund budget.

Dr. Burgess asked whether the process used for developing this year's budget had been helpful. Mr. Christopher responded that the districts appreciate having budgets prepared earlier rather than waiting until mid- or late July. He stated that having the budget approved in June is beneficial as schools prepare to begin the new academic year. Although the State Budget has not yet been finalized, he noted that it remains an important factor and that they feel confident about the direction it is heading at this point.

Mr. Johns reported that Anderson School District Two has made several adjustments to the budget report that was previously submitted. There is a change in the state revenue, expenditures summary, fund balance, and then a summary. This reflects the state changes after the budget was submitted and what they currently have for their budget.

Mrs. Hipp stated that with their process Anderson School District Three started with two big goals. One was to not ask for a millage increase in the budget. The second was to their staff salaries and make sure they were being taken care of in comparison to everyone else. The salaries are about 88% of their budget. There is not a lot of state funding left after salaries are paid. They will talk to different departments and principals to see what their needs are for the schools. The items that they need are covered by another fund source that can be used to help pay for these needs. They look at staffing because their board is committed to having small class sizes, ratio 17 to 1 in elementary schools and 21 to 1 in the middle school. The other thing that affected their budget is they use the town of Iva for SRO's; there was an increase due to trying to match their pay to Anderson County officers. Eighteen operational mills of their budget go to fund AIT, \$650,000. There was one special education teacher added for this year.

Mr. Christopher announced that Anderson School District Four has added 8 positions for this coming school year. They have added 5 professional staff and 3 support staff. Four of the eight positions are special ed related that will be working in one of the thirteen self-contained classrooms. They are opening a new high school and moving the middle school to the old high school building. The sixth graders will be moving out of the elementary schools and joining the seventh and eighth graders at the middle school.

Dr. Williamson asked if the Special Ed 13 self-contained classrooms have anything to do with mental health. Mr. Christopher stated that it could include mental health and a lot of their self-contained students have mental health needs that they service. We have 1.5 mental health counselors from Anderson County Department of Education and 1 that is employed by the district. They also use the Department of Mental Health for counselors.

Dr. Kelley reported that Anderson School District Five serves 36 different languages and has added 2 multilingual teachers. Additional personnel have been added to Robert Anderson Middle School. An Assistant Principal was hired, and another one was moved from another school. This will help the students in need and the staff to serve the students better. Robert Anderson Middle School has the smallest classes compared to the other middle schools. Without raising any millage, Anderson School District Five has added 10 math interventionists to serve the elementary students.

Dr. Kelley announced that they are starting A5 Connect for middle school students. This is a hybrid program that any student can register to attend. The students would remain enrolled at their home school and will be able to receive announcements from their principals. They can attend events, related arts, and clubs for the schools. They will complete virtual online classes with 2 of Anderson School District Five teachers and come in one day a week for 3 hours. The 1st and 3rd Friday the students will attend field trips. A5 Connect is already at capacity with 45 students, there is a waiting list. This has helped lower the classroom ratio for Title I schools.

Mr. Balog asked if they see Chromebooks being misused by students going on websites that they should not be on? Mr. Johns stated that they have software that does not allow the students to go on websites that are not healthy. The teachers are moving more to pencil and paper, and only using Chromebooks as a tool as opposed to less productive center.

Mr. Christopher said that they are constantly looking for where the holes are in their filters and that the students are figuring out how to get around the filters. It is not something that they must deal with every day. Mr. Johns reminded everyone that all five districts have E-learning and are required for the students to have Chromebooks for the instructional days.

Mrs. Hipp stated that since they have gone back to traditional teaching and using textbooks, they have saved time by not having to chase down online issues.

Rev. Dorriety asked where did all the hundreds of thousands of dollars go from the House Budget to the Senate Budget that the school districts were supposed to have received? The superintendents commented probably to the Charter Schools.

Mr. Upton asked what type of emphasis do you have on cursive writing in the second, third, and fourth grades? Dr. Kelley commented that it is State standard for second grade to be taught cursive writing. In third, fourth, and fifth grade they continue to practice.

Mr. Blanding asked where do they see their program going with artificial intelligence? Mr. Johns stated that AI is a tool that allows you to accelerate productivity. What we need to do is make sure that they know how to use that responsibly, so that their intellectual work is submitted with integrity, and instead of it substituting the learning, it just enhances it. It is a growing process. It is going to be different today than it was yesterday. Mr. Christopher commented that there are different tools to detect what percentage of a paper or assignment has AI in it. Our teachers do not want the students to get away from not learning, they want them to learn. They are developing strategies dealing with AI.

Mrs. Kelley stated that they have looked at how to keep it a negative, but also how to use it positively. Every month they have had training on how they can use it to help their students. They learned that you could take a student's notes and put it in AI and it will turn it into a study guide for them. It is being utilized as tools for the students but also the safeguards. This will be a growing piece every year that we continue to add on to.

Mr. Christopher stated that they are all nervous about the cyber security stuff that is going on now, it is a big concern with all the breaches happening.

Consideration of District One Budget: Dr. Mark Williamson presented the budget for Anderson School District One for the FY2026-2027 in the amount of \$124,911,691 of which \$53,807,424 is identified as local funding. The budget approved and implemented for FY2025-2026 was \$120,705,198 representing a budget increase of 3.48% for the new fiscal year. Dr. Williamson made a motion to approve the budget request which meets state requirements and Dr. Gary Burgess seconded the motion. The District One budget for FY 2026-2027 was approved with a unanimous vote.

Consideration of District Two Budget: Rev. Jason Dorriety presented the budget for Anderson School District Two for the FY2026-2027 in the amount of \$44,760,325 of which \$18,928,629 is identified as local funding. The budget approved and implemented for FY2025-2026 was \$41,850,022 representing a budget increase of 6.95% for the new fiscal year. Rev. Dorriety made a motion to approve the budget request which meets state requirements and Mr. C. Nakia Davis seconded the motion. The District Two budget for FY 2026-2027 was approved with a unanimous vote.

Consideration of District Three Budget: Mr. C. Nakia Davis presented the budget for Anderson School District Three for the FY2026-2027 in the amount of \$33,495,000 of which \$14,202,500 is identified as local funding. The budget approved and implemented for FY2025-2026 was \$32,190,650 representing a budget increase of 4.05% for the new fiscal year. Mr. Davis made a motion to approve the budget request which meets state requirements and Rev. Jason Dorriety seconded the motion. The Board approved the budget with a unanimous vote for FY2026-2027 for District Three.

Consideration of District Four Budget: Dr. Gary Burgess presented the budget for Anderson School District Four for FY 2026-2027 in the amount of \$44,497,261 of which \$26,662,174 is identified as local funding. The budget approved and implemented for FY2025-2026 \$41,852,785 represented a budget increase of 6.32% for the new fiscal year. Dr. Gary Burgess made a motion to approve this budget request that meets state requirements and Dr. Mark Williamson seconded it. The Board approved the budget with a unanimous vote for FY2026-2027 for District Four.

Consideration of District Five Budget: Dr. Vaughn Parfitt presented the budget for Anderson School District Five for the FY2026-2027 in the amount of \$166,171,747 of which \$85,385,845 is identified as local funding. The budget approved and implemented for FY2025-2026 was \$161,196,895 representing a budget increase of 3.09% for the new fiscal year. Dr. Parfitt respectfully moved that the board find it is not appropriate to include the budget amount funded for local Ad Valorem Taxes an amount for district school board member compensation which if funded at all should be funded from sources of revenue other than local Ad Valorem Taxes and therefore further move that the board approve the approved budget for fiscal year 2026-2027 but with the respect to the locally funded portion of the budget less the amount allocated for school board member compensation of \$33,000 resulting in a total approve budget in the amount of \$166,138,740 of which \$85,352,844 is identified as local funding and which meets state requirements and Dr. Mark Williamson seconded the motion. With seven yes votes and two no votes by Mr. C. Nakia Davis and Dr. Gary Burgess, the Board approved District Five's budget for FY2026-2027.

Dr. Burgess stated that he thinks all board members in the county should be paid.

The board members thanked the superintendents and finance officers for their hard work on the budgets for the 2026/2027 FY and for being patient with them during the changes that were made to the process of the budget information.

Reports

A. Administrator's Report: Mrs. Binninger provided an update on truancy, mental health services, and food service programs for the current school year.

Mrs. Binninger reported that the truancy officers completed 930 referrals during the school year. She also reported that the officers attended family court proceedings involving 97 orders to attend and 31 rules to show cause cases. Of the 31 rules to show cause cases, three parents received jail sentences, two parents were fined, and one juvenile was detained.

Mrs. Binninger stated that the Anderson County Department of Education employs 7.5 mental health counselors who serve Anderson School Districts One through Four and Renaissance Academy. During the current school year, these counselors conducted 4,527 counseling sessions and provided services to a total of 367 students.

Mrs. Binninger announced that the nutrition director for food services stated that Anderson School District Two has served 667,325 student meals and 15,509 adult/visitor meals during the current school year. She also reported that Anderson School District Three has served 610,302 student meals and 30,885 adult/visitor meals during the school year.

B. Financial

1. Tax Collection YTD vs. Budget: Mrs. Binninger reported that, as of May 31, 2026, all five districts have collected between 96% and 108.5% of local and state revenue. Mrs. Binninger noted that this report reflects budget to actual amounts.

2. Assessment Totals: Mrs. Binninger reviewed the county-wide assessment totals through May 2026, noting a per mill value of \$1,175,989,496, an increase of \$1,422 since April 2026. Mrs. Binninger presented a three-year comparison of the value of one mill for the month of April, reporting an increase of 6% from 2024 to 2025, approximately 5% increase for this year. We are continuing to see that increase year over year in property values.

Mrs. Binninger presented a breakdown for each district operating millage and value per mill as of May 31, 2026. Anderson School District One's current millage value is \$178,486, Anderson School District Two's current millage value is \$51,424, Anderson School District Three's current millage value is \$40,937, Anderson School District Four's current millage value is \$109,278, and Anderson School District Five's current millage value is \$283,708.

3. Education Sales & Use Tax: Mrs. Binninger reported that \$3,902,282.55 in Education Sales & Use Tax was collected in May. Mrs. Binninger stated that this is an increase of approximately \$182,000 from this time last year. Mrs. Binninger reminded everyone that 20% of these funds are posted to the sinking fund accounts of the districts to roll back debt service millage. The remaining 80% goes to capital projects.

4. Accounts Payable: Lastly, Mrs. Binninger presented the accounts payable showing the bills that have been paid in May 2026. Dr. Burgess made a motion to approve the accounts payable. Mr. Balog seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

Unfinished Business: None

New Business: None

Announcements:

Mrs. Binninger stated that the Anderson County Legislative Delegation meeting has been changed to June 25, 2026, at 5:00 pm for budget approvals. The meeting was originally scheduled for June 23, 2026. Mrs. Binninger will not be available to attend this meeting due to a prior engagement. Rev. Dorriety and Dr. Parfitt will be presenting the Anderson County Department of Education budget's to the Delegation.

Mrs. Binninger stated that the School Law Conference will be held at the Hyatt Regency in Greenville on August 29–30, 2026. Board members that are signed up to attend are Dr. Parfitt, Mr. Balog, Mr. Davis, Dr. Williamson, and Mr. Upton. Mrs. Binninger asked if anyone is interested in attending the School Law Conference to please notify her.

Meeting Date: The next board meeting will be on Monday, July 20, 2026.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:42 p.m. by Chairman Mr. Michael S. Upton.

Respectfully submitted,

Mr. C. Nakia Davis, Secretary of the Anderson County Board of Education.
This is a true and correct copy of notes taken at the meeting.