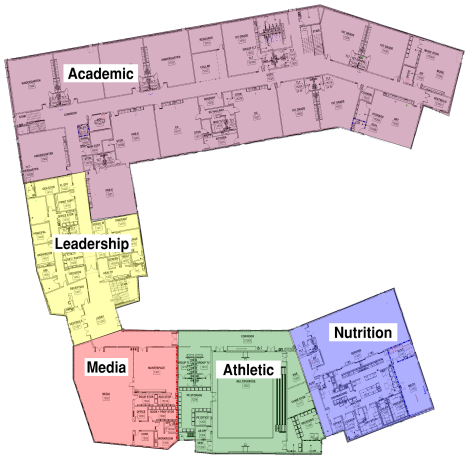
Orange County Schools
Board of Education Report

Executive Summary: Bond Update - New Elementary School
The New Elementary School is part of the voter-approved 2024 school bond and will provide capacity for 600 students to support Orange County Schools' long-term facility needs. Located adjacent to Gravelly Hill Middle School and the Soccer.com Center, the school is scheduled for substantial completion on May 1, 2029.

The project has advanced from schematic design into design development, with the design intent and programming goals unchanged. Value engineering reduced the schematic design estimate from $59,366,943 to $55,333,664—a savings of $4,033,279. Site construction is planned to begin July 9, 2027.



The City of Mebane annexation, rezoning, and special use permit process remains on schedule. Mebane requires all three Orange County parcels—the middle school, Soccer.com Center, and new school site—to complete this process before it will provide water and sewer service to the new school. The Orange County Board of Commissioners is scheduled to authorize signing the annexation petitions through its November 17, 2026 consent agenda.

Design & Construction Schedule
- October 27, 2026: Site design submitted
- November 6, 2026: Design development drawings
- January 25, 2027: Design development estimate presented to the Board of Education
- February 15, 2027: Site construction documents
- April 20, 2027: Site construction bid documents
- May 28, 2027: Building permit and GMP documents
- June 21, 2027: Site early release pricing
- July 9, 2027: Erosion control and site construction start
- August 5, 2027: Building permit approved
- May 1, 2029: New Elementary School substantially complete

**Dates subject to change*

Value Engineering
Value engineering is a structured review of a project to explore cost reduction while preserving its purpose, quality, safety, and essential performance**.** Value engineering saved $4,033,279 while keeping the design intent and program. Savings came from:
- Balancing the site to reduce grading costs
- A seismic survey to measure the partially weathered rock accurately
- Lowering the building height by 2'-8"
- Adding roof safety tie-offs so the parapet walls could be lowered
- Revising the floor plan to reduce the footprint by 5%
- Shortening the design and permitting schedule by 2 months so grading can start early

Annexation

The City of Mebane requires all three West Ten Road parcels to be annexed: Gravelly Hill Middle School (GHMS), the Soccer.com Center, and the New Elementary School site. Under the Memorandum of Understanding between Orange County and the Board of Education, approved by the Board on September 14, 2026, Amanda Hodierne of Isaacson Sheridan is providing legal services, and PMCnc is coordinating the process as part of the New Elementary School project management services. Legal fees are capped at $65,500.00. Orange County Schools will pay 75% (up to $48,900.62 from Capital Improvement Project funds), and Orange County will pay 25% (up to $16,599.38).

The site rendering below shows the three parcels along West Ten Road: GHMS, the Soccer.com Center fields, and the New Elementary School site.



Site and Permit Applications: Each parcel needs three applications: Annexation Petition, Zoning Map Amendment, and Special Use Permit. The table below describes the process and purpose of each application.

Application	**What it is**	**Why it is needed**
Annexation petition	A formal request from Orange County asking the City to annex land adjacent to city limits (per G.S. 160A-31). The City Clerk certifies the petition, and the City Council holds a public hearing and adopts an annexation ordinance.	Mebane extends water and sewer service only to property inside the City. Annexation also brings the campus under Mebane fire, police, and planning and inspection services.
Zoning map amendment	A legislative change to the zoning map. The Planning Board recommends consistency with the City's land use plan, and the City Council votes to approve after a public hearing with published, mailed, and posted notice.	Once annexed, the parcels must move from Orange County zoning to a Mebane zoning district.
Special use permit	Approval for a specific land use that requires a formal evidentiary hearing—complete with sworn testimony and written findings. Approval is tied to a specific site plan and may include conditions.	The Mebane Unified Development Ordinance requires a special use permit for K-12 schools in the R-20 district, and for the Soccer.com Center use.

For each special use permit, the applicant must prove four points at the hearing:

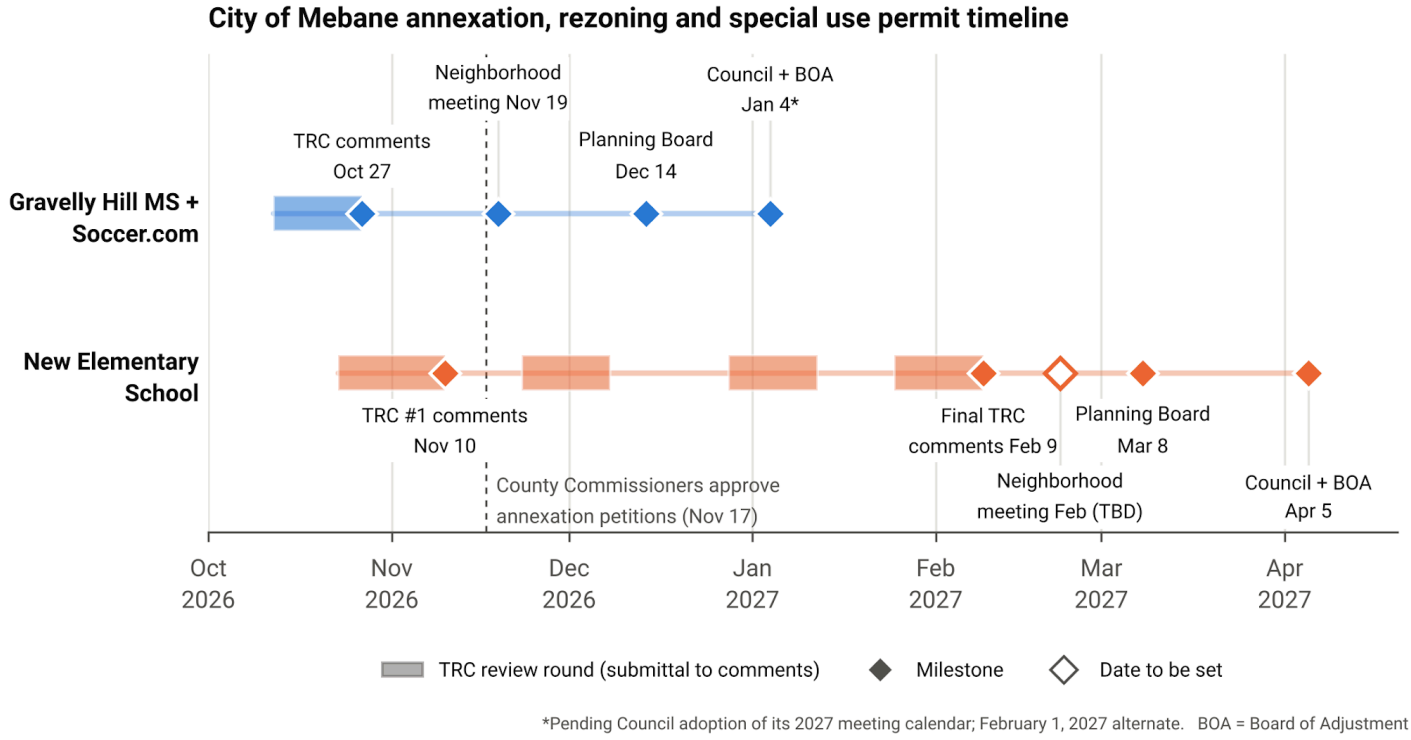
1. The use will not materially endanger the public health or safety.
2. The use will not substantially injure the value of adjoining or abutting property. An appraiser must testify to this.
3. The use will be in harmony with the area in which it is to be located.
4. The use will be in general conformity with the land use plan and other plans and policies officially adopted by the City Council.

Governing Bodies: Four City of Mebane governing bodies review the applications. The City Council and the Board of Adjustment make final decisions. The table below outlines the name of the municipal governing body, members serving on the authoritative body, and their role in the annexation process.

Body	Who serves	Role in this process
Technical Review Committee (TRC)	City department and agency staff appointed by the City Manager, chaired by the Planning Director	Reviews site plans against the ordinance and engineering standards and issues comments. Identifies existing site features to be listed as permit conditions. No public hearing or vote.
Planning Board	Nine appointed members: six City residents and three members from the extraterritorial area (two Alamance, one Orange)	Advisory. Gives written recommendations on the rezoning, including consistency with the land use plan, and on the special use permits.
Board of Adjustment	The City Council has appointed itself as the Board of Adjustment, with the Mayor as chair and two county appointees	Quasi-judicial. Holds the evidentiary hearing and decides the special use permits for Gravelly Hill Middle School and the new elementary school.
City Council	Elected Mayor and Council	Holds the public hearing and votes on the annexation ordinance and the rezoning. Decides the Soccer.com Center special use permit in a quasi-judicial hearing.

To help clarify the process, the City of Mebane is handling the annexation requests through two separate application processes, as recommended by City staff and Isaacson Sheridan. This ensures the existing property and the proposed new school property are considered independently rather than combined into one request. Before each application goes before the Planning Board, a virtual neighborhood meeting is held, with written notice mailed to property owners within 300 feet of the affected property (23 parcels representing 18 property owners). The Planning Board then reviews each request at a public meeting; however, public comments are not accepted during this meeting. The process concludes with a City Council public hearing, where residents have an opportunity to provide comments before the Council votes on each request.

Technical Review Committee Timeline: The chart below outlines the City of Mebane's Technical Review Committee (TRC) process, including key milestones from initial application submission through final decisions for two separate sites: (1) the combined Gravelly Hill Middle School and Soccer.com Center site and (2) the proposed new elementary school site. Each site follows its own review and approval timeline.



Gravelly Hill Middle School (GHMS) and Soccer.com Center

GHMS and the Soccer.com Center are existing properties that will not change use; therefore, they will be assessed first. During TRC review, City staff will list existing features that do not meet current standards. These will become conditions of the special use permits. The City Council will decide the Soccer.com Center permit. The Board of Adjustment, made up of the City Council members, will decide the GHMS permit. Below is an estimated timeline for the approval process;

- October 12, 2026: Submitted to the TRC
- October 27, 2026: TRC comments received
- November 19, 2026: Neighborhood meeting
- December 14, 2026: Planning Board recommendations
- January 4, 2027: City Council and Board of Adjustment decisions (February 1, 2027 alternate, pending the Council's 2027 meeting calendar)

**Dates subject to change*

New Elementary School

The New Elementary School must meet current planning standards. The design will likely be revised and resubmitted to the TRC up to four times before it goes to the Planning Board. Each submission is followed by about two weeks of City review. The Board of Adjustment decides the school special use permit. City application fees (special use permit $400, rezoning $300, and TRC fees) are paid from the New Elementary School project budget.

- October 23, 2026: First TRC submittal
- November 10, 2026: City comments on the first submittal
- November 23, 2026: Second TRC submittal
- December 8, 2026: TRC review
- January 12, 2027: TRC review
- February 9, 2027: Final TRC review
- February 2027: Neighborhood meeting (date to be set)
- March 8, 2027: Planning Board recommendations
- April 5, 2027: City Council and Board of Adjustment decisions

**Dates subject to change*

The chart below shows each New Elementary School step from submittal to the City's comments or meeting date.

