

CODE

From A1

Earlier this month, Kemp signed House Bill 1009 into law, expanding Georgia’s “bell-to-bell” cellphone restrictions beyond kindergarten through eighth grade to include high school students. Under the law, local school systems retain flexibility in how the rules are enforced, including whether devices are collected, stored or simply prohibited during the school day. The K-8 restrictions take effect July 1, while the expanded high school ban will begin ahead of the 2027-28 school year. Previous district language prohibited personal electronic devices during instructional time and certain school activities. The updated code now bars K-8 students from accessing devices at any point during school hours while on school grounds. High school students will still be allowed to use devices at designated times determined by principals, but devices may not be accessed during instructional time for non-instructional purposes and without teacher permission. The restrictions apply to cellphones, smartwatches, tablets, earbuds and other electronic devices. Exceptions would remain in place for students whose Individualized Education Plans, Section 504 accommodations or medical plans requiring device access. Board member Becky Saylor questioned whether those exemptions should be explicitly stated in the code of conduct, noting some students use phones to monitor medical conditions such as diabetes. York responded that the exceptions are already addressed in the administrative rule the board approved last year tied to the state law and would be outlined in students’ individual plans. “It was not deemed necessary,” he said. “...Our student discipline team has ongoing training with administrators on implementation, especially when there’s a new change coming in. So this is not going to be just a document that says, ‘Here read this,’ but there is training planned for implementation of any of these changes.”

OFFENSIVE MATERIALS

Much of the board’s discussion during the meeting focused on revisions involving disrespectful conduct, specifically the added phrase “objectively offensive materials” to a section prohibiting students from possessing or distributing profane, vulgar, pornographic or ethnically offensive material. “Some of the (offensive materials) are more easily defined than others,” York said. “... You can also have objective offensive materials, say based on someone’s religion.” Board member Nichelle Davis questioned why “ethnically” offensive material was specifically referenced and suggested “racially” offensive material should also be included if the district intended broader coverage. Superintendent Chris Ragsdale suggested staff revisit the wording before final approval. “I’m going to do a deep dive into this, and if we don’t need it, we’ll delete it, but I’ll bring it back to the board as a change anyway,” he said. By the evening meeting, York returned with revised wording that removed the

phrase “objectively offensive” and instead aligned the language with an earlier section referencing the use of offensive language involving disability, race, ethnicity, gender and religion. “I just want to say thank you all so much for being so quick and responsive to the feedback,” Davis told staff after the revision was presented. **STUDENT INTENT** Other revisions include the removal of references to “intent” from portions of the student code of conduct, particularly in sections dealing with disruption, harassment and physical offenses. Under the updated language, rules involving spitting or urinating on another person no longer require the act to be considered intentional. The revised classroom disruption rule now prohibits students from making noise or acting “in any other manner so as to interfere with a teacher’s ability to conduct a class or a student’s ability to learn,” eliminating the previous requirement that the behavior be intentional. Similarly, the broader school disruption section no longer states that a student must “intentionally” disrupt school operations, and another revision removes the phrase “with the intent” from language prohibiting students from blocking entrances or exits to school buildings or grounds. The district also revised its definition of harassment to remove “intentional.” The changes have prompted concerns from some community members online, particularly about how the removal of intent standards could affect students with special needs, who may struggle with impulse control, communication or behavioral regulation. Board Chairman Randy Scamihorn asked that families “give this a chance. “We review all of our rules and policies, particularly student code of conduct, throughout the year,” he said. “...We have been more than fair throughout the years with students who need consideration in this type of thing.” Scamihorn said he was unaware of the district’s reasoning behind the shift. The issue of intent, however, has surfaced in recent disciplinary litigation involving the district. Last year, Cobb Superior Court Judge Robert Leonard reversed the board’s decision to expel a middle school student who allegedly used a district-issued computer to warn classmates about a school shooting threat in 2024. Leonard ruled there was insufficient evidence the student “intended to cause a school disruption,” specifically citing the wording of the district’s disruption

policy at the time. The Cobb County Board of Education later attempted to appeal the ruling, but the appeal was denied earlier this year. **AI-GENERATED CONTENT** The district is also adding a new section addressing artificial intelligence-generated content. Under the updated rule, students are prohibited from “creating, sharing or distributing artificial intelligence-generated, altered or otherwise false images, videos or other digital content” that disrupts learning, falsifies school documents or misrepresents students, staff or school-related programs and events. The disciplinary consequences vary by grade level, with stricter penalties for middle and high school students. Scamihorn said there were a number of reasons why the rule was important, emphasizing students “need to do the work in order to exercise the brain. “If we just gave a calculator to a student trying to learn the basic mathematical skills, they would never know why two plus two equals four,” he said. “... So there are basics that should be learned in every genre, but once you learn those basics, for efficiency, you can use the technology available.” Scamihorn emphasized the changes “are never just arbitrary.” “There’s justification in order to help the student,” he said. Additional revisions to the student conduct code include: ♦ Expanding the definition of a bomb threat to include “threatening to plant a bomb,” in addition to transmitting a false alarm; ♦ Adding penalties for interfering with discipline investigations by concealing or altering physical or digital evidence; ♦ Revising bus behavior rules to prohibit students from preventing the orderly arrival or dismissal of buses; ♦ Updating prescription drug rules to prohibit possession, consumption or storage of medication not prescribed to the student; ♦ Revising sexual misconduct language to include “touching” and consensual sexual activity; ♦ Adding provisions addressing unauthorized parking and reckless behavior in school parking lots.



Chair Randy Scamihorn reads agenda documents during a Cobb Board of Education meeting.

NOTICE OF INSPECTION, PUBLIC HEARING, AND ADOPTION FOR PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR 2026-2027 BUDGET

City of Acworth

A copy of the proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2026-2027 will be available for public inspection beginning May 4, 2026, in the administrative offices of Acworth City Hall located at 4415 Center Street, Acworth, GA 30101. Office hours are Monday through Friday, 8:00 A.M. until 5:00 P.M.

The City of Acworth will hold a public hearing on June 4, 2026 for the purpose of receiving citizen input on the proposed Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Budget. Said hearing will take place at 4415 Center Street, Acworth, GA 30101, in the Council Chambers beginning at 7:00 P.M. during the regular meeting of the Mayor and Board of Aldermen.

Adoption of the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Budget is scheduled for June 18, 2026 and will take place at 4415 Center Street, Acworth, GA 30101, in the Council Chambers beginning at 7:00 P.M. during the regular meeting of the Mayor and Board of Aldermen.

Be advised that there will be a public hearing held for the reading of the City of Austell’s 2026-27 Fiscal Year Budget on June 1, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. and a special called meeting with a 2nd hearing on June 15, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. Both meetings will take place at the City of Austell Council Chambers, located at the Threadmill Complex, 5000 Austell Powder Springs Rd., Austell, GA 30106. The 2026-27 Fiscal Year Budget will be available on May 22, 2026, at 5000 Austell Powder Springs Rd., Austell, GA. Comments regarding the budget may be made to the City Clerk’s (clerk@austellga.gov) office prior to the hearing.

NOTICE OF BUDGET AVAILABILITY AND BUDGET MEETINGS

The City of Powder Springs hereby provides notice that a draft proposed budget for Fiscal Year 27 is available for review at www.powerspringsga.gov. The public is invited to provide comments or ask questions by sending an email to info@powerspringsga.gov. First reading and public hearing is scheduled for June 1, 2026 followed by second public hearing and proposed adoption on June 15, 2026 at City Hall Council Chambers, 4483 Pineview Drive and via ZOOM. The ZOOM details will be available on the City’s website.



LOGIC AND ACCURACY TEST NOTICE June 16, 2026, General Primary Election /Nonpartisan Runoff

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that Logic and Accuracy testing and preparation of voting and tabulation equipment to be used on **June 16, 2026, General Primary/Nonpartisan Runoff** will begin as follows:

- In-person voting units (BMD) and tabulation scanners (ICP):
 - **9:00 a.m. on Thursday, May 28, 2026**, at 995 Roswell St. NE, Marietta, GA 30060 until completion.
- Absentee Mail tabulation scanners (ICC):
 - **10:00 a.m. on Thursday, May 28, 2026**, at 995 Roswell St. NE, Marietta, GA 30060 until completion.

Testing will continue day to day until completed and is open to the public who wish to observe. The Superintendent will have a representative on-site to answer questions during the first hour of each phase.

This 22nd day of May 2026.

Leigh Phillips
Director
Cobb County Elections & Registration

