

February 16, 2015

The Washington County Board of Commissioners met in a joint session with the Washington County Board of Education on Monday, February 16, 2015 at 6:00 PM in the Commissioners' Room, 116 Adams Street, Plymouth, NC. Commissioners Tracey A. Johnson, Buster Manning, D. Cole Phelps, Bill Sexton and Julius Walker, Jr. were present. Also present were County Manager Jerry W. Rhodes, Clerk to the Board Julie J. Bennett and County Attorney Curtis Potter. Board of Education members Lois Clark, Ruffin Gill, Jr., Fred Norman, Jerry Phelps and Carlos Riddick were present. Also present were Washington County Schools Superintendent Dr. Joe Davis and Clerk to the Board Diane White.

Chair Sexton called the Washington County Board of Commissioners to order and Chair Gill called the Board of Education to order for the February 16, 2015 joint meeting.

Chair Sexton said that with the budget cycle for this next year getting ready to start that the County needs to see what the School Board is requesting. Chair Sexton said that the mold issue at Pines Elementary School (PES) needs to be addressed. Money needs to be found to pay for it. Chair Sexton went on to say that this meeting is about discussing such issues and seeing what both Boards can work out.

Chair Sexton said he understands that some schools aren't at capacity and asked Chair Gill if this is true. Chair Gill said it is the School Board's intent to look at consolidating the two high schools. The School Board has looked at cost to try not to burden taxpayers. Chair Gill said the problem is that any money saved by consolidating schools would need to be used for construction. The School Board is trying to put a new bill before the legislature to be able to use certain funds currently off limits to public schools for construction purposes despite other types of schools being allowed to use them for that purpose. Dr. Davis said it is at the stage of lobbying. Chair Gill said they need to look at PES also. It could cost as much as \$50,000 or as much as \$1M to repair that school. Commissioner Manning asked how old PES school is. Mr. Norman said it was built in 1986 and the problem is that it has a flat roof and poor architecture. Commissioner Walker said there were problems at that school when he was the superintendent. Commissioner Manning said the Commissioners need a broad scope about all the schools such as to how much each school is utilized. He has heard about underutilization. Commissioner Manning said he didn't know if they could talk about new schools in closed session. Mr. Potter said no, that talking about new schools as it relates to fiscal policy and budget decisions could not be discussed in closed session. Chair Sexton asked the school board if they have any additional information for the Commissioners such as a timeline when the full scope of the mold issue including costs to fix it, will be known. Mr. Cheeseman said it could be done in 30 days (weather dependent). There is a group coming to look at the issue. Commissioner Manning said in light of what Mr. Cheeseman said he feels that the Commissioners need more information before they can take any action. Chair Gill said that with the new school it could be a "green" school, and some of the energy savings would go into paying off the new school. Commissioner Johnson said taking it to the legislature is good but there is no way to know how long it will take to push through and it may not pass. Mr. Rhodes asked about consolidating PES and Creswell Elementary School (CES). Dr. Davis said he thought PES was almost at capacity.

The current capacity of the schools is estimated as follows:  
Union—300

PES—670  
PHS—400  
CES—250  
CHS-155 (7-12<sup>th</sup>)

There has to be at least 100 students in a school to have a principal according Dr. Davis.

The years the schools were built are estimated as follows:

PHS—1958  
Union—1955  
PES—1986  
CHS—1988  
CES— mid 1980's

Commissioner Manning said in some previous meetings the County looked at some new school construction ideas. Commissioner Manning mentioned that it was talked about that the Commissioners and School Board members could go in a small group to look at a new school (in Hoke County). Commissioner Manning asked if they are still looking in that direction. Dr. Davis said the biggest issue is getting the newly proposed legislation through to figure out how repairs or a new school gets paid for. “Green” schools will eventually pay for themselves. Commissioners Manning and Walker said they want to go visit one of these “green” schools. Dr. Davis asked Ms. White to contact the superintendent in Hoke County to schedule a visit. Dr. Davis said a new facility will cost about \$1.5M a year in debt service. Commissioner Manning said the Commissioners need to see the cost of repairs first in order to compare it with new construction costs.

Commissioner Johnson said PHS and Union have outlived their usefulness.

Commissioner Manning said the County gives the schools \$300,000 in capital funds. Commissioner Manning asked if the Board of Education receive other monies from other sources for capital outlay. Dr. Davis said they get money from the Lottery reserves ~\$140,000.

Chair Sexton said he is hearing that the main issue at PES is the roof and related mold issue. Dr. Davis said the School Board had an industrial hygienist come out to PES and they are waiting for a report from that visit.

Chair Sexton asked what the capacity of PES school is. Dr. Davis said between 800 – 900 students.

Commissioner Walker asked the School Board if they could only do one thing, what would it be. Dr. Davis said it would be to consolidate the high schools. Commissioner Johnson said she would like to hear from the School Board. Chair Gill said he agrees with consolidating the high schools. Ms. Clark said PES needs to be fixed now. Mr. Jerry Phelps agreed. He said that if payments for a new high school and to fix PES could be consolidated that would be ideal. Mr. Rhodes said they would still have capital outlay needs at the other schools.

Mr. Jerry Phelps said when the lottery funds were instituted it sounded good. Washington County Schools get 28 cents of every dollar spent. The lottery fund was built on the

premise of school construction needs. Tier 1 counties are the ones suffering the most. The funding formula that the state uses has been modified by the legislature over time and is not equitable.

Chair Sexton asked about the ball field lights. They were on the original capital improvement requests list; however, the Vikings were able to have playoff games in Plymouth. The School Board said they used temporary lights. Mr. Jerry Phelps said it would still cost \$1M to replace the lights at PHS and CHS. The NC Athletic Association is pushing the replacement of the lights as a safety issue. New lights will have to have metal/concrete poles.

Chair Sexton asked about consolidating recreation fields.

Mr. Jerry Phelps said that at the last meeting where Mr. Cheeseman presented the School Board's capital outlay plan to the Commissioners, the School Board went over the list again to mark the safety issues that need to be fixed. The capital outlay plan could probably cut down to ~ \$700,000 instead of over \$900,000 currently being requested. Mr. Jerry Phelps said the School Board must have the quote for fixing the mold at PES before coming up with a final figure to request. Chair Sexton said he hopes the School Board gets at least two bids to be able to make a comparison.

Chair Sexton said that the two boards need to have another work session in the middle of March. He would like to have the folks come give a presentation on the quotes for fixing the mold at PES.

Chair Sexton said that the Commissioners had one more item on the agenda concerning a resolution about Red Wolves. **Commissioner Manning made a motion to approve the resolution declaring Red Wolves extinct. Commissioner Phelps seconded, motion carried unanimously.**

At 7:15 PM with no further discussion needed, Commissioner Phelps made a motion to adjourn the Board of Commissioners meeting. Commissioner Johnson seconded, motion carried unanimously. Chair Gill adjourned the Board of Education meeting.

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William R. Sexton, Jr.  
Chair

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Julie J. Bennett, CMC, NCCCC  
Clerk to the Board