

**PITT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
GREENVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA  
FEBRUARY 10, 1999**

The Pitt County Board of Commissioners met in a regular session meeting on Wednesday, February 10, 1999, at 5:30 p.m. in the Auditorium of the Agricultural Building, 403 Government Circle, Greenville, North Carolina with the following commissioners present:

Eugene James, Chairman  
Jeffrey E. Savage, Vice Chairman  
Glenn Bowen, Commissioner  
Charles P. Gaskins, Commissioner  
David Hammond, Commissioner  
Thomas H. Johnson, Commissioner  
Mark W. Owens, Jr., Commissioner  
M. Theresa Shank, Commissioner  
Beth B. Ward, Commissioner

Board of Education members present were:

Sidney Scott, Chairman  
Don Carson  
Mike Barnette  
Ephraigm Smith  
Jack Collins  
Jill Camnitz  
Walter Gaskins  
James Hopf  
Walter Jessup

Board of Education members absent were:

Michael Dixon  
Ralph Love

Also present were:

Thomas B. Robinson, County Manager  
JoAnne Burgdorff, County Attorney  
Susan J. Banks, Clerk to the Board  
Arlen Holt, PIO and Cable Coordinator  
John K. Bulow, Assistant Manager  
Melonie Bryan, Director of Financial Services  
Loretta Lewellyn, Pitt County Finance Office  
James Rhodes, Pitt County Planning Director  
Dr. Howard Sosne, Schools Superintendent  
Brenda Strickland, Secretary to the Board of Education  
Dr. John McKnight, Assistant Superintendent, Pitt County Schools  
Aaron Beaulieu, Finance Officer, Pitt County Schools  
Gibb Chauncey, Pitt County Schools  
Al Delia, Facilitator

**Call to Order** of the Board of Commissioners and welcome by Chairman James.

Call to Order of Board of Education by Chairman Scott.

Chairman James began the meeting with a prayer and pledge allegiance to the American Flag.

Each Chairman asked for approval of the agenda.

**UPON MOTION** by Commissioner Hammond, seconded by Commissioner Shank, the Board voted unanimously to approve the agenda as presented.

The Board of Education also approved the agenda as presented.

Dr. Sosne expressed his appreciation to Mr. Tom Robinson and his staff for working with the School officials to bring this meeting together and spoke about the good working relations that have evolved on through this project.

Chairman James stated he wanted to welcome everyone. He said he hoped that this would be the beginning of these two boards beginning to talk to each other.

Mr. Robinson also thanked Dr. Sosne and the Schools staff for all their work and support in preparing for this meeting. He said they were working towards this meeting being very focused on specific areas for progress.

Mr. Robinson said the purpose was to:

- Serve the needs of the Children
- Improve Communication between the two Boards  
by establishing a regular dialog and to discuss current priorities
- Address Top Two priorities of County Commissioners and Top Two Priorities of Board of Education

Mr. Robinson noted the priorities of the Commissioners as follows:

- Better School Planning & Utilization
- Increased Student Performance

Mr. Robinson noted the priorities of the Board of Education as follows:

- Funding for new School Facilities
- Increase Current Expense to State Average

Mr. Al Delia, Facilitator, Associate Vice Chancellor with Regional Development, East Carolina University, spoke on the roles of the two boards and what their expectations should be for the outcome of this meeting. He provided a list of ground rules for everyone to follow. Mr. Delia expressed a need to try to keep comments to two minutes since there are so many people involved in this discussion.

Mrs. JoAnne Burgdorff then provided the legal interpretation of what each Boards role is as a governing body over providing education for the students in Pitt County. She cited Article 9 Section 2, equal opportunities for all students. Mrs. Burgdorff noted the revenues which were dedicated for schools by the General Statutes and how those funds were to be dedicated. She noted that the County has budgetary control and only authority over the budget. She stated that the Board of Commissioners determines if the amounts are fair and reasonable and justified by the needs. The Board of Education is a stand alone elected Board who decides the best way to operate the school system which includes site selection and purchase of land for future schools.

Aaron Beauleau, Finance Officer for Pitt County Schools, stated that they wish to address capital needs of the schools. He stated that wanted to address the need to finance \$38 million for a new high school and elementary school and would address the crowding at Pactolus and G.R. Whitfield schools later.

Mr. Beauleau stated that they have not had an abundance of funds but that the recent census has brought in additional funds. He said there would be \$10 million more in available funds after the special census based on projections used from the County data. He stated that they have budgeted a four-percent increase in sales tax, which he feels is a very conservative projection.

Mr. Beauleau stated that the Rose High Project ends in nine years, which will give the Schools some financial relief. He stated that they have projected out for the next five-year capital needs including the payment for the \$38 million in debt. This debt will be retired in the fiscal year 2007-2008. He stated that the major roofing needs have leveled off and is coming down. At the end of 10 years, they should still have \$1,783,682.52 in revenue with retiring the debt service. He stated that this debt includes \$28 million for a High School and \$10 million for an elementary school. Mr. Beauleau presented a chart of Capital Outlay Expenditures for 1998-2003. Three were additional needs noted on the chart but no funds were put in those needs such as technology, band & strings, classroom furniture.

He reminded both Boards that with any new school there are a lot of new operations costs, like electricity, new furniture, etc. He stated that the new sales tax monies that come into the schools can be used at the Schools discretion.

Ms. Melonie Bryan, Director of Financial Services, explained the different funding sources for capital expenses as disbursed by the County and State. She provided the education appropriations from the last five years.

Commissioner Hammond asked about the continued use of mobile units at the schools and if they could be done away with. Mr. Beauleau stated that there are 130 mobile units and that they need more.

The Commissioners asked about putting funding for technology in the budget and how much money was being received from the courts. Mr. Beauleau reported that the Schools received approximately \$575,000 last year from fines and forfeitures but probably won't receive as much this year.

The Commissioners questioned the overcrowding in the Grimesland and Pactolus schools. Mr. Beauleau stated that there has been \$8 million appropriated for construction at the Belvoir School from the State bond allocation.

Mr. Bryan stated that the County's funding for education has grown significantly over the last five years. Mr. Beauleau also added that their projected revenues are conservative and certificates of participation can be used for financing the new school construction.

Chairman James called for a break for dinner.

There was about a thirty minute break.

John McKnight, presented an update on school construction projects:

- Wintergreen addition was completed late summer
- Additional 12 classrooms at A.G. Cox
- W.H. Robinson, addition with 12 classrooms
- Chicod - 12 classrooms
- Bethel - completed demolition, and rebuilt 15 teaching spaces
- Ayden Elementary - new media center and offices (fall next year)
- K-2 in Farmville H.B. Sugg to open in fall with remainder to be completed in September
- new northern elementary school near Belvoir School (\$8 million to build school)

Dr. McKnight stated that they have expended \$25.8 million out of the \$28.7 million which leaves a \$2.8 million cushion for the Belvoir school. He stated that the 1992 projects lists is near completion.

Dr. McKnight gave a detailed review of current sites, facilities, staff, and buses and the details of what is involved in the facilities and daily functions. He noted that the schools have Before and After school programs, sports, etc., and is a huge, growing system. He said that Pitt County Schools is one of the fastest growing systems in the State. Dr. McKnight stated that the Pitt County Planning Staff went with he and Gibb Chauncey and met with Dr. Taylor, who provides the schools with their projections for future years. He's been very accurate over the years that he has been projecting numbers for Pitt County. He stated that Dr. Taylor's methodology is commendable. He asked James Rhodes, County Planning Director for comments. Mr. Rhodes stated that he was impressed with Dr. Taylor's methods and feels very comfortable with the numbers he has provided. Dr. McKnight stated that he anticipates closer collaboration with the County Planning Department in the following months.

Dr. McKnight stated that their plans are to send more students to the Ayden-Grifton High School which has a 670 student capacity. They have analyzed that 119 students need to be moved to Ayden-Grifton and presented the specific pockets of students to be moved. He stated that the problem is that they back up to other schools such as the new high school and the existing D. H. Conley High School.

Walter Gaskins stated a concern about moving the children to a different class at this point in their high school years. Commissioner Bowen stated that Ayden-Grifton

people have always been shafted and that he would not vote to spend more money on schools as long as they have space for more students. Commissioner James stated that they need to plan wisely. He said they could have put some students together. This is why he pushed for a census so that they could plan but that there had been very little growth in the Ayden-Grifton school area.

Commissioner Owens said attendance lines are a school board issue not an issue for the Board of Commissioners. Commissioner Bowen said that the Ayden-Grifton Students can not get the classes they want because that they don't have enough enrollment.

Commissioner Savage asked if the effects of the new Catholic High School, home schooling, etc. had been taken into account with these projections.

Dr. McKnight gave a detailed description on capacity and how it is calculated. He noted that exceptional children required quite a bit more in facilities and staff. He noted that high schools different from the elementary classrooms and their capacity. These figures determine the amount of space and teachers that have planning time. He stated that the mobile units are not included because they are not permanent structures. He said the five attendance areas have capacity projections from 1998 - 2007, will go from 18,212 to 20,986.

Dr. McKnight said that they have picked the year 2002 for the new facilities to be on line. Projections were done on newborn data. These figures are from students in the system now and they also reflect the history for the past 3-5 years and consider impact on schools. It does take into account in home schooling, etc, but not Catholic High School. He stated that they are confident with the five-year projection. He added that Dr. Taylor's forecasts have been 99% accurate for the last three to five years. They are based on first month enrollment figures.

Dr. McKnight stated that the Belvoir School has 826 students, not including pre-kindergarten. He said they did have a large number of students move into the area and they are up to around 900 students. Commissioner James stated he was informed there were 932 students at Belvoir School. Dr. McKnight stated that this situation happens every year in different areas. He stated that opening up of new trailer parks has effects on the schools. He stated that there is a growth of 170-200 students at least, for each year.

Commissioner Savage stated that the Schools need to consider these mobile units. He stated that he was concerned that a site had not been acquired. Dr. McKnight stated that without the 117 mobile units all the students could not be served but because of building code changes they are not able to put more new mobile units at some schools such as D.H. Conley. He said Belvoir School is quickly becoming the same way. He stated that the infrastructure of these schools are also affected when mobile units are added. Cafeterias are also affected. Some schools are starting lunch at 10:30 a.m. He noted that this needs to be considered when planning for new facilities. Commissioner Owens said that he assumed that the Schools have decided on the location of the new school.

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Dr. McKnight stated that they need to build a new high school in order to accommodate overages. It is planned to be open in 2002 with 874 students but by 2006 the school will have 1,588 students. He stated that they are trying to alleviate overcrowding at D.H. Conley, J.H. Rose and North Pitt. Commissioner James expressed his concern about Pactolus and G.R. Whitfield schools. Chairman James said those two schools and Belvoir are the fastest growing schools. He stated that the elementary schools are the most important because the children need to start out the right way. He stated that there needs to be some accountability.

Dr. Sosne requested that the Board of Commissioners let the Schools borrow \$38 million for a new elementary and high school. Mr. Robinson informed the Board that there is an additional \$7.7 million available for Pactolus and G.R. Whitfield. He added that if the Board of Commissioners chooses, they can let the school system move forward with three schools. Commissioner Ward suggested they look at all the attendance lines at the same time.

Commissioner Owens motioned that the School Board be allowed to purchase property for the new high school. Commissioner James asked for additional information on Pactolus and G.R. Whitfield Schools for the Board of Commissioners meeting on Monday, February 15, 1999.

Commissioner Owens motioned to authorize the Schools to borrow the money to purchase property for the new high school. Commissioner Savage seconded the motion.

Dr. Sosne stated that this is what the schools can do in the next five years without a tax increase. Commissioner Hammond called for the question.

Chairman James called for the vote. The Board of Commissioners voted eight to one to approve the motion authorizing the Schools to borrow the money to purchase the property for the new high school. Commissioner Bowen opposed the motion.

Chairman James stated that the Schools have sufficient funds to buy the property, with the County advancing the funds, and stated the County Finance Officer can give the Board guidance at the Board meeting on Monday. Chairman James said the Board just gave the Board of Education the right to use their own money. Jack Collins spoke about the Ayden -Grifton High School and noted that if the school had originally been built where it was supposed to be , then they wouldn't be having these problems. He reminded the Boards that North Pitt and Ayden-Grifton have been expanded. He asked what the true student population of Ayden-Grifton High School was and noted that it was 640 two years ago. He stated that their true population figures go back 10 years. He noted that they have lost 100 students in the last two years but they predict 600 students again next year. They are bringing more students into Ayden-Grifton school area which they addressed the issue last year and are looking at it again this year.

**Student Performance/Level of Funding- Tom Robinson**

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Mr. Robinson said that he had looked at the population growth in the County as well as the poverty figures. He stated that having five out of the top seven employers in Pitt County being exempt from property taxes causes the County to have a problem. He stated that Pitt County is a growing county as well as a low wealth county. He noted that Pitt County is close to the State average and noted the following information:

**Current expense per ADM**

NC 1,025 per student

\$876 average per student in Pitt County

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**Capital Outlay**

\$269 Pitt County

\$458 State average spent per student

State average per ADM \$391

Mr. Robinson reported that Pitt County provides an extra ten percent funding in capital outlay as well as provides 22% of the County Administration Building for in-kind space for the Schools Administration at an estimated costs of \$237,000 annually.

**Performance Goal**

Mr. Robinson said a reasonable goal for the county to set would be: 90% of students at A+ or above grade level within five years. He stated that they need to set additional benchmarks.

**Funding Goal**

Funding at State Average within 5 years

\$1,025 (19,772 students) = \$20,266,300

\$876 (19,772 students) = \$17,320,272

Mr. Robinson asked the Boards what they want to achieve. He asked what needed to put in the system to make this happen?

Mr. Delia suggested the two Board begin to identify the needs that need to be discussed or addressed in order to prepare for the next meeting of these two Boards. He stated that they need to make decisions on where the county should be five, ten or fifteen years from now.

He asked the following questions: How do you want to measure success? What statistics will both Boards agree to use for their baseline and figure out where to go from there. He suggested they may consider reducing class size? However, he stated that there needs to be a way to measure if these goals will produce the outcome they are striving for. He asked how you measure success in students?

Mr. Robinson asked the Board of Education to come up with a plan on how to allocate the money to bring kids up to an appropriate level. He suggest that the Board of Education come back to the Board of County Commissioners with their plans and then the Board can see if they agree with them. He added that people will pay for what they value.

Commissioner James stated he was concerned with accountability. The Boards must be realistic. He discussed the high school aged student dropout rate in Pitt County.

Commissioner Owens said that there have been studies done on the direct correlation between the amount of money the counties spend and the success of the students. Commissioner Shank stated that Pitt County is trying to bring in new industry and there needs to be a raised level of education. She stated that John Doren has identified that low class size and mentoring in a student's life affects them. Small class size is integral in basic education. Commissioner Shank asked the Board of Education to let the Board of Commissioners know what it would take to start lowering the class size.

Dr. Sosne said that its hard to get there in five years and that first off they do not have the classrooms to put new teachers in to accommodate lower class sizes.

Walter Gaskins spoke about some personal situations with the schools and said that the Board of Education had told Dr. Sosne that they want the students sent home if they are disruptive.

Don Carson talked about new mandates on services that did not exist in the 70's.

Commissioner Hammond asked about the discrepancy in the figures given on the mobile units. He stated that he hoped children did not get injured if they were in a mobile unit when a hurricane or tornado came through Pitt County. Mr. Carson also corrected the comment on the drop-out rate and stated that it was 4.65% in 1997.

Commissioner Ward stated the Board of Commissioners would like to know what the outcomes are going to be from this additional money. She stated that the Boards need to focus on the changes needed and what's going to happen with the money.

Mr. Delia stated that the Board of Education and Dr. Sosne are going to come back to Board of Commissioners with identified ways to meet the targeted outcomes.

Commissioner Savage stated a concern about in and out of school suspensions which he felt are excessive.

Mr. Carson said that the Board of Education took a stand and set the policy so that the schools are safe schools and to be tough on discipline. He said if the students are not going to learn and abide by the discipline then they need to be addressed. Commissioner Savage suggested the governing bodies need to address the disproportionate numbers and that crime and disruption in the classrooms need to be addressed.

Mr. Sidney Scott thanked the Board of Commissioners for meeting with the Board of Education. He stated that the Board of Commissioners needs to trust the Board of Education. He expressed his appreciation for this opportunity to openly discuss matters. Jack Collins also thanked the Board of Commissioners and said that the exchange of information was a good process and suggested the Boards needed to set another date for a follow-up meeting. Mr. Walter Jessup commented on the good dialogue between the Boards.

Dr. Sosne said that a 90% goal is an obtainable goal but it is hard to plan to reach that goal without knowing your resources. He discussed the need to increase teacher supplements and spoke about remedial programs and not being able to do an adequate job because of lack of resources. He said their hands have been tied and that they have had to come up with creative solutions. He stated that the transition centers are successful but they need additional resources to expand the good programs.

Commissioner Ward said that the Board of Commissioners wants to see what the outcome will be of increasing teachers salaries possibly at the end of five years. She stated that the County should have good retention of teachers. She stated that she had been researching the numbers of teachers graduating and not going into teaching. Commissioner Ward reported that it was not just because of the pay. She said that reduction in class size can help too. She stated that the Board needs to talk about three to five years out when resources are increased. She noted that reduced class size also reduces the need for special education classes.

Commissioner James said supplements were given because salaries were low but that salaries are not low now and the supplements need to be stopped.

Commissioner Hammond stated the Board of Commissioners appropriates the money and sees it through but realistically they can talk about setting goals but once its appropriated, its up to the Board of Education on how they use the funds. Commissioner Bowen stated that it is the Board of Commissioners responsibility to see that the funds are spent wisely.

Mr. Delia asked if the Boards wished to set a date for a follow-up meeting.

Commissioner James said he would like to look at Board of Commissioners priorities which were not looked at this meeting but felt that this was a very productive meeting. No date was set for a follow-up meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan J. Banks, CMC  
Clerk to the Board

