

**PITT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
GREENVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA  
APRIL 14, 1999**

The Pitt County Board of Commissioners met in a workshop session on Wednesday, April 14, 1999, at 7:00 p.m. in the Auditorium of the Agricultural Building at the County Office Park on Old Creek Road, 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  
Beth B. Ward, Commissioner

Absent:

M. Theresa Shank, Commissioner

Staff 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  
Dr. Howard Sosne, Schools Superintendent  
Dr. John McKnight, Associate Superintendent  
Aaron Beauleau, Schools Finance Officer  
Brenda Strickland, School Board Secretary

Board of Education Members present:

Ralph Love  
Ephraigm Smith  
Sidney Scott  
Walter Gaskins  
Walter Jessup  
Jill Camnitz  
James Hopf  
Jack Collins, Jr.  
Mike Barnett  
Michael Dixon

**Call to Order** and welcome by Chairman James.

Invocation provided by Chairman James.

Pledge of Allegiance led by Sidney Scott.

Chairman James asked for approval of the agenda.

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

Chairman Scott also called for approval of the agenda by the Board of Education.

Ephraigm Smith motioned, seconded by Ralph Love, the Board of Education voted unanimously to approve the agenda as presented.

Mr. Robinson stated the purpose of this meeting was to improve communications and build relationships between the two boards and establish educational goals for Pitt County students. He stated it was the County's goal to review the Board of Education's request for funds for 1999-2000 and look what at the financial implications would be for the County to provide those funds.

Dr. Sosne commented on an editorial that was in the newspaper.

Mr. Al Delia, ECU Research and Development Institute, was also present to facilitate the meeting. Mr. Delia reviewed the ground rules. He asked participants to keep their comments directed to the issue at hand. He noted that the two boards had already set their two goals for this meeting. One goal was to bring ninety percent of the students up to performing at their proper grade level, and to bring the County funding up so that Pitt County will fund the Schools at the State average.

Dr. Sosne introduced Mr. Walter Jessup to begin with the presentations. The Board of Education members made the following comments concerning the additional funding requested by the Schools:

Walter Jessup asked for Teachers Supplement funds. He stated that good teachers speak for themselves and that Pitt County teachers have received honor after honor, on a local, state and national level. He stated that more of their teachers are nationally certified than in any other State. Thirty-five of the teachers are of the Masters Degree level. He discussed the fact that they lose teachers every year. He stated that the average teacher salary is \$28,000 in Pitt County and the State average is \$31,000. There are 19,450 students but that Pitt County ranked 49<sup>th</sup> in teachers' supplements. He said that the State average is six percent and Pitt County is three percent. He asked the Board of Commissioners to increase teachers' supplement by \$300 per year to show an effort of support to the teachers.

Mr. Mike Barnette requested \$540,884 for Additional Student outcomes. This request included three full time positions for the high schools, nine full time positions for the elementary schools and several half-time positions dedicated to staff development, grant preparation and pursuing other needs. Some of the grant needs will focus on the kindergarten through second grade children.

Mr. Walter Gaskins spoke to funding for the Mandatory State Raises of 4% and 8.5%. These raises include some non-certified positions as well as teachers. He expressed the need to pay decent salaries to everyone in the system.

Mr. Ephraigm Smith stated they needed funding for hospitalization insurance increase in the amount of \$195,200. He stated that Blue Cross/Blue Shied is increasing premiums by thirty-five percent and this is based on 320 employees which comes out to \$610 per employee.

Mr. Michael Dixon also spoke to the need for additional personnel. He requested the following for the schools:

3 assistant principal positions - \$152,013  
3 A.G. teachers- \$90,000  
technology resource specialist - \$30,000  
1 transportation mechanic - \$28,000  
7 exceptional children clerical assistants - \$120,302

Mr. Jack Collins spoke to the elimination of Student Fees (\$10). He stated the Board of Education's desire to do away with the student fees collected at the individual schools from individual students. He said that the teachers do not need to be bill collectors and that this process penalizes children who's parents are less able to pay this fee.

Reverend Ralph Love addressed needs for the Maintenance Department such as major increases in environmental items, HVAC, janitorial supplies, plumbing, security/alarms in the amount of \$294,448.

Mr. James Hopf addressed Personnel Department requests due to an increase in fingerprinting costs, clinical schools, new teacher orientations, microfishe for personnel records, classified State development training and materials, TOY banquet, higher cost in advertising, recruitment, training for existing teachers and clinical intern training, and a bonus for teachers in areas of shortage after 4 years services (incentive pay) in the amount of \$36,000. An additional request for exceptional, math, and science is needed in the amount of \$10,000.

Ms. Jill Camnitz addressed the request for the Curriculum & Instruction Department for an increase for system wide expenditures monitored and implemented by C&I directors and coordinators dealing with student proficiency in the amount of \$127,626. This provides support in working with administrators, parents, students, teachers, etc., and helping with the curriculum. There will be accountability standards set and they will strive towards ninety percent efficiency to help achieve this goal. In order to prepare 3<sup>rd</sup> graders for testing, they must look at students when they are in the K-2 grade. They need \$57,000 for math and reading assessment for 2<sup>nd</sup> graders, \$23,000 for technology, \$20,000 for award winning development program which was begun with a grant and the grant is expiring this year.

The budgetary requests from the School Board is \$2,975,810.

Dr. Sosne spoke to the Legislative issues including local option sales tax. He stated that there is some concern that the funds may not go to the schools and he emphasized that the schools need the majority of those funds. He asked the Board to assist them in lobbying for additional special education funding and that they are trying to get the cap lifted to free local funds. He also said that they need additional low wealth funds and that the low wealth revenue could be doubled if fully funded.

Vice Chairman Savage asked about the traffic situation at Belvoir Elementary School and why the School Board did not address it as a priority. Mr. Delia asked the commissioners to stay on the items on the approved agenda. Mr. Delia said the intention of the meeting is to look at the overall budget questions. Chairman James agreed that this item should be addressed but would like it addressed at a later date.

Commissioner Ward asked about the following items:

- teacher's supplement increase - did it include supplements for principals, assistant principals and how much would be allocated for each area or position
- 9 positions in elementary K-2
- mandatory state raises, asked about non-certified versus employees and their applicable raises.

Vice Chairman Savage asked if child safety was an issue in this budget year? He received no response.

Commissioner Owens asked for clarification on Commissioner Ward's questions about teacher versus other administrative staff. Mr. Beauleau responded that the administrative cost was approximately \$40,000 of the \$750,000 of teacher supplements. There are separate certified staff on the supplement plans.

Commissioner Owens stated that Pitt County is fortunate that ECU provides such good teachers and that the County has not had to provide supplements to keep their teachers but presently they do need a boost for the retention of teachers. He stated that teachers do more than just teach now and it is very different than it was years ago. He stated he was supportive of teacher supplements but not some other things on the list.

Dr. Sosne said that the State sends funding for the State employees raises and hospitalization increase but not for the local paid employees.

Commissioner Owens commended the staff on the reports and also stated that there is a need to push the General Assembly on the local option sales tax and vote on the lottery. He said that if the State had the lottery, it could be directed for schooling, and the County would not have these funding problems.

Commissioner Hammond said he was supportive of paying everybody well that works for the County. He was concerned with the lack of funding requested for technology in the schools and suggested that the technology area be reviewed.

Commissioner James said there should be some system to help the lower paid teachers.

Commissioner Bowen asked how many people were present that were not working in the schools but had children in the schools. One gentleman responded that he was present solely as a parent.

Commissioner Hammond said Legislators are not real supportive on the one percent local option sales tax.

Mr. Walter Gaskins supported the importance of funding the needs for the education of the children.

Mr. Robinson reviewed the ad valorem tax and interests revenues for the County for this year and what is projected for next year. He said the total increase in revenues projected is \$2,215,890. All funds for the schools usually come from the increase in ad valorem taxes. He stated that there is not enough money in the increase to completely fund the schools request, even if there were no funding increases given to any other County program. He showed figures that it would take a 16% increase in per pupil allocation to supply the increase in funding that the Schools have requested. He noted that the County has borrowed money to pay capital outlay funds.

Mr. Robinson said that they have used \$1,025 as the State average on per pupil capita to determine the 16% increase to raise Pitt County's per pupil allocation to the State average. Mr. Robinson also noted that the Schools are building a new high school, two new elementary schools and that there will be an increase in their operation expenses once these new buildings come on line.

Chairman James asked about the increase in funds from the special census. Mr. Robinson said that one-third of the money is used for improvement in the school system and the remainder has gone into the public safety and human services programs. The census provided a \$1.7 million increase in the schools budget.

Commissioner Bowen noted that Pitt County schools were serving a high special needs population and was it related to the Hospital. He suggested the County ask the Hospital for funding.

Mr. Ephraim Smith said that if the Schools are going to work to raise test scores they need to have comparable funding to other areas. He said its going to require more money to bring the kids up to the appropriate level. He said they need smaller class sizes which will take additional revenue and it is up to the Board of Commissioners to come up with the money. He said Pitt County can provide better than it is currently providing. Mr. Smith stated that the two Boards have met more and received more public input this year. He said he hoped that both Boards are moving closer to promoting a common goal of an improved education system. He said they cannot develop long term plans unless they know what they can expect from local support from the County.

Vice Chairman Savage said the County is less able to rise to schools requests because its going to take some investing and creativity on behalf of the Commissioners. He said the Mental Health program's problems may have ripple effect on the schools and that the School Board needs to exude the same creativity to meet their needs as the Commissioners will have to provide. He noted that the Board of

Commissioners cares about the schools and children but also have other areas to address in this budget year.

Chairman James adjourned the meeting at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan J. Banks, CMC  
Clerk to the Board