

Windsor, North Carolina
August 24, 2016
Recessed Meeting

The Bertie County Board of Commissioners recessed its regular meeting on August 22, 2016 in order to meet jointly with the Board of Education today inside the Bertie County Public Schools Central Services Complex at 1:45PM outside of Windsor, NC. The following members were present or absent:

Present: Ronald “Ron” Wesson, District I
John Trent, District IV
Ernestine (Byrd) Bazemore, District V

Absent: Stewart White, District II
Tammy A. Lee, District III

Staff Present: County Manager Scott Sauer

Board of Education Members Present: Tarsha Dudley, Chair
Bobby Oceana, Vice Chair

Board of Education Staff Present: Interim Superintendent Julius Walker

There were no media members present.

DISCUSSION

Mr. Walker thanked the Commissioners for their willingness to meet, and explained that he was assigned the task of sharing information regarding a budget challenge—an estimated shortfall of at least \$500,000 for the new academic year, with impacts for nearly one hundred staff.

Mr. Walker explained that the shortfall could be absorbed with salary cuts for all clerical staff, custodians and paraprofessionals (e.g. teacher assistants) by reducing each employee’s wages by one hour per day, or approximately a 12% pay cut. Additionally, the Board of Education has considered reducing instructional coaches from 12 month positions to 10 months.

The estimated short fall is primarily attributable to a reduction in Low Wealth Supplemental Funding of \$153,864 and state benefit changes for retirement, hospitalization and one other item which in the aggregate equate to more than \$500,000.

Chairman Trent reminded those assembled of the correspondence sent to the Superintendent in early June raising several questions, notably the possible consolidation of campuses and the potential joint use of the new bus garage to service both county and school vehicles.

School Chair Dudley indicated that there has been review of closure options for both Aulander Elementary and the pre-school at Askewville.

Commissioner Wesson inquired about the consolidation of the Early College with Bertie High School, which was constructed to accommodate 900 students and has a current occupancy of approximately 460 students.

Vice Chairman Bazemore noted that we (the Board) could not make a decision today, without consulting the full Board.

All elected members present participated in a spirited discussion of efforts to economize, to seek joint solutions, and to work together to find the cost savings and avoid the salary cuts for the current school year, and take school closures off the table for the present time.

Chairman Trent noted that it is clear that additional research is required to ensure that there are no administrative restrictions which would prevent the relocation of the Early College to the main high school campus. It was repeatedly noted that the initial State guidelines for Early College programs required a separate facility, but this may not be true by current standards.

The consensus of those present was that there is also a sense of cooperation for cost sharing for vehicle maintenance in a joint use agreement, with the County absorbing its costs for labor, utilities, parts and overhead. And there was discussion regarding the savings to be achieved by sharing in the bulk fuel purchases for both gasoline and diesel fuel used by both parties. Additionally, there was discussion regarding the availability of annual price savings on locally negotiated propane gas purchases for school facilities, and school staff for residential use for those who chose to participate.

It was agreed that this information would be shared with both Boards, that discussions will continue in earnest, and that the Board will need to meet soon to review this important matter.

ADJOURN

Chairman Trent adjourned the Bertie County Board of Commissioners at 3:30PM.

John Trent, Chairman

Sarah S. Tinkham, Clerk to the Board