

**Special Called Meeting  
Northampton County  
May 4, 2016**

The Northampton County Board of Commissioners and Board of Education held a joint meeting to discuss school funding options on Wednesday, May 4, 2016 at 5:30 p.m. in the Commissioners' Meeting Room located at 100 West Jefferson Street, Jackson, North Carolina with the following present:

Chairwoman Fannie Greene  
Commissioner Robert Carter  
Ms. Kimberly Turner, County Manager  
Ms. Michelle Nelson, Clerk  
Mrs. Lucy Edwards, School Board  
Mr. Phil Matthews, School Board  
Mr. Kelvin Edwards, School Board  
Ms. Cathy Gillus, Interim Finance Officer

Vice-Chairman Joseph Barrett  
Commissioner Virginia Spruill  
Ms. Leslie Edwards, Finance Officer  
Chair Rhonda Taylor, School Board  
Mr. Clinton Williams, School Board  
Ms. Keedra Whitaker, School Board  
Dr. Monica Smith-Woofter, Superintendent  
Dr. Mark Rumley, HR Director

Chairwoman Fannie Greene opened the meeting and stated that the purpose is to listen to comments from both Boards. She said the citizens have spoken, the Board of Commissioners have listened and made their funding decision based on the citizens' wishes and on the funds that the County is operating with. She then opened the floor to the Board of Education.

Dr. Monica Smith-Woofter, Superintendent of Northampton County Schools, introduced the Board of Education members. The Board of Commissioners as well as the County Manager, and the Finance Officer introduced themselves.

The following discussion took place:

- Dr. Woofter noted that on the 18<sup>th</sup> of April, the County Commissioners welcomed the Superintendent to attend a work session. Mr. Doug Miller came to the meeting on Dr. Woofter's behalf. Mr. Miller presented the request of funding that the Board of Education was considering with regards to the school configuration and consolidation. That meeting was held as a result of school tours that were done in early April. Dr. Woofter stated that she had received a letter of response from the Commissioners and County Manager in regards to the funding request. Her Board has questions and would like further elaboration about the content of the letter.
- School Board member Clinton Williams asked for an explanation of the reasons stated in the letter on why they denied the Board of Education's funding request.
  - Mr. Williams noted that the schools are not neglected (as the letter suggested) but are old and in bad shape.
  - He said that the reconfiguration request is not a temporary fix. Even if they had a new school, the capital outlay needs still stand.
  - He asked that both Boards sit down to come up with a plan on how the Board of Education can fund the schools' capital outlay needs.
- School Board member Lucy Edwards also referenced a point in the letter where citizens expressed opposition to the reconfiguration. She asked how much of the population the

Commissioners were in touch with. Was it a meeting where there was a small group of people? She said she has been in contact with citizens in the County who are not opposed to the reconfiguration.

- She said as far as the tour of the schools goes, there are safety and health concerns at the present high school as well as structural problems that were not pointed out. Mrs. Edwards said they basically did a walk-through of the schools.
- Mrs. Edwards also said that school performance was mentioned in the letter. She feels that if they are able to provide the opportunities to the students that the Superintendent and curriculum team has planned, then the school performance will improve. She said student performance is not a good reason for not providing funds.
- County Manager Kimberly Turner wanted to clarify the letter. She said the bullet points were not necessarily the reasons why the Board made the decision that they did. She said they were mainly items of discussion that took place at the April 18<sup>th</sup> meeting. She also noted that the main reason the Board made their decision is because of the fact that additional funding in the amount of \$1.4 million will result in a tax increase.
- Dr. Woofter said that she and her Board recognize that the citizens spoke very loudly in their disinterest of raising taxes, but funding for school districts (as far as capital outlay needs) has to come from the County Commissioners.
  - Dr. Woofter addressed the bullet item in the letter that states “the only revenue source for additional funding will result in a tax increase.” She feels this point is incorrect. She said in September 2016 there will be further distribution of money coming from local sales tax. Northampton County is supposed to receive \$617,000, and she believes it will actually be more than that. She wants to know what the Commissioners will do with that funding, and noted that money could be appropriated to the schools.
- School Board member Kelvin Edwards stated that in the last 25 years, the County has closed seven schools. He feels that education is the key to Economic Development. He said that they need some help educationally and economically. Whatever the Boards can do in working together, they need to use every aspect to help the school system.
- Chairwoman Greene commented that the decision the Commissioners made was based on the funds that they have to operate with. That is the reason that they put the supplemental tax on the ballot. She was hoping that the Board of Education would come to the meeting wanting to develop a plan in the next three to five years where they can perhaps build a school. Mrs. Greene said she is hoping that when the Commissioners look at the budget that they can give some additional funding to help, but she is sure that it won't be \$1.4 million. She noted that as a Tier 1 County, we only have a limited amount of funds to work with.
- Mr. Edwards brought up the point that both Bertie and Warren County have built schools and they are Tier 1 Counties as well. He asked how they were able to build new schools.
- School Board Chair Rhonda Taylor is against moving the kids, but she knows that they need funds. She said that there were other options on the table that they can consider, but they need finances to assist them.
- Dr. Woofter said she felt that the school system is not a priority and they keep getting put off. She also said that if they are going to maintain existing buildings, then they need to

fund the amount of money needed for the upkeep. The \$345,000 that they've received over the years is not enough.

- County Manager Turner stated that with the \$345,000 for capital outlay in previous years, the Board of Education has come to the Board of Commissioners and asked for a transfer of funds from capital outlay to current expense year after year. After a certain amount of time, the Commissioners decided to put more money into current expense and that is how they came to the \$345,000 figure. She also said that with sales tax funds, the County is not supposed to get those funds until July 2016, and that is after the current budget is adopted and approved. As of today, the amount the County was supposed to receive has been reduced to \$501,361.10.

There was a discussion about having a time frame when the Board of Education would know how much additional funds the Board of Commissioners can give them.

- Ms. Turner said as far as the timeline goes, our first budget work session will be around May 16<sup>th</sup>; we have until June 30<sup>th</sup> to adopt the budget. Funds for the new fiscal year will not be available until after July.

There was a discussion about the two Boards getting together during the County's budget season (when they will know what they have). It was suggested that a meeting between the Boards could happen in mid-June.

The County Manager and Superintendent will come up with a date when both Boards can meet again.

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Michelle Nelson, Clerk to the Board  
"s.m. 05-04-16"