

**NORTHAMPTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS AND
BOARD OF EDUCATION PUBLIC FORUM
January 28, 2016
6:00 p.m.**

The Northampton County Board of Commissioners and Board of Education held a Public Forum to address questions and concerns regarding the supplemental tax on Thursday, January 28, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. in the Cultural and Wellness Center Auditorium located at 9536 Hwy 305, Jackson, North Carolina with the following present:

Chairwoman Fannie Greene
Commissioner Robert Carter
Ms. Kimberly Turner, County Manager
Ms. Michelle Nelson, Clerk
Vice-Chair Marjorie Edwards, School Board
Ms. Lucy Edwards, School Board
Mr. Phil Matthews, School Board
Mr. Joe Holloway, School Finance Officer
Ms. Patricia Harris, Clerk, School Board

Vice-Chairman Joseph Barrett
Commissioner Virginia Spruill
Mr. Scott McKellar, County Attorney
Chair Rhonda Taylor, School Board
Mr. Clinton Williams, School Board
Mr. Kelvin Edwards, School Board
Dr. Monica Smith-Woofter, Superintendent
Mr. Doug Miller, Exec. Director of Auxiliary Services

Chairwoman of the Board of Commissioners Fannie Greene welcomed everyone to the forum. She stated that on behalf of the Northampton County Board of Commissioners, we will be starting the session in partnership with the Board of Education. She introduced herself, Commissioner Virginia Spruill, Commissioner Robert Carter, and Vice-Chairman Joseph Barrett.

Chair of the Board of Education, Rhonda Taylor, stated that on behalf of the Board of Education, she would like to welcome everyone to the forum. She introduced herself, Vice-Chair Marjorie Edwards, Board Member Phil Matthews, Board Member Kelvin Edwards, and Board Member Clinton Williams. She stated that Ms. Lucy Edwards will arrive shortly. She turned the forum over to Superintendent Dr. Monica Smith Woofter.

Dr. Woofter reviewed the "Facts about Northampton Centrally located School" handout that was distributed before the forum.

Ms. Kimberly Turner, County Manager, reviewed the pamphlet that was given out before the forum.

**PLEASE SEE SCANNED DOCUMENTS WHICH ARE
HEREBY MADE A PART OF THESE MINUTES:**



Northampton

County Schools

Shaping Global Learners

The Facts about Northampton County's Centrally Located School

Facts:

1. The NC Department of Public Instruction's 10 Year student attendance projections for Northampton County Schools for the next 4 years indicates an average student attendance in the chart below. Thus, with these projections, as we have consolidated high schools, it is predictable that we will need to consolidate middle schools, as well as close at least 2 existing school sites by the year 2018.

		Student Population/Grade Level												Middle/High		
Grade Levels		K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	total k12	total 7-12
Years	2015-2016	161	176	153	167	178	157	149	135	135	164	159	97	84	1,915	774
	2016-2017	131	161	169	145	161	150	150	151	124	149	144	115	90	1,840	773
	2017-2018	141	131	154	160	139	136	143	152	138	136	131	104	106	1,771	767
	2018-2019	144	141	125	146	154	117	130	145	139	152	119	95	96	1,703	746

2. With these predicted student population numbers and the need to close 2 - 3 facilities, the Northampton County Board of Education has discussed multiple options from reconfiguring grade groupings to closing our oldest facilities, three of which were built more than 50 years ago.
3. A new centrally located school is the number one solution to addressing the following:
 - a. A decline in student population.
 - b. Necessary school consolidations requiring grade reconfigurations.
 - c. Housing approximately 1/3 of the district student population once older school facilities are closed.
 - d. Transporting students to far ends of the county as we are 80 miles in length and nearly 40 miles wide.
4. Without any state funding, the supplemental tax increase to afford a new centrally located school would cost property owners approximately a .09 (cents) tax rate increase. Based on the average residential tax value (\$80,000) for Northampton County residents, this increase calculates to an additional \$70 in annual taxes. The following chart shows examples of five

different household tax values and the amount of increase in annual taxes an owner would pay if a centrally located school were supported by voters.

Household Taxes Affected by Supplemental Tax Increase

Property Tax Value	Tax payment with current rate	Tax payment with increase rate	Difference
\$58,430	\$785.42	\$838.00	\$52.58
\$81,010	\$949.79	\$1,022.70	\$72.91
\$158,895	\$1,745.78	\$1,888.79	\$143.01
\$312,734	\$3,178.60	\$3,460.06	\$281.46
\$450,000	\$4,484.00	\$4,889.00	\$405.00

HOUSEHOLD TAXES AFFECTED BY SUPPLEMENTAL TAX

Property Tax Value	Tax Payment with Current Rate	Tax Payment with Increase Rate	Difference
\$158,895 *	\$1,745.78	\$1,888.79	\$143.01
\$105,218 *	\$1,235.64	\$1,330.33	\$94.69
\$81,010	\$949.79	\$1,022.70	\$72.91
\$103,539 **	\$1,612.62	\$1,705.81	\$93.19
\$48,895 *	\$679.22	\$723.23	\$44.01
\$58,430 *	\$785.42	\$838.00	\$52.58
\$68,924 **	\$1,321.07	\$1,383.10	\$62.03
\$128,890 *	\$1,467.62	\$1,583.62	\$116.00
\$91,504	\$1,448.96	\$1,531.31	\$82.35
\$345,175 *	\$3,487.11	\$3,797.77	\$310.66
\$76,843 *	\$941.66	\$1,010.81	\$69.15
\$312,734 *	\$3,178.60	\$3,460.06	\$281.46
\$221,316 * **	\$3,832.32	\$4,031.50	\$199.18
\$38,417 * **	\$834.24	\$868.81	\$34.57
\$450,000 *	\$4,484.00	\$4,889.00	\$405.00

*-Fire Svc Tax District

**-Town Taxes

Based on a \$34 million school

For additional information, please contact the Northampton County Manager's Office at (252) 534-2501.

Created by the Northampton County Manager

**SUPPLEMENTAL TAX INFORMATION
PROPOSED NEW CENTRALLY LOCATED SCHOOL**



Supplemental Tax Law:

G.S. 115C-501(a) To Vote a Supplemental Tax-- Elections may be called by the local tax-levying authority to ascertain the will of the voters as to whether there shall be levied and collected a special tax in the several local school administrative units, districts, and other school areas, including districts formed from contiguous counties, to supplement the funds from State and county allotments and thereby operate schools of a higher standard by supplementing any item of expenditure in the school budget. When supplementary funds are authorized by the carrying of such an election, such funds may be used to employ additional teachers other than those allotted by the State, to teach any grades or subjects or for kindergarten instruction, to establish and maintain approved summer schools, to make the contribution to the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System of North Carolina for such teachers, or for any object of expenditure.

Ballot Question:

Shall the County levy a supplemental tax on all taxable property in the County in an amount not to exceed 9.92 cents per one hundred dollars in value of property to finance the construction of a centrally-located, consolidated middle-high school for the students of the Northampton County Schools and to pay other capital outlay construction needs of Northampton County Schools?

For Local Tax

Against Local Tax



Current Tax Rate: 0.92 cents/\$100 value

Maximum Supplemental Tax Request: 0.0992 cents/\$100 value

General Law:

Under general law, the maximum supplemental tax rate voters may approve is \$0.50 per \$100 valuation. Once a supplemental tax is approved by the voters, a local board of education may request that the county levy a tax each year up to the maximum rate approved by the voters. The County decides whether or not to levy the tax and at what rate (the rate is capped at the level requested by the local board of education).

The County does not have any control over how the supplemental tax proceeds are spent by the school unit. That decision rests with the local school board, subject to the terms of the ballot measure under which the tax was approved. The Board of County Commissioners, however, may consider the availability of the supplemental tax revenue when determining the county's annual appropriations.

NEW SCHOOL SAMPLE FINANCING OPTIONS

ESTIMATED FIGURES

Cost	Interest Rate	Term (Yrs)	Yearly Payment	Tax (cents)
\$34,000,000	3.125%	40	\$1,490,121	.0867
\$34,000,000	3.25%	40	\$1,519,968	.0884
\$34,000,000	3.5%	40	\$1,580,555	.0919
\$34,000,000	4%	40	\$1,705,189	.0992
\$34,000,000	4.5%	40	\$1,834,216	.1067
\$34,000,000	3.125%	30	\$1,747,772	.1016
\$34,000,000	3.25%	30	\$1,775,642	.1033
\$34,000,000	3.5%	30	\$1,832,102	.1065
\$34,000,000	4%	30	\$1,947,854	.1133
\$34,000,000	4.5%	30	\$2,067,276	.1202
\$34,000,000	3.125%	20	\$2,288,374	.1331
\$34,000,000	3.25%	20	\$2,314,159	.1346
\$34,000,000	3.5%	20	\$2,366,236	.1376
\$34,000,000	4%	20	\$2,472,400	.1438
\$34,000,000	4.5%	20	\$2,581,209	.1501

Current School Debt:

FY 15-16- \$825,420	FY 21-22-\$644,018
FY 16-17- \$801,673	FY 22-23-\$621,150
FY 17-18-\$778,898	FY 23-24- \$597,475
FY 18-19-\$738,068	FY 24-25-\$570,020
FY 19-20-\$714,990	FY 25-26-\$382,895
FY 20-21-\$667,078	

Dr. Woofter called up participants to read their questions and or give their comments:

- **Donna Edwards** asked if the School Board was looking to build two schools or one, and if that school would contain grades 7-12.
 - The answer is one school, and yes it would contain those grade levels.
- Ms. Edwards went on to say that on previous plans, the Board asked for a \$15 million school, now the amount is \$34 million. She wanted to know why the amount doubled over the years.
 - Dr. Woofter answered that it costs more the longer you wait. Inflation has affected the cost. She said they received estimates from ten different architects, and they had amounts that ranged from \$23 million to \$65 million. She said they went with the median as much as possible. Even though they say they are requesting the Supplemental Tax for \$34 million, if the voters support it, and they submit it, they are going to go with the best and cheapest bid. It may not mean that they need \$34 million.
- Ms. Edwards feels that the residents want to know that the Board and the County have exhausted all avenues of researching funding for the school such as applying for State and Government assistance, looking for every possible resource.
- **Bill Johnston** stated that he is a farmer and a landowner. He is concerned by any tax increase and feels that for the older property owners, it takes about everything they receive. He asked if a school is built, will the School Board look after the closed facilities the way they have looked after Eastside School. He believes that school buildings do not always cause better education. Teachers make all the difference.
- **Gwen Bryant** said she is a lifelong resident. She asked why we couldn't fix the schools we already have. She also asked why they would want to put 7th graders with 12th graders. She said she and her husband are small farmers, and their taxes would go up by \$1,400 per year. She feels it's not fair to always put the burden on the landowners.
- **Ruth Bek** has lived in Northampton County for about 13 years. She feels that citizens can't make informed comments in regards to the new school when no information has been available to the public. She also noted that she feels it is a security issue to place 7th graders with 12th graders, and gave her opinion on what the School Board could do with the existing schools. Ms. Bek also said she has a problem where it says that the County does not have any control over how the Supplemental Tax proceeds are spent by the School Unit. She wanted to know where the guarantee is if the County gives the School Board this money, that they are going to spend it on what they say they will spend it on.
- **Christy Bolton** asked when was the last year that Northampton County Schools met State standards.
 - Dr. Woofter answered in growth standards, they continue to meet (in half of their schools in the last ten years) growth standards, but there is a difference between meeting growth and being proficient. They recognize that they have much need for their students to close the learning gaps.
- Mrs. Bolton also stated that she put her children in public school to begin with, but she ended up taking them out and putting them in private school, because the school could not meet standards. She also stated that new schools will not enhance the education when the Board of Education can't even provide an education to the students that just meet the requirements of both Federal and State Goals for special needs students and regular students. Finally, she stated that the citizens are owed almost \$4 million in delinquent taxes. How badly does the School Board need

money if they have yet to collect—and not even request—money held by small Towns in this County that is collected in the Town Violation Ordinances Fund. Conway alone has a balance that they've held for the Board of Education. As of today, it is \$74,045.

- Dr. Woofter stated that the request has to go to the County Commissioners first, then it is allocated to the Board of Education. Dr. Woofter said she has to make sure that they make the request happen, and she thanked Mrs. Bolton for that information.
- **Tim Hollowell** stated that he doesn't feel the tax payers can afford a 10.78% property tax increase. He said in six years, it's gone up \$.16. He said the figures given do not include reevaluation that increases the property value which causes taxes to go up. He stated that to fix the current schools for \$4 million, makes more sense than building a new school for \$34 million. He admonished the citizens to vote against the Supplemental Tax on March 15th.

Dr. Woofter announced that the last four comments have already been answered and she wants to give the members of both Boards a chance to make comments. She did state that there is one question from Mr. Ken Brown that has not been answered which is: How much comes from the lottery. Dr. Woofter replied that on average they get \$146,000 a year because the amount is dispersed across the State.

Dr. Woofter asked the Board of Commissioners if they had any comments. Chairwoman Greene asked the County Manager if she wanted to make any comments.

Ms. Turner stated that she wanted to clarify a couple of things. She said that with the lottery funds, the statutory requirements for the proceeds of the lottery funds is supposed to be 40%—that's not what the School system is getting. You have to lobby against the General Assembly to get those funds back. She also wanted to share the amount that was appropriated to the School system this Fiscal Year. The original appropriation was \$3,645,000. That included the current expense and Capital Outlay appropriation. The County gave an additional \$550,000 for a total of \$4,195,000 for Fiscal Year 15-16. Ms. Turner also stated that our property value decreased for 2015 by 8%. With the same amount of money, we had the previous Fiscal Year, the County Commissioners would have had to increase the tax rate from \$.92 to \$.97 per \$100 of value. During the budget time, the Commissioners decided not to do that because we have the second highest tax rate in the state of North Carolina. The County is providing the same services as last year with less money than last year.

Chairwoman Greene thanked everyone for coming to the forum, and stated that the purpose was to get the citizens information so that they could be better informed when they go to the polls on March 15th to help them to make a decision.

School Board Chair Taylor, on behalf of the Board of Education and Board of Commissioners, she wanted to thank the citizens for coming out.