

**Special Called Meeting
Northampton County
April 18, 2016**

Present: Robert Carter, Fannie Greene, Joseph Barrett, Virginia Spruill, and Chester Deloatch

Others Present: Kimberly Turner, Michelle Nelson, and Doug Miller (Northampton County Schools)

Chairwoman Greene called the meeting to order.

A motion was made by Chester Deloatch and seconded by Virginia Spruill to approve the agenda.

Question Called: All present voting yes. Motion carried.

Chairwoman Greene turned the meeting over to County Manager Kimberly Turner. Ms. Turner noted that the Superintendent would not be able to make the meeting today. Doug Miller, Director of Auxiliary Services for Northampton County Schools was present to answer any questions. Ms. Turner informed the Commissioners that the Board of Education had initially requested an additional \$800,000; however with updated figures, they are now requesting an additional \$1.4 million. Ms. Turner also mentioned that the Board of Education has voted in favor of Option 4 in which the High School would move to Gaston Middle, Gaston Elementary will house grades 1-8, Squire will include Pre-K, Kindergarten, and the Early College, Conway would hold grades 1-8, Willis Hare, Pre-K and Kindergarten, and Central would house Pre-K through 5th grade.

Commissioner Carter expressed his concern that in order to meet the expectations of the Board of Education, the Board of Commissioners would have to raise taxes, and he is not in support of that. He also felt that the Board of Education is not listening to the citizens. He said we can't afford to spend \$1.4 million for two or three years, when the Board of Education will come back seeking money for another school.

The Board asked questions of Mr. Miller at length about the Board of Education's plan and reasoning behind the decision.

Chairwoman Greene said she would like to see both Boards sit down and work on a plan to accomplish the goal of building the school, but she can't see paying this amount now for a temporary fix.

Mr. Tim Hollowell, a citizen from Woodland said he appreciated the Commissioners' comments, but he doesn't understand [addressed to Mr. Miller] how the School Board will bring up the idea again to build a new school in the next two or three years when nearly 89% of the citizens are telling them that is not the way to go. He suggested alternate methods of effectively utilizing the remaining school buildings. He also stated that it is not fair to the citizens when they say that two-thirds of the high school students who will be bused to the West, actually live in the East.

Mr. Joe Martin also came before the Board to voice his concerns. Mr. Martin stated that he learned at a previous forum, that the busing alone is going to cost almost \$100,000 more dollars than what they are already spending. He realizes that the funds are getting smaller, but his concern is that the funding from the State level is based on students that go to the school. He said that if they do this (move the high school to the West), he knows of several parents on the East end that will consider paying Hertford County to take their children which would be closer. Mr. Martin said in his opinion,

the Board of Education should be in districts just like the Commissioners are elected in districts. He feels every district should be represented on their Board. He would like to see the Board of Education and the Central Office put more emphasis on backing up the principal, teachers, and addressing the students' discipline problems.

Mrs. Nancy Nicholson said the initial reason the Board of Education said they needed a new high school was because the existing buildings don't look good to people who want to come to our County, and put their children in our schools. She said she went online to the Board of Education's website, and opened up the district plan. She stated that if she was a new parent coming here and wanted to see what the school system was like, she would not have to look at the physical building. Mrs. Nicholson stated while reading the district plan, she saw that 72% of our student population is non-proficient at grade level. Also, the percent of students that were trying to show improvement decreased from 20% to 18% last year, and the percent of students who were categorized as grade-level proficient decreased from 30% to 27%. She said our school system is in terrible shape, and the students are not even operating at grade level. To her, that is a big red flag. She said if we have parents that want to come to this County that have businesses, that report needs to look good. In Mrs. Nicholson's opinion, putting money in a new building is not going to solve this problem. She also felt that they need to think about other things that can be done: maintenance needs to be kept up on the schools, or they need to find other resources such as grants, etc. She said we all need to work together so that we can come up with something to help the parents, students, and teachers make it a functioning healthy school system.

Dr. Michael Elam, President of Roanoke-Chowan Community College, stated that he commended the Board for asking the tough questions. He noted that a dialogue between the Board of Commissioners and the Board of Education is a good place to start. He said that about five percent of the graduating class last year were from Northampton County, and that RCCC has worked very hard in partnering with the school system to serve the students and decrease costs. Dr. Elam noted that if the current option was accepted, it would move two-thirds of the students in the high school who are currently in the College's service area, out of it. So it has a significant impact on RCCC as far as their enrollment and FTE.

Ms. Turner made a final statement that the County has planned to appropriate an additional \$550,000 to the school system this upcoming budget year. The total appropriation would amount to \$4.1 million compared to \$3.6 million last year.

A motion was made by Chester Deloatch and seconded by Virginia Spruill to adjourn. **Question Called: All present voting yes. Motion carried.**

Michelle Nelson, Clerk to the Board
"s.m. 04-18-16"