

The Alleghany County Board of Commissioners and Alleghany County Board of Education held a special meeting on Monday, March 13, 2006, at 5:00pm in the Board of Education Office, Conference Room, 85 Peachtree Street in Sparta. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss school facilities.

Present: Chair Eldon Edwards, Vice-Chair Warren Taylor, Commissioner Graylen Blevins, Commissioner Sandy Carter Herndon, Commissioner Ken Richardson, County Manager Don Adams and Clerk to the Board Karen Evans, Board of Education members; Chair Charles Joines, Betsy Dillon, Joel Souther, and Superintendent Dr. Jeff Cox. Faron Atwood and Clarence Crouse was present but arrived late.

Commissioner Sandy Carter Herndon made a motion to open the Commissioners' meeting at 5:00pm. Commissioner Graylen Blevins seconded the motion. Vote 5:0.

Charles Joines explained the purpose of the meeting.

Joel Souther made a motion to open the Board of Education's meeting. Betsy Dillon seconded the motion. Vote 3:0.

Dr. Cox stated that Clarence Crouse is on his way to this meeting, and Faron Atwood had to answer a call and will be back soon.

Dr. Cox gave everyone a brief background on prior discussions about the middle school concept. He talked about instructional program needs, necessary staff for those needs and facilities needs. He started reviewing the committee report. He stated that this is the beginning of the dialogue between the Board of Commissioners and Board of Education regarding school needs.

Charles Joines talked about moving forward with the discussions.

Dr. Cox reviewed the enrollment numbers for the three elementary schools, instructional programs, advantages for a middle school setting, tentative mock schedule, and breakdown of the \$887,500 recurring costs including new teachers needed and the amount of teachers now.

Commissioner Warren Taylor asked are the 16 teachers funded by the County.

Dr. Cox explained how the funding comes from the State.

Commissioner Warren Taylor asked if the State will provide any additional assistance because of having a middle school.

Dr. Cox stated that additional assistance will not be provided except for the principal position.

Commissioner Sandy Carter Herndon stated that teacher 17 and 18 would be the County's responsibility.

Dr. Cox continued reviewing the needed positions and their funding sources. He reviewed the enrichment activities needed. He listed out the alternative teacher positions and stated those salaries add up to the enrichment staff. He reviewed the support staff needed.

Commissioner Sandy Carter Herndon asked about of the duties of the School Resource Officer.

Dr. Cox explained the function of the job as being a police officer and is state-funded. He reviewed the architect's projected utility costs regarding a middle school.

Faron Atwood and Clarence Crouse arrived at 5:25pm.

Dr. Cox explained the handout describing the new capital expenditures including the middle school, gym at Piney Creek Elementary School and acquiring land for water and sewer needs at Glade Creek Elementary School for a total of \$9,055,750. He stated that the middle school would eliminate the space needs at Piney Creek Elementary School and Glade Creek Elementary School, provide additional playing fields at Sparta Elementary School and reposition Charles Street to create more parking. He continued reviewing the handout describing the items that are already financed like the eight-classroom and multi-purpose room addition at Sparta Elementary School, school bus garage and the energy savings project for a total of \$2,919,439. He continued reviewing items that may be requested in the 2006-2007 budget including completing the air conditioning at all of the schools, converting a classroom into a science lab and replacing carpet with tile at Piney Creek Elementary School, completing the gym renovations and enclosing the walkway at Glade Creek Elementary School, replacing bleachers in the old gym, moving basketball goals in the new gym because of safety and liability issues and converting a classroom into a science lab at Alleghany High School for a total costs of \$546,500. He stated that these last requests assume the middle school is built. He stated that is the instructional and facilities plan.

Commissioner Sandy Carter Herndon and Dr. Cox talked about encore classes involves all of the classes other than the core classes.

Commissioner Warren Taylor and Dr. Cox talked about teachers typically don't escort students to the enrichment classes.

Susan Murphy stated that the teachers have other things scheduled while their students are participating in the enrichment classes.

Commissioner Warren Taylor and Dr. Cox discussed the proposed schedule and the need to look at the schedule to cut out extra teachers. Dr. Cox talked about this schedule is based on a 1:20 teacher/student ratio, looking at the teacher/student ratio and the two teams of three teachers works well.

Commissioner Sandy Carter Herndon, Faron Atwood, Dr. Cox, Charles Joines and Clarence Crouse discussed the middle school location adjoining the Sparta Elementary School, no additional land would be needed and the use of the auditorium.

Commissioner Warren Taylor and Dr. Cox talked about decreased enrollment after the middle school is in place.

Dr. Cox further talked about Piney Creek Elementary School enrollment could fall below 100 students. He stated that the Board of Education has discussed ways to get more students at Piney Creek Elementary School and different options for Piney Creek Elementary School.

Commissioner Sandy Carter Herndon asked about bus routes for Piney Creek Elementary

School and Glade Creek Elementary School and the number of out-of-state students.

Dr. Cox and Clarence Crouse explained why Alleghany County receives some of the out-of-state children is because the out-of-state teachers bring their children with them.

Commissioner Sandy Carter Herndon stated that she isn't objecting to it, just talking about them paying for it.

Susan Murphy stated that Sparta Elementary School has very few out-of-state students, and they are the children of staff.

Charles Joines talked about receiving monies for the out-of-the-county children.

Commissioner Sandy Carter Herndon stated that the report is very thorough.

Besty Dillon talked about a lot of this report has come from the teachers, and they have worked very hard on this project.

Commissioner Sandy Carter Herndon stated that adds more value to it because of the hands-on experience.

Charles Joines talked about having given the Board of Commissioners a considerable size program to deliberate.

Commissioner Ken Richardson stated his confidence in the School Board and in the public. He further stated the need to have a good organized presentation to all of the communities for the November ballot. He talked about number differences from what was presented at the three schools last year.

Dr. Cox talked about if the middle school is built, the number of students would go down at Piney Creek Elementary School and Glade Creek Elementary School so the needs would go down as well.

Commissioner Ken Richardson stated that if a middle school is built everyone shouldn't forget about Piney Creek Elementary School and Glade Creek Elementary School needs. He talked about the confidence levels in the communities. He further talked about having safety needs at the other schools and don't think they are being addressed.

Faron Atwood talked about this project is about the kids county-wide instead of at one school or another.

Charles Joines talked about doing projects now at Glade Creek Elementary School and Piney Creek Elementary School then the money becomes available for a middle school; the money was wasted at the other schools. He further talked about needs at Glade Creek Elementary School and Piney Creek Elementary School.

Commissioner Ken Richardson stated that the Board of Education thinks they have given the Board of Commissioners a problem, and he doesn't see it that way. He stated that he has supported every school project for the last 20 years. He talked about this has to be sold to the voters.

Clarence Crouse talked about looking toward the future and planning for the short term as well as the long term.

Commissioner Warren Taylor talked about this project should meet the needs of the school system for 15-20 years.

Missey Weaver talked about Twin Oaks Mountain being divided into lots and potentially the additional children entering into the school system.

Commissioner Graylen Blevins talked about letting the bond issue go forward and supporting it 100%. He further talked about the elected officials need to put everything aside, find the best way to meet the mandates now and face tomorrow then. He explained that the future is bigger than Sparta.

Charles Joines talked about having vocational classes offered at a middle school.

Commissioner Graylen Blevins talked about needs on the vocational side as well as the technical side.

Faron Atwood pointed out that they can't give each elementary school the same opportunities as what a middle school could offer.

Charles Joines gave an example of a wood-working class.

Chair Eldon Edwards expressed his appreciation to everyone who has worked on this project.

Chair Eldon Edwards and Dr. Cox reviewed the capital numbers of \$9,055,750 and the recurring costs of \$887,500.

Chair Eldon Edwards explained that he is concerned about the County's debt service if this project goes forward.

County Manager Don Adams explained what it would take to pay for this project.

Chair Eldon Edwards talked about adding this to the current needs in the county.

County Manager Don Adams reviewed the Local Government Commission's guidelines and items they review including the net debt ratio and the percentage of annual debt payments as compared to the annual budget. He explained where Allegheny County stands currently with those numbers. He further explained that the annual payments as compared to the annual budget cannot exceed 15%. He stated that if the Commissioners proceed and the bond passes then the County has reached capacity for the next three to five years. He further stated that this action will limit Allegheny County from borrowing any significant amount of monies. He talked about the project must be sold to the Local Government Commission before any action can be taken locally.

Commissioner Warren Taylor asked about the costs to get a referendum on the ballot.

County Manager Don Adams stated that there are three ways to finance this project; referendum, certificates of participation and installment purchase. He further stated that bond attorney fees would be the significant costs involved.

Commissioner Sandy Carter Herndon and County Manager Don Adams discussed that the installment purchase limits the time to repay the monies to 15 years and the need to look at a 20-year term. He talked about how you can figure 1¢ per million dollars borrowed.

Faron Atwood and County Manager Don Adams discussed how projected growth is figured.

Commissioner Ken Richardson talked about the property tax rate decreasing due to revaluation but with the same amount of money coming in.

Commissioner Sandy Carter Herndon talked about the taxpayers pay the same amount of money and it is the Commissioners' job to determine the rate.

Commissioner Sandy Carter Herndon and Dr. Cox discussed the value of vacant land increasing significantly more than houses. She talked about the development on Twin Oaks Mountain and Laurel Mountain Estates. She further talked about a lot of people are buying property here as a second home or as an investment, and it takes a while to see the improvements tax-wise.

Commissioner Warren Taylor stated that the County must publish the revenue-neutral tax rate next year regarding revaluation.

Dr. Cox talked about Lee County constructing a high school and raised taxes 12¢.

Commissioner Sandy Carter Herndon talked about we are looking at 18¢ for the proposed school needs. She further talked about having other needs, such as, the library construction project.

County Manager Don Adams reminded everyone that the payment for the \$1,950,000 is not in the budget and the 18¢ is for what has been presented tonight. He said that he is hoping to get some lottery money to help offset the \$200,000 payments on the \$1,950,000 loan.

Commissioner Graylen Blevins talked about the benefits of the second-home market.

Dr. Cox stated that he realizes that these are big numbers and there are areas that could be reduced without negatively impacting the program. He talked about coming to a general agreement on the recurring costs before trying to sell the building.

Charles Joines agreed that the boards need to have an agreement about the recurring costs.

Commissioner Sandy Carter Herndon talked about looking for ways to raise money other than property tax. She used Florida as an example. She stated that we need to look outside of the property tax rate box and explore all revenue avenues.

Dr. Cox talked about Union County charging impact fees for new construction to help assist paying for new schools.

Chair Eldon Edwards and Dr. Cox talked about that action must be approved by the General Assembly.

Commissioner Warren Taylor left at 6:50pm.

Chair Eldon Edwards stated that he supports the Alleghany County Schools, having good facilities and good staff but everyone also should look at the debt numbers. He asked if the project fails to pass on the referendum, what do we do.

Dr. Cox stated that they would ask that question to the Commissioners, create a revised plan, reevaluate the entire plan and the needs being greater if the middle school doesn't pass.

Faron Atwood stated that he hates to see three-million-dollar patches for several years.

Clarence Crouse stated that they planned out as far as they could in regards to long-range plans. He talked about having good, solid, strong long-range plans.

Besty Dillon stated that the staff should be appreciated for their work on the plans.

Commissioner Graylen Blevins talked about giving credit where credit is due. He asked if this plan is the Cadillac version.

Missey Weaver stated no, this is the bare minimum.

Commissioner Graylen Blevins stated his appreciation for all of the hard work.

Charles Joines and Dr. Cox talked about this plan isn't elaborate but there are places to cut like sharing the School Resource Officer with Alleghany High School.

Commissioner Graylen Blevins talked about the money compared to putting the kids together being more beneficial than the money.

Joel Souther stated that the Board of Education supports all of the communities. He talked about making the schools stronger.

Commissioner Sandy Carter Herndon asked the County Manager to refresh everyone on the financing options.

County Manager Don Adams reviewed the three options to finance this; installment purchase, certificates of participation or bonds. He explained what is involved in using bonds. He reminded everyone that the first step is to go to the Local Government Commission.

Mike Edwards talked about this is placing the burden on the taxpayers.

County Manager Don Adams agreed stating that this is why he has been discussing property taxes.

Commissioner Sandy Carter Herndon and County Manager Don Adams discussed that this can be funded without going through a referendum and using certificates of participation without a referendum.

Dr. Cox stated that this plan is for the 10 board members. He talked about collectively supporting the plan. He further talked about this is a lot of money and if a referendum is the route to go then that is the route to go.

Faron Atwood talked about both boards need to be together on this issue and everyone promote it to the community.

Clarence Crouse talked about the recurring costs is the first decision.

Chair Eldon Edwards reiterated that the report has been very beneficial.

The Board of Commissioners and Board of Education discussed dates, times and places for the next meeting. They decided on April 10 at 5:00pm at the Board of Education conference room.

The Board of Education and Dr. Cox thanked the Board of Commissioners, County Manager and Clerk for attending this meeting.

Being no further business, Chair Eldon Edwards adjourned the Commissioners' meeting at 7:13pm.

Being no further business, Charles Joines adjourned the Board of Education's meeting at 7:13pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Karen Evans
Clerk to the Board

Attest:

Eldon Edwards
Chairman