

The Alleghany County Board of Commissioners and Alleghany County Board of Education held a special meeting on Monday, April 10, 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: Vice-Chair Warren Taylor, 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, Faron Atwood, Clarence Crouse, Betsy Dillon, Joel Souther, and Superintendent Dr. Jeff Cox.

Commissioner Warren Taylor opened the meeting for the Board of Commissioners at 5:08pm.

The Board of Education approved their agenda.

Superintendent Dr. Cox reviewed the purpose this meeting.

County Manager Don Adams gave everyone a list of some questions that the Commissioners have asked in a prior meeting including grading amount in the project, exploring the costs of a middle school, total costs for all of the needs at all of the schools and the issue being on a bond referendum.

Charles Joines talked about needs at the other schools and their budget request will have two positions to start working on middle school curriculum.

Commissioner Sandy Carter Herndon asked if the bond is a concern of the Board of Education.

Charles Joines stated that yes, it is a concern, and it is a concern about maxing out the County's borrowing abilities.

Commissioner Ken Richardson stated that it is cheaper to go the bond route in the long run. He further stated decisions should be made about what needs to be done and then do it.

Commissioner Warren Taylor talked about looking at the needs at the other schools if a middle school doesn't go through. He further talked about adding up those needs and there not being a lot of differences. He asked if the middle school number could be reduced.

John Farrelly stated that his opinion is if the middle school concept is going to be done, then it needs to be done right and provide the things that are needed.

Commissioner Warren Taylor stated that he isn't questioning the middle school; he is asking about the teachers' schedule and reducing personnel.

John Farrelly explained the sample schedule and ways to reduce the student/teacher ratio. He talked about looking elsewhere to save money. He further talked about not cutting the project short.

Dr. Cox explained the 30-minute time blocks on the schedule and the activities that the teachers do during that timeframe.

Commissioner Warren Taylor asked if the \$9,000,000 is a concrete number.

Dr. Cox stated that it is a good cost for a middle school. He talked about some places to cut the fluff like sharing a School Resource Officer with the High School.

Commissioner Ken Richardson asked how the Board of Education is going to address the needs at Glade Creek Elementary School and Piney Creek Elementary School.

Dr. Cox talked about the needs going down if a middle school is constructed.

Commissioner Ken Richardson gave examples of needs that the schools have regardless of the middle school idea.

The Board of Education stated that some of those issues will be addressed during the budget year.

Commissioner Sandy Carter Herndon reminded everyone that this project will take the County to their borrowing limit and won't be able to borrow any more money for capital. She talked about the need to put all of the needs on the bond.

Dr. Cox reviewed the prior handouts describing the project.

Commissioner Sandy Carter Herndon and Randy Baker discussed ways to cut costs by offering alternatives during the bid process.

Commissioner Sandy Carter Herndon talked about the need to communicate with the public on the potential 18¢ property tax increase. She further talked about the non-residents also share this burden with the residents.

Commissioner Warren Taylor asked for reasons to do a bond.

County Manager Don Adams explained the costs associated with bonds, Certificates of Participation (COPs) and an installment purchase contract. He reviewed the terms of each. He reminded everyone that the first step is with the Local Government Commission. He continued reviewing what is involved with a referendum. He stated that time is running out for a referendum on the November ballot. He further stated that he must know by the end of May about the referendum issue regardless of the financing option. He explained that there is more leeway on a bond than on COPs.

Commissioner Warren Taylor stated that the Commissioners asked the Board of Education for a recommendation, and they are recommending a middle school. He further stated that it sounds like there isn't any negotiating on the \$9,000,000.

Betsy Dillon talked about having to add trailers at the schools to address some of the needs. She gave an example of having three science labs versus one at a middle school is cheaper.

Commissioner Sandy Carter Herndon talked about the children being given the same opportunity regardless of where they go to school.

Commissioner Warren Taylor talked about the need to find other ways to finance this project other than property taxes.

Dr. Cox stated the need for both boards to have an understanding on the recurring costs before going with a COPs or a bond.

Commissioner Ken Richardson stated that the Commissioners must be very careful because they can't obligate future boards. He talked about losing \$60,000 of the lottery proceeds.

County Manager Don Adams explained that the lottery proceeds are partially based on the County's ability to pay. He talked about the low wealth funding for school systems and explained that the lottery proceeds are being set up in a similar way. He stated that Alleghany County should get approximately \$118,000.

Clarence Crouse asked if anyone has received feedback from the public on this topic.

The Board of Commissioners and Board of Education shared the comments that they had received regarding the schools.

Charles Joines and Faron Atwood talked about going forward with the project instead of postponing it for a couple of years.

Commissioner Warren Taylor and Dr. Cox discussed this project is projected to address the schools' needs for 15 years.

Commissioner Warren Taylor asked about the projected numbers to maintain compared to building a middle school. He stated that these numbers would be good for the public to have.

Commissioner Ken Richardson stated that he supports the upgrades at Piney Creek Elementary School and Glade Creek Elementary School and the boards need to make a decision on the direction regarding the bond in May.

Commissioner Warren Taylor talked about how a property tax increase will affect citizens.

John Farrelly talked about the reasons for a middle school.

Missey Weaver talked about some parents have already visited middle schools in other counties.

The Board of Commissioners and Board of Education discussed prior bonds failing in Alleghany County.

County Manager Don Adams reviewed the timeline for the referendum.

Commissioner Ken Richardson stated that he recommends that the chairmen instruct their staff to make the appointment with the Local Government Commission in late May.

Charles Joines talked about reasons to have the referendum on the general election ballot.

Commissioner Warren Taylor asked how much money can be saved by doing bonds rather than COPs.

County Manager Don Adams stated that he will have to research that answer.

Commissioner Warren Taylor asked about setting another meeting before going to the Local Government Commission.

Dr. Cox reiterated the items that the Commissioners have questions about in order to answer them at the next meeting.

The Boards decided to meet on May 8 at 5:00pm at the Board of Education's conference room.

Dr. Cox asked about beginning to consider what happens if the referendum doesn't pass and how to move forward instead of waiting until November to start working on an alternate plan.

Commissioner Warren Taylor stated that the Board of Commissioners can't make those decisions because they will have to be made by the Board of Education.

Faron Atwood and Dr. Cox talked about fixing the problems at the schools.

Charles Joines and Susan Murphy discussed how the new addition at Sparta Elementary School will be used.

Being no further business, Commissioner Sandy Carter Herndon adjourned the meeting at 6:45pm. Commissioner Ken Richardson seconded the motion. Vote 3:0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Karen Evans
Clerk to the Board

Attest:

Eldon Edwards
Chairman