

**COLUMBUS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MEETING with COLUMBUS COUNTY BOARD of EDUCATION**

Monday, July 23, 2018

6:30 P.M.

The Honorable Columbus County Commissioners met on the above stated date and at the above stated time in the Dempsey B. Herring Courthouse Annex Building, located at 112 West Smith Street, Whiteville, North Carolina, for the purpose of conducting a meeting with the Columbus County Board of Education.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Amon E. McKenzie, **Chairman**
Trent Burroughs, **Vice Chairman**
James E. Prevatte
Giles E. Byrd
Ricky Bullard
Charles T. McDowell

APPOINTEES PRESENT:

Mike Stephens, **County Manager**
Amanda B. Prince, **County Attorney**
Bobbie Faircloth, **Finance Officer**

APPOINTEE ABSENT:

June B. Hall, **Clerk to Board**

COMMISSIONER ABSENT:

P. Edwin Russ

COLUMBUS COUNTY BOARD of EDUCATION MEMBERS PRESENT:

Barbara Yates Lockamy, Chairperson
Randy Coleman
Worley T. Edwards
Junior Dew

COLUMBUS COUNTY BOARD of EDUCATION MEMBER ABSENT:

Monty Herring

OTHERS in ATTENDANCE:

Alan Faulk, Columbus County Schools Superintendent
Jonathan Williams, Assistant Superintendent
Bill Phipps, Board of Education Lawyer

MEETING CALLED to ORDER:

At 6:30 P.M., Chairman Amon E. McKenzie called the scheduled meeting with the Columbus County Board of Education to order.

INVOCATION and PLEDGE of ALLEGIANCE:

Chairman McKenzie delivered the invocation. Everyone in attendance stood and pledged Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America which was led by Chairman McKenzie.

INTRODUCTION:

Superintendent Alan Faulk stated the following:

1. We would like to thank the Board of Commissioners for allowing us to be here tonight; **and**
2. First, I will turn it over to our Chairperson.

Barbara Yates Lockamy stated a couple of our Board members will speak and then our attorney.

Randy Coleman: stated the following:

1. We just don't know where we are going;
2. We are working on trying to get some schools built, and we don't know how we will pay for this;
3. Our funds are continuously decreasing;
4. Any help we can get, we would really appreciate it;
5. When funds dwindle from the state, it is hard to move forward;
6. We are asking for additional funds to allow us to keep operating; **and**
7. If you want quality in education, you need to support it.

Junior Dew: stated the following:

1. How are we going to pay for these new schools that we are going to build that the Board allocated for us to do?;
2. We are only getting \$500,000.00 from the County, and we use to get over \$1,000,000.00 from the Lottery Funds but the General Assembly are spending the Lottery Funds somewhere else;
3. We cannot continue to operate on the money we have;
4. There can be no equitable comparison of the Whiteville City Schools and the Columbus County Schools; **and**
5. If school merger materializes, the State funds allocated to the schools would be more beneficial to the entirety of the schools.

Bill Phipps, part-time attorney for Columbus County Schools: stated the following:

1. I have been the part-time attorney for Columbus County Schools for the past twenty-four (24) years;
2. We have eighteen (18) campuses and Whiteville City Schools have four (4) campuses;
3. We are spread over nine hundred, plus, (900+) odd square miles of land;
4. We have to do repairs and maintenance;
5. Columbus County Schools and Whiteville City Schools get \$500,000.00 Capital Outlay each, and there is some disproportionate there;
6. We had \$900,000.00 in sales tax revenue and we partner with the Columbus County Commissioners to put a water and sewer system to Old Dock School;
7. We, technically, are dealing with good faith;
8. Our schools are dilapidated;
9. We have depleted our funds in trying to keep teachers working;
10. This is the year that stops;
11. In the case we had more capital outlay, we could do more repair;
12. The popularity of the charter schools is due to the condition of our school buildings;
13. The new schools that are going to be built will be paid for with the funds the County has allocated for us, and if this happens, what will we operate on?;
14. With the merger of the two (2) school systems, the state allocation would not be affected;
15. When a student leaves the County School System to attend Whiteville City School System, we lose eight thousand, plus, (\$8,000.00+) dollars for each student;
16. We have a financial problem, and it is getting worse, and we need help;
17. We are in the red at \$500,000.00 - \$750,000.00 at this time, and we need help;
18. We are asking for a partnership to help us, and get us where we need to be to keep providing education to our children; **and**
19. The best way to do that is to do the merger of the two (2) school systems in Columbus County.

Commissioner James E. Prevatte: Bobbie, did the County and City School Systems receive \$500,000.00 in Capital Outlay? Bobbie replied stating the City School System was given \$204,000.00, and the County School System received \$505,000.00, and this was based on ADM.

Chairman Amon E. McKenzie: stated the following:

1. Budgets do change from year and year;
2. Property taxes have not increased in the last several years;
3. If there are no additional funds available, you have to budget on what funds you have;
4. We still have 18 schools to maintain with only 61% of these schools being used;
5. We want everyone to do their jobs as a team; **and**
6. That is a school board responsibility.

Commissioner Ricky Bullard: stated the following:

1. That was the best presentation I have heard in a long time;
2. Presenting the facts for what they are is what we all need;
3. I want to do everything we can for the schools;
4. Our critical needs are not getting met; **and**
5. We have got to face up and do what is needed.

Commissioner Giles E. Byrd: stated the following:

1. All seven (7) of the Board members are interested in helping the school systems in Columbus County;
2. At some of the school facilities, the number of students that attend is very low and a small percentage of the facility is being used, but is still being maintained;

3. A strong recommendation is to down size the facilities where it is needed;
4. The Board of Education needs to exercise the options available to lower the cost of operating these facilities; **and**
5. Raising property taxes would help provide the funds that are needed, but that would be a hardship for several of our citizens.

Worley Edwards: stated the following:

1. I have had the great opportunity to work in all three (3) of the school systems in Columbus County, 29 years in Columbus County Schools, 2 years in Whiteville City Schools and 9 years with Southeastern Community College;
2. I would like to thank you guys for your support through the years;
3. I know that the Board supports education;
4. We are asking for you to help us fix what we have;
5. We know that we need to close some of the facilities;
6. There are three (3) areas that have bothered me over the last years, as follows:
 - A. The \$900,000.00 that were given on the Old Dock Water and Sewer Project;
 - B. We never can re-build except when a school burns down; **and**
 - C. The Whiteville City School students getting \$400 - \$500 more than the Columbus County School students;
7. We need your help, and we do need to close some of these schools; **and**
8. I am working for the kids in Columbus County.

Alan Faulk: stated the following:

1. You have heard a lot of factual information, some on key and some off key;
2. Bobbie, I need to check and see if my figures for the County allocations are correct for Budget Year 2018-2019 and budget year 2017-2018. Bobbie replied stating the Current Expenses amount for 2018-2019 is \$5,315,425, and the amount for 2017-2018 was \$5,398,226;
3. Our Current Expenses allocation did go down;
4. The Capital Outlay amount did go up \$7,071;
5. In the 2017-2018 Budget year, we did make it by the skin of our teeth;
6. My Finance Officer tells me that we are in the red \$500,000.00 due to the following:
 - Exceptional children
 - Custodians
 - Substitute teachers
 - Utilities and maintenance
 - Transportation; **and**
 - Pre-K;
7. We have taken some steps to help with this deficit as follows: substitute teachers, custodians;
8. Closing some of the buildings not being utilized;
9. Be more efficient with our transportation;
10. I thank you for everything that you have done; **and**
11. We need your help if at all possible.

Chairman Amon E. McKenzie: stated the following:

1. In Columbus County, we have managed to operate over the last several years without raising the property tax;
2. Education is a very important asset for all citizens to have and be exposed to;
3. We do have a serious situation that needs to be addressed and handled; **and**
4. We are here to help the schools in any way that we can.

Commissioner Ricky Bullard: stated I know you have a Board Meeting next Monday night, and we need some plans for your future plans to save money in order for you to be able to receive the funds you are requesting. Superintendent replied stating the following:

1. We have an architect;
2. We do plan to consolidate Chadbourn Middle, Evergreen and Cerro Gordo into one plan, and that will shut down two (2);
3. We do plan to consolidate Tabor City Middle and Tabor City Elementary into one plan and that will shut down one (1);
4. We hope to go out to bid this coming spring;
5. We have talked about building a school in the eastern end of the County; **and**
6. We have also talked about making East Columbus a Junior-Senior High School.

Vice Chairman Trent Burroughs: stated the following:

1. I am processing the information you have delivered tonight;
2. We want to know what you are going to do to help yourself and to help us;
3. I can't see how you are helping the children when you are operating a school with less than 100 students; **and**
4. This needs to be addressed before new schools are built.

Commissioner Prevatte: Is the \$500,000.00 deficit in Current Expense? Will this amount put you back in the black next year? Superintendent Faulk replied stating it could.

Commissioner Giles E. Byrd: stated the following:

1. In the amount of \$500,000.00 you are asking for, if you deduct the \$159,000 you are getting but didn't know about, the amount would be \$341,000.00; **and**
2. What is the DOJ money used for? Mr. Faulk replied stating this is a part of Teen Court and was handled by Robeson County, and was part of the Obama administration.

Commissioner McDowell: stated the following:

1. I have worked many years in the County School System and have retired;
2. I am very familiar with the band-aid process;
3. We would like to see your plan to save money over the next year;
4. We want to see action taking place; **and**
5. We would like for the process to begin in moving students.

Alan Faulk: stated the following:

1. This may be my final meeting with you;
2. It is my desire to handle this problem before I leave office; **and**
3. Please consider the future of our children and please help in the best manner that you are able to.

Chairman Barbara Yates Lockamy: stated the following:

1. I thank you for what you do for education;
2. We need to be together; **and**
3. We need to see what we can do to help our children the most, and children are our future.

Chairman McKenzie: stated we will take this matter under consideration and we will get back to you.

ADJOURNMENT:

At 8:01 P.M., Chairman McKenzie stated this meeting is adjourned. These minutes were recorded by Bobbie Faircloth, Finance Director, and typed by June B. Hall, Clerk to the Board.

APPROVED:

JUNE B. HALL, Clerk to Board

AMON E. MCKENZIE, Chairman