

Currituck County Schools**Joint Meeting with the County Commissioners****03/23/2021 05:30 PM****Meeting Minutes**

County Cooperative Extension Building

Printed : 4/15/2021 3:05 PM ET

Attendees

Voting Members

Karen Etheridge, Chairman
Dwan Craft, Vice Chairman
Dr. Bill Dobney, Board Member
Janet Rose, Board Member
Kelly Williams Peters, Board Member

Non-Voting Members

Dr. Matt Lutz, Superintendent
Olivia McDonald, Student Board Member
Taylor McCarthy, Student Board Member
Albert Mercado, Student Board Member
Daniel Walker, Student Board Member

I. Call to Order

Attendance:
County Commissioners
Kevin McCord
Mike Payment
Kitty Etheridge
Owen Etheridge
Selina Jarvis
Paul Beaumont
Bob White
Ben Stikeleather, County Manager

II. Strategic Planning

The strategic planning session was facilitated by Dr. Mitch Owen of Mitchen Leadership & Organizational Development. BOE members, County Commissioners and support staff for both groups were in attendance.

Dr. Owen conducted the question session with the group and collected their responses. The data will be used during the planning process and to identify goals. Several more sessions will be held with different stakeholders in the county such as parents, teachers, and business owners.

III. County Planning

The second part of the meeting focused on future planning and funding for the schools.

Ben Stikeleather, County Manager, stated the budget must be formulated in the following month. Funding of the schools which included the funding request for expansion projects and the hiring of several positions must be discussed and addressed. Dr. Lutz said the best time to search for staff is May through June.

Mr. Stikeleather addressed the Capital Outlay plan that includes school funding. The County has funded three more mobile classroom units. This will give the district a total of five. The units will be used as tools as the county expands and builds new schools. The designs and

proposals are in the works for MES & MMS. The same design team is currently working on the County's buildings. The plan is to fund the expansion and not to incur debt. Based on the costs projections and plans, Mr. Stikeleather felt comfortable the county would be able to do so.

Plans to purchase 36 acres of land off Tulls Creek for a new elementary school continues. The contract was returned with minor changes. Hopefully the land purchase will take place in April. Of course additional soil samples will be taken and a travel impact analysis will be conducted - turn lane, etc.

The plan is to open the new elementary school in 2025 and have the classroom expansions completed by 2023. Priority will be elementary classroom space.

It is anticipated that following the completion of the elementary school, another school will be needed. Land needs to be identified by 2023 for the next school. The district is conducting a 10-year study, and will hopefully also identify the type of school needed (middle?).

The two groups discussed the County's current debt and revenue sources. Ben explained the revenue neutral concept. He recommended staying away from a bond.

Janet Rose asked if there were particular percentages of the revenue set aside for the schools. Mr. Stikeleather explained various revenue sources were used to fund the district. Although the new County buildings carry a debt, the County is not close to the maximum borrowing amount.

Mr. Stikeleather explained that it was important for both boards to support a tax increase. Above revenue neutral requires buy in from all parties. Kitty Etheridge cautioned that the current re-evaluation and revenue neutral did not mean that all citizens paid low taxes.

Dr. Lutz presented current expenses that the district faces due to unfunded state mandates as well as required student services that require additional staff.

Dr. Lutz said it was important that all six of the district's elementary schools provided the same level of instruction. Dr. Lutz provided data points showing elementary scores (see Powerpoint).

The Boards discussed the number of current students in the district and funding levels as well as potential growth in the county. The requirement to maintain the virtual academy is unknown at this time.

The Boards discussed the tax rate. Lower debt can result in lowering taxes; however, that may require future tax increases to fund future projects. Mr. Stikeleather said he did not want to short the school district on future projects.

Karen Etheridge asked about using transfer tax. Mr. Stikeleather cautioned funding with it because it was a volatile funding stream. Sandra Hill, County's Finance Director, stated that Dare County used transfer tax back in 2009 to fund a project and it caused a major issue. There was not enough collected to cover the debt. Transfer tax is not consistent.

The County has used the transfer tax to fund smaller projects - because there is no guarantee. Paul Beaumont cautioned that unexpected projects could come up and the County has several needs too. Mr. Stikeleather cautioned against stacking debt.

Bob White inquired about funding the projects and staying revenue neutral. The Boards discussed the additional \$570,000 and if provided how it would help student achievement. Mr. White verified that if the county remained revenue neutral it would not be able to provide the BOE with funding for the additional positions and school construction. Mr. Stikeleather replied that was correct.

Commissioners discussed the options of several percentages over revenue neutral. The unfunded class size mandate must be addressed. Mr. Beaumont said that he would rather see the County at a rate that all could live with - instead of dropping and increasing.

Kitty Etheridge and Mr. Etheridge discussed a bond that would allow the residents to vote. The Boars discussed growth in the county and tax rates. The Boards agreed that it was important to provide correct information if taxes increased in order to cover county services and needs of the school district. The expansion and mobile units will be funded without borrowing.

Mr. Etheridge cautioned that increased tax rate could hurt farmers which could cause land to be sold to developers.

The Commissioners agreed to support the school district by funding the requested positions and building projects.

IV. Adjourn

Chairperson

Secretary