

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF
ROWAN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
PUBLIC HEARING
NOVEMBER 2, 1987

The Board of Rowan County Commissioners met in Adjourned Session in the Community Building on November 2, 1987 at 7:00 P.M. The following members were present: Chairman Richard Messinger, Vice-Chairman J. Newton Cohen, Sr., Commissioner Jamima DeMarcus, Commissioner George Knox and Commissioner Wilborn Swaim.

Chairman Messinger welcomed everyone to the Public Hearing. He stated that the Commissioners were functioning as a convening agent. That this was a Public Hearing of both the Salisbury School Board and the Rowan County Board of Education and he had agreed to act as moderator and the Commissioners would come into the picture later, assuming that the Boards of Education adopt the proposal. He further contended that this is a Public Hearing to hear what needs to be heard and said about the proposal with the merger of at least two systems.

A number of people had signed up to speak and Chairman Messinger stated that members of the Boards of Education were present and they had presented the proposal to them and would be principally involved in answering questions.

Mr. William Stanback, Chairman of a small group to consider merger, said he wanted to go on record as an individual in being in favor of merger. He said he did not have children in school at this point, but had paid his dues a year or so ago attending these meetings and received a wonderful education as to the work. He said he would like to see the boards merge. He said he felt that this was a county that is one group of people and to have two school units working within such a limited area is counter-productive to efficiency in education and to the best education of our children.

Mr. Austin Mitchell said he wanted to know how Kannapolis would be affected by this merger. Mr. Mobley, County School Superintendent told him Kannapolis is a separate unit as Salisbury is now and Rowan. Merger will not affect Kannapolis. He asked how it would affect the tax base? Chairman Messinger told him that Kannapolis would receive a pro-rated of whatever Rowan County votes. A pro-rated share based on the number of pupils. Another question, he asked why this would not be a public vote, (referendum). Mr. Marcelle Williams, County Board explained to Mr. Mitchell that they have been working six years on a proposal and had been trusted by the people to come up with a plan. He said he felt that the majority of the people in Rowan gave them this responsibility to put together and carry on whatever it is about education in Rowan County.

Commissioner Cohen commented that he had stated many, many times that he would hold out for the people to have a referendum vote on this issue. He said he would hold out for a vote and hoped that the people of Rowan County will observe the democratic process taking place.

Attorney Todd Paris told Commission members that he was not for sure if he supported Merger or not. He further contended that he could see no problem with a referendum. He said he was worried about where the lines would be drawn and where our children would be going.

Paul Dziezyc of Salisbury encouraged a public vote. He stated, "If you believe the majority of people want this, then you have nothing to lose".

Carl Eagle, County Board said public education that could be needed to achieve success in a public vote on merger would prove difficult to provide.

Gail Horton, Parent, said she had a sophomore at East Rowan and wanted to know if her child would graduate from East. Her answer was yes.

Chairman Messinger asked Carl Eagle to talk about the study. Mr. Eagle commented on the referendum. He stated that the people voted for their representative and their representative was supposed to study and make the best decision for them and that is the way he felt about this decision. He said he was for merger whenever he was re-elected last November and had made that known to the people. He said Merger would place the child closest to the school in their area; and also equalize the schools on a pupil ratio.

Chairman Messinger said the time table and plan in this merger calls for the schools board to present a plan and this is the public hearing to address and question the plan. After this public hearing, Mr. Messinger stated, the School Boards could meet to change it or certify it and approve it. Assuming that they approve the plan here or approve it with certain changes they would do that on a formal vote and bring it back before the Board of County Commissioners. The Commissioners would then approve or disapprove the plan. Next the plan calls for an independent study to be conducted on attendance line- "who goes where". Commissioners hired Research Triangle to do this and will be done this winter and results in by next fall. Mr. Messinger said the School Boards have agreed to agree on whatever their findings might be. This plan will then be put into effect either by the vote of the Commissioners or by a public referendum. Merger would then take place July, 1989. Commissioners have agreed to start funding the project by a tax increase, probably need to raise somewhere between a million and a million and a half. He also stated that a new superintendent would be hired prior to July 1, 1989.

Frankie Owens a concerned citizen expressed his feelings about the studies that have been done on merger. His strongest feeling was concerning the expense involved. His next question was, "why merge".

Ed Hayden another concerned citizen asked Reid Leonard, "If merger does not guarantee a better education, why are we here"? Another question raised by Mr. Hayden was concerning how the City would pay their tax.

Robert Saunders, Attorney, said he was looking forward to seeing the two systems work together.

Jim Cohen, Jr. Ex-Commissioner and parent said, "a merged system does not guarantee a better education".

Bill Turner a 25 year veteran teacher asked how "teacher transfer" would be handled.

Zina Paris, parent asked why can't we be given more details concerning merger, that she felt the public had not been well informed. She said she would like to see more consideration be given to the study.

Glenn Ketner, Jr., City school board member said he had little sympathy for some people who have had chances to gain information. He said in answer to Mr. Hayden's tax question, the first year of funding, the city school district residents would continue to pay a supplemental school tax set by the city council. They would not pay a tax the second year according to the plan since the Salisbury city district would end.

Mrs. Roseborough, East Rowan area, raised the question concerning curriculum. She said she was concerned about quality of education that all schools should have the same.

Elaine Ervin, Parent and Teacher from Southern Rowan who served on one of the study committees was concerned about where her children would be going to school and wanted to know, "what it takes to get a referendum".

W.T. Fleming, retired city educator said he favored merger but could not speak for the rest of the minority community.

Commissioner DeMarcus said Merger would be a way to offer an equal opportunity to every child.

Commissioner Knox said he had worked for twenty-nine years with the school system and that he was willing to support what ever it takes.. he said he was willing to, "bite the bullet".

Commissioner Swaim commented that in reference to a referendum, "this Commission is elected to make that decision". He further contended that, "we have had to make other decisions just as important as this and it is not our form of government to put it to a vote".

There being no one else to speak for or against the merger, Chairman Messinger concluded the Public Hearing. Afterwhich, the two Boards of Education met and voted that the plan of merger be submitted to the Board of Commissioners of Rowan County and recommended for concurrence and approval. Then the Board of Commissioners thereupon motion made by Commissioner DeMarcus and seconded by Commissioner Knox voted to concur and approve the plan of merger with the following vote:

FOR: Commissioner DeMarcus
 Commissioner Knox
 Chairman Messinger
 Commissioner Swaim

AGAINST: Commissioner Cohen

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda L. Honeycutt, Clerk
Board of County Commissioners