

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF
ROWAN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS AND
SALISBURY/ROWAN SCHOOL BOARD
SEPTEMBER 27, 1995 - 8:15 A.M.
STANBACK AUDITORIUM, ROWAN PUBLIC LIBRARY

PRESENT: Todd Arey, Chairman
Thomas M. Webb, Vice-Chairman
J. Newton Cohen, Member
Steve Blount, Member
Jim Neely, Member

School Board Chairman Stan Welch, Karen Carpenter, James Donnell, Kay Norman, Billie Starr and Eldridge Williams, as well as Dr. Joe McCann and the County Manager were also in attendance.

The meeting began at 8:30 a.m. with opening remarks by Chairman Todd Arey, who explained that the commission hoped to achieve a partnership with the school board to improve education in Rowan County. The meeting was turned over to facilitator Larry Parks.

Mr. Parks asked that each participant express what they perceive to be the main problem or concern that should be addressed to improve education in Rowan County schools. The participants responded as follows:

Todd Arey: Decentralization of public education. Under decentralization what goals will we set to insure success because there will be more local control of the school system. I think decentralization is another way of saying there isn't enough state and federal money and therefore will turn to the county for more budget money and 30% of our budget goes to education now.

Karen Carpenter: What is the goal of Rowan-Salisbury Schools? I am not sure that we have established for ourselves within the school system goals which can be measured and achieved to make sure our kids are prepared to get a job and keep a job available to them in this community and outside this community. So I would like to see us focus on where we are now, where we want to be, and how we are going to get there.

Steve Blount: Need to look at the big picture and see that we are not just competing with our neighboring counties but with counties all over the world. And we need to make sure that what we are doing in our small community here in the south are equivalent or better than what is being done in other communities all over the world. The common denominator throughout the world is public education. We must be sure that our public education system is doing all it can do to be competitive on a worldwide basis.

Eldridge Williams: Everything the county commissioner does revolves around education. We need money. Money is the key to improving our education system and educating our children. We need to work together to make sure money is received and spent wisely to achieve the absolute most for our schools.

Bettie Starr: Concerned about excellence in education. Has concerns about the growth and plan for handling this growth. Will need more money to manage the growth. Also has concerns about the working relationship between the two boards. (Distributed copies of a newspaper article).

Tom Webb: Concerned about the quality of education. We offer special assistance for lower students and special programs for high achievers but often overlook the middle students. We need to plan some programs aimed toward these middle of the road students. Also concerned about the discipline problem in the schools. We should have some way of controlling the schools.

Kay Norman: Concerned about the relationship between the school board and the commission. We need to address redistricting and racial quotas. We need to get out and talk to the community and educate them about what is going on in our schools.

Jim Neely: We need to insure a better way of working together to make sure our students receive the best education possible.

James Donnell: Quality of education. We need to build on the good things we are doing and do away with the things that are negative. Federal funding is being cut back more and more and we will need more local money in the future.

Newton Cohen: Main concern is school funding. We need to look to Raleigh to raise salaries. Concerned about the violence in schools. A good environment is needed for our students to achieve the best education possible. A state statute says that local funding should be used to build the facilities and from that standpoint the county commission is obligated to do all in their power to build these facilities. Teachers salaries are too low and we need to look to Raleigh because that is their responsibility to raise the salaries. We need to look at the statute of where the local

and state funding is to be directed. We need to create a good environment where our students can enter and learn without concern for their safety.

Stan Welch: Funding is the major concern. We need more facilities. This meeting will be good for providing an avenue for open dialog so we can express to you exactly what our needs are.

Open discussion was held.

Lunch was served in the Hurley Room.

Mr. Parks reviewed a few points covered in the morning session. He asked that each participant express what they feel the main goal should be to solve any problems recognized in the morning session.

Stan Welch: We need to prepare our children to proceed in the world today and also into the twenty first century.

Newton Cohen: Improve the environment in the classroom so the teacher can teach and the student can learn.

James Donnell: Teachers need to know they are going to be supported by the principal and school board. Need to insure safety in the classroom for all. We might also look at flexible school schedule to meet all students needs.

Jim Neely: We need to prepare our students for hi-tech industry jobs in the future.

Eldridge Williams: We must concentrate on the 3 R's. We know what the community and business leaders need. Communication is the key to everything. We need to make sure teachers are teaching and preparing the students for what is waiting on them in the community and business world. We need more discipline. this is nothing new, this has always been a problem. We need to do all in our power to keep kids in school. suspension works against us and what we are trying to achieve-we need to keep the kids in school.

Tom Webb: Quality in education and quality educators. We need to teach the core subjects and put emphasis on reaching the middle students. Regarding the discipline problem, the alternative school might be the answer.

Bettie Starr: Set realistic and achievable goals. Communicate curriculum objectives to the commission, each school should meet or exceed the state goals. We need to reaffirm a commitment to meet educational needs of all children. To do this, we need to develop a plan.

Kay Norman: Define quality of life. We need to set short term objectives and articulate what we are and what we are expecting to achieve. We should get out in the community and explain where we are and where we want to go. We need to focus on developing a pre-school program, a K-3 program, and higher grades also, to set some standards.

Bill Burgin: We need to somehow involve parents more. We need to be specific with our goals and try to achieve more parents participation. We should offer opportunities to all levels.

Steve Blount: We need to raise the average achievement levels in our high schools. Alternative schools should be considered. Regarding the retention policy in the schools, as it now stands, a student cannot be held back in the same grade more than one time. If the student still cannot work on the level needed to advance to the next grade, they should be kept in that grade until they are prepared to proceed.

Karen Carpenter: Align the curriculum vertically. teach decision making skills. Search for alternative funding. Establish supportive relationships with the business community. Work toward enhancement of status of teachers.

Todd Arey: The first goals should be to have more meetings to open dialog. We also must dare to be different. If a program is working in another state or location, we should copy it and fine tune it for our system. We should explore the year round school for all schools in the Rowan county system. We might investigate a longer school day, offering programs such as after school tutoring. We should tap into the private sector and ask for input. If local industry I asked to give their input, they will most likely give funding and sponsor programs, also.

Mr. Parks asked what role each different sector will play in role solving.

Todd Arey: The two boards should work together to try to find ways to raise money and should give each other political support. The public sector is needed. We need to make parents realize that we want to give kids a better education than we had. We should involve the private sector to bring in more money.

Karen Carpenter: Do not foresee the county commission and the school board being on the same level because one controls the purse strings. But we can work together. The only way to involve a group is if it impacts them in some way. We should go out into the community and talk about the issues involving the schools.

Steve Blount: We should each depend on each other and recognize that we need the support of both boards for success. We should discuss and debate and then work together in a partnership. If we do not pay now for reeducation we will pay later through the prison system. The school board is charged with the detail work

but are ignoring the big picture. Community colleges are important and we need to bring them to the table with us. We need a strategic plan to bring industry into the area. People must be educated to move into industry.

Bill Burgin: The question is how to interact? Advocates for school system are part of checks and balances. Regarding the school board dealing with the commission-that relationship does establish a partnership. The school board must sell to the commission which direction they wish to go before they try to sell the public. We need to find the best answer as to how to achieve interaction with parents. Our goals must have short-term impact on students but will take long-term effort.

Kay Norman: Regarding the two boards, each board needs to exhibit leadership in a distinctive manner. We need leadership to articulate what is important for our overall goals. Accountability is an important issue. Though the tow boards are different, both are seeking high standards and more money. these boards must be partners or are on a collision course. Would like to see a program like Connecticut has where businesses adopt a school. We need more commitments, both financial and human resources.

Stan Welch: We need to open up communication, encouraging trust. Need to get the business force back on board. This was working before it was placed on the back burner. we also need to involve parents. We are all on the same team.

Bettie Starr: We need parents involvement. We need to continue to reach out to parents, and involve businesses, also. We need to motivate the public.

Tom Webb: The primary goal is the education of children. This should be a joint effort of the school board, county commission, parents, private sector and the state. The county commission and the state are responsible for funding. The parents need to be educated as to what is going on in the schools and what is needed. The private sector should be tapped for resource aid. If they have input, they will back them up with dollars.

Eldridge Williams: Business community needs to be involved. Need better communication between the two boards. Would be good to meet jointly every couple of months. Should utilize colleges and college students in the school system. RCCC does some of this now, Livingstone and Catawba should also be involved.

Jim Neely: There is merit to the two boars meeting together. This would help achieve the best education possible. we need to let the public know we want them to become involved. We need to work together an communicate with the people.

Newton Cohen: In agreement with the thoughts expressed by the others.

Mr. Parks asked the group for some consensus as far as meeting together again. The participants responded as follows:

Steve Blount: Yes, on a regular basis, every couple of months and/or a retreat.

Bill Burgin: Yes, and would like to look at specifics, once a month or every two months.

Tom Webb: Yes, as this will keep both boards educated as to what the facts are on both sides.

Bettie Starr: Though not in favor of this initial joint meeting, now feels that there would be some merit to having open communication between the two boards. Though pleased to have the opportunity to give thoughts to the commissioners, we must remember that many of the programs are mandated by the state.

Todd Arey: The interaction of the two boards is good, but does not feel it would be warranted to meet every two months. It would be beneficial to receive from the school board a prioritized list of goals and issues. Would be in favor of a couple of days out of town for a retreat of the two boards possibly in January or February.

James Donnell: Because an election in 12 months or so will mean new faces on the board, it would be better to act fast. If we do not act soon, the new faces on the board could change things.

Newton Cohen: Though it has been nice to get together, the bottom line is that both boards are answerable to the public.

Stan Welch: The partnership of the two boards is good but the question would be how often to meet jointly. Two months would be too frequently. Even quarterly would seem too much. Each board meets individually and this with jobs, homes, etc. it would be a burden to add another frequent meeting.

Karen Carpenter: Would like for Dr. McCann and his team to come back with a plan and look at school systems that are successful. We could copy these programs.

Mr. Parks called for a vote and the majority voted in favor of additional meetings. It will be decided later as to how soon and when the next meeting will be and board members will be notified.

There being no further business Commissioner Blount moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Webb seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandy Bogle,
Substitute Clerk