

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
ROWAN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
PUBLIC FORUM-MAY 18, 1998-7:00 P.M.
SALISBURY HIGH SCHOOL, SALISBURY, NORTH CAROLINA

PRESENT: Jim Neely, Chairman
J. Newton Cohen, Vice-Chairman
Steve Blount, Member
Dave Rowland, Member
Frank Tadlock, Member

Members present from the Board of Education were: Vick Bost, Betty Starr, Bruce Jones, Eldridge Williams and Karen Carpenter.

Mr. Neely welcomed everyone in attendance and thanked them for coming to the first public forum on the proposed school funding plan. He then introduced Dr. Betty Starr who described what the School Board hoped to gain from the public forums. Dr. Starr then turned the meeting over to Larry Parks who served as moderator.

Mr. Parks described the two tasks that faced each board, one with educating children and the other with providing funds for educational needs. He stated that the two boards sought to hear how the public felt about the proposed funding plan developed by the two boards.

Mr. Tim Russell presented the County's portion of the proposal for providing school funds. He stated that the two factors affecting the change in funding was an increase in the statewide average per pupil appropriation and an increase in student enrollment. He explained the current expense and capital needs, which were the two main components of the plan, and reviewed possible revenues to provide the funds necessary to bring the local per pupil expenditure to state average.

Mr. Howard Hurt, Associate Superintendent, presented the educational portion of the plan. He stated they were seeking an improvement in educational funding and that citizens were now faced with a moral imperative to make improvements in education.

Mr. Hurt reviewed the Board of Education's monetary needs stating that if they did nothing else but maintain current programs they would need \$1,752,627. The School Board is seeking, however, \$3.1 million to implement benchmark testing in grades K-8, add 24 reading tutors and materials for grades 4 & 5, provide high school fast track services, add 4 teachers for non-English speaking students, add 2 teachers to the alternative school, increase teacher supplements, add high school remediation, and implement high school benchmark testing. He then added, "the question is whether funding should be over one year or two." Mr. Hurt said that if the increase was funded over 2 years they would only be able to do the continuation budget items.

Mr. Parks then recognized citizens who had signed to speak:

Jackie Propst- stated the County needed to provide funding so children do not fall through the gaps in order to build a foundation. She added that she did not care where the money came from but it must be provided.

Margaret Streater- stated that we cannot afford not to invest in children adding that the quality of teachers was not as important as the quantity and materials to work with.

Sam Post- stated he had three children in public schools and was a teacher himself and he resented what has happened to the schools, that there was a decline in democracy and justice and we have a population of people that don't care. He stated the County had not lived up to its commitment made during the merger to fund the schools at the state average.

Margaret Almeida- stated she has children in three schools and asked the Board to please find a way to provide the funding adding that they must have competitive salaries to keep talented teachers.

George Hundley- said he was interested in the economic development and stability of the community and a quality education was a vital importance for those buying property. He felt the idea of only bringing up to state average was outrageous, and added that if the Board must raise taxes to provide the funding then it must be done.

Rebecca Corriher Daugherty- stated she wanted a better education for children and was willing to pay for it but she was not willing to pay for it when counselors

advised her to take her son out of the county in order for him to receive a diploma. She expressed her concerns over the class of 1999 plan which required a 2.0 for a graduate to receive a diploma instead of certificate.

Tricia Hester- stated that she was a high school teacher and supported funding for remediation which would help with the new graduation requirements. She stated she was willing to pay taxes to have funds for remediation.

Ada Fisher – stated that 15% of all children are born to parents who abuse drugs and that this proposal did not address all of the issues. She stated she felt the School Board was setting itself up for failure by not developing creative plans to address more of the problems.

Catreliia Hunter- stated that what we do for the schools will be the most important thing we do for the county. She added that she supported efforts to increase funding for school and asked the Board to do everything in their power to provide a level of funding needed by the schools.

Gary Fries – asked the Board to consider all aspects of funding very seriously. He stated that reform comes in surges and that if the facilities were built better education would follow.

Betsy Cunningham – stated that we could only attract quality to the community by having quality education.

Lisa Montap-Siegel- stated that her daughter did not have her own English book and had to share and the schools were short of the basic things that are needed to teach. She told the Board to go ahead and raise property taxes if they needed to get more money.

Libby Johnson- stated there were many needs in the schools including counselors for children that come from troubled homes. She stated she supported increased funding for the schools.

Inez Joyner – stated she was a teacher at Overton and she sees the joy in children's faces when they learn. She stated we must either pay now or pay later.

Jerry Davis – stated that teachers have to strive to do more with less. He felt the County Commissioners haven't adequately funded the basic needs of the children and that by only bringing funding to state average would be asking students to only be average, they would be forgetting the above average students.

Tom Knauf- stated that he was discouraged that we were only aiming for average and challenged the boards to aim higher and to meet the political challenge of increasing taxes to provide funding.

Patricia Trueblood – stated that the school system is failing and that she supports paying for higher education as long as the money went to the right source. She stated that teachers needed to learn to work with children of all different colors and needs.

Hazel Kinley – stated that she was upset about the 2.0 requirement for a diploma and she felt the School Board has let the students down.

Mr. Parks thank everyone for their participation. He noted that there would be a total of six public forums and the two boards appreciated people attending the meetings and voicing their concerns.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kelly Dickinson, CMC
Clerk to the Board