

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
THE ROWAN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
PUBLIC FORUM – MAY 19, 1998- 7:00 P.M.
WEST ROWAN HIGH SCHOOL, SALISBURY, NORTH CAROLINA

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

ABSENT: Jim Neely, Chairman

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

Karen Carpenter introduced the board members that were present and described the reason for the public forums stating they were looking at a plan for increased funding for versus increasing student performance. She then introduced Larry Parks, moderator, who described the format the evening's agenda.

Steve Blount presented the County's portion of the plan explaining that the County wished to increase the funding level of the schools to state average in return for the School Board's commitment to raise student performance to state average.

Howard Hurt presented the school needs as determined by the School Board and how the requested \$3.2 million would be spent.

Mr. Parks then explained the ground rules for the public forum and called on the first speaker:

1. Pastor Patricia Trueblood – asked the School Board to consider qualified teachers with pleasant attitudes and to spend money for children advocates for the schools. She also asked the Board to revise its current suspension policy.
2. Pam Hall – implored the Board to fund the schools at state average adding there were glaring needs for classroom materials, teachers and expanded facilities.

She stated you get what you pay for and asked the Board to fully fund the \$3.2 million even if it meant a tax increase.

3. Larry Crowell- stated he supported increased funding for schools and was concerned that the county was only striving for median. He stated that we must have school programs or suffer from the consequences.
4. T. Frank Holman – stated Rowan needed to catch up with funding and that some of the responsibility for learning needs to be put back on the parents and students.
5. Lloyd Masingo – stated that he could not afford to keep paying increased taxes on his property.
6. J. Scott Isley- stated the long range plan looked good but they needed to address the immediate needs. He stated that the County had a \$6 million slush fund set aside and he could not understand why it wasn't spent on the children. He also referenced the baseball stadium and asked if adult recreation was more important than education.
7. Tara Getzloff – stated she was a fifth grade student at Cleveland Elementary School and asked the board for smaller class sizes.
8. Doug Jones – stated he was saddened that citizens had to take time from their families to ask the Board to do what was promised in the 1989 merger. He asked the Board to fund to state average in one year and not two.
9. Jim Greene – stated he was in favor of funding at state per pupil level. He added that providing the assessment needs was also essential, as well as providing remedial classes so all students prepared.
10. John Leatherman- stated there was no choice but to fund and if the only alternative was a tax increase then so be it.
11. John Aycock – stated that he population is growing and he supported the revenue ideas of the local option sales tax or a bond referendum. He stated he supported a state run lottery to raise revenue for education, adding that Virginia has earned \$2 billion from its lottery and 35% of that went to the educational system.
12. Mike Barnette – disheartened that they only want to bring children up to state average and encouraged the School Board to seek a level of excellence. He questioned the Board holding \$6.9 million in reserve and why it wasn't given to the schools.

13. Jim Cohen – stated he was encouraged at the County’s request for an efficiency study but condemned the schools for dragging their feet to accept the offer. He said he did not see money as the answer to educational problems because some of the lowest funded schools in the state had the highest performance levels.
14. Mike Jones – discussed the schools policy on suspension and drug use and stated they needed to view substance abuse by children more seriously, not to just throw them out of school.
15. Ada Fisher – stated she was prepared to spend any money required to provide better education for children but that we could not accept average or ordinary if we wanted our children to become competitive. Stated the system needs creativity and asked the Board to look at children as an industry. She also stated that a supplemental program to help parents teach their children was also needed and she would favor the sales tax to help pay.
16. Robert Knox – stated he applauded the educational system because of the many obstacles it faces each day such as the break down of the family. He stated he supported taxes if that’s what it would take to fund the educational system.

Commissioner Rowland asked to have Mr. Russell speak to the fund balance question. Mr. Parks asked the other Board members how they felt and Vick Bost stated his objection. Mr. Parks then asked the audience who would like an answer about fund balance and by a virtually unanimous show of hands the request was granted.

Mr. Russell explained the County’s fund balance to the audience and the General Statutes that govern how money must be spent and how much must be kept in savings.

Mr. Parks stated that the purpose of the public forums was not to get into a debate but to hear from citizens and in the future he would encourage citizens with questions to seek the facts beforehand.

Mr. Bost asked to respond to Mr. Russell’s explanation and stated that his objection was only because the board’s were not present to disagree or debate and added that the education system needs higher priority.

Mr. Blount then thanked everyone for attending and stated the Board will take all comments into consideration during their budget worksessions.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kelly Dickinson, CMC
Clerk to the Board