

**MINUTES OF THE JOINT MEETING OF THE
ROWAN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
&
ROWAN SALISBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION
January 8, 2007 – 4:00 PM
J. NEWTON COHEN, SR. ROOM, ADMINISTRATION BUILDING**

Commission Members Present: Arnold S. Chamberlain, Chairman
Chad Mitchell, Vice-Chairman
Jon Barber, Member
Tina Hall, Member
Jim Sides, Member

Board of Education Members Present: Bryce Beard, Chairman
Karen South Carpenter, Vice-Chair
Dr. James "Jim" Emerson, Member
Linda Freeze, Member
Jean Kennedy, Member
Kay Wright Norman, Member (arrived at 4:50 pm)
Patty Williams, Member

Other Staff members present were County Manager William Cowan, Clerk to the Board Carolyn Athey, Superintendent Dr. Judy Grissom, and Executive Assistant to the Superintendent/Board Clerk Bonnie Holder.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Commission Chairman Arnold Chamberlain convened the meeting at 4:00 pm.

2. PRAYER

Board of Education Vice-Chair Karen South Carpenter provided the Invocation.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commissioner Chad Mitchell led the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. COMMISSION CHAIRMAN ARNOLD S. CHAMBERLAIN / COMMENTS

Chairman Chamberlain said he understood the importance of an education and he explained that the purpose of the meeting was to demonstrate to the citizens that both Boards want what is best for the children in Rowan County. Chairman

Chamberlain said he wanted the public to have confidence that the two (2) Boards would work together to achieve that goal.

5. BOARD OF EDUCATION CHAIRMAN BRYCE BEARD / COMMENTS

Chairman Beard apologized to the Commissioners that they were not made aware of the situation regarding Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) any earlier than they had been. Chairman Beard read a prepared statement and said the Board of Education was present to demonstrate to the Commissioners and to the public that they understood the situation and had been planning improvements since April. Chairman Beard said the focus for the previous five (5) years had been more on facility needs and redistricting. Chairman Beard said the recent AYP results were of grave concern and he felt that one of the answers to the problem was Dr. Grissom. Chairman Beard said the Board of Education and the Board of Commissioners could not alter the past but strive for a better future.

Chairman Chamberlain welcomed Dr. Grissom and the Board of Education members. Chairman Chamberlain asked that anyone who wished to speak be recognized by the Chairman due to the large number of elected officials in attendance.

Chairman Chamberlain interchanged agenda items #7 and #8 in the order of presentation/discussion.

6. ROWAN SALISBURY SCHOOLS PRESENTATION

Explanation of No Child Left Behind

Dr. Grissom explained that school systems are judged on many different measures, with AYP being only one (1) measure.

Dr. Grissom presented a power point presentation, a copy of which is attached to these minutes. The power point presentation provided both Boards with a better understanding of AYP.

History of AYP for 4 Consecutive Years/Explanation of Corrective Action Status

Dr. Grissom continued with the power point presentation as she provided the Board with the history of arriving at corrective action status. Dr. Grissom discussed the comparisons between RSS and other systems.

7. ROWAN SALISBURY SCHOOL PRESENTATION

Explanation of Where We're Going From Here

Dr. Grissom discussed the Board of Education's efforts to get beyond its current AYP standings, which included efforts to enhance communication and to enhance the curriculum. Dr. Grissom also said the Salisbury Post was going to allow her to provide a bi-weekly column in the newspaper.

Dr. Grissom reviewed plans that are in progress as well as the school systems needs.

8. QUESTIONS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Chairman Chamberlain asked if Dr. Grissom initiated the plans in progress or if the plans were already in place. Dr. Grissom said the plans shown in the power point presentation had been initiated in the past 7 or 8 months (which Chairman Chamberlain pointed out was under Dr. Grissom's tenure).

Chairman Chamberlain asked if any teachers/principals were resisting the corrective action and Dr. Grissom said the Board of Education was receiving excellent feedback.

Commissioner Barber referred to the District Improvement Plan and asked if it was a document that the Board of Education started working on in the summer. Dr. Grissom responded yes. Commissioner Barber said the plan was very detailed and he asked if it was the same plan that would be sent home to parents. Dr. Grissom said yes and Commissioner Barber asked if Dr. Grissom thought every parent would take the time to read the material. Dr. Grissom said, "some will, some will not." Dr. Grissom said the plan was an attempt to get the information to the parents. The packet would include a letter from the Superintendent, a magnet, district plan and the district report card. Dr. Grissom said the day before the packet is sent out, she planned to conduct a Connect-Ed call to every home to announce that the packet was forthcoming.

Commissioner Barber questioned the feedback regarding Connect-Ed and Dr. Grissom said over 8% of the calls were successful the first time the system was used.

(Kay Wright Norman arrived at 4:50 pm.)

Ms. Carpenter asked Commissioner Barber's opinion regarding the plan discussed by Dr. Grissom. Commissioner Barber said he personally felt the plan was too much information for parents to digest and that he was not sure they would read it all. Dr. Grissom responded that she wanted the parents to have the plan but said she felt that parents would have more interest in "their school" and what their school was doing to meet the goals.

Commissioner Mitchell praised Dr. Grissom for an informative presentation and he asked Dr. Grissom what the results would be if the school system did not make AYP in 2006-07 or 2007-08. Dr. Grissom referred back to the list of sanctions she had reviewed and said the state could do defer funding, replace district personnel, remove particular schools from a jurisdiction of the LEA, appoint a receiver or trustee to administer the affairs of the system, abolish or restructure the LEA or allow students to attend schools in another district that had made AYP.

Commissioner Mitchell asked if the benchmark hurdles were the same for every subgroup and Dr. Grissom responded yes.

Patty Williams explained that a child with a learning disability was expected to score as proficiently as a child without a learning disability. Ms. Williams also explained that the percentage of students tested at the high school level was more difficult due to some students being in prison and she reported that staff had actually gone to prisons to test some students. Ms. Williams said to complicate matters further, if a student was hiding from the police, RSS was still accountable for finding and testing that student.

Chairman Chamberlain called for a short recess at 5:10 pm.

Chairman Chamberlain reconvened the meeting at 5:15 pm.

Commissioner Hall said Dr. Grissom was new to RSS and was not to blame for what she had inherited with her position. Commissioner Hall was optimistic that the 2 boards would work together for a successful resolution to the current school situation. Commissioner Hall expressed hope that Dr. Grissom and the Board of Education could provide an understanding of what went wrong. Dr. Grissom responded that she could address how her previous school system had responded in the first year of not making AYP. Dr. Grissom said she was not with RSS in the first few years of not making AYP and that she could not address what had been done and what information had been shared.

Commissioner Hall asked if RSS was being open enough with the parents, teachers and students about the process? Dr. Grissom said she felt like the system was being open, as the situation had been discussed at the school levels, copies of information had been given to teachers, and a letter would be mailed to parents on February 5th via US Mail.

Commissioner Hall asked if funds had been spent wisely in meeting the standards of the NCLB law. Dr. Grissom said she could not speak to the past but that she felt funds were being spent wisely. Dr. Grissom said the district plan would be the guiding force for RSS and that the system was also looking into grant monies in an effort to bring in additional funds.

Commissioner Hall said law requires that 10% of federal money must be allocated for school improvements and she said there must be a plan approved by the Board of Education as to how the money would be spent. Commissioner Hall asked if the Commissioners could receive a copy of the plan and Dr. Grissom said yes.

Commissioner Hall questioned the costs of future sanctions and Dr. Grissom said it would be difficult to predict those costs when RSS did not know what those sanctions would be.

Chairman Beard said he felt some things were going to have to change to make the system more realistic. Chairman Beard said the focus must remain on “today” and that everyone must work together in order to make RSS successful. Chairman Beard predicted that the state would lower the standards before 2013-14.

Mr. Emerson added that RSS would not settle for being on the bottom of the list.

Commissioner Hall praised Dr. Grissom’s idea on literacy coaches. Commissioner Hall discussed focusing on subgroups and the success experienced by Landis Elementary School during her tenure as principal in regards to developing a plan for each child.

Commissioner Hall highlighted a handout that she had distributed during the recess. The handout contained information, which she said helped recreate what should be happening with the school system.

Chairman Chamberlain said the current situation with RSS happened under the leadership of the former Superintendent and that it was now time to correct the situation.

Commissioner Sides said everyone needed to understand that of approximately 31 schools, only 2 schools had failed. Commissioner Sides said as a County Commissioner that it was not his charge to run the school system. Commissioner Sides said his charge was to the citizens regarding the \$30 million the Commissioners provide in local funding to the school system. Commissioner Sides said it was the County’s responsibility to provide for the capital needs and that the Board would continue to fulfill its obligation. Commissioner Sides said he would like some accountability for the funding. Commissioner Sides said as a business owner he personally had had to do a better job with less money and he said, “I hope the school system can do the same thing.” Commissioner Sides commended the Board of Education for “what I’ve heard and what I’ve seen.” Commissioner Sides said he was concerned about education but that he was excited about the “changes that you’ve put forth today.” Commissioner Sides said he also had concerns about the federal government being involved in education and that he hoped there were changes coming that would make it easier for RSS to do its job.

9. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairman Chamberlain opened the Public Comment Period to entertain comments from citizens who wished to address the two (2) Boards. The following citizens spoke:

- John Leatherman said he would like for the school board to establish a district-wide school improvement team on a permanent basis. Mr. Leatherman said he would like for the Commissioners to be able to appoint members to the team.
- David Setzer said he was pleased to address the Board on behalf of the county's greatest resource – its children. Mr. Setzer said their education was the highest civic responsibility shared by all. Mr. Setzer said it was imperative that the community ensures that the school system is outstanding. Mr. Setzer said as a representative of the Blanche and Julian Robertson Foundation, he was pleased to reaffirm the Foundation's support of education and the public schools.
- Phillip Kirk from Catawba College applauded the Boards for the joint meeting. Mr. Kirk said there were 2 issues that should be addressed, 1) the lack of communication, and 2) attitude. Mr. Kirk felt the joint meeting was a good step and he commended both Boards. Mr. Kirk said there would be changes to NCLB but that the program would not be eliminated. Mr. Kirk suggested ending social promotion and to place emphasis on reading. Mr. Kirk said there was an excellent teacher education department at Catawba College that could assist RSS.
- Jeff Smith, Chair of Rowan Partners for Education said he was excited about what he had heard discussed today. Mr. Smith talked about unyielding support for RSS and the children in the County, saying education is the only way for the County to progress. Mr. Smith praised the open communications and he applauded Dr. Grissom. Mr. Smith asked for continued support for RSS and to let the professionals do their jobs, and to hold them accountable.

With no further citizen input, Chairman Chamberlain closed the Public Comment Period.

Chairman Chamberlain said the Boards would coordinate a future meeting and he expressed his appreciation to both Boards for their preparation and congenial dispositions.

Chairman Chamberlain thanked everyone for their attendance at the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to come between the Boards, Chairman Chamberlain adjourned the meeting at 6:10 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carolyn Athey
Clerk to the Board