

**MINUTES OF THE JOINT MEETING OF THE
ROWAN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
&
ROWAN SALISBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION
March 26, 2007 – 5:30 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
Patty Williams, Member

Other County Staff members present were County Manager William Cowan, Clerk to the Board Carolyn Athey and Finance Director Leslie Heidrick. Staff members present from the school system were Superintendent Dr. Judy Grissom, Assistant Superintendent Dr. Becky Smith, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent/Board Clerk Bonnie Holder and other staff seated in the audience.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Chamberlain convened the meeting of the Rowan County Board of Commissioners at 5:30 pm.

Board of Education Chairman Bryce Beard convened the meeting of the Rowan County Board of Education at 5:30 pm.

2. PRAYER

Commissioner Jon Barber provided the Invocation.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Beard led the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. COMMISSION CHAIRMAN ARNOLD CHAMBERLAIN COMMENTS

Chairman Chamberlain referred to agenda item # 8 and requested that the issue be presented and discussed only briefly.

Commissioner Hall moved for an addition to the agenda pertaining to Faith-Based Initiatives. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Barber and passed unanimously.

Chairman Chamberlain added the issue as agenda item #8a.

5. BOARD OF EDUCATION CHAIRMAN BRYCE BEARD COMMENTS

Chairman Beard reported that the one-year anniversary for Dr. Grissom's employment with the Rowan-Salisbury School System (RSS) was the following week. Chairman Beard said as the meeting progressed, everyone would realize the progress that had occurred during Dr. Grissom's tenure with RSS. Chairman Beard expressed hope that measurable gains would soon be seen.

6. ROWAN –SALISBURY SCHOOL SYSTEM – UPDATE REGARDING STATE ASSISTANCE TEAM

Dr. Smith provided a power point presentation to highlight the LEAP Team's recommendations. Dr. Smith explained that the LEAP Team consisted of retired educators who had been assisting RSS since mid-January. Dr. Smith reviewed the sites visited by the Team and said their focus was on Title One schools, which are federal programs. Dr. Smith said the Team validated many of the procedures RSS was already performing and also complimented RSS on the cleanliness of buildings, congeniality of staff and the mannerisms of students.

The Recommendations:

- Implement and continue the use of PEP's for at-risk students
- Review of lesson plans and schedules by principals
- Post essential questions or student friendly statements of objectives that are connected to each day's lessons
- Ensure effective use of personnel and resources
- Evaluate existing educational programs
- Display student work relevant to curriculum being taught
- Target needs of individual students
- Provide differentiated instruction
- Use data to drive instruction
- Foster active engagement of students thru use of manipulatives, varied instructional strategies, technology and differentiated instruction
- Develop system for benchmark testing for the district

Commissioner Sides referred to Benchmark testing and asked how the students who “don’t get it” are provided with the extra instruction to bring them up to their grade level. Dr. Smith said tutors could be used before/after school or during lunch. Dr. Smith said there were various ways to address the problem.

In response to a query from Chairman Chamberlain regarding the Team’s recommendations, Dr. Grissom said the Team’s role is to provide the recommendations and monitoring to ensure compliance.

Dr. Smith said the school system currently has technology issues and is trying to bring their system up to par.

7. ROWAN –SALISBURY SCHOOL SYSTEM – GRADUATION/DROP OUT RATES & PLAN OF ACTION TO ADDRESS RATES

Dr. Smith continued with the power point presentation as she discussed the graduation/drop-out rate. Dr. Smith explained that all students don’t graduate in 4 years as some graduate early or some go beyond 4 years. Dr. Smith said there are some problems with the tracking system. Dr. Smith said that before the state had revealed the graduation rate, RSS had already started working on a High School Task Force to look at ways to keep students in school.

Dr. Smith then reviewed the following procedures RSS was looking to implement to address the graduation/drop out rate:

- Improve the registration process to make it more about the individual student (target students beginning in 8th grade)
- Improved communications with parents and students
- Applied for federal safe schools and communities grant
- Increase correlation between career and academic education
- Focus more on students with issues and provide more individual counseling lessons with students and school counselors
- Implement Alternative School Task Force
- Investigate the feasibility of adjusting progress report schedule
- Apply for a consortium grant to focus on high school instructional modules that engage students in hands on training relevant to learning practices
- Improve attendance rates - begin interventions early on
- Examine ways to meet needs of students who are unsuccessful with additional scheduling and settings
- Explore Learn and Earn programs
- Investigate additional partnerships
- Explore the virtual public school model (online courses)
- Develop alternatives to suspension program
- Develop vertical teams

Dr. Smith said additional funding would be needed to fulfill and implement the plans.

Commissioner Sides pointed out that the County is asked to fund more and more while the State continues to fund less.

Commissioner Mitchell mentioned that the County had taken the initiative to hire resource officers and principals but was being penalized \$300,000 per year for taking the initiative.

Commissioner Barber said there are costs to society due to dropout rates.

8. ROWAN-SALISBURY SCHOOL SYSTEM – BRIEF DISCUSSION REGARDING PRIORITIZED CAPITAL NEEDS

Ms. Carpenter distributed the list of the school system’s prioritized capital needs. Ms. Carpenter said any number of the projects could have been ranked as the number one priority.

The priorities were as follows:

Priority	Projects	Individual Project Cost
1	Technology Infrastructure	\$ 2,000,000
2	Land for South Area Elementary School	\$ 1,300,000
3	Land for Southwest Area Middle School	\$ 1,500,000
4	Woodleaf Elementary School – Replacement School	\$ 14,766,319
5	Administrative & Maintenance Facility	\$ 10,020,000
6	South Area Elementary School	\$ 14,342,298
7	Southwest Area Middle School	\$ 21,163,629
8	High School Instructional Gyms	\$ 8,299,740
9	Middle School Instructional Gyms	\$ 8,299,740
10	Cleveland Elementary School – Replacement	\$ 16,591,435
11	Knox Middle School – Replacement	\$ 24,023,446
12	Elizabeth Duncan Koontz Addition	\$ 1,913,374

The total cost for all projects was \$124,219,981.

Commissioner Hall asked if there had been feedback from the public regarding the replacement schools for Cleveland and Woodleaf. Assistant Superintendent Jim Christy responded from the audience that the school system had not received much feedback at all.

Commissioner Hall said parents from these schools had previously expressed their preferences for renovations as opposed to new schools. Ms. Carpenter said renovations were not an option for Woodleaf Elementary.

Commissioner Hall asked if RSS had involved Salisbury Rowan Utilities (SRU) in the water issues at Woodleaf. Mr. Christy responded that RSS had certified well consultants looking at Woodleaf and that RSS had worked very closely with SRU in trying to locate new school sites, and in looking at the existing sites.

Commissioner Hall said she had recently talked to Matt Bernhardt, Assistant City Manager for Utilities, and he had informed her that no one from the school system had approached him pertaining to the water concerns at Woodleaf Elementary School. Commissioner Hall said SRU was the County's water experts and that they might have ideas worth looking into. Mr. Christy said RSS had certified well consultants from Chapel Hill look at Woodleaf. Mr. Christy said SRU handled municipal water/sewer. Mr. Christy explained that a well consultant had been contacted "because that's what we're dealing with."

Commissioner Hall said SRU dealt with issues countywide and she mentioned the tremendous savings SRU had just provided to the Town of Rockwell. Commissioner Hall suggested it might be worth asking SRU to look into the situation.

8a. ADDITION

Commissioner Hall reported that she had attended a meeting in Charlotte at Waddell High School pertaining to faith-based initiatives. Commissioner Hall said Charlotte-Mecklenburg School (CMS) Superintendent, Dr. Peter Gorman, was basically reaching out to the faith community in an effort to make a difference for at-risk children. Commissioner Hall said there are over 234 churches in Rowan County who stand ready to reach out and make a difference to the children. Commissioner Hall recognized Dr. Jim Duncan who was in the audience from First Presbyterian Church. Commissioner Hall said part of Dr. Duncan's sermon on Sunday was regarding the tragic death of 13-year old Treasure Feamster. Commissioner Hall said Dr. Duncan had asked why Rowan County couldn't do something like what CMS was suggesting.

Commissioner Hall distributed a packet of information and highlighted some of the comments and information learned from attending the meeting in Charlotte.

Commissioner Hall said she had been thrilled to hear Dr. Smith state in her presentation that RSS was already considering faith-based initiatives. Commissioner Hall expressed hope that RSS could hold a summit and reach out to the churches in the community.

Commissioner Hall recognized Pastor Sandy Kerr from Thyatira Church in the audience.

9. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairman Chamberlain opened the Public Comment Period to entertain comments from any citizens who might wish to address the Boards.

With no one coming forward, Chairman Chamberlain closed the Public Comment Period.

10. CLOSING REMARKS / BOARD OF EDUCATION CHAIRMAN BRYCE BEARD

Chairman Beard said the school system was dealing with an increasingly challenging world and was looking for different ways to deliver education and services. Chairman Beard said the Board could feel comfortable in the school administration and staff in knowing that they care about the students. Chairman Beard said the school system has high hopes and dreams and hopes to be a model for other systems in the future. Chairman Beard said RSS was reaching out for community support because teachers had to make up for some of the shortfalls in the world today. Chairman Beard commended the teachers as he said they did not have an easy task.

11. CLOSING REMARKS / COMMISSION CHAIRMAN ARNOLD CHAMBERLAIN

Chairman Chamberlain echoed Chairman Beard's comments and said he believed a lot of effort was being put forth. Chairman Chamberlain said there are two (2) constants to the abused and neglected children in the system, 1) there is no dad in the house, and 2) whoever is raising the child is uneducated. Chairman Chamberlain said the Commissioners have a tough job in deciding how to spend county funds but he said the Board of Education also had a tough job. Chairman Chamberlain said someone had to do the job and he wanted people performing the task that "wanted" to do the job – and he said the Board of Education "obviously wants to do it." Chairman Chamberlain finished by saying if RSS was not successful, "we on this side don't have a chance in years to come."

12. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, Chairman Chamberlain adjourned the meeting of the Rowan County Board of Commissioners at 7:00 pm.

Chairman Beard recessed the meeting of the Board of Education at 7:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carolyn Athey
Clerk to the Board