

Facilities
COUNTY FINANCE COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING
MARCH 17, 1997, 8:00AM

PRESENT: Chairman Rollin Shaw
Commissioner Tom Bacote
Commissioner Billy R. King

OTHERS: Members, Board of Ed Facilities Committee (Mackey Hall, Milton
Yarboro, Kenneth Edge)
Other Members Board of Education (Diane Wheatley, Mary Emily Royal,
Richard Glazier)
Cliff Strassenburg, County Manager
James Martin, Deputy County Manager
Juanita Pilgrim, Asst. County Manager
Cliff Spiller, Asst. County Manager
Danny Higgins, Staff Attorney
Marsha Fogle, Clerk
Staff: Board of Education
Frances Deaton, Secretary, Board of Education

This special meeting was called so that the County Facilities Committee and the School Facilities Committee could discuss proposed construction projects that would require a bond referendum.

Mr. Tim Kinlaw said there is a need for a \$98,000,000 bond referendum. He reviewed the projects (3 new schools), additions, renovations, roofing projects, deferred maintenance, equipment upgrades and contingency. He noted that a lot of the money would be going for additions/renovations to our present buildings. Mr. Kinlaw noted the growth of the system and the state's mandate to reduce class size as some of the reasons the County must add new schools. He also indicated that some of our older schools are in dire need of attention. In addition to the student growth in our schools, the state continues to add teachers each year, i.e., since 1994 the county has added 270 teachers (equates to five elementary schools).

Commissioner Lee Warren noted that \$98 million computes to a \$8 million dollar debt service each year which equates to 8 cents on our property tax. In addition, operating cost will increase. Construction/operating cost ~~to~~ could equate to a 13 cent tax increase. Mr. Warren said we need to get a hold on what the taxpayer will support.

Mr. Glazier said he thought with the leadership of the school and county a \$98 million dollar bond referendum would be successful. He noted the importance of both entities working together on this issue. Mr. Edge indicated the public relations campaign would have to have private money in order to be successful.

Mr. Tim Kinlaw noted that the State predicts a flattening out in the student population in 2005. Mr. Edge stated that because of a glut of construction projects coming on in the next year, construction costs will escalate.

The Board of Education adopted a Resolution requesting the Board of Commissioners to approve a \$98 million dollar bond referendum for schools. They would like to have the referendum in June.

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Mr. Strassenburg noted there is not enough time to get the referendum on the ballot by June. He indicated the next step for the Board of Commissioners is to decide how much the bond issue will be and then Staff will go to the Local Government Commission with the information. In addition, Mr. Strassenburg said we should also be informing the public about not only the school needs but other county needs that will require a tax increase. He said we should fully disclose all of this information to the taxpayers. Mr. Glazier stated that along with reporting what this will cost, we should report what it will cost us if we don't do it.

Board of Education member, Mary Emily Royal, said she still thought the best way to get the money would be through a 1 cent local sales option tax. She noted that finding monies to do school construction is not just a Cumberland County issue, it is affecting a lot of other school systems. She suggested all of the systems should get together and lobby for the authority.

It was noted that \$98 million is really only a third of what is needed.

The Board of Commissioners will consider this matter at the March 25 meeting.

Commissioner Shaw noted the importance of not "dilly-dallying" too long on this issue and the importance of both Boards working together.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 9:30AM