

CUMBERLAND COUNTY FACILITIES COMMITTEE  
AUGUST 12, 2003, 8:30 AM  
REGULAR MEETING

PRESENT: Chairman Breeden Blackwell  
Commissioner Ed Melvin  
Commissioner Kenneth Edge  
James Martin, County Manager  
Juanita Pilgrim, Deputy County Manager  
Amy Cannon, Assistant County Manager  
Cliff Spiller, Assistant County Manager  
Laura Johnson, Assistant County Attorney  
Tom Cooney, Utility Department Director  
Bob Stanger, County Engineer  
Charles Whittenton, Solid Waste Director  
Mitzi Champion, Public Information Director  
Kenny Currie, Emergency Services Deputy Director  
Lula Crenshaw, Martin Luther King Committee  
Walter Vick, Architect  
Ronnie Mitchell, Attorney  
Ann Hymes, Deputy Clerk

1. Approval Of Minutes: June 10, 2003 Meeting

MOTION: Commissioner Edge moved to approve.  
SECOND: Commissioner Melvin  
VOTE: UNANIMOUS

2. Discussion and consideration of a request from Tom Cooney regarding the building condition and citations from the City Fire Marshall's Office on the former Washington Drive School

Tom Cooney, Utility Department Director, stated that on July 28, 2003 the City Fire Marshall's office conducted a safety inspection of the former Washington Drive School. It was discovered that a large amount of combustible material was stored in the buildings. The Fire Marshall gave the county 72 hours to secure the building and 90 days to remove all combustible material from the grounds. He further stated that the roof covering the gym is unsound, and it is a health hazard due to the pigeons living there. The main structure of the building is in pretty good shape. It would take approximately \$300,000 to demolish the building and approximately \$50,000 to clean it and secure all openings to the building.

Tom Cooney further noted that the County is presently leasing a metal building adjacent to the school to Moses Mathis for bicycle repair. Evidence indicates Mr. Mathis has allowed repair and disassembly of large truck

vehicles at the location. Mr. Mathis denies this. He has apparently also allowed the illegal disposal of oil into the drains located in the Washington Drive School. Mr. Cooney asked the committee for instructions on what to do with the building.

James Martin, County Manager, noted that the Martin Luther King Park Committee is interested in restoring the school and perhaps an agreement could be worked out with them. Lula Crenshaw, representing the MLK Park Committee, stated they remain interested in the property. They realize that some of the portions may have to be demolished, however they would like to save as much of the historical part as possible. Mr. Martin reminded the committee that when this issue came up several years ago, the county was ready to transfer the property to the MLK Park Committee but because of the portion of the property leased to the bicycle business it was put into escrow until October 1, 2005 when it would then be transferred to the committee. The County has a lease agreement with Mr. Mathis until August 30, 2005. He asked if the MLK Park Committee would be willing to accept the property before then. Ms. Crenshaw replied that they would be willing if the property is secured and stable, and without the current liabilities.

Walter Vick, architect for the MLK Park Committee, provided background information on the Washington Drive School. He noted that federal tax credits make it an attractive project for private enterprise, and the whole building could accommodate 30 low to moderate, affordable residential apartments. The only area that has an intrusion problem is the gym. The building could come back on the tax rolls once restored and rehabilitated. He also said he would find out the cost of reroofing the property in the event it becomes necessary.

Commissioner Edge inquired about asbestos in the building. Mr. Cooney said there is a small amount and it would have to be removed prior to demolition. Fencing the building was discussed. It was decided that whatever fencing is needed to secure the parameters, it should be done.

Mr. Cooney was directed to ask the city for an extension on the 90-day deadline. The County would agree to demolition of certain portions of the school, but only if ordered by the city. Commissioner Blackwell asked Laura Johnson, Assistant County Attorney, to immediately proceed with communications with Moses Mathis to notify him that he has been engaging in prohibited activities in both his leased area as well as in the school, and demand that he stop or face ejection. If he does not comply, steps should be taken to remove him from the property. The entire property would then be deeded to the MLK Park Committee.

MOTION: Commissioner Blackwell moved that the Facilities Committee recommend to the Board that the County meet the deadline of 90 days to clean out the structure and to secure the structure by sealing up all openings on the first level, as well as construction of appropriate fencing, in order to comply with the city's orders. Once that is done, the County legal staff will prepare documents to transfer that portion of the property containing the Washington Drive School to the MLK Park Committee. This may require the property to be subdivided.

SECOND: Commissioner Melvin

VOTE: UNANIMOUS

Meeting adjourned: 9:40 AM.