
Ashe Campus/WCC

Memorandum

To: Ashe County Commissioners
From: Chris Robinson, Vice President
CC: Sam Yearick, County Manager

On January 3, 2017, the Ashe County Board of Commissioners reaffirmed its commitment to funding \$6 million towards the expansion of Wilkes Community College's Ashe Campus. The total project budget will be \$10 million, with \$3 million from the Connect NC Bond Referendum and \$1 million from the WCC Foundation.

Since that time, the college's administration has been working with the Ashe County Board of Education to acquire the approximately three-acre site adjacent to the Ashe Campus. The new 30,000 square foot facility on this site will provide new instructional space and necessary office space for faculty and staff. The college will continue to operate the current space.

The college and the board of education have reached an agreement in principle on the site at a cost of \$300,000. Additionally, the college will lease the adjoining parking lot from the board for one dollar per year; the lease will be for 20 years, with a college option to renew for an additional 20-year period. The Ashe Board of Education and the WCC Board of Trustees have approved the agreement.

The college has completed the required soil testing of the site and a survey is underway. A plat will be available by the time of our meeting on November 6 and presented to you then.

The college is next required to receive final approval of the project from the State Board of the NC Community College System. One of the requirements for approval is that the college own the property. We can then transfer the property back to the county to hold for any loan transaction that may be used to fund the \$6 million commitment, with a lease back to the college for that

terminates at the end of the loan period. Both transactions can be approved by the State Board during the same meeting if needed.

We are requesting to use \$300,000 of allocated county funds for the property transfer, and that those funds be made available in the coming weeks to complete the transaction. We would work with county administration on the transfer back to the county and the lease of the site.

As a side note, the college and the Board of Education are in the process of setting up an Early College High School on the Ashe Campus. This will allow up to 40 students annually to earn both a high school diploma and an associate's degree free of charge. The school is expected to have an enrollment of 200 students when fully phased in over a five-year period, making it imperative to move ahead with the expansion as quickly as possible.

We appreciate your support of the Ashe Campus expansion and look forward to providing further details at the November 6 meeting. In the interim, please do not hesitate to let me know if you have questions.