

Ashe County

*150 Government Circle
Jefferson, NC 28640*



Meeting Minutes - Draft

Tuesday, September 17, 2019

10:00 AM

Board of Education Annex Building

County Commission

*Chairperson Todd McNeill
Vice Chair William Sands
Commissioner Larry Rhodes
Commissioner Paula Perry
Commissioner Larry Dix*

I. 10:00 AM - Meeting Called to Order at the Ashe County Board of Education Annex Building

Chairman McNeill called the Special Meeting of the Ashe County Board of Commissioners to order at 10:00 a.m. at the Ashe County Board of Education Annex Building. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss construction of the Ashe County Middle School.

Members present: Chairman McNeill, Vice Chairman Sands, Commissioner Dix, Commissioner Perry, and Commissioner Rhodes.

Others present: Interim County Manager Adam Stumb, Finance Officer Sandra Long, Deputy Clerk Barbara McCoy, and Clerk Ann Clark.

School Board members present: Darrell McClure, C.B. Jones, Polly Jones, Dr. Beckworth, and Dianne Eldreth.

Others present: School Superintendent Phyllis Yates, Finance Director Amanda Coldiron, Maintenance Supervisor Jerry Baker, Architect Larry Greene, Middle School Principal Dustin Farmer, and Engineer Jason Herman.

Vannoy Construction representatives present: Mark Vannoy and Mike Kesterson.

Present: 5 - Commissioner Todd McNeill, Commissioner William Sands, Commissioner Larry Rhodes, Commissioner Paula Perry and Commissioner Larry Dix

II. Pledge of Allegiance/Opening Prayer

C.B. Jones led the Pledge of Allegiance and Vice Chairman Sands offered the opening prayer.

III. Presentations

**PRES
19-163**

School & Site Design

School Superintendent Phyllis Yates spoke about site construction on the Ashe County Middle School project. Six different companies picked up plans and five of those submitted bids on the project. Vannoy Construction was selected for the project after submitting a bid of \$649,000 that includes site work, the sediment and erosion control plan, and rough grading at the building site. Commissioner Rhodes stated that last year when the commissioners and the School Board met, the plans were for a one-story building and a recent article in the paper stated that plans are now for a two-story building and the auditorium has increased in size. Architect Larry Greene stated that school staff wanted additions to the building which resulted in the plans being changed to a two-story building. He explained that 11,000 square feet was added which changed the original plan of 149,000 square feet to 161,000 square feet. This will be paid for by savings from site grading and other similar costs. Dr. Beckworth stated that the building was shortened by 100 feet so that it would not be built on fill dirt. C.B. Jones stated that land behind the school is too steep and not usable and is they reason they did not purchase more land. Commissioner Rhodes explained that the commissioners are charged as stewards of tax dollars and it is the commissioners' responsibility to be good stewards of that money. Commissioner Rhodes believes the commissioners should have been included in discussions regarding changing to a two-story building. The commissioners have also not been notified of the costs associated with these changes

which affects every person in the County. He explained issues when Westwood Elementary School was built. Commissioner Rhodes added that the \$15 million received from lottery funds for the project affects the County because the County will not receive \$5 million in lottery funds for five years. School Superintendent Phyllis Yates stated that she is responsible for not keeping the commissioners updated on changes made to the project. Since there were no extra costs involved and since they would not be asking for more money she did not notify the commissioners. C.B. Jones stated that they never went back to the commissioners to ask for approval of changes to the plans on the other two school construction projects he has been involved in. Polly Jones told the Board that she wanted a one-level school but when she found out that part of the school would be constructed on fill dirt she did not want that. Commissioner Dix stated that this needs to be clarified with the public. Architect Larry Greene stated that there is a stream close to the road. Commissioner Rhodes asked about the location of the elevator. He was told there will be only one elevator which complies with ADA requirements. Mr. Greene stated that the auditorium and the gym are basically the same as in the first plan.

PRES
19-164

Grading/Site Contract

School Superintendent Phyllis Yates explained that the contract is for 100 days at a cost of \$649,000 but this could change if rock is hit.

PRES
19-165

Construction Update

Chairman McNeill stated that he is questioned often by citizens on when construction will begin on the new middle school. Architect Larry Greene stated that the original date to begin construction was June 1, 2020. Since the plans have changed from a one-story building to a two-story building, the project has been delayed approximately two to three months. Hopefully less grading will compensate for this. The projected date for completion is now the fall of 2022. Architect Larry Greene stated that they are now in the design and development stage of the project. He explained that his fee is fixed and will not change with any changes made to the plans. Commissioner Dix explained that he has had many questions from the public regarding traffic concerns. School Superintendent Phyllis Yates stated that she and Interim Manager Adam Stumb met with DOT concerning traffic at the school. DOT may place a light at the school although they have not committed to that and DOT will not construct a secondary entrance into the school. Interim Manager Adam Stumb stated that DOT recommends only one access to the school. Ms. Yates told the commissioners that she talked with representatives from American Emergency Vehicles and was told that traffic will not be a problem. Dr. Beckworth stated that it would help if the Town of Jefferson would three-lane the entrance into the school.

PRES
19-166

Finance

Dr. Beckworth stated that the Ashe County Middle School is a \$40 million project. Finance Officer Sandra Long stated that at a previous meeting held on November 5, 2018 with the commissioners, the commissioners approved the recommended design that was presented on October 30, 2018 consisting of 149,924 square feet. With removing the cost of the land (\$1,600,000), the project cost would be between \$37.4 million and \$41.4 million from an estimate dated October 29, 2018. Later the County was given an estimate dated April 11, 2019 of between \$40.7 million to \$44.9 million. Removing the cost of the land, the cost of the project would be between \$39.1 million and to \$43.3 million. The mid-point would be \$41.1 million. The County had committed \$25 million for

the project plus the Needs Based Lottery grant of \$15 million which brought the total project to \$40 million. There could be a little flexibility on both sides. The County is planning to borrow a total of \$33 million; \$25 million for the Middle School project and \$8 million for WCC Ashe Campus expansion project. The County has been reserving Articles 40 and 42 sales tax plus Article 46 sales tax, along with the sales tax redistribution to cover the loan payments. The last payment was made on the land in August 2019 so that amount can be removed from the project costs. Until the project bids are received in April 2020, the County will not know the exact amount that will need to be borrowed. Interim County Manager Adam Stumb passed out information on a tentative financing schedule. The Local Government Commission (LGC) has 60 days to approve the financing project application submitted by the County. The timeline for the project will be modified based on the date the bids are received. Dr. Beckworth stated that the school plans are for 161,000 square feet at \$260 per square foot which equals \$40 million. Commissioner Rhodes questioned how much energy efficient equipment is planned for the school. Architect Greene answered that there will be energy efficient mechanical items, insulation, and lighting that will save energy. He explained that there is not enough money in the budget for a solar system.

PRES

19-167

Others

Mark Vannoy and Mike Kesterson with Vannoy Construction provided an explanation of the Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR) program versus using a general contractor on the school construction project. The CMAR would come before the Board of Education and the Board of Commissioners for an interview. The company would work with the architect on the project. When a CMAR is selected for the project, a fee that is set by the State would be negotiated. A budget could be submitted within three weeks after selection of the CMAR. The next step in the process is the bidding process. The CMAR can bring smaller contractors together on the project to keep the work local. An advantage is that the cost will be known for the project before the project is bid. This is the best method to maintain a budget on a project.

PRES

19-168

School Board Comments

Dianne Eldreth asked what extra cost there would be in using the CMAR process. Mark Vannoy answered that the pre-construction fee is 1/2% of the project cost of \$40 million and could be waived if negotiated. C.B. Jones asked if money would be saved by using a CMAR. Mark Vannoy answered that in today's market there would be savings and more savings during the design stage. Darrell McClure asked if using a CMAR would affect the timeline of the project. Mark Vannoy answered that the timeline would be shorter by utilizing a CMAR. He added that the quote given is a guaranteed amount. If costs go over the quoted price, the costs are at the expense of the CMAR. Architect Larry Greene stated that he is not sure how his engineers would react to bringing a third party onto the project at this point. School Superintendent Phyllis Yates stated that all five school construction projects that she has been involved with have never gone over budget and the school system has always worked with Vannoy Construction. C.B. Jones stated that the Board of Education is responsible for the project but they need to keep the commissioners better informed.

PRES

19-169

Commissioners Comments

Chairman McNeill stated that good information has been provided during the meeting and he wants to see the project move forward. Commissioner Dix stated we all want what is

good for Ashe County. Commissioner Rhodes stated have two commission board members need to sit in on school board meetings and report back to the commissioners.

IV. Adjournment

Commissioner Dix made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:12 p.m. Commissioner Perry seconded the motion. The motion passed with unanimous approval.
Approved

For: 5 - Commissioner McNeill, Commissioner Sands, Commissioner Rhodes,
Commissioner Perry and Commissioner Dix

Citizens with disabilities requiring special needs to access the services or public meetings of Ashe County Government should contact the County Manager's Office three days prior to the meeting by calling (336) 846-5501.