

**MINUTES OF BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF GUILFORD COUNTY
WORK SESSION**

Greensboro, North Carolina
August 31, 2015

The Board of County Commissioners met in a duly noticed Work Session at 3:00 PM in the Blue Room, Old County Courthouse, 301 West Market Street, Greensboro, NC.

PRESENT: Chairman Hank Henning, presiding; Vice Chairman Jeff Phillips; Commissioners Carolyn Q. Coleman, Kay Cashion, Alan Branson (in at 3:15PM), Ray Trapp, J. Carlvena Foster, Alan Perdue, and Justin Conrad.

ABSENT: None.

ALSO PRESENT: Marty Lawing, County Manager; Mark Payne, County Attorney; Matthew Mason Chief Deputy Attorney; Robin Keller, Clerk to the Board; Mo Green, Guilford County Schools Superintendent; Clarence Grier, Deputy County Manager; Gene Chasin, Say Yes to Education Chief Operating Officer; Richard (Skip) Moore, Say Yes Planning Committee Representative; members of the Board of Education, members of the media and community.

Call to Order

Chairman Henning called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM and then recognized Mo Green, Guilford County Schools Superintendent to share information regarding the proposed Say Yes to Education Initiative for Guilford County.

**Presentation: Say Yes To Education Initiative
History and Background**

Green introduced Gene Chasin, Operations Officer for Say Yes to the Board. He shared that they will be discussing a wonderful opportunity to transform how we deliver education in our community. Green noted that while he and his staff were compiling the 2016 strategic plan, they identified a need to engage the entire community in the development of our youth. Green shared that the Say Yes initiative aligns with the goals of the 2015 strategic plan, whereby it aligns many different agencies focused on education. He noted that also during this review of the program by the School system, the Guilford Education Alliance was also researching the Say Yes Initiative and reached out to them on behalf of Guilford county students.

Green advised the board that one of the conditions of consideration of Say Yes is to have the support of the major governmental agencies associated with the schools. He stated that both the City of High Point and the City of Greensboro have offered their support of the initiative.

Mr. Chasin reviewed the history of the Say Yes program. He noted that the program began in the 1980's in Philadelphia, and is designed to help communities provide Scholarships, Comprehensive Supports, and quality schools in order to increase the level of Post-Secondary Education Completion, thereby creating economic revitalization.

Guilford's County's selection to submit proposal

Mr. Chasin reviewed the RFP process that Say Yes initiated for a County wide trial of the program. He reviewed some of the criteria that Say Yes was looking for in expanding the program models used in Syracuse and Buffalo NY. Chasin reviewed their national community selection process placing Guilford County as one of the three finalists.

Chasin stated that by committing to the Say Yes Partnership, the County, the City of High Point and the City of Greensboro and Guilford County Schools would agree that postsecondary access and success was an overarching community goal, and that they would engage in active collaboration to make effective use of existing resources to deliver comprehensive wrap around services to ensure students could have access to post-secondary education.

Chasin reviewed the organizational structure of the 5 core staff of the initiative and coordinating activities that would become legacy costs beyond six years of implementation. Chasin went on to review what the wrap around supports looked like in other programs. He reviewed items identified in Buffalo such as after school and summer school programs, health clinics, internships, legal clinics and mental health clinics. He described the potential economic impact of increasing the number of post-secondary graduates. Chasin shared that a gross household income of 75 Thousand Dollars would be eligible for a 5 Thousand Dollar choice grant. He stated that 96% of the students eligible for financial aid in the Buffalo project were able to submit financial aid applications. Chasin reviewed the Collaborative partnerships raising funding for school caseworkers, use of community block grants and private resources used to fund the programs. He informed the Board that additional adjustments to the design were made as a result of best practices identified in Syracuse and Buffalo. He noted that flexibility with ongoing learning and adjustments to the program are required to be successful. He stated that it is important for local leadership to take ownership of the program as early as possible. He stated that the Say Yes to Education works with the external partners; with local leadership having primary responsibility of the program.

Say Yes to Education Planning Committee Update

Clarence Grier, Deputy County Manager and County liaison to the Say Yes Planning Committee reviewed the tasks of the local planning committee. He advised the Board that they have been meeting every two weeks. He stated that the committee is comprised of officials from City of Greensboro, City of High Point, Guilford County Schools, Principals, Teachers, Social Workers, representatives of Higher Education, local non-profits and philanthropic agencies. He discussed

some of the activities such as those of the communications sub-committee in their effort to inform the community through social media, website and speaking engagements. Grier reviewed each of the committee's task forces and a timeline of their efforts.

Scholarship Organizational Structure

Skip Moore, representing the other agencies on the planning committee reviewed the Say Yes Program components. He noted that there are two key components 1) Community/Schools Programs and 2) Scholarship Program. He stated that the Community/Schools Program would be designed to address student and family support programs, college planning and community involvement. The Scholarship program would be tasked with fundraising, endowment fund management and scholarship policies. He stated that the Scholarship Program would be created as a 501-c3 and discussed that the Scholarship Program would have a board model.

Say Yes Financial Model

Moore went on to review the scholarship process to be all locally organized and locally managed. He reviewed the proposed organizational structure and the composition of the board of directors. Moore discussed the contributions and distribution of funds raised, noting that eligible students names would be submitted through the review process and that tuition would be paid directly to the post-secondary colleges. He stated that they would require fund raising of approximately \$1,000 for every child in Guilford County Schools. He stated that there is no family or household income cap; and students would be eligible for what they termed a "last dollar scholarship". Moore reviewed an example, that if a family makes less than 75 Thousand annually they would be eligible for a Pell Grant and the program would allow them to waive the rest of their tuition, contingent on the school that they select to attend.

He reported to the Board that 100 post-secondary schools have signed up to participate with the Say Yes Program. Moore went on to review different levels of scholarship eligibility based on the student's financial needs and access to resources.

Moore reviewed some of the proposed policies, that students be full time Guilford County Schools students in good standing; must complete the FAFSA form to be eligible; Eligibility Period of 8 semesters within 5 years at a four-year school, and 4 semesters within 3 years to a two-year school; currently limited to Guilford County schools graduates; and longevity in Guilford County Schools would factor in to the amount of scholarship you would be eligible for.

Role and Financial Expectations for Guilford County Government

Green discussed the role and financial expectations for Guilford County Government. He stated that they would request the Chair of the County Board of Commissioners serve on the Executive Committee and that the County Manager or his designee would serve on an Operations Committee. The Operations Committee would establish various task forces to address specific program components.

Green stated that the goal of the program is to review existing programs in order to find efficiencies in service delivery and to utilize those dollars more effectively to meet the needs of the students. Green shared that Guilford County would have discretion to participate in any

program they choose. He stated that if there are not enough sufficient funds, the County would not be responsible for funding, but rather those needs would be privately raised. He emphasized that Guilford County would not be expected to fund locally created scholarships or endowments. Green noted the tremendous amount of work completed thus far with much more to do if Guilford County were selected.

Green questioned if Scholarships were to be eligible for the 2016 graduating class, quick movement would be needed to designate Guilford County as a Say Yes Community; pledges would need to turn into actual funds received and ready for distribution. He stated that the program would need to move quickly to launch in September of this year.

Commissioner Cashion questioned the reference to longevity in the Guilford County Schools system.

Moore stated that upon review of other States, such as California who require longevity beginning from Kindergarten-12 for 100% eligibility, they are recommending that if a student move into our community as a Senior in High School that they be eligible for 25%; Junior 50%; Sophomore 75% and those students in the system from 6-12 would be eligible for 100%. He emphasized that the crux of the program was to prepare students for college with the scholarship as the carrot.

Commissioner Coleman questioned the membership of the planning committee. She noted that she has received concerns that there is very little minority community representation.

Commissioner Trapp questioned if Bennett College was involved.

Moore confirmed that they were involved.

Trapp asked for additional information as to how the scholarships would be handled.

Chasin further explained that the formula they were utilizing was based on those used in Buffalo and Syracuse. He stated that those students who are eligible for funding through Pell grants will use those funds first, and any remainder of tuition would be waived for participating private universities. He stated that statistically the program increases the retention and completion rates of post-secondary schooling. He stated regardless of the economic status of the student the wrap around services will aid all students. He stated that one of the main outcomes for the program is that secondary education becomes a cultural change in our community.

Trapp questioned how the wrap around services would be provided.

Chasin stated that the program provides for consultants to review all areas of programming and operations; such as, assessing whether kindergarten readiness is needed or if third grade reading levels are were on target. They identify students with need and provide the link to appropriate support.

Moore stated that Guilford County is very College rich, yet has a very low attendance rate. He stated that in Buffalo they were able to connect colleges to the local schools with tutoring programs and after school programs.

Conrad questioned if the program allowed for inclusion for all schools, including charter and private schools.

Moore stated that the current data and analysis access is restricted to Guilford County Schools, and they want to work within a system in order to address needs assessments. He stated that it is difficult to address an individual or home school family not within the School System. He stated that he cannot speak for the Say Yes group or all of the partners but he felt that they would be open to looking at including charter schools down the road.

Green stated that once you look at all of the components of the program in the formula model our community needs to raise 70 Million Dollars. He discussed the need for additional consideration when you begin adding additional students. Green shared that 83% of school age children are within the Guilford County School System. He noted how remarkable that it is to have received such a large outpouring of community support. He asked the Board to allow them to start as proposed with the opportunity to adjust as the program becomes established.

Chairman Henning questioned the delay in providing meaningful conversations about the program with the County Board of Commissioners.

Moore responded that they had held some individual meetings with commission members several months earlier.

Multiple commissioners who attended those meetings responded that those meetings were very cursory and without any specifics as to how the program would work in Guilford County.

Moore shared that of the students in Charter schools there are only two schools to his knowledge that would be adversely impacted, as they have students from Kindergarten through the 12th grade. He stated that a majority of the Charter schools end at the fifth grade, and those students then transfer back into the Guilford County School system making them eligible for the Say Yes program.

Henning expressed his hesitation and concerns with having to actively choose to exclude children from a County sponsored program. Henning stated that they are charged as Commissioners with ensuring that all citizens receive access to resources.

Moore reiterated that those Charter Schools offering education from Kindergarten through Fifth grade will not be excluded. He clarified that the resolution before the board does not ask for funding but rather commitment to further discuss the program and its structure. He stated they would need to look at each Charter school one by one to see how it would affect the funding formula.

Cashion questioned how long it would take to gather the data.

Chasin stated that it would take approximately one year.

Coleman left the meeting at 4:43PM.

Chasin reviewed some of the statistical analysis that they conduct and the indicators they use in assessing each school.

Cashion expressed her concerns with not having previous conversations regarding the details of the program. She stated that she would like to support the concept.

Chasin reminded the Board that Say Yes is a grant organization who is willing to commit 15 Million dollars into Guilford County, and reiterated that they are seeking no funds from the local governments.

Moore stated that the only funds used from the Scholarship program are those for administrative salaries and fund raising activities. He stated that they utilize volunteer's more than full time staff.

Cashion thanked Chasin for Say Yes' commitment to Guilford.

Commissioner Foster shared that she has heard from some of her constituents that those in her community would not require scholarship resources due to other resource options, and asked how the program would be beneficial to them. Specifically, she asked how families would leverage social or mental health wrap around services.

Coleman returned to the meeting at 4:55PM.

Chasin stated that Say Yes looked into federal resources in Buffalo, and researched how they are utilizing existing services and determined which areas are overlapping and how to better use those services in a more effective and meaningful way. He proposed that they would complete a similar review of existing services in Guilford that would benefit all students. He further emphasized that the primary goal of the program is not so much the scholarship aspect but rather ensuring school readiness and support for college.

Green noted that they would utilize opportunity scholarships. Whereby they use a model studied in Syracuse and Buffalo to ensure that if a student received the majority of college funding through grants, that there was opportunity to cover any remaining differences in order to remove all barriers to post secondary education.

Perdue questioned the definition of an eligible senior.

Chasin stated that they would need to be a student graduating from Guilford County Schools, and completed the FAFSA application.

Moore stated that the program was not designed to pay out of state tuition.

Perdue expressed his concerns with excluding charter schools as they are also supported by tax dollars. Perdue questioned the level of financial support for a student of a middle class family who does not qualify for any grants and is an average student.

Chasin clarified that they would receive full tuition coverage through Say Yes, contingent upon their college selection.

Green clarified that on top of that they would also be eligible for opportunity scholarships.

The Board discussed the nuances of each scholarship proposal.

Coleman shared that resources to those students enrolled into Guilford County Schools not being accessible to those enrolled in private schools is not a new concept. She noted that private school students do not have access to public school sports teams, or public school aftercare programs. She noted that that is a choice parents make when they determine which school to place their child.

Conrad stated that he hoped everyone could agree that there has been a communication disconnect and hoped that moving forward there would be more inclusion and openness of information with the County Commissioners. Conrad noted that several months ago he requested financial reporting data and has not yet received a response.

Chasin acknowledge that they were still working on compiling those figures.

Conrad stated that he would like to have a feasibility study conducted to look at including all students in Guilford County.

Moore reviewed the data gathering steps and was unfamiliar with how to access Charter enrollment data and if they tracked the same information that their model uses in assessments.

Commissioner Branson thanked the planning committee and the Say Yes organization for their efforts in promoting the business community and hoped that they would use that same level of communication with the Commissioners moving forward. Branson questioned how many additional resources would be needed to compile and evaluate the data. He questioned if the process was proving burdensome on existing school staff.

Green stated that it would be very difficult to say what the additional analysis of the Charter schools would add to the workload. He shared that he hoped to have further conversations as to what this would look like.

Chasin stated that some of the services provided by County caseworkers or school caseworkers would be more of re-aligning existing resources.

Green stated that he would ensure that communication is improved. He stated that County leadership added to all levels should help address the issue. He stated that once accepted by Say Yes as the next community, they would establish the organizational structure. He stated that there needs to be a structured way to get information back to the Commissioners.

Phillips thanked Kevin Gray and Mindy Oakley for reaching out to the Commissioners last week to share additional information. Phillips questioned the additional costs for Charter Schools asking if the same funding mechanism could be used as the Guilford County School's students.

Moore indicated that it would require more investigation as the population eligibility for Pell grants would be different; he stated that they would need to look at graduation rates and other demographics but would be willing to look at it. Moore apologized for miscommunication and shared that the majority of those working on the program were volunteering their time and resources and are learning as they go through this process.

Conrad motioned to approve a Resolution in Support of Say Yes to Education for Guilford County. Motion Seconded by Cashion. (Approved)

Coleman questioned the initial text of the language as read by Conrad in which the resolution referenced "All Guilford County Students". She questioned if this modification would impact the program as presented.

Foster echoed Coleman's concerns and questioned if this would stop Guilford County from being a finalist for the program.

Moore stated that if the language was in the spirit of inclusion of all students it may negatively impact Guilford's participation; however, if the verbiage was intended to allow for discussion as to the feasibility that this may work.

Coleman expressed concerns regarding the proposed resolution.

Conrad spoke to the resolution and stated that the resolution as proposed emphasized that they were willing to have continued conversation and would like further discussions as the project moves forward.

Chasin noted that the proposed resolution is significantly different from where his Board was going with the program and he would have to take it back to his Board for consideration.

Cashion expressed her support that the resolution was not a dictate but should be taken in the spirit of open dialog.

Moore stated that inclusion of all school aged children would create a barrier to fundraising efforts in order to support everyone.

Foster stated that the resolution as presented causes concern for her as she does not want the language to impede the program's success.

Coleman offered a Substitute motion to delete the language of All Guilford County Students and replace with Traditional Guilford County Schools Students. Substitute Motion was seconded by Commissioner Trapp.

VOTE: Substitute Motion Fails 3:6

AYES: Coleman, Foster and Trapp.

NOES: Henning, Phillips, Perdue, Conrad, Cashion, Branson

Commissioner Perdue offered a friendly amendment to the initial motion, where by the language of “All” students would be replaced with “Guilford County students attending tax funded”.

Conrad accepted the friendly amendment.

Green questioned if the modifications would require the inclusion of Charter schools at the launch of the initiative.

Conrad restated the resolution with the amendment.

Conrad questioned if Charter schools were included in any of the other programs.

Moore stated that Buffalo included charter schools in the program but that private schools were not feasible for the program and inclusion of the private schools would mostly likely cause issue with Say Yes’ approval of Guilford County.

Trapp expressed concern with the resolution as stated, he shared that he would have difficulty approving any resolution that slowed or stopped the momentum that was building in our community.

Coleman questioned when students would be benefiting from the program.

Chasin stated that if approved it would begin with the class of 2016.

There was general consensus of the Board to encourage ongoing discussion and dialog regarding how to implement the program for those Charter Schools willing to submit to the same criteria as the Guilford County Public Schools. And that the spirit of the resolution was not intended to impede the programs momentum in our community, but rather to ensure inclusiveness of as many Guilford County Students, particularly those in Charter schools, as similar models have been used in other Say Yes Initiatives.

Coleman questioned if this would affect the current voucher program to attend Charter Schools.

Linda Wellborn, Board of Education Member addressed the board and cautioned them as to making any changes by adding Charter Schools. She stated that it would not be equitable that Charter schools would not have to open their books and allow full transparency and have the same access to wrap around services and scholarships as was the requirement of the Guilford County Schools.

The Board clarified for Wellborn that the intent of the resolution was to allow for discussions on how to create inclusion to the same process and benefits of Say Yes, for those Charter schools that wanted to be included.

VOTE: Conrad/Cashion Motion Passes 6:3

AYES: Henning, Phillips, Perdue, Conrad, Cashion, Branson

NOES: Coleman, Foster and Trapp.

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF
SAY YES TO EDUCATION FOR GUILFORD COUNTY

WHEREAS, Say Yes was founded in 1987 by money manager George Weiss, who promised more than 100 sixth graders at a Philadelphia school that he would pay to send them to college if they graduated high school;

WHEREAS, since its inception Say Yes has evolved into a national nonprofit that organizes and galvanizes whole cities around the goals of every public school student graduating from high school to be able to attain, afford and complete a post-secondary education;

WHEREAS, Say Yes believes that regardless of economic circumstance or social standing, every child can achieve a post-secondary education and become an actively contributing member of their community when given the opportunities and support;

WHEREAS, the organization currently works with nearly 65,000 public school students in pre-kindergarten through grade 12;

WHEREAS, through fundraising, Say Yes and its local partners make it possible for a community's public high school graduates to receive a full tuition scholarships to any in-state public, private or community college and university regardless of family income; said awards being granted after Pell grants and other financial aid have been taken into account;

WHEREAS, Say Yes communities achieve a positive economic impact – a more educated labor force, incentives for businesses to start or relocate into a community, a stronger tax base, increased property values and revitalizes communities while assisting students and families to achieve a post-secondary education;

WHEREAS, Guilford County is the leading candidate to become the next Say Yes to Education Community and will provide the opportunity to work together so that every graduate of a school in Guilford County receiving tax dollars will be eligible to receive a college education or post-secondary certificate;

WHEREAS, Say Yes has challenged the community to meet and initial \$28 million fundraising goal of forty percent (40%) of the overall \$70 million endowment goal for local scholarships which could be available to the graduating class of 2016 and at this time, at this point in time the community has raised over 25 million in pledges;

WHEREAS, upon the completion of six years collaboration with the national Say Yes organization each Say Yes community may take ownership of the effort and assume local responsibly for sustaining the scholarship endowment and for providing other support to students and their families;

WHEREAS, Say Yes brings stakeholders in the community, city and county governments, the school district, parents, teachers, businesses, philanthropic and faith-based organizations, colleges and universities together and arms them with the tools needed to boost post-secondary participation and success.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNTY COMMISSION OF GUILFORD COUNTY:

- That the success of the Say Yes to Education would benefit Guilford County students attending tax funded schools, and;

- The County Commission supports participation in the Say Yes program for those Guilford County school aged children, and expects real engagement of the Say Yes Committee with all locally tax funded schools willing to participate;
- The County Commission is open to further dialogue with community partners about the Say Yes Program in an effort to further understand the financial scope of the program, if any, on Guilford County and its citizens, and;
- The County Manager, or his/her designee, is hereby directed to participate as a representative of Guilford County in various Say Yes committees, and ;
- The Manager or Chairman of the Board will serve as the Chairman of the Community Leadership Council and;
- The County Manager shall keep the Commission informed as to appropriate opportunities for Guilford County as well as all potential County financial responsibilities relating to Say Yes that should arise.

Adopted this the 31st day of August, 2015.

Commissioner Coleman shared her appreciation of the School System, volunteers and Say Yes partners. She thanked them for their efforts to bring the program this far and hoped that they understood that the Board may sometimes disagree but that their overall goals are to act in the best interest of all of the students in Guilford County.

The Board recessed at 6:05 pm

The Board returned from recess at 6:30pm

Commissioner Branson motioned to hold a closed session for the purposes of considering a potential economic incentive or business expansion and to consult with the County Attorney.

By General Consensus the Board approved the motion and entered into close session at 6:31PM

The Board reconvened into Open Session 7:40pm

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 7:41 PM by unanimous consent.

Paul Henry "Hank" Henning, IV, Chairman

Clerk to Board