

**Joint Meeting of the Guilford County Board of Commissioners
and Guilford County Board of Education**

Thursday March 14, 2019

5:30PM

Robert E. McNair Elementary School Media Center

4603 Yanceyville Road

Browns Summit, NC 27214

The Guilford County Board of Commissioners met in a duly noticed public meeting in conjunction with the Guilford County Board of Education on March 14, 2019 at 5:30 PM at Robert E. McNair Elementary School.

PRESENT: **Guilford County Board of Commissioners** - Chairman J. Alan Branson, Vice Chairman Jeff Phillips, Commissioners Kay Cashion, Skip Alston, Hank Henning, Carolyn Coleman (in at 6:08) and Justin Conrad

ABSENT: Alan Perdue, J. Carlvena Foster

PRESENT: **Guilford County Board of Education** - Vice Chairman T. Dianne Bellamy Small, School Board members Darlene Garrett, Bryon Gladden, Kehm Irby, Winston McGregor, Anita Sharpe, Pat Tillman, and Linda Wellborn

ABSENT: Chairman Deena Hayes, Pat Tillman

ALSO PRESENT: Guilford County Attorney Mark Payne, School Board Attorney Jill Wilson, School Superintendent Sharon L. Contreras, PHD, County Manager Marty Lawing, Deputy County Manager Clarence Grier, Scott McCully, Schools COO, Clerk to Board of Commissioners Robin Keller, Clerk to Board of County Schools Lisa Nolen, Joe Clark Vice President/Education Excellence MGT Consulting Group, various members of staff and members of the community and members of the media.

Welcome and Call to Order

Vice Chair T. Dianne Bellamy Small of the Guilford County Board of Education welcomed all those present and called the Meeting to order at 5:42PM

Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Kay Cashion

Alan Branson, Joint Sub-Committee Chair and Chairman of the Guilford County Board of Commissioners welcomed everyone present. Chairman Branson allowed those present to introduce themselves

Principle Tina Johnson of Ronald McNair elementary thanked both boards for allowing them to host the meeting. She spoke to the benefits of being able to educate and transform students lives in a newer facility.

Scott McCully, Guilford County Schools COO reviewed the history of the joint planning subcommittee and subsequent selection of vendors to conduct the joint facilities and boundary optimization study.

Joe Clark Vice President, Education Excellence Group/MGT Consultation shared that they have been working for a year on the study and are working towards the goals that the Community wants for its education needs. Mr. Clark provided a brief overview of the agenda for the meeting. He noted the collaborative process and the numerous members of staff including school principals and community members who helped to produce the final recommendations. Clark reviewed the Pre-Kindergarten through Senior Year historical and projected school enrollment. He shared that by 2028 school population will grow slightly from 72,118 to 72,456. He shared that the stable enrolment allows for 10-year planning. He noted the existing full report that each entity has received. He shared for each site there is an additional report for each site. Clark reviewed the individual school dashboards and how their data was compiled for each facility.

He discussed the definition of education suitability, the and the assessment criteria specific to how the facility supports education programs. He noted items such as science labs, facilities to support art programs and STEM programs versus a general education classroom settings were rated for the overall scores.

He elaborated on the site condition scores including information such as parking lot functionality and adequacy. He noted that Guilford County scores really well in technology infrastructure and that the county and schools have invested in technology throughout the County.

Dr. Contreras noted that the infrastructure scores are not about actual devises; rather, she noted that it speaks to technology infrastructure and not actual equipment that students have in hand.

Clark confirmed this data score is an indicator of available bandwidth and fiber in every facility, routers etc. Clark went on to review the Scoring Data District summation. He shared that they reviewed 4 school systems across the country to compare Guilford County to.

Commissioner Coleman arrived at 6:08PM

Clark reviewed the elementary school scores. He noted that more than 25 of the County's elementary schools have scores in the unsatisfactory category. He spoke to the schools at the middle school level which show a pretty good range from poor to good. He noted that there is however a large amount of excess space and they will share some recommendations on those regarding some of the utilization needs of some of the other schools. He noted that there are

some pretty dramatic condition issues of some of the Specialized schools. He shared that this is commonly seen of these types of schools as their attendance fluctuates more frequently depending on need.

Clark shared that of those choice schools, such as Morehead, they are significantly over capacity. There is a recommendation to look at utilization of those schools and program assignment. He reviewed some decisions such as duplication of the program in other sites to reduce overflow while still providing access to the programs, or limiting the choice attendance caps through policy decisions. Clark reviewed a utilization map that perhaps the Schools could consider moving students into other areas for better utilization.

Clark reviewed information he was asked to present by School Administration, based on projected school enrollment. He reviewed a variety of capacities across the school district and recommended that the Schools perhaps include consideration of standardization of enrollment numbers as a way to help reduce the needed number of facilities.

Clark reviewed the projected recommendations costs by building type and a phased in implementation cost schedule. He noted that these phases could be modified based on the need of the district. He noted that they reviewed a lot of efficiency options, such as school assignments as a priority strategy. They also reviewed program equity and program opportunity, using Morehead elementary. He questioned if programing was driving over population through utilization and perhaps those programs should be duplicated in other areas. Some additional Non-Capital strategies could be school repurposing, policy changes, school consolidation and balancing utilization.

Scott McCully noted that they will ensure that all of this data will be provided through a hotlink on the Guilford County Schools Website.

School Board Member Khem Irby questioned if housing developments and new families moving into communities were considered when considering the projections.

Mr. Clark shared that they do have development factors and calculations used for each building. He shared that this calculation was weighted differently based on each community and their projected growth.

Irby asked if the phases include eradication of mobile units.

Clark shared that as they capture capacity data such as design capacity, operational capacity. They do not count portable buildings when considering capacity for schools. With the goal to remove portables at those schools where they are.

School Board Member Winston McGregor questioned mobile facilities for places such as Mendenhall.

Clark shared that a school may be listed at 87%, with mobiles and those would be based on programmatic decisions rather than actual attendance. He noted they have seen decisions to house things such as “specials” -music or art programs, where mobiles are often used to provide music space or a classroom is used as a music space and then a mobile is used for the displaced classroom space.

McGregor questioned if we could consider programmatic issues.

McCully noted that that they may also indicate fluctuation of populations.

Contreas stated that she has seen that several of the teachers in mobiles are comfortable and simply do not wish to move back into the school facility. She noted that that is something that we need to monitor more closely.

McGregor asked if there are any recommendations today that are different than what was presented to the sub-committee December 31.

Clark confirmed that there are no changes since the report provided on the 31st.

Alston shared, that as a Commissioner, he is concerned with how to address the funding. He expressed concerns with the first phase recommended at 961 Million.

Clark shared that if the District were to address everything in the plan, the total would be 1.5M. He shared that the first phase may be a reach for the school district. He stated that some of those priority's may need to be moved out.

Alston noted that the Boards would need to get a team together to develop a realistic proposal with the first phase being the largest cost phase.

Commissioner Conrad thanked his colleagues on the sub-committee and the number of hours they have committed to this study. He questioned some of the school closure recommendations as Kiser elementary as an example which has a high enrollment with a projected high enrolment in the future. He asked Mr. Clark to speak in generality as to the recommendations where a school with a high utilization is being recommended as a potential closure.

Clark shared that what drove the recommendations was based on the school scores. He noted that Kiser scored a 42 and the cost to bring a 42 to a 100 at a price per square foot, would be cost prohibitive to bring the building up to score. Also included in the factors were enrollment and programs. He noted that these are indeed hard decisions and he recognizes the impact if recommendations are accepted. He noted that each school was given a very detailed report

regarding their status. He shared that it is very reasonable for each community to have the challenging discussions and the will of the community as to what recommendations are accepted and which are changed or modified.

Commissioner Cashion questioned if the enrollment projections take into consideration Charter school enrollment.

Clark shared that charter schools, parochial schools, and home school numbers were not included in the enrollment figures.

Cashion noted that we have seen an increase in charter school attendance and was curious of those figures were included. She questioned if safety issues and future programmatic expansions were included in recommendations.

Clark stated that yes each of those factors were considered. However, a specific and detailed security study of schools was not completed.

Branson shared that one item discussed in the last joint committee was to consider safety and security of the schools. He shared that they spoke to provision of CAD drawing for each facility for our Emergency Services department.

Clark shared that they provided a local architectural firm with local drawings which were converted to CAD drawings. They are currently mapping room numbers to those now, and are about 60 schools in and will complete all the schools by the end of the month. With those provided to the school district. At that time, it would be incumbent on the school district to provide to emergency responders.

Bellamy Small questioned the recommendations for Montlieu Elementary and noted the size of the lot may be prohibitive.

Clark shared that they are recommending an 8 M renovation. He shared that any recommendations would need to be reviewed by an architect before moving forward.

Board of Education Member Sharpe questioned what those cost recommendations would be for each school and where they could find those specific recommendations for each location.

Clark shared that those costs are usually major facilities upgrades such as blowers, roofs, etc. They also look at programmatic deficiencies such as does the school require additional space for art programs. Clark shared that there are detailed reports for each school and he would be happy to help the council member to find those specific details.

Mr. Gladden recognized that some of the programmatic needs are compromised by the facility deficiencies.

Clark shared that as a part of the overall scores, they defined the requirements based on conversations as to what an elementary school programs, as example, are need for educational suitability and standards for every space that the district required for every school facility. The environment standards were established with the goals to improve the environment of the students.

Gladden questioned if race or socio-economic status was taken into consideration on these recommendations.

Clark stated that it was not as a part of the recommendations, but that they were asked by the district to re-look at those factors. Clark stated that in order to do that they would have to look at each student individually. He noted that it is a worthy and necessary effort, but that is a very detailed and analysis that that would need to be considered and clear utilization goals would need to be considered.

Gladden questioned if there was a cause and effect study for boundary recommendations.

Clark shared that boundary recommendations were based on space utilization.

Gladden questioned the costs of the MGT study.

Angie Henry reviewed the costs of the contract with the inclusion of boundary optimization study to be included.

Scott McCully shared that the study was included but not an impact study.

Anita Sharpe questioned security, and if it was considered at each of the sites. Clark stated that some aspects of security such as fencing, lighting, single point of entry and security cameras.

Sharpe questioned if judgment calls were made at each site based on those factors.

Clark stated that those factors were considered in the overall suitability scores. If you did not have all of those components, you would score lower.

Sharpe questioned if there was a separate assessment to bring up just security.

Clark shared that there are many ways to secure a site and they would need to examine what the standard for securing a site means to the district and we could then compare the data to those established standards.

Linda Wellborn shared that the assessment provided a great need for the facility needs at these schools. She spoke the need for serious consideration to maintain our school facilities.

Irby noted that things will need to be done creatively and differently and that we need to focus on efficiencies of using those bond funds. She noted that we need to be more accountable as to how we are using those funds and showing progress. She shared her hopes that as a board we can communicate the reasons for every decision that needs to be made and that the good of the children is at the center of these very difficult decisions.

Gladden echoed Irby's concerns. He spoke to making decisions based on the good of the entire county and district specific goals. We must build out and manage the expectations of the schools and the PTA's. We need to move as one District and not as individual districts. He shared it is important to have a strategic plan for the entire district that we can all advocate for.

McGregor questioned if there can be additional detail into the suitability scores.

Clark confirmed her understanding of the recommendations.

McGregor shared that she hoped with this data that the two boards can begin to move with some expediency.

Chairman Branson spoke to the next steps. He noted that since coming to the board, he has seen a sincere effort from both boards to begin working together in a more productive manner.

Dr. Contreras thanked the MGT consultants. She shared that staff have been looking into the concerns raised by the boards and the community. She noted that we cannot uncouple the academic programmatic components from the facility needs.

She shared that they are considering innovated school designs aligned with the boundary optimization plan and school utilization recommendations. She shared that in D1 there are 5 schools in "Red"; D2 – 7, 3-5, 4-7, etc. She shared that there are total of 45 schools in the red areas, with 2/3rds in the poorest communities.

Staff recommend a phase 2 of the study to dig a little deeper into the boundary optimization. She shared that it would include looking at 85 neighborhood schools and X number of specialized schools, to provide high quality seats. Perhaps closing some and reopening as new schools.

She shared we could consider looking at different school-grade structures. She suggested the provisions of variety of options for families such as art schools, health profession high schools in addition to academies currently offered. Such as stand-alone high schools.

She shared the next steps would be to prioritize these projects. She shared that if we are looking to size schools perhaps we can control the costs. Perhaps all elementary schools need to be between 500 and 600 dollars which would lower the 1.5B cost.

She noted the support of the Federal funding of school facilities. She would like to see additional effort on our Federal delegation.

Contreras recommended that the joint committee goes back to work on a phase 2 of the boundary optimization study and come back with a boundary optimization plan, and recommendations on additional choice options based on some of the smaller schools and placing in communities with traditionally underperforming communities.

McGregor questioned if this would include additional contracting and funding for the work. Contreras stated that they have not spent the money so that the costs are in the current budget.

McGregor asked if there was anything they can ask the private sector to help in such as ways to improve the market value of some of our properties.

Jill Wilson, school Attorney shared that it could create fraud issues if members who consulted would then have interest in bidding on the properties.

Irby questioned when new development occurs and impacts on the enrollment, can the District get additional resources to build additional schools.

Clark noted that there are opportunities to consider impact fees, similar legislation is put into place in California to help cover costs of roads, and infrastructure in communities.

School Attorney Jill Wilson spoke to consideration of impact fees.

County Attorney Payne noted that some of those recommendations may include special legislation.

County Commissioner Cashion questioned any possibility to privatization as to the construction of schools and the system leasing those schools. Has there been any cost comparisons, as this is being discussed nationally.

Clark shared that they have looked at that for other school districts around the country but not have considered for this district. There are really no two states that fund construction the same. A bond resolution for the amount that we have described here may not be attainable so we may need to look at other resources to reach the same goals.

Cashion questioned if we could at least evaluate the possibilities.

Alston shared that there have been some conversations to that possibility now. He shared from his understanding it still requires funding to pay for the construction. Alston questioned how long the second study will be. He cautioned the timeline if everyone is considering a bond

referendum for 2020 there is approximately a 6-month process. Alston cautioned that if we do decide to do a bond referendum we would be looking at a 6-7 cent tax increase.

County Attorney Payne shared that a bond referendum must be less than 12 months and more than 45 days prior to the election.

Branson questioned if that would be the same for a sales tax referendum

Alston shared that we cannot set a bond fee until after November of this year. Alston shared that there would be a timeline for any study group.

Contreras noted that the bulk of this work associated with her additional committee work is done and would only take a few months.

Gladden spoke to the privatization and the leasing option, he stated that when contracting you take away the opportunity for MWBE participation. If we privatize that we may threaten significant MWBE representation.

Alston spoke to that concern, and if we did consider leasing versus mortgage the payment will be the same, but we can address concerns with terms and conditions.

Contreras restated the next steps.

Gladden asked if the current optimization includes looking at transportation.

Contreras stated that she would not add that piece as it would extend the timeline many months.

Alston clarified the direction for staff to go back on the next steps and bring back to the joint facilities committee.

General consensus of both boards to direct staff to complete a phase II of the demographic study to develop a boundary optimization plan and bring back to the Joint Facilities Committee.

Gladden questioned if a joint resolution supporting the Federal Legislation was in order.

Branson stated several commissioners just returned from Washington DC discussing this matter. He shared that it is crucial to discuss on the Federal and the State Level. He shared his support of a resolution.

Motion by B. Gladden to direct staff to prepare a draft resolution to bring to the School Board at the next regular meeting in support of the Federal Rebuild America's School Act of 2019. Seconded by Irby.

Motion carried unanimously by the School Board

Motion by A. Branson to direct staff to prepare a draft resolution to bring to the School Board at the next regular meeting in support of the Federal Rebuild America's School Act of 2019. Seconded by H. Henning

Motion carries unanimously by Board of Commissioners

There being no further business both boards adjourned by unanimous consent at 8:06PM

J. Alan Branson, Chairman
Guilford County Board of Commissioners

Robin Keller
Clerk to Board

