MINUTES -- April 27, 2018

The Caswell County Board of Commissioners held a special meeting at the Caswell County Historic Courthouse in Yanceyville, North Carolina at 2:00 p.m. on Friday April 27, 2018. Members present Nathaniel Hall, Chairman, Rick McVey, Vice-Chairman, David Owen, Sterling Carter, William E. Carter, and Jeremiah Jefferies. Also present: Bryan Miller, County Manager. Ashley Kirby, Administrative Assistant recorded minutes. Members absent: Kenneth D. Travis

MOMENT OF SILENT PRAYER

Chairman Hall welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Chairman Hall opened the meeting with a moment of silent prayer.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Board of Commissioners and all guest in the audience recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

PROPOSED AGENDA

Chairman Hall stated there was no agenda, but went over a brief overview of the proposed agenda.

1. Budget request from the Caswell County School Board.
2. Efforts for funding the security plan.
3. Review the budget and gather questions for the Caswell County School Board.
4. Plan work session with the Caswell County School Board.

Commissioner Hall stated, after looking at the budget request the one thing that stood out was the funds budgeted for Stoney Creek. Over the past few years Stoney Creek had a very low enrollment in comparison to other schools in the county. We are looking at 400,000.00 roughly to get Stoney Creek up to where it needs to be far as safety concerns and none of that is discussed in the academics. There are not a lot of options that can be done with Stoney Creek, and they wanted the board’s opinion. Whatever is adopted will come from the Caswell County School Board and we also need to be aware of the financial situations.

Commissioner Owen stated that his main concern also was Stoney Creek. The age of the school is an issue and the Caswell County School Board has stated in past meetings the lifelong expectancy of a school is 40 years. We know safety is an issue, but the age and low enrollment of the school is an issue; at what point do we stop putting money into that school.

Commissioner Jefferies questioned Chairman Hall could the other school absorb Stoney Creek’s enrollment. Chairman Hall replied, whatever approaches that might be taken should come from the Caswell County School Board and the main concern is the finance part of it. If Dr. Carter, would like to respond to any questions at the end of this meeting she can. In addition there will be a work session with the Caswell County School Board.

Commissioner S. Carter questioned Chairman Hall “Mr. Chairman, I’d like to add this to the list of questions for the superintendent: How would this change if those schools did absorb the enrollment of Stoney Creek, how would this change transportation needs and structure in the county school bus district.” Chairman Hall stated that it would require some structural changes and would not expect the Caswell County School Board to have these issues….. Commissioner S. Carter stated “that question was geared toward the financial initiation.” Chairman Hall, replied if not addressed today, it will be addressed in the Caswell County School Board session.

Commissioner McVey questioned Chairman Hall if he wanted to go over the proposed budget, to help make the public aware of what we are discussing. Chairman Hall replied yes and went over the budget which included the following: Stoney Creek, cost of estimation for secure school requirements, construct a new entrance for security view, and close in breezeway between cafeteria and main building (estimated cost $225,000.00), keyless entry system (estimated cost $130,200.00). In addition to camera installation and wiring (estimated cost $7,000.00), elevated water towers at South and Stoney Creek (estimated cost of $50,000.00), that is the following that was requested.

Commissioner McVey stated at what point is it really feasible to keep putting money into Stoney Creek. Chairman Hall agreed that the board needs to think about it and have the discussion with the Caswell County School; there is an issue of security and that will have to be addressed.

Commissioner McVey questioned the enrollment at Stoney Creek. Commissioner Owen replied around 195.

Commissioner Owen questioned about the closing of the breezeway at Stoney Creek, what are we closing in, the type of the enclosure.

Chairman Hall stated we can discuss other schools budgets; we do not have to focus on mainly Stoney Creek.

Commissioner McVey questioned Chairman Hall, is the board is going to discuss the plans for the new high school. Chairman Hall replied we can, after these discussions we need to make as move as expeditious as possible because there is not a lot of time between now and July.

Commissioner McVey questioned for high school site the possibility of a 15 million dollar grant; is that grant going to be applied to the 30 million or be held by the Caswell County School Board and saved for other projects.

Commissioner S. Carter stated “Mr. Chairman, I can half way answer that according to the first projection, if they receive any grants that it would go to the project”. Mr. McVey questioned will the grant go toward the 34 million. Commissioner S. Carter stated “yes that’s right”. Commissioner Owen stated that he did not think that is a hundred percent accurate to the best of his knowledge on the first project when the Caswell County School Board came before the board with the bond issue that was included on one of the three options that the Caswell County School Board came back with.

Commissioner S. Carter stated “I have a few questions: If they receive this 15 million dollar grant…… Commissioner McVey stated if the School Board receives the 15 million dollar grant does that go back into the 30 million, is it included in the fund that we are borrowing for, or is it used for other projects in the future. Chairman Hall replied: That will be one of our questions for the Caswell County School Board work session and the board will be clear on their response. Commissioner Owen stated, also there is a possibility of the 16 million with the bond that they could receive. Commissioner S. Carter stated “I believe you have the resources here to answer those questions”. Chairman Hall replied yes we do but, as he stated earlier in the meeting it was not the board’s intention to put anyone on the spot, some of the questions the board would like the next answer to be the final answer. And the board would like the Caswell County School Board to have the opportunity to discuss these questions if, Dr. Carter would like to respond at the end of the meeting she may. The state wide bond issues are still in flux, the board was just notified this week that there was a change in the formula. There was a push by some to delay the bond. We do not know the outcome but we will in due time.

Commissioner Jeffries stated the board needs to have a meeting with the Caswell County School Board and ask these questions before we can make decisions. And from his understanding, the 15 million is going to the bond but we need to know exactly what is happening, then we can make our decisions. He suggested the board needs to discuss the referendum. The main concern to him is a 30 year bond because the tax rate will be 7% on the referendum vs. 40 years with a 4.5% sales tax. With the 7% tax he felt like it would not pass and ask the board to look at 40 years with the 4.5% sales tax and they might receive a grant to pay the whole loan off. The tax payers will look at the 7% and disagree, there are a lot of citizens who are on a fixed income and very few farmers in the county. But a 40 year loan is what will make it easier for Caswell County tax payers; there is a need for the school and it needs to happen, but he questioned the board what can we do to make it happen. Commissioner McVey stated he thought the board had a general consensus that the board would do a referendum. Commissioner Jeffries stated that he was not talking about a referendum; his concern was 30 years……. Commissioner McVey stated years were the issue last time we…….. Commissioner Jeffries stated it was not an issue the board approved it for 30 years and there was one person who voted no which was his, this needs to be brought back up to the board.

Chairman Hall stated the board has three issues: he addressed to Commissioner Jeffries, there was no written agenda but the main goal of this meeting is to schedule a work session with the Caswell County School Board to discuss concerns and answer questions. And addressed Commissioner S. Carter as he stated earlier, the next answer we get from the Caswell County School Board will be the board’s last answer. The referendum was a consensus of the board, the length of time that we borrow on can be brought up. As we look at this to make it work we need to make it happen because there is a need for a new school. There will be more discussion about it once we get to the dollars and cents of it all, in his opinion it did not make a lot of sense to make a decision on something that we did not know the dollar amount.

Commissioner Jeffries questioned would it be put on the referendum or not….. Chairman Hall replied yes we agreed on that…… Commissioner McVey stated we made it a consensus….. Commissioner Jeffries replied yes you made it for 30 years….. Chairman Hall replied yes. Commissioner Jeffries stated yes but, you have censuses to have it for 30 years with a 7% increase on tax, we know it is going on the referendum. Why not 40 years with the 4.5% sales tax; there is no need to keep having meetings if the board keeps discussing the same thing.

Commissioner W. Carter stated he has given it a lot of thought as far as the tax payers in the county and he agrees with Commissioner Jeffries. He suggested it would have a better chance of passing with the 4.5% sales tax rather than the 7%; we haven’t completed the budget for the county departments and there might be an increase with the county’s budget. If the county receives any extra funding it could pay the school bond. He also suggested making it a 42 million bond including the security updates that are needed for the school. Commissioner McVey questioned, can that be put on the bond or does it have to be separate. County Manager Miller replied yes.

Commissioner McVey stated, he understands where Commissioner Jeffries and Commissioner W. Carter are coming from, wanting to help out the tax payers through this whole process by not raising property taxes, but if you make the loan for 40 years, look at the interest rate on the loan….. Commissioner Jeffries stated yes but, with the 40 year loan it is possible that it could be paid off before the 40 years. The 40 year loan it gives us more opportunity to receive more grants. Commissioner McVey stated, he understands but, the interest on the whole is a huge difference and questioned Chairman Hall about the interest difference for the 30 year loan in comparison to the 40 year loan. Chairman Hall replied that he did not have the figures in front of him and in addition to the position that Commissioner Jeffries has taken, one of the strategies of the referendum, anything could happen. The strategies might be the route that we can get the citizens to vote. Now one final thing to add is that if the referendum fails the need for the school is still there; what will we do when we have to start thinking long term/short term. That is why he is requesting a work session with the Caswell County School Board to get all the answers that are needed.

Commissioner W. Carter suggested the board to add the extra on the bond for the security issues that are needed per the request of the Caswell County School Board and make it for 42 million instead of 33 million. Commissioner Owen replied if the board considered adding the extra amount on the bond that would add a considerable amount of tax increase for the tax payers.

Commissioner W. Carter stated looking over the budget for the county departments there were some needs last year that did not get approved, for instance the Sheriff department asked for 6 cars last year. Now this year they are asking for 12 new cars at $30,000 per car. Commissioner McVey questioned about the cars….. Chairman Hall replied we are not going to discuss the county budget today. Commissioner McVey stated if we get 12 cars for $360,000, and from what he has been told that cost is not for fully outfitted cars for $30,000 each, why are we not getting a better group rate. Commissioner W. Carter replied, the county will be getting them at the state discounted price. Commissioner McVey replied that at his previous employer in Chapel Hill, they did not purchase sheriff cars for 30,000 and they received those for a discounted price when purchasing them as a group. Commissioner W. Carter replied the $30,000 is for the police package. Commissioner McVey replied ok. Commissioner W. Carter stated that in years past the board used to borrow out of soil waste and pay it back when there was a need for new ambulances, or sheriff cars, but now the Local Government Commission will not allow that. Chairman Hall replied, when we get to the county budget session the county manager will update us on that.

Commissioner S. Carter stated “Mr. Chairman and fellow board members, in the past we were about to discuss the terms of the referendum. We agreed it was an option. Second question what the terms of the USDA loan is. We have the resolution in front of us and we have a blank that we have to fill in not to exceed X number of dollars. This is a most vital piece of information that we need before this school board work shop with the school board. We can’t determine the 40 or 30 years the calculation of this…any weigh out of our options and strategies along with the school board all of the information laid out on the table unless we have that info. On the list of questions, I would like this information or I will probably not be attending the school board work session, because this is of the most important. I need a number not to exceed X number of dollars for part A and B of the school renovation request. Second I need part B of this I need a number not to exceed X for parts A, B, and C which includes the alternate options for their budget request, which also includes the civic center. It is in our papers that we received months ago. Also I need not to exceed X for parts A, B, and C plus the security request as we have been discussing that we now know that can be included in this conglomerate number. We need those 3 numbers in order to determine the need not to exceed figure also term figure for however many years. Also the tax increase estimate; we need that information before we can continue talking at all any further. Its quite frustrating that we keep beating around the bush on this but that’s the matter of things…..we have a resolution and we have to fill in the blanks.

Commissioner Owen stated if he is not mistaken there was a consensus of the board that option C is what the board was going after. It was 30 million dollars with the board picking up 3 million out of the 33 million. The board can still receive and review that information, but the consensus of the board was for the 30 million. The board can look at adding the security issue into that package… Commissioner S. Carter replied “and my point is with that as well, and will completely change all if those figures.”

Commissioner Owen stated considering 42 million dollars the tax rate which we want to lower, will go back up with the 40 year loan and the board needs to keep that in mind with the 40 year loan.

Chairman Hall stated the last figure will get a supplement from the staff and the board will pick one and when we do that it will be a final decision. The board recognizes that we might have to add some dollars to handle some of the security issues and that’s part of the reason why we are having this discussion.

Commissioner S. Carter stated “we have to think of the contiguously all of that…..” Chairman Hall replied “correct”.

Commissioner Owen questioned is the board going to wait on the other items such as supplements and social worker requests. Will this be discussed today or at budget session. Commissioner W, Carter replied, the county has always funded the teacher’s supplements. Commissioner Owen replied, yes he knew the county always funded the teacher supplements, but it was included in the pack that the Caswell County School gave the board. Commissioner W. Carter replied the board will have to separate a few things out of that. Chairman Hall replied the board will break this down, we will deal with the safety issues and we are going to work with them by setting up a work session to discuss the issues; as well as looking at the full budget in work session.

Commissioner Owen stated, he assumed the board was going to review the package from the Caswell County School Board.

Chairman Hall questioned the board if they had any other comments or suggestions with none. The board would like to open the floor for Dr. Carter if she would like to comment on any of the questions that the board had raised or if she would like to wait until to the work session. Dr. Carter replied she would like to wait until the work session.

Chairman Hall questioned the board if they had any further questions.

Commissioner W. Carter stated in the past few years we have funded the teachers supplement out of the county budget and when the County Manager presents the budget well go over the budget. Then the board will see where we stand and what can be funded.

Commissioner Owen stated that he wanted to share with the board that he had spoken with Governor Cooper and he is recommending in the short session a package for 130 million for security, youth mental health, etc. It sounds like a lot of money but, the 130 million has to be divided with all counties in North Carolina; he also suggested if any of the board members have a chance to talk with any legislators to encourage them to pass it. Commissioner W. Carter questioned, the time frame. Commissioner Owen replied, right now it is still in short session. It could be passed to the committee or it could be the very last day. Commissioner W. Carter replied, it would be great if it happened.

Chairman Hall stated, if nothing else…. Commissioner W. Carter stated he would like to welcome the new Editor for the Caswell Messenger and thanked him for coming. Commissioner S. Carter stated “Mr. Chairman I’d like to say it is a welcoming presence to see you sitting on that front bench giving coverage.”

ADJOURNEMENT

Commissioner W. Carter made a motion to adjourn at 2:38p.m., seconded by Commissioner McVey. The motion passed unanimously.

*The minutes above was prepared by Administrative Assistant Ashley Kirby.*