

Joint Meeting with the Board of Supervisors and the School Board (Thursday, February 29, 2024)

Northumberland County, Virginia

Members present:

James M. Long, Richard F. Haynie, James W. Brann (remotely), Chip Williams

Members Absent:

A.C. Fisher, Jr.

Other Staff Present:

Mr. Luttrell Tadlock, County Administrator

Mr. Drew Basye, Assistant County Administrator

Ms. Morgan Wilson, Executive Assistant

Mr. Robert Headley, IT Administrator

Mr. Carl Hayden, IT Technician

1. Opening of Meeting 5:30 P.M.

Information: A. Call to Order

The special meeting was convened by Chairman Haynie and held at the Northumberland Courthouse located at 220 Judicial Place, Heathsville, VA 22473.

Action: B. Remote Participation

Mr. Haynie indicated that he had received a request by Mr. James Brann to participate in the meeting tonight by electronic communications from a remote location due to illness. Mr. Haynie indicated that he had approved such participation under the County's adopted remote participation policy and asked that the Board of Supervisors ratify this decision to allow Mr. Brann to participate remotely.

Motion to ratify Mr. Haynie's approval and to allow Vice Chairman Brann to participate via zoom during the meeting as allowed under the Board's adopted remote participation policy.

Motion by: Chip Williams, second by: James M. Long.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Aye: James M. Long, Richard F. Haynie, Chip Williams

Not Present at Vote: James W. Brann

2. Joint Meeting with School Board

Chairman Haynie announced that the County has entered into a contract with UHY Advisors Mid-Atlantic, Inc. for their forensic auditing services to cover both the County and School Division and he stated that the Board would keep the School Division updated on this matter.

The School Board Chair called the School Board meeting to order as this was a joint meeting. Attending the meeting was Betty Christopher, Dave Curran, Denise Mazyck, Dr. Cheryl Davis, and Dana O'Bier.

Information: A. School Board Budget Presentation

Chairman Haynie turned the meeting over to Superintendent Holly Wargo and Finance Director Tara Booth to present the School's FY25 budget request to the Board.

To begin the presentation, Dr. Wargo read the budget transmittal letter aloud. The School's FY25 Operational Budget is \$22,151,020 (an increase of \$193,611) and the School Nutrition Budget is \$724,521 (an increase of \$69,840). The total School Board request including Operational and School Nutrition is \$22,875,541 (an increase of \$263,451). The FY25 Capital Improvement Budget requests from the school can be found in section 6 of their presentation located on board docs. The Capital Improvement Budget prioritizes the use of the new construction funds (\$1,134,172) for the elementary school boiler replacement (\$173,121.48). Dr. Wargo explained that the School Board plans to apply the remaining new construction funds to the following projects:

- Elementary school flooring upgrades - \$171,479.92
- Replacement of the elementary school playground - \$376,745.60
- Repairs to the concrete walkways at the middle and high school - \$53,145
- A rooftop stairway at NES - \$67,140
- Resurfacing the athletic track - \$292,540

The School Board proposal also includes a 1.25% step increase for scaled employees and a health insurance increase of 7.2%.

Mrs. Booth stated that their 2024-2025 budget priorities consists of level funding, to include staff raises, to cover the health insurance increase, to evaluate the paraprofessional salary scale, to review class size, and to cover the costs for 3 security officers (1 per school) as well as the costs for secured ID badges. Mrs. Booth then went through a list of budget efficiencies which were found through discussions with each principal/director in the school system. The list of budget efficiencies can be found in their presentation on page 7.

Dr. Wargo moved forward to page 8 and provided a comparison of salary increase proposals and health insurance premiums with other Region III School Divisions.

Supervisor Long asked if the school was planning to replace the EMT teaching position.

Dr. Wargo stated they were not going to replace this position because the school was unable to find a teacher this year to fill that position and they were trying to honor the Board's request for approximate level funding.

Supervisor Long asked why they chose to cut so much funding from textbooks.

Mrs. Booth explained that they were able to cut that amount because they received a grant from the state called “All in Tutoring” which can be used to purchase textbooks and they plan to use ESSER grant funds to cover any remaining costs for textbooks.

Progressing to page 9, Mrs. Booth provided the Board with costs of health insurance for employees if the 7.2% increase does not get approved by the Board of Supervisors. Mrs. Booth continued to their revenue detail and explained that a lot of their state funding decreased this year due to their increased composite index. The school’s revenue recapitulation can be found on page 11 of their presentation.

Moving forward to expenditure details, page 13, Mrs. Booth presented a chart showing the total costs in each category with the 7.2% health insurance increase. On page 14, Mrs. Booth shared the percentage increase of this information in each category.

Section 4 of their presentation consists of supplemental information with salary totals for each category. Mrs. Booth stated that there was a lot of confusion this year when the governor introduced the 2% raise, so Mrs. Booth explained that the Governor announced a 2% raise for SOQ positions for half of the year. She stated that the 2% for half the year is the exact same at 1% for the entire year, so they found 1% of the staff salary and the School Board voted to make that increase for all employees. Mrs. Booth explained that this occurred when she met with the directors and principals to look for efficiencies to see if they could accommodate that funding within the current budget. She stated that they were able to accommodate, so in January all staff received a 2% raise for six months. Finance Director Booth then explained how she calculated this year’s salary scales. She began with the salaries at the beginning of last year and added the 2% for the whole year, which would have been 1% received in June, plus an additional percentage. So, 2% was added to the original salary from last school year, and then an additional 1.25% step. Mrs. Booth stated that all the salary scales listed in the supplemental information show the 2% from their original contract last year plus the step increase.

Supervisor Long asked if the bus drivers will receive a raise and health insurance.

Mrs. Booth stated that bus drivers would receive the same raise as everyone else and full-time bus drivers would be covered under the 7.2% health insurance increase.

Mrs. Booth continued and gave a summary of the updated School Nutrition budget. She stated that the update mostly consists of salary changes, the coverage of health insurance for full-time employees, and any additional funds going to school food as the Director of School Nutrition, Mrs. Hamlett, explained that she was trying to buy more fresh and local food. Mrs. Booth informed the Board that Mrs. Hamlett works to get reimbursements back from the government which covers the increased costs of food.

Dr. Wargo moved on to their Capital Improvement Budget. The school submitted their request in the new format to Mr. Basye as requested and they are currently waiting for their boilers at the elementary school. Dr. Wargo stated that the boilers should be delivered next week. As stated earlier, the School Board would like to use their new construction funds for the boilers as well as the other projects listed in the budget transmittal letter.

On page 50, Dr. Wargo attached the letter from August 2, 2023 from the School Board thanking the Board of Supervisors for replacing the roof on the old EVB bank and referencing discussions about the deed for that property.

Mrs. Dana O'Bier asked what the status is on the School Board's request in transferring the deed over to them. She wonders what the holdup is.

County Administrator Tadlock stated that he wasn't sure but Mr. Gregory and the School Division's legal counsel have been in discussions on this matter. He stated that he could reach out to Mr. Gregory for an update and suggested the School Board reach out to their legal counsel as well.

Mrs. O'Bier stated so both lawyers are holding up this process.

Mr. Tadlock explained that is where that particular item is at this time.

Finance Director Booth added that the budget transmittal letter reflects updated/current estimates regarding the costs of those CIP projects.

Dr. Wargo stated that section 7, page 51, consists of transportation fleet information for the Board of Supervisors to review.

Mrs. Booth then gave a status update on the school's federal funds on their OMEGA (Online Management of Education Grant Awards) report. More information related to this report can be found in their presentation on pages 54-56.

Additionally, Mrs. Booth stated that a lot of their purchases and positions were funded by using ESSER grant funds. Most funds that schools receive, the school is not allowed to use those funds for something they were already previously funding (supplanting). ESSER funds did not have that specification. Mrs. Booth explained that ESSER funds had a lot of leniencies and were given to localities during the COVID pandemic to provide more opportunities without the financial stress. She stated that they went back and tried to reimburse everything they could from last year's budget that was used with ESSER funds, so when money is given back to the County, those were items taken out of the General fund and moved into ESSER. Finance Director Booth explained that it was difficult for her to figure out all these expenses when she first accepted her position because they were not all allocated to the right location, but she and

other staff are still working to correct that. She believes they have made tremendous progress and that should all be cleared up before too long. Moving forward, she stated that the school is working on reimbursements regularly, but those expenses previously funded by ESSER won't have any funds to support them. She reiterated that the school won't have the money to support some of the positions they currently have and there won't be enough money to make any extra purchases (materials for JROTC/STEM facility, metal detectors, etc.) Mrs. Booth stated that after September, there will be no more ESSER funds available, so the school budget will be back strictly to their request that is presented.

Dr. Wargo concluded their presentation by stating that section 9 consists of several questions that were brought to their attention and the answers associated to those questions.

Action: B. School Board Supplemental Appropriation Request

Mrs. Booth stated that she shared a letter with Mr. Tadlock on February 2, 2024, about the Virginia Tiered System of Supports grant and the division allocation is \$22,500. These funds have already been received and Mrs. Booth provided a copy of the grant application to the Board so they could see how those funds would be used. Finance Director Booth asked the Board if they'd be willing to take action on this appropriation tonight as she will be absent from the regular board meeting in March, and she'd like to address any questions or concerns they may have.

Mrs. O'Bier asked Mrs. Booth if she'd like the Board to take action on this appropriation tonight or just at their regular meeting.

Mrs. Booth stated that if they'd be willing to tonight that would be great because staff is waiting to spend those funds which have to be spent by the end of the school year.

Motion to approve a supplemental appropriation for the Virginia Tiered System of Supports (VTSS) in the amount of \$22,500 to their Instruction line item 30-6000-6100.

Motion by: James M. Long, second by: Chip Williams.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Aye: James M. Long, Richard F. Haynie, James W. Brann, Chip Williams

Mrs. Mazyck stated that she is hopeful that the Board of Supervisors will be able to help the school finalize their teacher contracts much earlier this year since the school presented their budget to them earlier this year.

Chairman Haynie stated that the Board of Supervisors is going to do their best to stick to the proposed schedule.

Dr. Davis asked if either Board had a set time for their next meeting together.

The Board of Supervisors and School Board agreed to hold their next joint meeting on May 30, 2024 at 6:00p.m.

The School Board's Chair, Betty Christopher, adjourned to close the joint meeting.

***Chairman Haynie requested a 10-minute recess.*

3. County Administrator Items

Action: A. Regional Radio Update

County Administrator Tadlock reminded the Board that the Regional Radio System is being financed through Bank of America and one condition required is for the County to provide them with all contract and lease agreements through L3Harris Microwave Networks and American Tower (ATC). The County is trying to lease space on the tower with ATC and earlier this month Chief Balderson came to the Board and ATC had proposed a certain lease agreement with the County. Through discussions with the Board, the Board had approved up to that amount stated in the lease agreement, but they were looking for any reduction in that amount as well. Staff went back and reviewed the lease agreement with ATC and are still negotiating with them. This afternoon ATC sent additional information back to staff, however County staff has not had the chance to review that material in detail yet, but it does seem promising that ATC is willing to come down some on the price. Mr. Tadlock explained that due to the negotiations with ATC, the County has not finalized the lease agreement with them, and Bank of America needs that in order to proceed in paying the County's pay requests. Microwave Network has submitted two invoices to the County, one of which the County submitted to Bank of America, but they have not processed any payments because they are waiting on that additional information. Additionally, Microwave Network has some money tied up in the equipment and they want payment, and if they don't receive it, they are looking to assess any type of late penalty on those invoices. Mr. Tadlock stated that staff did have a meeting with bond counsel, legal counsel, and Davenport (County's financial advisor) to see what options the County has for accommodating with Microwave Network without jeopardizing the loan with Bank of America. A suggestion was made that if the County has the funds to cover those invoices, then the County could move forward with payment and then at such time the lease agreement is finalized with ATC, the County would seek reimbursement from Bank of America. Mr. Tadlock informed the Board that he checked with the Treasurer's Office and the County does have the funds available to cover those invoices.

Supervisor Williams asked if the County is holding up the process if they do not appropriate those funds.

Mr. Tadlock stated that the risk would be incurring late fees from Microwave Networks and although they are still proceeding to move forward with L3Harris, Microwave Networks has not shipped any of the equipment.

Motion to authorize staff to move forward in wiring funds in the amount of \$268,946 to pay Microwave Networks and to later seek reimbursement from Bank of America.

Motion by: James M. Long, second by: Chip Williams.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Aye: James M. Long, Richard F. Haynie, James W. Brann, Chip Williams

Action: B. Supplemental Appropriation - Webb Boring LLC

Mr. Tadlock stated that the initial contract with Webb Boring, LLC (in relation to the sewer pipe replacement under Cockrell Creek) was in the amount of \$375,000, but when they began the work, they realized they needed to relocate where some of the boring was going to occur. This caused an additional \$25,000 of costs to be incurred. The Board did authorize up to \$400,000 for the emergency procurement and during that discussion, staff spoke about the possibility of using part APRA funds and part CIP funds to cover the costs for this project. After further review of the ARPA funds and after receiving bids back on the drainfield project at the school, Mr. Tadlock suggested that the Board consider using the capital improvement funds to pay for the project entirely. There is approximately \$633,000 left in ARPA funds and in discussions with the engineer, the drainfield project is going to cost around \$500,000. Mr. Tadlock stated that there is approximately \$1.1M in the capital improvement fund, so there is enough in those funds to cover that project.

Motion to approve a transfer from the Capital Improvement fund to the General fund with a supplemental appropriation to line item 9103-7021 in the amount of \$400,000.00 to cover the expenses of the emergency procurement of the sewer line repair under Cockrell Creek.

Motion by: James M. Long, second by: Chip Williams.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Aye: James M. Long, Richard F. Haynie, James W. Brann, Chip Williams

Chairman Haynie asked for an update on the reassessment.

Mr. Tadlock stated that the County just advertised for request for proposals on the reassessment this week. This was advertised on eVA (Virginia's Marketplace) and in the local papers with a due date of March 20, 2024 at 2:00 p.m.

Supervisor Long asked about the budget request progress.

Mr. Tadlock stated that the budget requests were all due at the end of January so the County should have all requests at this point.

Mr. Tadlock explained that Dominion Energy was planning to meet with the Board on March 7, 2024 to discuss solar and smart meters, however, in discussions with Dominion, they requested to have those two items separated so more time could be spent on each topic. Dominion Energy asked if the Board could meet with them on April 4, 2024 in addition to March 7, 2024 to discuss smart meters.

The Board of Supervisors agreed to meet with Dominion Energy on April 4, 2024 to discuss smart meters.

4. Items Related to Closed Meeting

Action: A. Convene into Closed Meeting

Motion to Action: A. Convene into Closed Meeting: convene into closed meeting as permitted by Virginia Code Section 2.2-3711 (A)(1); 1. Discussion, consideration, or interviews of prospective candidates for employment; assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, salaries, disciplining, or resignation of specific public officers, appointees, or employees of any public body; and evaluation of performance of departments or schools of public institutions of higher education where such evaluation will necessarily involve discussion of the performance of specific individuals. Any teacher shall be permitted to be present during a closed meeting in which there is a discussion or consideration of a disciplinary matter that involves the teacher and some student and the student involved in the matter is present, provided the teacher makes a written request to be present to the presiding officer of the appropriate board. Nothing in this subdivision, however, shall be construed to authorize a closed meeting by a local governing body or an elected school board to discuss compensation matters that affect the membership of such body or board collectively.

Motion by: Chip Williams, second by: James M. Long.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Aye: James M. Long, Richard F. Haynie, James W. Brann, Chip Williams

Action: B. Reconvene into Open Meeting

Motion to reconvene into open session.

Motion by: Chip Williams, second by: James M. Long.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Aye: James M. Long, Richard F. Haynie, James W. Brann, Chip Williams

Action: C. Certification of Closed Meeting

Motion that the Northumberland Board of Supervisors return to Public Meeting and certify by roll call vote that only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements by the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, and as were identified in the motion convening the closed meeting were heard, discussed or considered during the closed meeting.

The vote on the motion was passed by a roll call vote as follows:

Aye: Richard F. Haynie, James M. Long, James W. Brann, Charles H. Williams

Motion by: Chip Williams, second by: James M. Long.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Aye: James M. Long, Richard F. Haynie, James W. Brann, Chip Williams

5. Closing of Meeting

Action: A. Adjournment

Motion to carry over to the special called meeting on March 7, 2024.

Motion by: James W. Brann, second by: James M. Long.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Aye: James M. Long, Richard F. Haynie, James W. Brann, Chip Williams