



LEE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
AND LEE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION JOINT MEETING
MCSWAIN EXTENSION EDUCATION AND AGRICULTURE CENTER
2420 TRAMWAY ROAD
SANFORD, NC 27330

July 25, 2024

MINUTES

Roll Call – Lee County Board of Commissioners

Present: Dr. Andre Knecht, Cameron Sharpe, Kirk Smith, Bill Carver, Mark Lovick,
Taylor Vorbeck

Absent: Robert Reives

Roll Call – Lee County Board of Education

Present: Eric Davidson, Sherry Lynn Womack, Alan Rummel, Jamey Laudate, Chris
Gaster, Sandra Bowen

Absent: Patrick Kelly

RECEPTION - 6:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER - 6:30 PM

Chairman Kirk Smith called the Lee County Board of Commissioners to order at 6:30 p.m.

Chairman Eric Davidson asked for a motion to approve the Agenda. Commissioner Taylor Vorbeck moved to approve the agenda and Board Member Chris Gaster seconded. The Agenda was unanimously approved.

Chairman Davidson provided context on the purpose for this meeting. During the Board of Commissioners budget work session in May, the Board of Education provided comments throughout the meeting, but did not have staff present to answer questions, so it was proposed to have a joint meeting to have additional conversation.

Commissioner Andre Knecht arrived at 6:32 p.m.

Chairman Davidson called the Lee County Board of Education to order at 6:35 p.m.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Motion: Motion to approve the Agenda as presented.

Mover: Taylor Vorbeck

For: 5 - Dr. Andre Knecht, Cameron Sharpe, Kirk Smith, Bill Carver, Taylor Vorbeck

Absent: 2 - Mark Lovick, Robert Reives

Motion Result: Passed

WELCOME & MEETING OVERVIEW

Sanford Area Growth Alliance CEO Jimmy Randolph welcomed the Boards and said he was there to moderate and help guide the conversation.

AVERAGE DAILY MEMBERSHIP

Mr. Randolph introduced the first topic of discussion, Average Daily Membership, and read aloud an overview on the item, as well as two prompts, a copy of which is attached and incorporated into these minutes.

Board of Education Member Alan Rummel addressed prompt one and referenced the data provided in the agenda packet. The district is seeing charter school students returning to Lee County Schools. Charter and private schools physically cannot absorb all of the new students notated in the projected growth models, which were created using data collected by the County's GIS Department. PMR (Principal Monthly Report) refers to payments made from the school district to charter schools. The report includes a list of students attending charter school, as well as their addresses, which are verified by staff before payments are made to the charter school. Board of Education Vice Chair Sherry Lynn Womack noted that in the student appeal process, there are many students coming in to Lee County Schools from out of county that are willing to pay tuition.

Commissioner Mark Lovick arrived at 6:47 p.m.

Superintendent Dr. Chris Dossenbach addressed prompt two and noted that the funding model for public schools will change and impact the upcoming school year. The old formula was based on enrollment within the first 20 days of schools and will now be determined based on the ending total of students for the prior year. Dr. Dossenbach doesn't anticipate a large number of negative impacts, but the district did take steps to save money now that COVID dollars are going away and the funding formula is changing. Board Member Rummel said less students means less funding from the State for teachers and the district has to pick up that cost, as well as costs for classified staff, even though less students doesn't impact the school building size. State funding also hasn't kept up with inflation. Board Member Sandra Bowen said the district doesn't receive a refund for returning students from charter schools either. Dr. Dossenbach also noted that since COVID, if a student was homeschooled or attended private school and enters the public school system for the first time, the state does not recognize those students and Lee County Schools has to pick up that cost to fund those students. They are sometimes considered to be "ghost students" that the district is responsible for. Commissioner Bill Carver asked the Board of Education if they've talked to the legislators about fixed versus soft costs and the impact they have on the schools, as well as the impact of scholarship opportunities. Board Member Rummel said the Board of Education has adopted resolutions asking for specific

funding allocations for ESL and technology, rather than a blanket ask for full funding. He felt it was better to give legislators actionable items in the hopes they will be funded. Board Member Womack encouraged members to go to the legislators in person and to call them. She has gone to the legislators and is pushing for reevaluating the funding formula and staff salaries. Commissioner Lovick said it's hard for Lee County to do our jobs when the state isn't doing theirs for the public schools.

Average Daily Membership.pdf
LCS ADM & Charter School Distributions.pdf
Per Pupil Spending Historical Data.pdf
23-24 State Initial Funding Allotments.pdf
13-14 State Initial Funding Allotments.pdf

CAPITAL PLANNING

Mr. Randolph introduced the second topic of discussion, Capital Planning, and read aloud an overview on the item, as well as three prompts, a copy of which is attached and incorporated into these minutes.

County Manager Lisa Minter addressed prompt one and noted that the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is a planning tool and the idea for the current plan is for it to be a guide over the next couple years. The projects listed do not have to be completed in the years specified. County staff put the projects in the year when the County plans to finance the projects. The joint maintenance project planning would need to be started now if it's to be financed in FY 25-26, as it will require at least a year of planning and multiple approvals to be in place before the project can move forward. Both County and school district projects have been moved around to ease the tax burden. These projects also aren't guaranteed, but are being planned for. Board Member Womack asked why the timeline for the school projects changed between what was requested by Lee County Schools and the priority presented to the County. Ms. Minter said the biggest changes were the Southern Lee High School auditorium and bus garage projects. She and the Commissioners changed the priority of the auditorium because of the safety issue surrounding the state of the bus garage and the addition of the pod at Southern has temporarily solved its capacity issue for now. Chairman Smith noted that he and Commissioner Carver saw the current bus garage facility and acknowledged the need to take care of this project for the safety of the employees. Board Member Jamey Laudate said the joint facility is personally concerning to him. He went on the tour of Chatham County, with members of Lee County Schools and the County, and when they visited Chatham County's joint facility, the resounding theme was the trust between two the agencies. He is not sure the two Boards can work through that. He noted that that was another reason the school district listed the auditorium renovations first, to provide more time to work things out on the joint facility and proposed switching the projects back since they are about the same price. Commissioner Sharpe noted that in the May budget work session when the school district's pay study came up, that Commissioner Robert Reives suggested offering bonuses to staff and asked if there had been any additional discussion. Dr. Dossenbach said there have been some discussions internally with just staff and that nothing has been discussed with the Board of Education just yet. His team is still working on the numbers. The County has

not provided bonuses to its employees because the Commissioners fully funded the County's pay plan.

Chairman Smith addressed prompt two. Chairman Smith noted that when Board Member Womack took over as chair, the County and school district have held monthly breakfast meetings to discuss issues between the two Boards. He said he shares notes from those meetings with his Board and encourages the school board to do the same. These monthly meetings have helped to strengthen the relationships between the agencies.

Dr. Dossenbach said the Jonesboro School has not been demolished yet, but the process has begun. The school district was first required to remove asbestos from the facility, which is occurring now, and anticipates full demolition to occur by September 1.

Mrs. Minter provided more context on the possible project. The County's COLTS (County of Lee Transit System) vans are being vandalized at the current facility on Douglas Drive and the County is also of warehouse space. With the proposed new bus garage and the current one remodeled, there will be enough space on the property for a warehouse and COLTS facility for the County. Mrs. Minter said there have been issues getting mechanics for the lift maintenance for the COLTS vans and wondered if the Lee County mechanics could service them since they already service the bus lifts. It was then suggested to tour the Chatham County facility to see how operating a joint COLTS and Lee County Schools bus garage may work. The County would like to move forward with this project after seeing the Chatham facility and running some numbers, but before planning takes off, there needs to be consensus if there's a willingness to enter into a joint facility. . Board Member Chris Gaster said this joint project would be a win-win but would like for more information on the warehouse and for the school district's maintenance workers and their facility to also be considered when looking at this project. Chairman Smith said the storage/warehouse need stems from the County currently paying for external storage space for various departments, and would also house COLTS staff, vehicles and equipment. Chairman Smith said he has spoken to Lee County Schools Maintenance Director Chris McNeill and determined that they would renovate the old bus garage and move the maintenance department there. Board Member Gaster asked to see a cost breakdown from all the agencies involved with the project, including EMS and the Sheriff's Office. Mrs. Minter said the original plan, before a joint facility was proposed, was to look at an individual bus garage for Lee County Schools and a public safety warehouse with COLTS for the County, with the potential of joint maintenance occurring and the County contracting with Lee County Schools for lift maintenance. The Board of Commissioners provided consensus to move forward. Board Member Laudate wants to see a contract and work through it before committing. Board Member Sandra Bowen asked if a bus garage was going to improve student education and felt this project should not be prioritized. Board Member Womack brought up a separate joint project between the County and Central Carolina Community College (CCCC) and Chairman Smith noted that there was an attempt for a joint facility between Lee County and CCCC, but it was determined that there would not be a cost savings with this project since there were so few conducive shared spaces identified, so the County moved forward with its own library project. Chairman Smith offered for the County to craft a Memorandum of Agreement for the joint maintenance facility and asked for consensus from the Board of Education. Chairman Davidson said the entire Board of Education has not heard the explanation of the whole plan and would like to discuss it at their August meeting. Board Member Womack asked to have County staff present the proposal and Chairman Smith agreed.

Board Member Alan Rummel addressed prompt three and noted the capacity issues presented in his handout. The school district does have short-term options available to address capacity, which are the pods at each school site and redistricting. The Board of Education determined that there is a need to continue to search for land. Commissioner Dr. Knecht asked if it was possible to add any additional buildings onto current school sites, and would like to see that researched. Commissioner Vorbeck would like to have a follow-up conversation on state funding. Dr. Dossenbach noted that the district has had 600 less students since COVID. Board Member Laudate said the district is expecting growth and is able to cover high school student capacity now, so their focus is on elementary and middle school capacity.

Commissioner Lovick departed the meeting at 8:10 p.m.

Capital Planning Discussion Prompts.pdf

Adopted CIP Summary.pdf

Jonesboro School Site Map.pdf

Chatham County Joint Maintenance Facility Design.pdf

Chatham Interlocal Agreement Bus Garage.pdf

LEE COUNTY SCHOOLS SQUARE FOOTAGE_CAPACITY May 2024.pdf

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Randolph introduced the final topic for the meeting, a time for Board Member comments, and read aloud an overview on the item, a copy of which is attached and incorporated into these minutes. Members of both boards were provided an opportunity to provide comment on any matter relevant to the joint meeting.

Board Member Comments Introduction.pdf

ADJOURN

Motion: Motion to adjourn. The Lee County Board of Commissioners adjourned at 8:31 p.m.

Mover: Cameron Sharpe

For: 5 - Dr. Andre Knecht, Cameron Sharpe, Kirk Smith, Bill Carver, Taylor Vorbeck

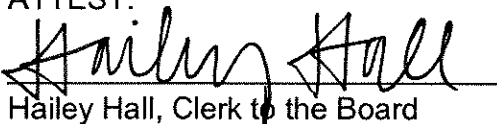
Absent: 2 - Mark Lovick, Robert Reives

Motion Result: Passed



Kirk Smith, Chairman
Lee County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:



Hailey Hall, Clerk to the Board



Average Daily Membership (ADM) Discussion

Introduction

Discussions around Average Daily Membership (ADM) of the school system have been ongoing for years and will continue to drive decision making for the foreseeable future due to the funding models adopted by the State Legislature and the growing population in Lee County. Recent efforts to expand school choice for parents, whether that be charter schooling or opportunity scholarships for private educations, have greatly impacted Lee County Schools' ADM.

These changes have impacted resource allocation, staffing, classroom sizes, and, most notably, state funding levels, necessitating the implementation of various strategies to mitigate the negative effects. The Board of Commissioners is not responsible for capital needs of local charter schools, but LCS is required to distribute a portion of the local current expense funding to each charter school that an in-County student attends, even if the school is out-of-County. With the number of County students enrolling in charter schools increasing, LCS is paying larger sums to area charter schools each year. Some soft costs can decrease due to serving less children, but many hard costs are unwavering, leaving similar bills to be paid with lower funding levels.

Long-term projections for student enrollment in Lee County will be critically important in determining how and when to best tackle the current expense and capital needs of the school system. Prioritizing needs over wants will be crucial over the coming years as both Boards work on future budgets. Thorough preparation and continual action from both Boards will be necessary in developing plans for how to best grow and improve our County and its public school system.

Discussion Prompt(s)

1. Lee County Schools will begin our discussions today by sharing local ADM data and the required charter school distributions. What are the current data trends and how do they impact future enrollment projections?
2. The state continuously modified funding formulas over the years, with current calculations relying on the previous year's ADM as the basis for many calculations. How have these changes impacted funding levels and operations within LCS and what has been done to mitigate negative impacts?

Attachments:

1. School ADM Data with Charter School Distributions
2. County Per Pupil Funding Data
3. State Initial Allotment Formulas

Capital Planning Discussion

Introduction

The Lee County Board of Commissioners adopted their five-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for the years 2025 through 2029 this past June. This CIP is the largest in the County's history and necessitated more intense discussions around debt impacts and priorities. Over the next few years, Lee County staff has made it a priority to invest more time into the CIP process and develop systems to where projects are completed in timely manners, rather than being stuck in limbo for years without concrete direction. Preliminary discussions throughout the past year have been impactful and the current, adopted CIP is a good basis with which to move forward.

One of the first projects that could be a large accomplishment for both LCS and LCG would be the proposed Joint Maintenance Facility. This past February, representatives from both Boards and organizations had the opportunity to tour Chatham County's Joint Maintenance Facility. Lee County has the ability to operate a great facility that would emulate Chatham County's success, but it will require new levels of cooperation and communication between both Boards and staff to make it possible.

Many other large projects are currently within the five-year scope of the adopted CIP. Notable school projects include the auditoriums at both high schools, gym renovations at East and West Lee Middle Schools, and a possible new elementary school. A majority of the projects in the CIP are projected to be able to be completed without a debt-related tax impact. The major projects, though, such as the new law enforcement center, elementary school, and indoor recreation center coincide with projected debt-related tax impacts when the entire plan is considered.

Discussion Prompt(s)

1. The current placement of projects on the CIP is according to proposed debt issuance. Starting with Lee County Government, what does this mean for the projects and when should the Board(s) and staff begin planning for a project on the adopted CIP?
2. The Joint Maintenance Facility will require full cooperation and coordination between both Boards. The first point of discussion for this project surrounds the destruction of the Jonesboro School and the plan for the entire site on Cox Maddox Rd. What is the current plan for the site and how can we best facilitate this project's completion in a timely manner so as to best provide required services?
3. Projects pertaining to school expansion and new construction are both present in the adopted CIP. What are the current capacity issues being seen throughout Lee County Schools? Are there alternatives that could mitigate overcrowding that would enable other projects to take precedence over the capacity expansions?

Attachments:

1. Adopted CIP Table
2. Jonesboro Site Maps
3. Chatham County Joint Maintenance Facility Design
4. Chatham Interlocal Agreement
5. Current School Capacities and Enrollment

Board Member Comments

Introduction

Please share your insights on how we can elevate our communication and collaboration to better serve Lee County. Reflect on the unique roles and responsibilities that each board holds within our County and how we can leverage these strengths to help our community thrive. Discuss strategies for fostering open, honest, and productive dialogue and for building mutual trust and understanding. Aligning both boards' efforts to address the challenges and opportunities we face will be invaluable in ensuring the well-being and progress of Lee County.

Each board member will now have three minutes to speak.

NORTH CAROLINA, LEE COUNTY
Presented for registration on this 20th day
of Aug 20, 24 at 9:10 AM PM
recorded in Book 38 Page 596
Pamela G. Britt, Register of Deeds