

**THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
and  
DURHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS BOARD OF EDUCATION  
DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA**

Monday, November 24, 2003

4:00 – 6:30 P.M. Joint Session

**MINUTES**

Place: Commissioners' Room, second floor, Durham County Government Administrative Complex, 200 E. Main Street, Durham, NC

Present: Commission Chairman Ellen W. Reckhow, Vice-Chairman Joe W. Bowser, and Commissioners Philip R. Cousin Jr., Becky M. Heron, and Mary D. Jacobs

DPS Chairman Michael Page and members Gail M. Heath, Steve Martin, Phillis Scott, and Jacqueline D. Wagstaff

Absent: DPS Vice-Chairman Regina George-Bowden and member Kathryn Meyers

Presider: Chairman Ellen W. Reckhow

**Welcome/Opening Remarks**

Chairman Reckhow welcomed everyone to the joint meeting of the Board of County Commissioners and Durham Public Schools Board of Education.

**Enrollment Update**

Chairman Reckhow recognized Dr. Ann T. Denlinger, Superintendent, Durham Public Schools, for her presentation.

Dr. Denlinger distributed a chart comparing 2002-03 and 2003-04 Durham Public Schools membership, month 3. She highlighted the following four schools:

- Hillside High School—increase—216 students from 1,216 to 1,432;
- Lowe's Grove Middle School—increase—102 students from 709 to 811;
- Sherwood Githens Middle School—increase—79 students from 974 to 1,053; and
- W.G. Pearson Elementary School—decrease—131 students from 320 to 189.

The Commissioners asked questions and made comments.

Superintendent Denlinger responded to the questions and comments.

Dr. Denlinger stated that the total student population increased by 147 students from 30,356 (FY 2002-03) to 30,503 (FY 2003-04).

### **Health/Wellness Trust Fund Grant**

Chairman Reckhow recognized Dr. Bert L’Homme, Associate Superintendent for Instructional Services, to make a presentation on this item.

Dr. L’Homme stated that the wellness partnership has been positive for Durham Public Schools students. George Watts and Glenn Elementary Schools, as well as Hillside and Southern High Schools, house clinics. A new clinic is opening at E.K. Powe Elementary. W.G. Pearson Elementary School utilizes Lincoln Community Health Center resources.

Dr. L’Homme praised the success of the Tooth Ferry project.

Dr. L’Homme announced that Durham Public Schools was notified recently of receiving a \$413,000 grant for “The Campaign for a Healthy Durham Phase 1: County Obesity Initiative”. The obesity project will be located in four schools (two elementary and two middle schools) and will include an evaluation component based on the amount of weight lost.

The Commissioners asked questions and made remarks. Dr. L’Homme responded to the questions. Discussion followed.

### **Student Achievement**

Chairman Reckhow recognized Dr. Denlinger for a presentation on student achievement.

Dr. Denlinger reminded the Commissioners of the school system’s vision statement that all students in Durham perform on grade level.

Dr. Denlinger stated that her primary legal responsibility to the students, staff, and community is to provide a safe and orderly learning environment, her secondary responsibility being high-quality instructional programs.

Dr. Denlinger presented data concerning student achievement that reflected substantial improvements in all instructional program areas.

### **ABCs of Education**

Dr. L'Homme presented information on the State's ABC program. DPS is pleased that seven schools rated "excellent" (90 percent of the students achieved at or above grade level last year).

### **No Child Left Behind Federal Program**

Dr. Denlinger reported that this program adds another dimension to the State's accountability program whereby the school system is held accountable for the performance of every child. The Federal Government established 806 goals for all schools in the district; 704 goals were achieved for a percentage of 88.3. Fifteen schools met all of their goals.

### **Closing the Gap on the Reading Goals**

Dr. L'Homme presented the achievement data on this item. Durham Public Schools set a goal in FY 2002 to meet the literacy goal in FY 2006-2007 and eliminate the achievement gap.

The County Commissioners asked questions and made remarks about the student achievement presentation. A lengthy discussion followed.

Dr. L'Homme and Dr. Denlinger responded to the questions.

### **2003 Bond Follow-Up Schedule of Projects**

Chairman Reckhow asked Dr. Denlinger to make a comprehensive follow-up presentation on the 2003 Bond Referendum.

Dr. Denlinger commented that the administration would explain the projected schedule of events to the Commissioners and School Board members.

Assistant Superintendent Hugh Osteen used a chart to show the layout of projects in the 2003 Bond Referendum. The chart encompassed a six-year period. Bond sales will occur in March 2004, March 2006, and March 2008.

Mr. Osteen used the Priority One Bond Referendum Projects chart to discuss various construction projects. He also reviewed the Durham Public Schools Cash Flow report.

### **Joint Planning Protocol**

Chairman Reckhow called attention to the Joint Planning Protocol that had been attached to the agenda. She wished to remind all principle parties that the Commissioners take

this protocol seriously. The Commissioners trust that the School Board will make a commitment to follow the protocol.

Commissioner Heron suggested that the following be added to the protocol document as it relates to the environment: use or refer to the Durham inventory of historic sites and the inventory of endangered species and plants. Many of those sites are designated in the City/County Planning Department. She recommended that this be considered when considering future school sites.

**Letter from Bond Campaign Committee Co-Chairs MaryAnn Black and Stephens Toler**

Chairman Reckhow stated the importance of following-up on several points raised in the following letter regarding feedback from citizens in the community:

“Thank you for giving us the opportunity to serve as co-chairs for the 2003, \$124 million *LEARNING 4-All Bond Campaign*. The Commissioners, the School Board, and both administrations created a well-planned educational bond. It enabled us to present the bond package to the community, and it helped voters understand the importance of the bond. We were privileged to speak to many civic organizations, education and political groups about the bond package, and we successfully convinced them to endorse it.

During these sessions, groups gave us many kind suggestions to make the next bond stronger. One of the most frequently asked question was, “How will the bond impact property taxes for homeowners”? Perhaps you could create a chart that shows, on an upward scale starting at \$80,000, the best and worse case scenarios for homeowners’ property taxes. The second most frequently asked question was, “How much did the previous bond increase property tax?” A chart that shows the impact of the last three bonds would help address this issue.

There needs to be stronger procedures for public input before the Capital Improvement Plan is developed. We suggest that the School Board and the County Commissioners have coffee time with the community leaders, stake holders, groups of citizens, and other interested parties to receive input on the bond item before the final preparation of the package and to help citizens understand how the package is being designed, while allowing opportunity for discussion or changes, if warranted.

The Bond Campaign Steering Committee did not have enough Parent Teachers Association (PTA) members. In the future, PTA volunteers should be named as a part of the committee. There should also be a person to

coordinate the volunteer activities for the telephone bank, to remove signs, etc.

The following are issues that need to be addressed now that the bond has passed.

1. The School Board needs to ensure that site based committees receive community input on all building designs (particularly Fayetteville Street and C.C. Spaulding). This is consistent with the current process and with the goals of the schools serving as community hubs.
2. The School Board needs to commit to building a new band suite at Hillside High School and to identify the appropriate resources to accomplish this.
3. To provide accountability, quarterly reports should be made available for all bond projects. The reports could be posted on various web sites, in libraries, or given to citizens at their request.
4. The School Board needs to address the issue of whether small schools have access to similar resources as large schools.
5. Fayetteville Street and C.C. Spaulding should have health rooms and the resource rooms should be located on the same floor as the primary classrooms, if possible.
6. The School Board needs to explore whether the City will allow the expansion of Fayetteville Street School into the adjacent park.
7. The School Board needs to continue to work diligently to identify resources for the Vocational/Technical School.
8. When an institution receives funds from a bond referendum, and not all the funds are spent for the specified project, management must account to the public for any unused funds before seeking additional funds in the next bond.

We thank all the members of the steering committee for their hard work. We thank Dr. John Lucas for being our honorary chairman. We thank the staff of the County, Durham Public Schools, Durham Technical Community College, the Durham Public Libraries, and the staff at the Museum of Life & Science for their help with the bond passage. Marilynn Walls, President of The Creative Mark, and Deborah Craig-Ray are to be commended especially for the many long hours they put into this campaign.

Finally, we thank the people of Durham County for voting “**Yes**” to ***Learning 4-All***. They will help us upgrade old facilities, build new structures, and improve schools throughout our community. We are indeed a great community of people, who value our public facilities and, most importantly, value ***Learning 4-All***.

Sincerely,

/s/ MaryAnn Black

/s/ Steve Toler”

A lengthy discussion was held regarding the letter.

Chairman Reckhow urged the school system to request that schools provide an opportunity for community input by holding a forum or another type of gathering. The Commissioners request that the schools address the community’s recreational needs, as well as various other needs. She asked that the school system consider constructive ways to reach out and ask the community for ideas.

Dr. Denlinger agreed to act on Chairman Reckhow’s recommendation.

### **Career and Technical Education School Task Force Update**

Chairman Reckhow commented that the County Commissioners would vote on Commissioner appointments to the Career and Technical Education Task Force at their upcoming meeting. She expressed her desire that the Task Force begin work in the near future.

The County Commissioners and Board of Education had a discussion regarding who would convene the first meeting and the associated responsibilities.

Chairman Reckhow stated that she and School Board Chairman Michael Page would convene the first meeting, set the date and time, and designate the location. She added that the Task Force will select its leadership.

Commissioner Heron wanted to know from Superintendent Denlinger if a trip had been planned to visit vocational programs, as had been discussed at a previous meeting.

The Commissioners and School Board concurred that the Task Force, Board of Education, and Commissioners should visit the vocational programs.

Superintendent Denlinger said that she and County Manager Ruffin would determine a date in January for the trip.

### **Public Comments**

Victoria Peterson, P.O. Box 101, Durham, NC 27702 expressed her opinion that citizens should be given an opportunity for public comment concerning each agenda item. She requested that Mr. Osteen introduce a plan to ascertain that African-American men would be employed to work on contracted projects. Ms. Peterson asked whether data could be collected regarding the number of African Americans, Latinos, and women are employed. She also asked if information could be compiled to determine the progress of African Americans in school.

Dr. Lavonia Allison, P.O. Box 428, Durham, NC 27702, echoed the opinion of Ms. Peterson that citizens should be given time at the meetings for comment. She commended the report that was presented relating to student achievement in reading and math. Dr. Allison challenged the school system to “follow” ninth graders to determine how many graduate; this data is important because this population is filling up the jail. Dr. Allison voiced concerns about the procedures in place to prepare students for the PSAT; preparation should begin in the sixth grade. She requested that all reports generated by the School Board be available for public review.

Ms. Anita Hammond, 2100 Otis Street, Durham, NC 27707, representing the Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People, appreciated the data presented at the meeting. The report was good; however, the community needs to know what happens to school dropouts. This information is needed to complete the picture.

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School Board Chairman Michael Page thanked Ms. MaryAnn Black and Mr. Steve Toler for their excellent work on the successful passage of the recent bond referendum.

No official action was taken at this meeting.

### **Adjournment**

Chairman Reckhow adjourned the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Garry E. Umstead, CMC  
Clerk to the Board