

MINUTES  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
COUNTY OF YORK

Adjourned Meeting  
January 14, 2008

6:00 p.m.

Meeting Convened. An Adjourned Meeting of the York County Board of Supervisors was called to order at 6:30 p.m., Monday, January 14, 2008, in the Round Room, York County School Board Offices, by Chairman Thomas G. Shepperd, Jr.

Attendance. The following members of the Board of Supervisors were present: Walter C. Zarembo, Sheila S. Noll, Donald E. Wiggins, George S. Hrichak, and Thomas G. Shepperd, Jr.

Also in attendance was James O. McReynolds, County Administrator.

**JOINT MEETING WITH YORK COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD**

School Board Members Present: R. Page Minter, Chairman; Linda Meadows, Vice Chairman; Barbara S. Haywood; Mark A. Medford, and Dr. Robert W. George.

School Division Staff Present: Dr. Steven Staples, Superintendent; Richard M. Hixson, Deputy Superintendent for Operations; Dr. James R. Tucker, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction; Dennis Jarrett, Chief Financial Officer; Dr. Jennifer Parish, Director of Curriculum and Staff Development; and Betsy Overkamp-Smith, Community and Public Relations Officer.

Chairman Shepperd thanked the School Board members for the invitation to attend the meeting, and stated the Board of Supervisors also appreciated the correspondence that preceded the meeting. He stated it is the Board's hope to come to a better understanding of the requirements of the School Division.

Chairman Minter indicated the School Board wanted the Board of Supervisors to be more informed earlier in the process. He then presented the group with some background information on the FY2008 budget, stating that full funding was not approved, and there was a \$1 million shortfall that the School Board had to offset. He stated student enrollment was supposed to have dropped, but that did not occur. He indicated that as a result, 19 teacher positions were eliminated, and the technology program moved from a 5-year replacement to a 7-year replacement schedule. Mr. Minter then noted that the School Board members wished to present the Board of Supervisors with some significant talking points to be considered when formulating the FY09 budget.

Mr. Medford addressed the priority of technology, stating that four years ago the School Board had adopted a policy for a 5-year replacement program. As a result of last year's budget, the School Board had to change to a 7-year schedule, and the members feel it is unacceptable. He noted that many of the schools were operating under programs and with equipment that are outdated and not being used by many others, and a loss of productivity results. Children using their home computers are not able in many cases to interface with their school's computers because of the older technology being used in the school. Mr. Medford noted that when the technology program was started in the School Division, the Board of Supervisors was very forward thinking and helped the Division by allocating a good deal of funding to upgrade the old systems. He stated everyday operations are driven by technology, and instructional software is being limited because of the older operating systems. He stated it is one of the School Board's priorities to move back to a 5-year goal, and it needs the support of the Board of Supervisors and the community.

Chairman Shepperd stated the Board understands the value of technology, but it is looking to see what the School Board is proposing to counter-balance the need. It may take a sequence of other things to occur for the Board to provide that funding. He stated the Board of Supervisors needs to see in detail what it is the School Board is proposing.

Mr. Medford indicated the School Board will have a number for the Board to show what it actually costs to get back on the 5-year program.

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Discussion followed on other areas of technology infrastructure that need to be replaced other than computers and operating systems.

Mr. Medford indicated the School Board will provide the Board of Supervisors with all the information it needs concerning what the School Division needs in the way of technology upgrades.

Mr. Zaremba stated he would like to see some kind of credible study that would support or validate the 5-year cycle versus other timeframes. He stated he would like to know what the life cycles are in comparable school divisions regarding technology replacement.

Mrs. Haywood next addressed rising fuel costs and the increased cost over last year, and the anticipated increases for next year. She stated the School Division has no choice but to purchase fuel to run the buses, and so far for this fiscal year the costs are more than \$150,000 over what was budgeted. She spoke of what the School Division has done to improve the budget areas of transportation, stating they have done everything possible to eliminate waste on the bus routes. Mrs. Haywood stated everyone has been impacted by the problems with fuel costs, noting that if the School Division cannot afford to run its buses, other programs would have to be cut.

Chairman Minter addressed the priority of special education. He stated the federal funds never increase but are always reduced. He noted the School Division lost six positions last year. Because the military makes compassionate home assignments, York County offers many services to military families with special needs, and special education enrollment has been up 4 percent since last September. Mr. Minter noted that special education is a federally mandated program, and the School Division has to pay the costs, no matter what they are.

Discussion followed on the New Horizons program and how its budget is set.

Mr. Zaremba indicated it would be nice if the Board of Supervisors had the costs on special education as well. He stated it gets his hackles up when he hears "unfunded mandate." He asked what the shortfall was that the County is expected to make up.

Chairman Shepperd indicated that as a result of the success of the School Division's program, he has heard that many families want to stay in York County. He asked what distinguishes York County's program from all the others, other than the concentration of the military in this area. He stated he never hears anyone state they want to stay at other military bases or posts. Mr. Shepperd indicated this raised the question as to whether or not the County was providing something over and above the mandates, and there is an expense to that. He stated his concern is impact aid, and it looks like the County is supplementing the federal government which is the reverse of what it should be, and the citizens need to know it.

Mrs. Meadows addressed the priority of the pupil/teacher ratio, stating the School Board is concerned about what is going on at present. She noted Mr. Minter had alluded to the problems that occurred when 19 teachers were cut because of the expected enrollment decrease, and it has caused a pupil/teacher ratio in the elementary schools to increase to 27:1 or better because the decrease did not occur. She stated that the size of these classes place instructional delivery in real peril, and she went on to cite the ratios in some of the other schools and programs, as well as some of the special problems the teachers have to address such as inclusion students, ADD, ADHD, and children with limited English proficiency.

Chairman Shepperd indicated the School Board and its staff are the experts in determining the ratio of students to teachers. He noted that there does not seem to be a problem with the ratio in the high schools, and he asked why not concentrate more teachers in the elementary schools where the problems are. Mr. Shepperd stated this was the part of the discussion that was missing when the Board of Supervisors looked at the whole budget.

Mrs. Meadows indicated there are more than 25 core classes that have 30 or more children in them, and a total of more than 200 classes with 30 or more children.

Mr. Medford noted that with the reduction of teachers because of anticipated lower enrollment, the extra teachers could not be hired, so classroom ratios went up, and the School Board at that time could not do anything about it.

Chairman Shepperd indicated the Board of Supervisors needs this kind of detailed explanation.

Mrs. Meadows stated that as soon as it can get the figures together, the Board of Supervisors will know how much it will cost.

Mr. Zaremba indicated he felt it was too early to talk about it intelligently at this point. He stated the Board of Supervisors also wants to know what the School Board's plans are to level some of these costs, and the Board does not expect to see increases across the entire School Division, including administration. He asked what the School Board was doing to solve the problem internally.

Chairman Shepperd stated he needed to know what the requirements are and why each requirement is good or bad.

Mr. Medford noted that this information was in the School Board's mission and goals.

Discussion followed on the need for a lower student/teacher ratio and keeping the students up to the level they are today.

Chairman Minter stated there is a great shortage of special education teachers, yet the School Division must provide the services, and they must have licensed teachers for them.

Dr. George then addressed teacher compensation, stating that last year York County gave the smallest raise in the area at 3 percent, and it currently ranks seventh out of nine comparison divisions in Hampton Roads, slipping from 5<sup>th</sup> place in the last two years. He asked if the County really wanted the quality of its students' education to be in the bottom one-third, or does it expect the qualifications for its teachers to be in the bottom one-third. He stated York County is not in the bottom one-third of the places to live and raise a family. Dr. George stated there is no reason why York's teachers should be paid in the bottom third of the scale, and he proposed that during this coming year the teachers get back to the middle of the pay scale. After that, he stated the School Board would develop a long-term strategy for keeping the pay scales in the middle. He noted that the teachers do not come to York County to teach because of the great pay, but for its safety, the favorable student/teacher ratio, and the adequate instructional technology. After having increased the student/teacher ratio, taken the technology replacement program from every five to seven years, and dropping teacher pay to the bottom of the middle third, he asked how long it will take before York sees a decrease in the number of qualified teacher candidates. Dr. George stated it is the School Board's charge to get the teacher compensation back to the middle of the pay scale.

Discussion followed on teacher compensation and the difficulties associated with a merit pay system.

Chairman Shepperd indicated that 85 percent of the school budget is teacher compensation. He stated his point is that it does not tell the whole story. The Board of Supervisors knows that teachers are critical, but maybe the whole Peninsula needs to wake up.

Dr. George stated that nine divisions have researched teacher compensation, and have looked at it day in and day out. He indicated they have developed valuable data which has determined the minimum a teacher is worth.

Mr. Medford noted the School Board benchmarks to try to figure out salaries just as the County does. He stated the problem comes into place when there is a need for a teacher that is hard to fill. He agreed that perhaps the School Board does need to look at the scales and the whole teacher compensation system.

Discussion followed regarding after-school and extra-curricular programs and their fate if funding is needed elsewhere in the school budget.

Mr. Wiggins indicated he knows very well what York County schools do for York County. He stated people move here because of the schools, and the ones who come are parents who are very interested in their children's education, but some are not. He stated parents have a lot to do with the success of York County's schools. He spoke of a newspaper article stating that York County was third in the state in terms of getting the most out of the money it spends on

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education, which says a lot about the community, its parents, and its teachers. Mr. Wiggins noted that when things get tough, cutbacks happen, and the first thing to go is technology. He stressed that key employees need to be kept, and the teachers are most valuable when it comes to education. He stated it is up to the School Board to develop the budget, and the Board of Supervisors does not have unlimited funds. It is up to the School Board to determine how to best educate the children within the amount of funding allocated; it has to be run like a business.

Dr. George thanked the Board of Supervisors for the huge task it does for the County. He expressed his hope that the two boards can have more open communication.

Mr. Medford spoke of the good relationship between the two boards. He stated he knows that public education is the Board of Supervisors' top priority, and the School Board appreciates the efforts of the Board of Supervisors in that regard.

Mrs. Noll indicated there has been open dialog between the two boards for years. She stated it would be helpful to know how much discretionary money is in the School Board's budget versus how much is mandated, noting the School Board's hands are tied in many instances. Mrs. Noll indicated the School Board members could contact the Board members at any time. She then noted that teachers are never paid what they are worth, but the Board will provide as much for them as it can.

Mrs. Haywood stated the School Board lives and breathes teacher compensation, and it will send the Board of Supervisors all the information it needs to better understand the needs of the teachers.

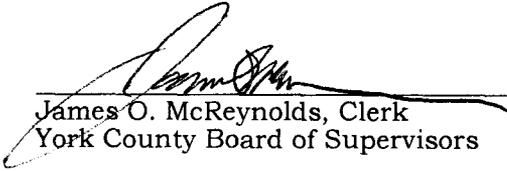
Mr. Medford noted that the School Division also has other employees, and market adjustments are important also.

Chairman Minter then proposed that the School Division's staff could take over the County's technology system and absorb the workload, causing a dollar savings to the County. He noted that the School Board members had reviewed their concerns, and he thanked the Board of Supervisors for attending the meeting.

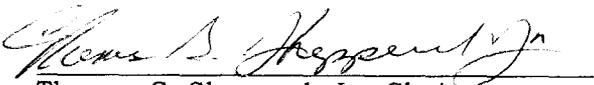
Chairman Shepperd stated the discussion had been great, and the School Board could now go back with some of the questions the Board has and begin to address them. He stated both boards are well aware of the value of education to the County.

Mr. Zaremba indicated in his 12 years on the Board of Supervisors many of the issues brought up tonight have been wrestled with before. He stated the School Board is doing a great job by any measure, and there is hardly a school division in the state that can touch York's. He indicated the Board of Supervisors wants input from the School Board, the teachers, and the public in order to develop an approved budget that meets all the requirements.

Meeting Adjourned. At 7:54 p.m. Chairman Shepperd declared the meeting adjourned sine die.



James O. McReynolds, Clerk  
York County Board of Supervisors



Thomas G. Shepperd, Jr., Chairman  
York County Board of Supervisors