

**THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA**

Tuesday, March 30, 2010
“Conversations with Commissioners”
7:00 P.M.

MINUTES

Place: Jordan High School, 6860 Garrett Road, Durham NC 27707

Present: Vice Chairman Ellen W. Reckhow, and Commissioners Becky M. Heron, Brenda A. Howerton, and Joe Bowser

Absent: Chairman Michael Page (Excused)

Staff: County Manager Michael Ruffin; Deputy County Managers Wendell Davis and Carolyn Titus; Assistant County Managers Deborah Craig-Ray and Drew Cummings; County Attorney Lowell Siler; Director of Budget and Management Services Pam Meyer; Finance Director George Quick; Assistant to the County Manager Laura Jensen; and Clerk to the Board Michelle Parker-Evans

Presider: Vice Chairman Reckhow

Call to Order

Vice Chairman Reckhow called the meeting to order. She introduced the Board of County Commissioners.

The Vice Chair read an announcement concerning the importance of filling out the Census form and reminded everyone of the deadline for returning the form.

Because of the number of citizens signed up to speak, the Vice Chair announced that two minutes would be allotted per speaker.

Durham County Current Budget/Financial Overview

The County Manager, Mike Ruffin, recognized Heidi Carter, School Board member. The Manager gave a brief overview of the upcoming budget and challenges.

DURHAM COUNTY FY 2010-2011 BUDGET FORECAST

- Property Tax Base has increased 1.3% vs. average of 3% growth seen in previous years
- He indicated that the County has a \$29.4 billion tax base next year
- The County is recognizing \$2.6 million in new income vs. \$6-8 million in the past.
- Durham Public Schools is being asked to take a 3 percent reduction in local funds
- The County is experiencing a \$10.8 million deficit

The Manager concluded by giving an overview of the Budget Approval process and schedule:

- Monday, May 24 - Manager's Recommended Budget to Commissioners
- Thursday May 27-Wednesday June 16 - Budget Worksessions with BOCC to be scheduled
- Monday June 14 – Public Hearing on Recommended Budget
- Monday June 28 – Board Adoption of FY2011 Annual Budget Ordinance

Community Conversations

Vice Chairman Reckhow called the names of citizens who signed up to speak. She asked that all citizens be respectful. The citizens made the following comments:

Amanda McCall, 104 Calm's Way, spoke as an educator concerned about budget cuts to the schools.

Julie Spencer, Carrington Middle School Principal, spoke about the consequences of cuts to staff development and the shortage of supplies.

Kathy Kirkpatrick, Lowes Grove Middle School Principal, presented statistics on the likelihood of incarceration due to learning difficulties. She added that 3rd grade end of grade tests are used to determine how many jails will be built.

John Kline, 217 Nottingham Drive, expressed concern about his child who attends the School of the Arts. He asked that strong consideration be given to using the "rainy day" fund for schools.

Jhalia Myers, a senior at Hillside High School, expressed concern about the lack of supplies in schools.

Elisa Benitez, a junior at Hillside High School, spoke and supplies, overcrowded classrooms, and the position teachers are placed in by giving extra credit for paper and supplies brought in by students.

Ramya Mudugu, a student from Githens Middle School, made a plea for the Board to reconsider budget cuts to Durham Public Schools. She was concerned about extra curriculum programs as well as free or reduced lunch and bus stops.

Stephanie Humphrey, made a plea keep all assistants and support staff in the schools. Otherwise teachers would have many roles all day.

Michael Stauch, 105 W. Club Blvd, asked the Commissioners to do whatever it takes for the schools.

Cristen Chappell, 104 Ashworth Drive, a parent of Creekside and Githens students, asked the Commissioners how many visited a school this week. She invited all the Commissioners to visit a school.

Trilby McClammy, PTA Council, made a plea for using the "rainy day fund."

Cyrus Dastur, 1002 Oakland Avenue, asked the Board to think outside the box for ideas of creative funding. He stated that he is willing to pay more to ensure the schools are funded.

Yolanda Whitted, 1006 Leon Street #5, spoke as a teacher and parent. She spoke about her experiences being homeless because she did not make enough money to pay her bills. She was concerned about being homeless again if teachers are forced to take a pay cut.

Ahnick Peek, 1104 Harrier Court, spoke about donating a case of paper to schools each month because of the lack of supplies. She also pointed out that 29% of the population in Durham is under the age of 19.

Matthew Perry-Johnson, 4 Tacoma Court, spoke as an educator. She indicated that larger class sizes would allow more bullying and less time for teachers to teach.

Ronald Thornton, Jr., a junior at Hillside High School, talked about books not being replaced, increased classes and fewer summer school options.

Rick Hardy, 4006 Kettering Drive, a realtor, spoke in support of children. He requested accountability from the Commissioners.

Gina Frutig, 5231 Penrith Drive, an educator and single parent, spoke about the hardships she faces and asked the Commissioners not to cut teachers' pay.

Howard Partner, 2110 Woodrow Street, a volunteer at the School of the Arts, mentioned the big projects being planned in Durham. He asked about delaying those projects. He also questioned whether there was a need to build additional schools right now.

Amy Glass, 8 Chantilly Place, talked about the perception of schools in Durham. She felt it was important to keep school funding and dispel the perceptions.

John Stone, 10 Litchfield Court, parent of Pearsontown and Rogers Herr students, stated that he willing to pay more to help with the school funding. He asked that the Commissioners not consider a 4-day school week as some other areas have considered.

Brian McDonald, a teacher at Jordan High School, talked about classes with over 30 students. He asked the Board to keep teachers.

Deborah Alcorn, 2626 Hitchcock Drive, spoke about assistant principals who had already given up one month's pay to help with the budget. She asked the Board to use the "rainy day" fund for schools.

Carol Mansfield, 3503 Heatherwood Lane, talked about the perception of schools in Durham. She stated that June is too late for the School Board and the BOCC to talk about the budget.

Brad Shuler, Cansler Drive, spoke as a parent of a special needs child. He requested accountability and talked about teachers' pay.

Mariann Crea, 4915 Dula Street, asked the Board to reconsider the two cent tax increase to help fund the schools.

Nancy Sing, 4 Brunswick Court, had questions about the 10 counties that Durham Public Schools were compared with. She was concerned with the poverty rate of the other counties. She stated that not funding schools will be funding for law enforcement.

Shaunda Cook, 1904 Spring Creek Drive, echoed the sentiments of the other speakers.

George Brown, 3600 Tremont Drive, asked the Board to consider children. He expressed his belief in the need for education and Durham Public Schools.

Nancy Cox, parent, stated that the current cuts have implications now. She asked that any questions regarding DPS spending be made public.

Elizabeth, a tutor, spoke as an advocate for children. She stated that the remedial cuts have hurt the children.

David Hawks, Principal of Durham School of the Arts, stated that any more cuts will dismember Durham Public Schools. He also stated that Durham needs to remain competitive.

Closing Remarks

Vice Chairman ended the public speaking time by thanking the citizens, assuring them that no decisions have been made, and the Board of County Commissioners is listening to them. She reiterated that the School Board will make a recommendation to the County Manager and the Manager will present the recommendation to the Commission.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Parker-Evans
Clerk to the Board