

JOINT MEETING MINUTES  
DURHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS BOARD OF EDUCATION  
and  
DURHAM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
August 25, 2003

Durham County Board of Commissioners hosted a joint meeting with the Durham Public Schools Board of Education on Monday, August 25, 2003 at 4:00 p.m. at the County Commissioners Chambers, 200 E. Main Street, Durham, North Carolina.

School Board Members in attendance:

Regina George-Bowden, Vice-Chair  
Gail Heath  
Steve Martin  
Michael Page  
Phillis Scott  
Jackie Wagstaff  
Ann T. Denlinger, Superintendent

County Commission Members in attendance:

Ellen Reckhow, Chair  
Joe Bowser, Vice-Chair  
Philip Cousin, Jr.  
Becky Heron  
Mary Jacobs  
Mike Ruffin, County Manager

Board of County Commission Chairman Ellen Reckhow called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone on behalf of the Board of County Commissioners. Ms. Reckhow stated that Board of Education Chairman, Kathryn Meyers, was absent due to illness in her family. Vice Chairman, Dr. Regina George-Bowden, welcomed everyone on behalf of the school Board.

Mary Jacobs asked to add an item to the agenda – *Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)*, and Jackie Wagstaff asked if time would be allowed for Public Comment. Discussion of the MOU would be added to the agenda after the Resolution to Establish a Task Force for a Career & Technical Education School, and Public Comment would be allowed at the end of the meeting.

Superintendent Ann Denlinger and Assistant Superintendent Hugh Osteen were recognized.

**Update of 2001 Bond**

Mr. Osteen presented a slide tape presentation of the 2001 Bond Referendum status. On November 2001, citizens of Durham approved the expenditure of \$51.8 million for public school facility improvements. Those bond projects included additions and improvements to 11 existing schools, construction of a new elementary school, and acquisition and distribution of mobile

classrooms system wide. The scope of work, the work schedule, and the financing costs for renovations to Bethesda, R.N. Harris, Lakewood, Oak Grove, Pearsonstown, George Watts Elementary Schools, New Elementary School "A"; Carrington, Chewing, Neal and Rogers-Herr Middle Schools; Durham School of the Arts; Facilities/Transportation (Central Services); and system wide mobile classrooms were reviewed (see attachments).

Mr. Osteen stated that the Board of Education and County Commissioners would receive a report on the remaining balance after the close out of all projects funded by the 2001 Bond. The projects were prioritized according to the Long Range Facilities Plan. The school system does plan ahead for projected growth. Joe Bowser asked if Durham contractors were bidding on the projects and being awarded projects. Mr. Osteen stated that Durham contractors were bidding on some of the projects and that the Lakewood and Chewing projects are contracted by Durham contractors. Mr. Osteen did not have the statistics available for the amount of the total bond going to Durham County contractors nor for minority contracts. That information would be sent to the County Commission members for their information at a subsequent time. The environmental issues at Lakewood School, according to Mr. Osteen, have been addressed. Superintendent Denlinger stated that an updated report would be presented to both Boards on September 11, 2003.

#### **Update on July 28 County Commissioner's Meeting**

Chairman Reckhow said the Hillside High School band and chorus rooms and the Fayetteville Street Elementary School site expansion had been discussed at a recent Board of County Commission Meeting. Both items are included on the Board of Education Meeting agenda on August 28 for discussion, and possible subsequent action by the Board of Education.

While the Hillside High School band and chorus rooms have functioned successfully since 1995, Hillside's current band room is the smallest high school band room in Durham Public Schools. There is not a practical way to expand the existing room in its current location. In order to provide a band room at a larger size, a new band room or suite would have to be constructed adjacent to the existing building. If all of the program spaces were replaced, the new band suite would be roughly 4,500 square feet in area. The projected range of cost for the new band and chorus rooms could fall between \$750,000 and \$850,000. Further study and more detailed estimates are needed prior to setting a final budget.

The proposed capital improvement for Fayetteville Street Elementary School includes new building additions and renovations. The proposed expansion includes a new two-story wing housing a media center, art, music, computer and several classrooms. Renovations will occur in the entire existing structure. Existing spaces will receive new thermally insulated windows, central air conditioning, new lights, marker boards, flooring, painting and much more. While the site is small and expansion space is limited, the proposed addition will fit within the confines of the existing property. Final determination of new building and site layouts occurs during programming and input meetings with design professionals and the school's building committee. The cost of utilizing the adjacent city park property to help meet state property standards would be determined by agreement between the School Board and the City.

Ellen Reckhow stated she hoped the School Board would move forward with these projects. Dr. Denlinger said that administration would do whatever the School Board wishes them to do.

### **Career Pathways Presentation**

Assistant Superintendent Dr. Janice Davis was congratulated for being appointed Deputy State Superintendent for the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.

Dr. Davis briefed the Board and Commission about graduation requirements established in 2000 by the North Carolina State Board of Education. The requirements include Career Pathways in three of the four-diploma courses of study -- College Tech Prep, Career Prep, and Occupational Courses of Study. The pathways offered at the high schools are based on criteria including enrollment trends over the past eight years, the number of concentrators (those students who have completed the course sequence), available financial and physical resources, and available staff. Future budget cuts may dictate further course alignments and/or reductions. The *Durham Public Schools Career & Technical Education Career Pathways – Course Offerings – 2003-04* for each high school were shared. Students can choose their pathways. There is a great deal of opportunity and flexibility in the plan, with a successful outcome for the students as the goal. Dr. Davis invited Board members to visit the schools and see the programs.

### **Resolution to Establish a Task Force for a Career & Technical Education School**

A resolution was presented, for consideration, which would deal with an issue of establishing a task force to study career and technical needs in the community and to provide strategies to address those needs. If the establishment of a school is one strategy, it was suggested that W.G. Pearson would be an appropriate site for such a school. The County Commissioners are following up on the issue in hopes to get that task force going. Ms. Reckhow said Durham is blessed with a wealth of opportunity for job growth. The proposal is to create a task force that would include 21 people including representatives of the Board of Education and the Board of County Commissioners.

Superintendent Denlinger suggested that whenever the resolution is adopted, and whenever both Boards give direction to the Chairpersons of the School Board and Board of County Commissioners, they should make it clear, at that time, that the name is to remain open. The task force could bring back their recommendation for a name after they complete their work.

Joe Bowser recommended renaming the resolution as follows: *A Joint Resolution To Establish A Task Force To Study Enhancing Vocational Educational Opportunities in Durham County*. Mr. Bowser stated that Durham needed to find out what it is not doing; what is being left out. A recommendation from the task force should be made to the community. A budget is also needed so departments can begin their work.

Jackie Wagstaff expressed disappointment that the intent of the task force, in her opinion, had been recrafted to something other than the original plan. She understood the original intent was to help kids who were falling through the cracks and to prepare those kids for jobs like masonry and carpentry. Ms. Wagstaff had concerns about timelines, who will serve on the task force, and how they would be appointed.

Dr. Regina George-Bowden said the idea of a task force is good; however, the resolution should be renamed consistent with the model that will be used. The task force should explore models that have been the most successful in the U.S. Dr. George-Bowden stated, in her opinion that the terminology had changed as well as the concept. She understood vocational opportunities would be for students who had dropped out of school – that was the original idea.

Steve Martin said the goal is to establish a dedicated school to focus on mid-21<sup>st</sup> Century career and technical needs of the business community. It is important to find successful models and find one that works best for the community. The intent should be to use businesses and educators to come up with a model. While Mr. Martin supports the goal, he feels a succinct understanding of the goal is important.

Becky Heron stated that vocational education had clearly changed over time.

Gail Heath said it was important not to give the task force a job to tell the Boards what they want to hear, or what they have already decided. She hoped that good people would be found to serve on the task force.

Chairman Reckhow suggested cleaning up the resolution and placing it on upcoming Board agendas. The resolution would be brought back to the two Boards at the time the appointments are made with more information on how the process would proceed. The County Manager and Superintendent will meet and develop a clear mission statement for the group and provide a process for how the task force would work. Administrators will take a comprehensive look at all the issues and concerns. The resolution will be referred to as *A Joint Resolution To Establish A Task Force To Study Enhancing Vocational Educational Opportunities In Durham County*.

#### **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**

Mary Jacobs asked to revisit the MOU. She and Joe Bowser desire more diversity among the Durham Public Schools Central Office and Senior Staff. They also suggested that the senior administrators reside in Durham County. There are too many tax dollars going out of Durham County. Commissioner Bowser said that Durham kids needed to see African American administrators making decisions for them. The lack of diversity in upper level management, Bowser said, causes resentment in the African American community. Dr. George-Bowden said she brought up this issue two years ago; therefore, it is not a new issue. Phillis Scott said she did not feel that administrators should be told where they could live. The goal should be for people to want to live in Durham County. Ms. Scott said the Board is fully committed to hire people that represent diversity.

Chairman Reckhow said she would be happy with wording of the MOU as presented, with the understanding that the message has been conveyed that a good faith effort should be made to diversity and to try to have administrators living in Durham County.

Gail Heath said she thought that the School Board, individually and collectively, is committed to diversity. Diversity is important across the board, not just for administrators. The commitment

is there, and Ms. Heath did not wish to single out one particular group. Superintendent Denlinger stated that there are more African American principals today than ever before in Durham, and they work with kids on a day-to-day basis in the schools.

It was agreed that #12 on the MOU would be amended as follows: *The Durham Public Schools recognizes that diversity is important in the employment of public school administrators. Efforts will be made to ensure that appointed administrators are representative of the community at large.* The amended MOU will be presented to both Boards for adoption.

### **Academic Update – NCLB/ABCs**

Superintendent Denlinger presented Durham Public Schools Realizing our Vision: From Good to Great! The vision is that every student performs at or above grade level. The commitment is student achievement and to provide safe and orderly learning environments, and high quality instructional programs. Working on the Work ensures high quality, “engaging” instructional programs that inspire students to do meaningful work. The percentage of students at or above grade level for the following areas was shared: (1) K-2 assessment; (2) 3rd grade reading; (3) 3rd grade math; (4) grades 3-8 composite; (5) promotion standards, and (6) high school EOCs. The preliminary 2002-03 ABCs recognition was also shared, with 7 Schools of Excellence, 11 Schools of Distinction, 19 Schools of Progress, 33 High Growth Schools, 2 No Recognition Schools, 2 Priority Schools, and no Low Performing Schools. Also shared was preliminary statistics on No Child Left Behind results. After one year of a five-year goal, the schools are on track. The data supports that in the year 2006-2007, there will be a celebration of eliminating the achievement gap. Two elementary schools had 100% of their white students efficient in reading while 95% efficiency was noted in 10 schools. Also noted was 80% or more African American students at or above grade level in reading. In math, Burton, Holt, Morehead and Pearson Elementary Schools had 100% of their children on grade level. Other schools charted 95% proficiency in math and above, with 90% African American students efficient in math. A broad visual was shown indicating what is happening in the middle schools. The schools continue to post significant scores for all students. Four middle schools had students with 95% proficiency in math and two schools were 80% proficient in math. Shepard Middle School continues to do very well with all populations of students. Dr. Denlinger stated that children are being better equipped to be successful.

Dr. Denlinger ended her presentation with a quote by Ron Edmonds – *“We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us. We already know more than we need to do that. Whether or not we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven’t so far.”*

Ellen Reckhow congratulated Dr. Denlinger on presenting an excellent report on Durham Public Schools progress.

Chairman Reckhow recognized 4 public speakers that addressed the Board members.

- Victoria Peterson was disappointed in the County Commissioners. She said there is a continuing problem in the community with African American men being incarcerated.

There is a problem in that there is no money for a vocational center. Ms. Peterson said the African American community couldn't wait.

- Lavonia Allison congratulated Dr. Denlinger on the excellent student achievement. She hopes the suspension rate and dropout rate will also improve. She stated the resident requirement for upper level administrators has a serious impact on Durham County. Dr. Allison talked about the Hillside High School band room.
- Larry Hester read a letter to the group about a November 2003 bond referendum in support of a vocational school to be located on an inner city site in Durham.
- Linda Hester requested additional information pertaining to all bond spending since 1991. She asked for details about how the monies were spent and inquired about rules for spending unspent monies.

Chairman Reckhow adjourned the meeting at 6:40 p.m.

\*attachments (Update of 2001 Bond)

---

Approved by Durham Public Schools Board of Education

/s/ Michael Page  
Chairman

Approved by the Durham County Board of Commissioners

/s/ Ellen Reckhow  
Chairman