

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

Friday, January 19, 2007

1:00 P.M.

MINUTES

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

Present: Durham Public Schools (DPS) Board Chairperson Minnie Forte-Brown, Vice-Chairperson Steve Schewel, and Members: Heidi Carter, Steve Martin, Omega Curtis Parker, and Kirsten Kainz.

Durham Public Schools Administration: Superintendent Carl E. Harris, Hank Hurd, Associate Superintendent of Administrative Services, and Hugh Osteen, Assistant Superintendent of Operational Services

Commission Chairman Ellen W. Reckhow, Vice-Chairman Becky M. Heron, and Commissioners: Lewis A. Cheek, and Michael D. Page; County Manager Michael M. Ruffin

Absent: Commission: Philip R. Cousin, Jr.
Board of Education: Fredrick A. Davis

Presider: Commission Chairman Ellen W. Reckhow

Welcome

Chairman Reckhow called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone.

She noted the agenda item for discussion was the DPS' Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

DPS Long-Range Facilities Plan

Chairman Reckhow stated that when she looked at the plan, she experienced some sticker shock. The total of \$551 million is more than double the last 10-year plan that was brought to the Commission. She noted that the County staff is updating their 10-year CIP plan and will be incorporating some or all of this plan into it, as well as working to develop a phased-approach in order to fund the plan in manageable pieces. She noted that in addition to providing an overview of the plan, it would be helpful for DPS to share their priority areas.

Ms. Forte-Brown thanked the Commissioners for the opportunity to discuss DPS' much-needed facilities plan. She stated that she was encouraged and thankful after she read the op-ed article in

the newspaper, which she felt, indicated that the Commission and the school board have the same vision about what needs to be done in Durham to ensure that our children are competitive and ready for the 21st century. She noted that school board member, Fredrick Davis, was absent due to surgery. She wished him a swift and complete recovery.

Mr. Osteen stated that the Board of Education finalized the Long-Range Facilities Plan on November 16, after a number of public meetings and board meetings. He noted that the long-range facilities plan is updated by the Board of Education every 2-4 years and the state requires an update every 5 years. Mr. Osteen reported that on January 16, he attended a state-level presentation on capital improvements of approximately \$9 billion for school improvement needs across the state. Of the \$9 billion, Durham's portion was \$348 million for a 10-year period. Mr. Osteen explained that the facilities plan under discussion is over a 12-13-year period and the state dollar amount of \$348 million is lower because the state uses statewide averages, which are typically lower than what most urban districts have to spend.

Mr. Osteen proceeded with a brief overview of the Table of Contents:

- Section 1. Introduction
- Section 2. Executive Summary - a quick reference that provides a brief description and dollar value of the project
- Section 3. Implementation Process
- Section 4. Definition of Terms
- Section 5. Supporting Information, Maps & Charts – contains information about criteria, prioritization, enrollment capacities, and other helpful information
- Section 6. Financial Summaries
- Sections 7-10. Elementary, Middle, Secondary/High Schools and Central Services – a highly detailed list, project-by-project
- Section 11. Appendices – a detailed history reference

Mr. Osteen continued with a detailed discussion of the plan:

- Section. 3 Implementation Process. Mr. Osteen pointed out three charts in this section which graphically indicated an accelerating gap between the regular cycle that previously existed in renovating schools and where we are now. Code issues, advances in technology and program have changed dramatically over the last several years in addition to the normal wear and tear over the years. Mr. Osteen explained that, as the gap grows, so do the dollars, creating some of that sticker-shock. Mr. Osteen stated that the plan attempts to reach a balance between the perfect facility, as a target, and the reasonable facility that can be achieved.
- Section 5. Supporting Maps and Charts. Mr. Osteen discussed briefly the following categories of criteria that are used to prioritize DPS' projects: (1) Overall goals, which are: to provide for growth, eliminate mobile classrooms, and upgrade existing facilities; (2) Detailed criteria: safety, educational guidelines/recommendations, existing capacity, future capacity, future facility conditions, time - when did the facility last receive improvement, and funding sources, which Mr. Osteen stated have a dramatic effect on how projects are prioritized.

Timeline Analysis for completing projects. Mr. Osteen stated that it takes an estimated 42 months to complete a new elementary school and only 14 months of that is

construction. New middle schools are estimated to take 46 months and high schools are 50 months. Construction periods for each are 16 months and 19 months, respectively. Mr. Osteen thanked the City/County Planning staffs who have been extremely helpful in this area.

Student Capacity and Enrollment Summary 2006-2007 Chart – Information on this chart included the 20th day enrollment figures, building capacity, capacity rating, and the number of mobile classrooms of each school by grade level.

Chairman Reckhow noted that with regard to the few schools that are under capacity, is there is a strategy to make these schools more attractive to parents, or would programs be revamped to attract students. She explained that, to some degree, these schools are unused resources, while money is being requested for new construction.

Dr. Harris explained that when looking at capacity and how it is reported using the state formula for computing capacity, what is not embedded and not seen is when DPS has classrooms staffed with a student-teacher ratio that is below the state capacity. If the state funds at 1:20 and DPS staffs a school at 1:15, there appears to be capacity, but there is not; or if DPS puts programs in the school that are exceptional programs, such as a visually impaired program, the capacity may call for 25 students, but there may actually be only 5 students in the classroom. This indicates that capacity figures may not be precise or extremely accurate. Dr. Harris pointed out that staff is reviewing magnet schools and programs to make sure that all available capacity is being utilized.

Mr. Osteen emphasized that this information in the plan is very fluid due to capacity and enrollment changes that happen on a daily basis.

Chairman Reckhow noted that both year-round elementary schools, Pearsontown and Easley, are over capacity. At a previous meeting she raised the issue as to whether multi-tracking year-round would be considered to gain capacity.

Mr. Osteen commented that at this time, there is no conclusive recommendation to offer; however, staff has been studying this since the last meeting. Regarding timeframe for completing the study, Mr. Osteen commented that he hoped to have evidence and back up information to share with the Superintendent within 30 days.

- Section 6. Financial Summaries – Mr. Osteen discussed the following:
 - Summary Report by Campus – which listed all school sites and central office sites with categories of their expense levels such as land costs, construction costs, furniture and equipment, etc.
 - Summary Report by Year beginning with 2009 - which listed a chronology of projects prioritized by site.

Mr. Ruffin commented that the next referendum was planned for November 2009, but, due to the facilities' needs, a referendum is being considered for November 2007. The amount is not known at this time. He stated that, in March, staff will present to the Board of Commissioners their recommended CIP, which will include the DPS plan. He

commented that it is clear that money is needed much sooner for the long-range facilities plan; therefore, we are looking at a bond issue in 2007. Mr. Ruffin noted that the timeline is very compressed for a referendum. He stated that the first step would be for the Board of Education to make a request, probably in February, to the Board of Commissioners for a certain amount of money for certain projects.

Attorney Kitchen commented that no timeline has been established; however, it should be on the agenda at the March 26th Commissioners' meeting.

Mr. Hurd, Associate Superintendent of Administrative Services, stated that the Superintendent should bring information to the Commissioners late January or mid-February.

Board member Martin requested that the information be available to the Administrative Services Committee at the February 12th meeting.

Board member Schewel pointed out to Mr. Ruffin that this is the first time he has heard Mr. Ruffin publicly state his support of a 2007 referendum. Mr. Schewel stated that he appreciates that Mr. Ruffin, staff, and the Commissioners are working toward that 2007 date.

Mr. Ruffin reiterated that what the Commissioners are able to do regarding an amount is still the "\$64,000 question;" however, the two staffs are working together, and are convinced that, given what is presented in the plan, a referendum cannot wait until 2009.

Mr. Osteen continued with his discussion of Section 6. He pointed out that the information provided in PV1 – PV11 shows a breakdown of each facility by category/description/and priority assignment, whether High/Urgent (2006-2009), Mid-Range (2010-2013) or Long-term (2014- 2018).

Mr. Osteen commented if everything in the plan is added, facilities' space would increase by 16%, or 856,000 sq. ft. over the span of 12-13 years. Operating expenses will increase by \$3.1 million in today's dollars, if services continued at the same level. Transportation would be included in the operating costs, even though the majority is state-funded. Mr. Osteen pointed out no costs in the instructional area are represented in this figure.

In response to Chairman Reckhow's question, Mr. Osteen emphasized that when making upgrades to school facilities, every energy-saving opportunity is explored and implemented, if possible. Upgrades may include energy-saving windows, HVAC, etc. Mr. Schewel commented that the DPS staff is very conscientious in looking for ways to conserve energy.

Chairman Reckhow stated that a bill was passed in the last session which allowed the private sector to build a building for long-term lease. She asked if this was something that DPS had considered. She added that she received an invitation from Guilford County to groundbreaking ceremonies for the first school to be developed under this law.

Mr. Osteen stated that he is familiar with the program and its availability. He added that Counsel and staff are working together on the details to determine if this is something DPS wants to participate in; however, no options are ruled out.

Mr. Osteen closed his presentation by emphasizing that this is a plan - a large plan that has changed since approval on November 16. He stated that the plan changes on a daily basis as projects are completed and new projects are discovered. Mr. Osteen reiterated that the plan is a very fluid document and always will be. He offered to answer questions.

Commissioner Page asked Mr. Osteen to explain "Old Pearson New Program."

Mr. Osteen explained that the Board of Education approved a new middle school program that will be located in the former W.G. Pearson building with an opening date in August. Mr. Osteen emphasized that everything possible is being done to ensure a safe and adequate program; however, capital improvements will need to be made eventually.

Commissioner Page asked that if in 2010, the new middle school at W.G. Pearson is not as successful as anticipated, would the Board revisit or would it continue to move forward?

Mr. Osteen stated that everything in the plan is fluid; outside factors change as well as internal factors.

Commissioner Page stated that this was a serious concern for himself and others.

In response to Commissioner Page's question regarding Holton School, Mr. Osteen commented that there was no information pertaining to Holton School provided in the facilities' plan. Mr. Osteen stated that the Holton project is considered funded as a joint effort between the Board of Education, County Commissioners and the City of Durham. Ms. Forte-Brown commented that DPS is ready and the curriculum is in place. Mr. Osteen explained the Board and the City are working on finalizing details of the arrangement on how the building will function due to it serving as a joint-use facility.

In response to Commissioner Page's question regarding the continuation of the new middle school program at W.G. Pearson in 2010, if not successful, Mr. Martin commented that year 2010 is the first year that all 3 middle school grades will be assigned and in place at the school. School year 2007-08 will begin with grade 6 only, grade 7 will be added in 2008-09 and grade 8 added in 2009-10. Mr. Martin commented that in 2010, there would not have been adequate time to determine success; however, we will determine if the grades are filled and if the school is at capacity. Mr. Martin added that attendance at the school is optional. There are three feeder schools and additional slots will be filled by the lottery process.

Commissioner Page shared his concern that there seems to be a great interest in attending certain schools, but when the time comes to move to the next level, the students do not make the move; for instance: from Burton to Shepard, from Shepard to Hillside.

Ms. Forte-Brown commented that program alignment has been one of the Board's greatest obstacles. She explained that parents from two of the feeder schools, R.N. Harris and Burton, (W.G. Pearson was not a magnet at that point.) came to the Board and aggressively shared the

fact that they choose a magnet and then have no link in middle school. Ms. Forte-Brown noted that the curriculum programs at Burton, R.N. Harris and W.G. Pearson align and that the parents are very excited about the program. She added that she anticipates a waiting list for those that want to attend the new W.G. Pearson middle school.

With regard to the IB programme at Hillside, Ms. Forte-Brown shared that James Carter, IB Coordinator at Hillside High School, has been very active talking to Shepard parents and sharing with them the success of the IB programme at Hillside.

Board member Carter shared that Shepard and Carrington Middle Schools have been named North Carolina Schools to Watch. She commented that this is a very prestigious award given to schools that are a model for academic performance as well as outstanding performance in other areas. Ms. Carter emphasized that Board members discuss frequently how to attract families to our schools.

Commissioner Page expressed concern about safety issues in the old W.G. Pearson neighborhood.

Ms. Forte-Brown stated she had heard that comment before, but felt it was not supported by the data. In her opinion, W.G. Pearson has never had safety issues. Safety procedures will be in place at the new middle school and should not be a major concern for parents. Ms. Forte-Brown stated that to paint that neighborhood as unsafe is unfair, unjust and stereotypical. She added that she lives in the neighborhood and any comments referring to it as being unsafe are offensive.

Chairman Reckhow commented that if you think back to the 90s, when a new school was being considered for Northeast Central Durham (Eastway Elementary), many commented that because of the neighborhood the new school may not be safe. This has not been the case; in fact, the school has been positive for the neighborhood and may have helped trigger some of the rejuvenation in the area.

Commissioner Cheek questioned how a November bond and starting on the facilities' project in advance would affect capacity? He questioned that assuming we start within the timeframe, would we create new capacity, keep up, or fall behind? Commissioner Cheek added that he was not looking to add extra capacity, but rather looking at future development down the road, and feeling comfortable that the Board will avoid having to address the issue of shutting down development in Durham.

In response, Mr. Osteen commented that if we are on target with the plan, we will be able to avoid those shutdowns. The plan, in itself, will not get us ahead creating empty seats, but will certainly help us to keep up with growth.

Commissioner Heron asked Mr. Osteen about calculating or projecting capacity. She stated that Commissioners are under the impression that figures have been under-projected on the student generation chart.

Mr. Osteen responded that DPS and City/County staffs are working together to update the student generation chart; so that when a development comes in, a reasonable estimate can be made. Mr. Osteen explained that the goal in updating the chart on student generation numbers is

to make it representative of new residents that “move-in” and those that relocate or “move-around.”

Dr. Harris expanded on Commissioner Cheek’s question. He referred to the new high school construction that is recommended in the plan. He stated that, based on what we know today, opening the school would not necessarily put us far ahead; it would likely bring us back to where we should be. He added that the number of students currently attending Riverside High School indicates that the school is grossly overcrowded and we recognize that the core facility is not adequate to meet the needs of the number of students in attendance. We also recognize how long it takes to open a high school; so by the time school construction is complete and ready for the students, we would actually be “keeping up.”

Mr. Osteen commented that traditionally, expanding existing facilities makes up the bulk of work that is done. He added that the inventory of parcels and buildings have been carefully reviewed to determine if further expansion is possible. Even though those opportunities are very limited, we are very conscious of using what we have and not just looking for new sites.

Board member Carter stated that the Board is also conscious of the benefits of smaller high schools and middle schools. She stated that the school board is committed to achieving 100% graduation in the near future of our students and these large, comprehensive high schools are not effective for a lot of our students. She commented that the thought of expanding a large school and making it even larger does not seem to be the right way to go as far as educating the kids.

Ms. Forte-Brown commented that two new high schools are opening, using existing facilities. The staff is working to maximize and implement those programs within the existing facility, while keeping them separate and individual from the regular campus.

Chairman Reckhow commented that the Durham School of the Arts’ project-cost of \$43+ million appears to be a re-do of the entire campus. She asked Mr. Osteen to discuss this project in more detail.

Mr. Osteen noted that DSA is the largest campus, 310,000 square feet with buildings dating back to the 1920’s range. The actual project is \$25.7 million with additional costs of approximately \$9 million for inflation and \$9 million for other support costs. Mr. Osteen stated that this is a huge facility with a tremendous number of needs. He commented it is the biggest ticket item for existing schools in the plan; however, the good news is that there is a waiting list for students wanting to attend. Mr. Osteen said that a new addition, approximately 20,000 square feet, is currently underway between the media center and the auditorium. In response to Chairman Reckhow’s question regarding a change in capacity, Mr. Osteen reported that at the request of the school community, both the in-school community and the surrounding outside community, the campus has been master-planned and rather than applying too many “band aids,” the decision was made to build new space. A determination will be made as to whether or not to use space in the Carr Building, which needs a major overhaul. If used, capacity would probably increase, but this would be for review by the Board.

Mr. Schewel pointed out that none of the DSA capital improvements fall into the high/urgent range, although it is of concern to the Board. The project cost is spread out over many years.

Chairman Reckhow noted that in the plan, Forest View Elementary School is recommended to receive \$11 million in upgrades. She recalled attending the school's dedication and noted that the entire cost of building the school may have been \$11 million. She commented that this is a good example of sticker shock.

Mr. Osteen stated that he understood the sticker shock very well. He pointed out that even long-term operating costs dwarf the first-time building cost. In the past, schools could be built for \$70 per square foot, now the cost may range from \$150 to \$200 per sq. ft.

Commissioner Cheek questioned if the numbers might be adjusted given a 2007 bond. Mr. Osteen replied that this may be a possibility. Mr. Osteen stated that staff will be continuously updating every single item that will go into the Board of Education's bond recommendation to the Commissioners.

Mr. Schewel commented that DPS has a history of bringing in projects under budget.

In response to Chairman Reckhow's question, Mr. Osteen stated that there are several projects coming up for bid within the next couple of months: a new elementary school, Lowe's Grove renovations, Fayetteville St., and C. C. Spaulding projects.

Commissioner Heron asked if DPS has compared its square footage costs with other districts across the state. Mr. Osteen commented that when Wake County did their last bond, he clipped many articles pertaining to the square footage costs. He added that comparisons are also made with state averages. Mr. Osteen emphasized that every feature put into a school is constantly reassessed.

Chairman Reckhow stated that she agreed with the County Manager in moving up the bond date due to the increase in construction in Durham County. She commented that in 2006, there were slightly fewer than 3,100 new dwelling unit permits applied for in Durham County, making it one of the strongest years ever for Durham.

In response to Chairman Reckhow's question about priority projects, Mr. Osteen commented that New Middle School B will be built in Northern Durham on donated land; New Elementary School E will be on Hebron Road, near Old Oxford Highway; and 2 New High Schools A and B are recommended with only one to be built. Mr. Osteen commented that campus size traditionally has been 60 (high school), 40 (middle school), and 20 (elementary); however, adjustments can be made.

Commissioner Heron emphasized that Durham County Stadium provides a great football field and should be utilized. She commented to Mr. Osteen that she hoped that in planning new schools, serious consideration will be given to using that facility rather than purchasing land for a football field that is not needed.

Commissioner Reckhow commended DPS for their very comprehensive report containing much data. She stated that the next step would be to determine exactly what to include in the future bond. She suggested that once a bond figure is determined, as in the past, a survey be conducted to gauge if there is reasonable acceptance.

County Manager Ruffin stated that there would be options other than the DPS facilities plan on the November ballot. He added that the County's 10-year Capital Improvement Plan, amounting to approximately \$1 billion, will be presented at the Commissioners' meeting on March 5. There will be several referenda over the life of the plan, including 2007.

Chairman Reckhow noted that there were no citizens wishing to comment.

Closing Remarks

Chairman Reckhow commented that she would like the High School Completion Plan to be an agenda item for a future meeting. She noted that the plan was completed last year, but has never been presented to their Board. She stated that it was particularly important for their Board to discuss, because she hoped that helping DPS with the High School plan would be a priority at their Board's upcoming retreat in February. Chairman Reckhow asked for further comments.

Board member Kainz raised the subject of a comprehensive, coordinated plan for early childhood education. She commented that if you want children to be fully-engaged in school and to fully-attain their education, you must start early, provide education, and perhaps, consider a universal plan for early childhood education.

Chairman Reckhow invited board members to participate in several educational initiatives:

- Partnership for Children: Kirsten Kainz
- Youth Council of Workforce Development Board: Heidi Carter
- Results-Based Accountability Educational Committee: Kirsten Kainz

Chairman Reckhow stated that the next joint meeting will be in April, according to the schedule to meet every three months.

Superintendent Harris commented that the DPS staff and the County staff have worked very well together. Mr. Ruffin's leadership has contributed to the staffs working together to understand the parameters both are working under. Dr. Harris emphasized that DPS wants the Commissioners to clearly understand what our needs are and we want to be able to demonstrate that to you in such a way that you don't have any question about what we are trying to convey to you and your staff. Dr. Harris thanked the staffs for working so well together.

Chairman Reckhow suggested two items of business for the April meeting: adoption of the DPS budget and discussion of the High School Completion Plan.

Adjournment

Chairman Reckhow adjourned the meeting at approximately 2:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Gwen Parker, School Board Liaison
Durham Public Schools