

## PERQUIMANS COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION JOINT WORK SESSION – APRIL 18, 2016

The Perquimans County Board of Education met with the Perquimans County Board of Commissioners in a joint work session on Monday, April 18, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. in the administrative offices of Perquimans County Schools. Board of Education members present included Susan Cox, Arlene Yates, Steven Magaro, Amy Spaugh and Anne White. Ralph Hollowell was absent. Board of Commissioners present included Janice Cole, Kyle Jones, Matthew Peeler, Wallace Nelson, Fondella Leigh and Ed Muzzulin. Others present included County Manager Frank Heath, County Finance Officer Tracy Mathews, County Clerk Mary Hunnicutt, Clerk of Court Todd Tilley, Director Brenda Dail, Assistant Superintendent James Bunch, Reporter Peter Williams, Coordinator of Community Relations Teresa Beardsley, Director of Transportation Jeffery Miller, Administrative Assistant Mary Kay Peele, Superintendent Matthew Cheeseman and Winfall Mayor Fred Yates.

### Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Board Chair Susan Cox. Amy Spaugh led the Pledge of Allegiance and Steven Magaro opened the meeting with a word of prayer.

### Approval of Agenda

Upon motion by Anne White and seconded by Arlene Yates, the Board voted unanimously to approve the agenda for the meeting as presented.

### New Business

#### Welcome

Board Chair Susan Cox welcomed everyone to the meeting. She expressed appreciation for both boards to be able to meet together to talk about what is going on in Perquimans County Schools and what things are going to affect us now and in the future. We are off to a good year and are constantly evaluating what we are doing and how we can move forward to make things better for our students so they can reach their full potential.

#### School Funding: 2016-2017

Mr. Cheeseman introduced himself and began his presentation with the operating norms. He stated the sustainability in the county is in jeopardy right now because of the school district having to lift the heavy load around what we're doing to move forward in the county. The school district serves as the largest employer in the county. Considering, there are some responsibilities that go along with that.

Mr. Cheeseman has had the opportunity to meet with many of the commissioners within his first fifteen days as being superintendent. He asked questions about their role and told them about the responsibilities regarding his role. Mr. Cheeseman stated commissioners spoke around not specifically needing to know how the money is used or tracking every single dollar, but more so about what our needs are and how we live in Perquimans County Schools. Mr. Cheeseman stated he understands his core business. He asked County Commissioners if they understand the core business of Perquimans County Schools. When asked, Mr. Jones stated he is not an educator. He leaves that to those who are elected to decide, see what kind of finances we have and go from there. Mr. Cheeseman stated it is essential they understand our core business which is teaching and learning.

There are two principals around our core business—a clear road map and innovation. Mr. Cheeseman stated he does things differently. He holds people and our programs accountable, he monitors, and he gives people courage to do their jobs. If they get it right, we celebrate; if they don't get it right, we educate them. He provided an illustration of the CW Company which cornered the wagon manufacturing market in the late 1800's. By the 1900's, they were out of business. First of all, they lost sight of the company's core business which was transportation, not building wagons. Mr. Cheeseman stated we are here tonight to make sure we don't lose sight of the long range goal. He stated he has a behavior that looks through a lens differently than most people. You have to think differently and act differently if you want a different result.

How well are we educating all stakeholders, including the adults, in order to have high level sustainability? What are we going to do to get a different result? Mr. Cheeseman's presentation included examples of innovation. He asked commissioners to broaden their minds as to how they will invest in the largest employer in the county. The commissioners are going to hold us to the accountability model that excellence is expected. It needs to be more of a collaboration and a partnership. The focus is not on teaching, but on learning. We need to be looking at what the students are doing and what are the outcomes and products. We need to face the brutal facts and have the tough conversations. Based on the North Carolina School Report Card, the commissioners are in danger. The society of Perquimans County is in danger. There are two schools graded at a "C" and one school graded at a "D" on a 15-point scale established by your legislators. Next year's scale will go to a 10-point scale unless it is changed in the short session. Knowing that, we will automatically have an "F" middle school, a "D" high school and a "D" grammar school. When someone is thinking of moving to the county, they go to Zillow or Realtor.com to see what your school colors are. Our schools are yellow and red. If those colors don't change, you are going to have flight. Some are homeschooling, some are transferring to neighboring districts, and some are going to the charter school. State money follows the student to the charter school, which amounts to about \$8,000. People look at being in your community by looking through the lens of your school, especially if they have children.

100%, 100% of the time. What does that mean to you? 100% of our children, whether they are AP, honors, EC, etc., 100% of our kids we need to have influence and impact on in order to build a legacy of lasting relationships. Do we truly mean 100%? If you had a pilot that had an 87% landing rate, would you feel comfortable getting on the plane? If you went through a McDonald's drive-thru with a sanitation score of a "B," would you drive away? Would you have heart surgery with a surgeon who had a 37% survival rate? This is real. People ask these kinds of questions. Think about sustainability, about where you are and where you want to be. Now there is a sense of danger, two "C's" and one "B." Through my leadership, it is this team that is going to turn it around.

The goal is 100%. Every child means every child. Every employee means every employee. Children aren't the only ones learning. They aren't the only ones being held accountable. My understanding is that \$2.489 million was requested last year, but \$2,375 million was received. That is 95%, not 100%. The difference, \$110,000, would have raised our teacher supplement from 2.25% to almost 4% or it would have raised our classified salary scale enough to where custodians who have been here for nineteen years actually get a pay raise. It could have helped bus drivers who make \$11.09 an hour, which is only .20 over the median, but \$3.00 less an hour than Currituck. Mr. Cheeseman asked respectfully, regardless of the Commissioners' decisions, to fund us at 100%. That is scary because you don't know what we're asking for, but you will know on May 12<sup>th</sup>. The stakeholders in the community are going to look at that really close this year because they are making decisions whether to go to the charter school, or

whether they want to go to South Carolina or Virginia. We are losing more students than we are gaining. This year, we are at about 1,800 students. The state projection is 1,715 for next year.

What is the greatest resource in our district or in our community? It's the people. You are funding the business of education and I'm asking you to fund that at 100%. Our focus is on three things—classified salary scale, teacher wages, and academics. Without our classified staff—bus drivers, cafeteria staff, custodial staff, and teacher assistants—we would have to shut down school, even if all our teachers showed up. We would not exist as an organization. This is an awesome opportunity to invest in people. This county is going to look to see how you invest in your people.

Mr. Cheeseman asked County Commissioners to fund the district at 100% of our request so that we can help with teacher wages and compete for high-quality talent. About 30 days ago, Senator Cook spoke with superintendents in Elizabeth City and said the state has done everything it can do for teachers and it is time for your local communities to invest in this. We need the commissioners' help in order to attract high-quality talent and retain them. These people are part of your community, which goes back to economic buying power. If we attract high-quality teachers and pay them appropriately, it puts the money right back into your community.

The third item is academics. What do you want your schools to look like, sound like and feel like? What do you want your valedictorian to be able to do? Do your high school graduates have to take remedial courses upon entering college? We are capable of changing that with high-quality teachers and holding people accountable.

Can you fund us at 100%? The funding request is attached to a plan. By funding at 100%, you are saying you are investing in the adults in our county school system. If you start investing in these people at a higher rate than you are now, you are going to get your return on investment. We are holding people fiscally accountable. No one serves food on the district's dime. No longer are we printing off checks to pay employees as we are using direct deposit. No longer are we randomizing what supplements are going to be for administrators and when negotiating with new talent.

On May 12<sup>th</sup>, Mr. Cheeseman stated he is just going to ask one question—can you get to 100%?

Chair Janice Cole asked about the plan. Suppose you were funded at 100%, how long would it take to see a return on your investment? Mr. Cheeseman responded, one year. If North Carolina legislators keep the report card at the 15-point scale, it will make our job that much smoother. The return on the investment is progress. Mr. Cheeseman explained the grading process and also mentioned the academic calendar. We are going to give everything we can give to see progress. Chair Cole asked about what measures will be looked at. Mr. Cheeseman stated we would look at enrollment. Part of that return on investment is the commitment to the county that would prompt people to be here in the first place. You would want to look at enrollment, testing data, retention, and highly-qualified teachers.

Mr. Peeler asked if, through the grading process, our schools could ever attain an "A" due to other limitations that would automatically be a deductor from getting that "A" grade. He asked if it were mathematically or realistically attainable. Mr. Cheeseman stated mathematically yes, but realistically no because we need to be able to attract and retain highly-qualified staff.

You have a great opportunity as you look at the model across the country of how a county commission group and a board of education collaborate together and go all in. Part of that is sustainability. You have an opportunity to bring national spotlight to what we're going to do together and be all in. This year, 2016-2017, should be Operation Education.

Chair Susan Cox thanked Chair Janice Cole, the Commissioners and Mr. Heath for the opportunity to meet together.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

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Susan B. Cox, Board Chair

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Matthew F. Cheeseman, Superintendent