

**MINUTES OF A JOINT MEETING OF  
THE JACKSON BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS AND  
THE JACKSON COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION  
HELD ON FEBRUARY 20, 2019**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners met in a Joint Meeting with the Jackson County Board of Education on February 20, 2019, 3:00 p.m., at the Department on Aging Center, Heritage Room, 100 County Services Road, Sylva, North Carolina.

Present:

Jackson County Board of Commissioners:

Brian McMahan, Chairman	Don Adams, County Manager
Boyce Deitz, Vice Chair	Heather C. Baker, County Attorney
Mickey Luker, Commissioner	Darlene Fox, Finance Director
Ron Mau, Commissioner	Angela M. Winchester, Clerk to Board
Gayle Woody, Commissioner	

Jackson Board of Education:

Alison Laird-Large, Chairman	Dr. Kim Elliott, Superintendent
Margaret McRae, Board Member	Jacob Buchanan, Assistant Superintendent
Wes Jamison, Board Member	Jason Watson, Director of Operations
Abigail Clayton, Board Member	Cora Fields, Clerk to the Board

Absent: Elizabeth Cooper, Vice Chairperson

Chairperson Laird-Large called the meeting of the Board of Education to order.

Mr. Jamison moved to approve the agenda. Ms. Clayton seconded the Motion. Motion carried.

Chairman McMahan called the meeting of the Board of Commissioners to order.

Chairperson Laird-Large introduced Dr. Kim Elliott, Superintendent.

Dr. Elliott thanked both Boards and expressed the appreciation of the Jackson County Public Schools on the work the current and previous Boards had done for the schools in the past few years to fund their capital needs. They were very pleased with what had been done with the buildings and facilities. They were far from complete, but had seen so much progress.

**(1) JACKSON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS:** Dr. Elliott presented:

Capital Improvement Priorities February 2019:

**(a)** Continue Capital Funding:

- General Capital \$235,000 – day to day capital needs
- Preventative Maintenance \$375,500
- Technology Funding \$400,000
- One to One Initiative \$320,700
- Total \$1,331,200

**(b)** Current Needs:

- Baseball Field Accessibility at Smoky Mountain High: Estimated Cost \$250,000  
They had been working closely with the JCPS Operations Director, JCPS Board attorneys and with the County Manager on this issue. They needed to provide baseball field accessibility for the high school.

- Single Entry Points and Egress Courtyards: Estimated Cost \$2,500,000  
They wanted to pursue the single points of entry and egress courtyards. Previously, the two Boards went into closed session for the safety conversation approximately one year ago. They wanted to maintain and honor the goals and objectives from that safety meeting to secure their facilities. If necessary, they could move into closed session that day or at a later date, if they wanted more specific information regarding egress courtyards.

Mr. Buchanan stated that the project at Smoky Mountain High School would be two fold. The upper level above the baseball field was the area where they were proposing to build ADA gallery seating, which would include a concrete slab with a handrail and would be fully ADA compliant with buddy seating. They would also clearly mark certain parking spots as handicap accessible and there would be an ADA compliant toilet at the top.

Secondly, there were plans to build a parking lot in the lower section next to the batting cages with handicap parking. There would also be ADA compliant handicap seating on the bleachers in the lower level and sidewalks to the dugout to allow for accessibility. There would be additional work to be done down the road on the bank area.

Commissioner Deitz stated that thought they should start down at the backstop and come all the way up as the whole place needed to be redone and put in decent seating. He thought it needed to be done before or as they did this at the top. They needed to think big rather than small.

Mr. Buchanan agreed and they did want to address that issue, but it was cost prohibitive at that time as it would be approximately \$500,000. It was part of the plan, not immediately, but to be phased in later. If those funds became available, they did have plans to utilize them.

Commissioner Luker stated that if the work was done in phases, as recommended by the architect, John Cort, would phase two impact any of the work that had been done in phase one.

Mr. Buchanan stated that it would not and phase two would also create accessibility for the football stadium as well. Mr. Cort's recommendation was to create a retaining wall behind the old gym, fill that area in and then create a ramp that would go two directions. One would create accessibility for the baseball field and the other would bring it down to the football stadium. The ramp would serve both needs to increase accessibility to both fields. The estimate from Mr. Cort was \$500,000 to be able to do that appropriately.

Commissioner Luker stated that Cort's recommendation should be the first step taken in order to meet the ADA part in the short-term. If they had the funding and could, then include phase two.

Mr. Adams stated that all of the numbers they were talking about would be part of the discussions at the budget retreat to start looking at available resources. The baseball field accessibility issue had to be done, it was not optional.

Dr. Elliott stated that the timeline was March for the upper section and by August 1<sup>st</sup> for the lower section with parking, restroom accessibility and a pathway to handicap and buddy seating.

Closely tied to the #1 priority was school safety single entry points and egress courtyards, which was estimated to be \$2.5 mil to finish single entry points and begin all of the egress courtyard work.

Chairman McMahan inquired about the timeframe.

Mr. Buchanan stated they had worked closely with Mr. Cort, Emergency Management and Code Enforcement and there had been many meetings to work on the designs. The only item left was to submit the plans to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. They were probably looking at an 18 month process for this at multiple sites.

Dr. Elliott stated that they applied for every safety grant that the Department of Public Instruction offered and was awarded all of them, either in partnership with another entity or to Jackson County Public Schools.

Mr. Adams stated that when they were speaking about the single entry point, it was basically controlling who entered the facility. The courtyards involved the students moving around school buildings.

Mr. Buchanan stated that in some of the schools they did not have to go outside to go from one part of the school to another. In many of the schools, they did have to exit the building. The egress courtyards would essentially enclose and connect the buildings together so that once students were inside, they were travelling inside the protective barrier.

Dr. Elliott stated that they would also create some outdoor learning spaces and they hoped that outdoor classrooms could be used more fully with egress courtyards.

Mr. Adams stated that there would also be a technology component to include cameras, video systems and keyless entry, which they had addressed before.

Mr. Buchanan stated that the design had a swipe key component for exterior doors and would get them to the point where there would be no more brass keys for exterior doors for any of the buildings.

Dr. Elliott stated that a lot went into the school safety project, hence the cost. They were moving along rapidly with the camera installation and felt good about their plan.

**(c) Long-Term Needs:**

- ADA Ramp Football Stadium
- ADA Compliant Visitor Bathrooms/Concession Stand
- Bus Garage
- Track on Jones Street Property
- Fairview Cafeteria
- Blue Ridge Gym with Performance Stage
- Smoky Mountain High Auxiliary Gym A/C

Commissioner Mau stated that since they were talking 5-10 years out, the turf would need to be replaced in that time period and it was not a small ticket item. Should that get added to the list?

Dr. Elliott stated that it should, but not before the other items.

Mr. Buchanan stated to keep in mind that the items listed above were multi-million dollar items. The expense for the turf was really initial and the replacement would be substantially less. That could be something they could budget for in a couple of years with funds left over from other projects. They had taken good care of the turf and hoped the life expectancy would be greater than ten years.

Commissioner Woody inquired about the softball field being moved to the high school campus?

Mr. Buchanan stated that JCPS owned the property that the three ball fields were on below Fairview Elementary School and they had an MOU with the County Recreation Department for the upkeep and care for those. They had been in discussion with Rusty Ellis, Recreation and Parks Director, about the middle field and the small field for them to pool resources together to develop those two fields to be used for softball as well as little league. This would provide two softball accessible fields to be used that were essentially on the campus of the high school. This would include a new concession and restrooms.

Mr. Adams stated that he had instructed Mr. Ellis to reach out to little league and look at the usage of the fields by the middle school, the high school and little league, so that it could be worked out. Also, they were trying to figure out what the upgrades would need to be.

Dr. Elliott stated that they did not currently have a viable, legal track. This would also help to finish the master plan from many years ago.

Mr. Buchanan stated that the bus garage located off SCC's campus was constructed in 1957. It did not have appropriate storage and they currently utilized two old mobile units for additional storage. They had options to pick sizes of the yellow buses, but they were not able to receive the largest buses, because they did not fit in the bus garage. They had been working with Grant Tharp and had developed a design that would allow them to build a new bus garage on the same property and then be able to take down the current garage.

Dr. Elliott stated that Fairview's cafeteria was extremely crowded, especially if there were special events, such as Thanksgiving lunch. The schedule for lunch was compacted and caused the younger students to eat early in the day.

Regarding the Blue Ridge Gymnasium, there were a limited number of bleachers and the court was very close to the bottom row of bleachers. They were in need of a larger gym with better seating and capacity.

In summary, they did their best to prioritize the capital needs with one and two being tied in her mind:

**(d) Capital Needs in Summary:**

1. Baseball Field Accessibility
2. Single Entry Points and Egress Courtyards
3. Football Stadium ADA Compliant Ramp and Bathrooms/Concession

- 4. SMHS Track
- 5. Bus Garage
- 6. Fairview Cafeteria and Blue Ridge Gym/Stage

Commissioner Luker stated that looking at the information presented, other than the courtyards and the bus garage, everything else was driven around the sporting events complex items. Would he be correct to assume that they were where they needed to be on classrooms, roofs, building repairs and no issues within the next ten years?

Dr. Elliott stated that if enrollment remained stable, they were in very good shape with classrooms. If enrollment spiked again as it did approximately every five years, Cullowhee Valley could need two classroom spaces, but at that time, they did not.

Mr. Buchanan stated that to answer the HVAC and roof question, the QZAB loan funding had done wonders for the district to be able to say they were in good shape and ready to start talking about other items. The last round of QZAB bids would be sent out soon to replace the HVAC at Blue Ridge Early College in the high school building and at Fairview in the middle school building. When that happened, they felt that HVAC wise, they would be caught up with where they should be. With the funding provided for preventative maintenance, they would be at a point to utilize those funds so they did not get behind.

Commissioner Luker inquired how they based their priority ratings three through six.

Dr. Elliott stated they worked closely with principals who worked with their staff. The principals operated in such a way that if one school needed something, the others pooled together, so it had been very constructive conversations. Six years ago, they began asking each principal for their top three priorities in capital. To be sure they were fair and equitable, roofs and HVAC had to come first. Then, they went with their rankings. The accessibility at the football stadium had to be number three. They could have potentially flipped four and five, however, they had promised the track for 20 years. The list could always change.

Commissioner Woody inquired if they were using any of the funds from Southwestern Commission that came from the Cherokee Preservation Foundation. When they mentioned the outside learning area that would be great for that.

Dr. Elliott stated that they had not accessed those funds for capital, but they had accessed those funds for programming, teaching and learning. That was a great idea if the committee would entertain that.

(e) Operation Needs:

Dr. Elliott stated that regarding the teacher supplement, they were having a difficult time competing as Haywood raised theirs to 8%. Jackson County currently offered 2%. She requested 4% at the minimum. The 4% supplement (total of 6%) and a step for all non-certified staff would be \$942,000. A 2% supplement (total of 4%) for certified staff and a step for all non-certified staff would be \$562,977. The only other request she may have would be 0-2 teachers for class size, but their ADM had not been certified yet.

Mr. Adams stated that at the retreat they would have the sales taxes through 2024 to show projected available revenues to deal with immediate needs and future needs.

*Informational item.*

There being no further business, Mr. Jamison moved to adjourn the Board of Education meeting. Ms. Clayton seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 4:19 p.m.

There being no further business, Commissioner Mau moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Woody seconded the Motion. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 4:20 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Angela M. Winchester, Clerk  
 Jackson County Board of Commissioners

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Brian Thomas McMahan, Chairman  
 Jackson County Board of Commissioners