

**VIRGINIA:**

A meeting of the Lancaster County Board of Supervisors was held in the Administration Building Board/Commission Meeting Room of said county on Thursday, February 28, 2019.

Members Present: Jason D. Bellows, Chair  
Ernest W. Palin, Jr., Vice Chair  
Jack D. Larson, Board Member  
William R. Lee, Board Member  
Robert S. Westbrook, Board Member

Staff Present: Don G. Gill, County Administrator  
Crystal Whay, Clerk to the Board and  
Building/Land Use Assistant

Mr. Bellows called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. He led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**PUBLIC INPUT**

Charles Costello, a District 2 citizen, stated that he hoped the Pledge of Allegiance would become a permanent part of the Board of Supervisors’ meetings.

Mr. Costello referred to an article in the Northern Neck Sentinel and stated that he found it to be disturbing. He stated that the article referred to a phone call received by Dr. Westbrook from Mr. Bellows in which Mr. Bellows said the School Board Chairman, Audrey Thomasson had told him that Superintendent Parker’s contract would not be renewed. He stated that the article stated that the phone call was made prior to the School Board meeting on January 8<sup>th</sup>. He stated that Ms. Thomasson states, in the same article, that it did not happen. He stated that he would like to know if the phone call did or did not happen. He stated that it was important for the people to know the truth. He asked Mr. Bellows to comment.

Mr. Bellows replied yes.

Mr. Costello thanked him and stated that Ms. Thomasson was in error.

Robert Smart, a District 1 citizen, read his prepared statement: “The form of Virginia’s government is constitutional republic, whereby the people retain ultimate authority, but they elect officers to represent them. The people and their elected

representatives are bound by a written constitution. You are the elected representatives for the people of Lancaster County. It may difficult at times as you govern to know the will of the people you represent because this county is so diverse-composed of young and old, rich and poor, black and white.”

Mr. Smart continued to read: “A consequential issue is now before you. Regarding this issue we have heard from a group of citizens who support a very large appropriation for new public school construction. But the voices of citizens outside this group have scarcely been heard. The sought appropriation is of magnitude such that, if granted, it will affect the local economy for decades to come. If a contract is let obligating such appropriation, there will be no turning back. Thereafter, this county’s capacity to respond to other needs, such as for emergency medical services, law enforcement and even for brighter ideas to improve education, would be severely restrained.”

Mr. Smart continued: “The ultimate authority of the people is exercised through the ballot, but under the Virginia constitution you, the elected board, cannot be compelled to put any particular matter to the ballot. The decision to put any particular matter to public referendum is yours to make. However, public referendum is the surest way to know the will of the people. I imagine it might be comforting to you to know with certainty the will of the people before you vote on an appropriation for many millions of dollars that will mostly leave this county. I stand before you today to ask that you authorize a public referendum on the matter of appropriations for new school construction. It is proper that those who will shoulder the burden of debt for decades to come should have a direct voice in an appropriation that will have far-reaching consequences.”

Bill Warren, a District 3 citizen, stated that, at last month’s meeting, he and a few others were talking about what appeared to be rumors surrounding Dr. Parker’s contract. He stated that the news came as a shock because there had been no discussions concerning Dr. Parker’s contract at any prior School Board meeting and the public had never been invited to offer any opinions on the matter. He stated that the public did not even know that Dr. Parker’s contract was up. He stated that, on February 12<sup>th</sup>, the School Board held its regular meeting and approximately 250 people showed up on the basis of rumors. He stated that the Educational Foundation had a resolution that supported Dr. Parker, as well as the Verlander Trust and the Wiley Foundation. He stated that many people from the community spoke in support of Dr. Parker at that meeting. He stated that the School Board went into a closed session to discuss the Parker issue and approximately 250 to 300 people waited to hear something. He stated that the School Board came back at nearly ten o’clock and simply adjourned the meeting. He stated that the School Board could have easily adjourned that meeting until four o’clock on Friday, February 15<sup>th</sup> at the School Board office where the decision and the vote would be taken. He stated that they did that because they simply do not want the public involved. He stated that they had already made up their minds and did not want to hear the criticisms. He stated that the School Board held a special meeting, but it was not advertised in the local paper because there are separate rules for special meetings.

Dr. Westbrook stated that appropriate notices have to be made even with special meetings.

Mr. Warren stated that he knew there was supposed to be appropriate notice, but as he understood it, for a special or emergency meeting, the public needs to be notified at the same time as the board members themselves. He stated that he suspected that it was published on the website, but he did not actually check it, so he did not know whether it was legal or not. He stated that the way it was done was very disrespectful to the many people who attended the School Board meeting and waited for hours and then were not told that there was a special meeting being held in three days. He stated that the Board of Supervisors would have never done that. He stated that transparency and openness does not seem to be on the agenda for the School Board. He stated that, by a 3-2 vote, the Superintendent was released.

Mr. Warren stated that it was apparent from the meeting that the vast majority of the community supports Dr. Parker. He stated that the School Board members might know more about it than the members of the public and he suspects that they do. He stated that the situation now is that the school is in disarray, teachers are upset and he had spoken to six parents who said they were moving their children to the Middlesex County school system. He stated that it was bad enough that they were going to lose the best Superintendent the County may have ever had, but it was disturbing the way the School Board has gone about it. He stated that they have done everything in the dark and tried to hide public meetings and he thought they could do better than that for the community.

Mr. Warren asked that the Board of Supervisors consider the possibility of asking the Department of Education to send an investigator to find out if the School Board has acted legally and if they were justified in what they did. He stated that he thought it was important for an independent party to look into it.

Mr. Larson referred to Mr. Warren's comments concerning Dr. Parker and stated that, because it was a personnel issue, the Board of Supervisors would not get involved.

Francis Edwards, a District 5 citizen, stated that there was a lot of emotion surrounding Dr. Parker. He stated that many people have spoken on his behalf, but there are others that are concerned about the lack of diversity. He stated that it was time for everyone to put their differences aside and come together for the children. He stated that the current facilities were not a healthy environment for childrens' learning and need to be replaced. He stated that a new school can be built cheaper and faster than renovating the existing facilities. He stated that the new school would be "green" and pay for itself in fifteen years from the savings. He stated that there were other funding sources that can be pursued at the state level that would allow competitive wages for the teachers. He stated that there was another factor at the state level that could be addressed and that is the inequity in the composite index. He stated if that is addressed it could mean larger revenues on an annual basis from the state. He stated that he proposed that the Board of

Supervisors consider the welfare of the children and accept the school budget as proposed.

Dr. Gary Silverman, a District 1 citizen, stated that there was a lot of passion concerning the Superintendent, but everyone needs to understand that it is a personnel issue and they may never know the real story. He stated that the suggestion of having an audit is valid, but they still might not know anything because it would be sealed. He referred to the diversity issue and stated that it is a matter that needs to be dealt with in the County. He stated that one of the issues with this year's school budget is that they are considering cutting the three and four year old children's program and he stated that he thought it helped the students be competitive. He stated that he also understood that they were considering renovating the annex building to house suspended students as well as the special needs students. He stated that he hoped the Board of Supervisors will consider the needs of the students when considering the school budget.

Allen Marple, a District 2 citizen, stated that he perceived two issues. He stated that the first is the termination of Dr. Parker's contract and the second is the cost of new schools. He stated that he did not know Dr. Parker, but had heard good things about him. He stated that he had heard that one of the things leveled against him and his management was that white people cannot teach African-American students. He stated that he was the Chairman of the Board of the American School in London and there were about eighty percent American students-white, black and yellow, five percent Canadians, and also Chinese, Japanese, Taiwanese, Arabs and African students. He stated that the teaching staff, which included all sizes and stripes, had no problem teaching the students and helping them get into the finest universities in the world. He stated that to say that a white teacher cannot teach an African-American student begs the question if that is a request to return to segregated schools, which were horrible.

Mr. Marple stated that he had read about the cost of the new schools campus and he understood how the price of \$100 million dollars would cause concern. He stated that he knew that the current facilities were woefully in need of improvement. He stated that whether or not the proposed campus is the right way to go, he was not qualified to say, but he does know that it was not well "sold." He stated that more details are needed such as how much the taxes will increase and for how long.

Joan Marple, a District 2 citizen, described her career as a teacher locally and in other parts of the world. She stated that she substituted in the public schools and found many students with issues, but found that when she worked one-on-one with them, they were successful. She stated that there were many challenges, but it was important to reach them and get to their core.

Joan Blackstone, a District 5 citizen, stated that Lancaster County has 8,500 registered voters and a population of 10,788 people. She stated that a \$100 million dollar school is way over the top. She stated that \$17,300 is spent per student currently and at that rate, every student could go to a private school. She stated that she thought the middle school was adequate, but perhaps needed some renovations. She suggested that

the primary school be built behind the middle school on available land and the two schools could share a principal and administrative staff to help save money. She stated that the population is decreasing and she did not think more people would be coming. She stated that the Board needs to be more responsible with the budget. She stated that she would rather see more money go into the teachers and the curriculum than in a fancy building. She stated that this county was not Fairfax County. She stated that a \$100 million dollar school building for what is probably one of the smallest counties in Virginia does not make sense.

James Vick, a District 1 citizen, stated that he had spoken with some former teachers and they had left the Lancaster County school system, not because of the buildings, but because of the educational system and what they had to put up with. He stated that what is being proposed is going to burden the taxpayers and only sixty percent of the population pays the majority of the taxes. He stated that this school system has problems and the new buildings are not going to solve them. He stated that teachers do not want to stay because they get no respect. He referred to the proposed solar panels and stated that he had been in the electrical business a long time and would like to see on paper how exactly there would be no electric bills. He stated that solar panels require maintenance and do not always generate power.

Mr. Vick stated that there should be a referendum on the new schools because the voters should have a say in what happens with the issue. He stated that people fix what they have because that's what they can afford and that is what the County should do.

Dr. Charlotte Silverman, a District 1 citizen, stated that she has taught on both the high school and college levels. She stated that she supported the new schools plan that was in the local paper as well as higher salaries for teachers. She stated that she did not think a public referendum was necessary. She stated that the County needs economic development and they need to bring young people to the community and the schools are pivotal in doing that. She stated that she supports tax increases to make this happen. She stated that she hopes the Board of Supervisors will act accordingly.

Mike Clarke, a District 3 citizen, stated that his daughter went through the school system and has gone to college and is doing well. He stated that they can build the Taj Mahal and spend millions of dollars, but until the parents get involved in the school system, they will never have a successful school system. He stated that he was trying to sell his home and the people who are buying homes here are buying vacation homes, not permanent residences. He stated that those people do not have children who will be going to the local schools. He stated that, in his opinion, two schools would be enough and they could share facilities. He stated that there is a declining school population and unless some industry comes to the area, he did not know how that would change.

Jesse Davis, a District 5 citizen, stated that he has been a local contractor for the last twenty years. He stated that he would like the Board of Supervisors to consider forming a committee of local contractors that could be involved in a school design that would be feasible. He stated that, from what he understood, the County is spending \$2

million dollars to design what has been presented. He stated that he had many questions concerning the design and thought the architects needed to be guided in a different direction. He stated that he thought the County could get what it needs for a lot less money. He suggested considering the school design in Northumberland County. He stated that he would be happy to help and could talk to other local contractors about forming a committee if the Board wanted to do so.

## **PRESENTATIONS**

### 1. Broadband Authority Update

David Pere, the Vice Chair of the Broadband Authority, read the monthly report: “Since the last report on January 31<sup>st</sup>, the Broadband Authority has continued to provide assistance concerning the Atlantic Broadband renewal matter. Complete minutes of the Authority’s meetings are available, but this report will update you on the important items that are in process.

1. The Authority successfully completed and submitted its application for a federally-funded Telecommunications Planning Grant. In the process of submitting this application, the County’s CAMS registration was updated with the assistance of Dr. Gary Silverman. We do not yet know whether we have been selected for the grant, but we hope to hear sometime in March.
2. The Authority made a budget submission for FY 20, principally to fund a professional project design study, which will be done when the planning work funded by the EDA and Planning Grant are complete.
3. The Authority has again been in contact with the Center for Innovative Technology, which is providing start up assistance and will aid in circulating and evaluating the results of a needs assessment survey. CIT is very familiar with the specific actions required to complete the planning process outlined for the Telecommunications Planning Grant. CIT has also finished revising the survey and it will be distributed at the appropriate point within that planning framework.”

## **VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

None.

## **PUBLIC HEARINGS**

None.

**CONSENSUS DOCKET**

1. Minutes for January 31, 2019 Regular Meeting (Revised)

Recommendation: Approve minutes as submitted and revised

Mr. Bellows made a motion to approve the Consensus Docket.

VOTE:	Jason D. Bellows	Aye
	Ernest W. Palin, Jr.	Aye
	Jack D. Larson	Aye
	William R. Lee	Aye
	Robert S. Westbrook	Aye

**CONSIDERATION DOCKET**

The Board considered the following items on its Consideration Docket:

1. Approval of February 2019 Salaries and Invoice Listings

The motion was made by Mr. Palin to approve the salaries for February 2019 in the amount of \$282,694.78 and invoice listings for February 2019 in the amount of \$1,005,026.29\*.

\*Capital Improvements - \$517,020.18

VOTE:	Jason D. Bellows	Aye
	Ernest W. Palin, Jr.	Aye
	Jack D. Larson	Aye
	William R. Lee	Aye
	Robert S. Westbrook	Aye

## 2. Consideration of the Revised Emergency Operations Plan

EMS Chief Matt Smith stated that he had prepared the resolution and if there were no major changes, he asked that the resolution be passed, so they can send the plan to the state. He stated that the document is required to be revised every four years. He asked for any comments.

Dr. Westbrook stated that the plan was nicely done.

Chief Smith stated that, to address Dr. Westbrook's concern about the contacts list, since it is an adopted document, it was suggested to have an insert, so that anytime a position or phone number changes, the document would not have to be readopted.

Chief Smith stated that the basic changes on the plan were formatting and grammatical changes to make the document easier to read. He stated that the following annexes were added to the document: Hazardous Materials, Debris Removal, Evacuation, Family Assistance Center and Shelter Management. He stated that the Table of Contents was updated and blank pages were removed from the document.

### **RESOLUTION FOR EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN**

**WHEREAS**, the Board of Supervisors of the County of Lancaster, Virginia recognizes the need to prepare for, respond to and recover from natural and manmade disasters; and

**WHEREAS**, the Code of Virginia, §44-146.19, requires each local jurisdiction and inter-jurisdictional agencies to prepare and keep current a local emergency operations plan; and

**WHEREAS**, the Code of Virginia, §44-146.19, requires each local jurisdiction to conduct a comprehensive review and revision of its emergency operations plan: and

**WHEREAS**, the County of Lancaster has a responsibility to provide for the safety and well-being of its citizens and visitors; and

**WHEREAS**, the County of Lancaster has established and appointed a Director and Coordinator of Emergency Management;

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** by the Board of Supervisors of the County of Lancaster, this Emergency Operations Plan as revised is officially adopted; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED AND ORDERED** that the Director of Emergency Management or designee, is tasked and authorized to maintain and revise as

necessary this document during the next four (4) year period or until such time it be ordered to come before this board.

Dr. Westbrook made a motion to Adopt the Resolution for the Emergency Operations Plan as presented.

VOTE:	Jason D. Bellows	Aye
	Ernest W. Palin, Jr.	Aye
	Jack D. Larson	Aye
	William R. Lee	Aye
	Robert S. Westbrook	Aye

3. Consideration of Board of Supervisors Strategic Plan

Mr. Bellows stated that, originally, the strategic plan was put together in 2015 at a board retreat when he was last chairman. He stated that the Board of Supervisors recently met with the Planning Commission to work on the vision statement. He stated that they have finalized the strategic plan and should adopt it as a guide going forward. He stated that the plan should also be posted on the County’s website and made available to the public. He stated that the Code of Conduct for the Board members was also attached to the document.

Mr. Lee made a motion to Adopt the Board of Supervisors’ Strategic Plan and Code of Conduct.

VOTE:	Jason D. Bellows	Aye
	Ernest W. Palin, Jr.	Aye
	Jack D. Larson	Aye
	William R. Lee	Aye
	Robert S. Westbrook	Aye

**BOARD REPORTS**

Mr. Larson referred to the previous comments made by Mr. Warren and Dr. Silverman concerning the School Superintendent and stated that the School Board and the

Board of Supervisors are two separate bodies. He stated that it was his understanding that the Board of Supervisors should not be involved in anything with the School Board with the exception of funding. He stated that he understood what Mr. Warren was saying, but he believed the course of action was to go through the Commonwealth Attorney's office to see if an investigation could be done concerning possible violations.

Mr. Larson stated that his second item was being read as a member of the Finance Steering Committee and he hoped to be able to steer the Board in a certain direction. He read his statement: "Nearly two years ago, the Facilities Acquisition Committee appointed by the School Board reported out with their recommendations. Those recommendations proposed two new schools with renovations to the Middle School for a total cost of approximately \$70 million dollars. Concerns were raised at that time about the affordability of this plan. Since then the plan has changed significantly with a new location, all new construction and a cost of \$114 million dollars for a comparable total campus size. Over the last two years there has been much debate within this Board and the general public as to the benefits, cost and affordability of the plans proposed."

Mr. Larson continued "With the most recent cost estimates of \$114 million dollars, proceeding or not proceeding with the plan for new construction of schools is no longer the issue. The issue now is, can Lancaster County afford debt of this magnitude for any purpose and still meet the need for essential public services over the next 40-50 years? It cannot. I have never been more certain of anything in my lifetime. I base this strong feeling on my many years of dealing with matters financial and my assessment of the financial condition of Lancaster County. We are a County with an aging population and fixed, often limited income. We have many others who have very limited financial means in the County. We are, in short, a relatively poor county, a fact recognized even by those who support new schools when they also come before us asking for an ever increasing school operating budget. Suggestions to reduce our debt exposure by obtaining grants from the Federal government, permission from the state to increase the sales tax and retain that portion, or rely on citizens to dedicate their estate to new school construction are not feasible or able to be realized within the timeframe needed. Large increases in real property taxes will be the only means by which this massive debt could be financed. Thoughts of transferring the debt burden from those who cannot afford it to those who supposedly can are even more unrealistic than those cited above. Those thoughts may even be illegal under current state law. To conclude my argument, I also strongly believe that any lending institution to which we might turn, including government entities, will reject our application on the grounds that we simply cannot afford it."

Mr. Larson continued "Just as there are always alternative solutions to a problem, there are also, as in this case, strongly held views in stark contrast to each other. I recognize that my views may not reflect those of the majority of citizens in Lancaster County, even though I believe they do. I am willing to put my views to the test with a public referendum and ask that my fellow board members who hold an opposing view be willing to do the same. If you feel as strongly as I do that you are right, then you have nothing to fear from a public referendum. If you have not already, you will be able to sell

your view to the majority and it will prevail. It is only fair, on a matter of this magnitude, that those who will bear the burden or share in the benefit of this decision long after any of us are still on this Board be given the opportunity to be directly involved in it.”

Dr. Westbrook stated that he was in opposition to Mr. Larson’s position. He stated that when Mr. Larson says that the County cannot afford the new schools, that is Mr. Larson’s opinion. He stated that he believed that they can afford it and should do what is best for the children. He stated that this process has taken place over years and the School Facilities Committee met throughout the County for years and invited the public along the way. He stated that the fact that some people did not attend those meetings and don’t know the facts is a real issue.

Dr. Westbrook referred to Mr. Vick’s comments on electricity savings for the proposed new schools and stated that the new schools’ energy savings would be two-fold, in that they would save on the usage and the solar panels would be generating electricity and between the two of those, the County could have a school that costs nothing as far as an electricity bill. He stated that was already happening at Discovery Elementary School and it could happen here. He stated that, when he was on the School Board, they paid over \$300,000 annually in electricity costs. He stated that, in his opinion, a public referendum should be the last thing on the list because it is their sworn duty to do their best for this County and it is up to them as individuals and what they think that responsibility is. He stated that he was pretty clear in his consideration of his responsibilities as Mr. Larson is with his. He stated that they could agree to disagree.

Dr. Westbrook stated that the Board had just adopted its Strategic Plan and he would like for them to go beyond that, before they get into the budget discussions, and set a date for an open session workshop, talking with the public about the priorities the Board has for spending before they ever consider the dollar amounts from any organization. He stated that the Board has said in its Strategic Plan, that there are three major priorities of public safety, emergency medical services and education.

Dr. Westbrook stated that he had only been through one budget process last year and there were many organizations that came to the Board asking for money. He stated that he would like for them to have a protocol in place where they decide ahead of time what the priorities are and how they are going to fund those priorities and then how they might handle all of the rest. He stated that, if they identify those things that they are supposed to be responsible for as a government and they tax the people to be able to fund those priorities, they should have no money left over to give to anybody else, especially non-governmental organizations that can raise their own money. He stated that these matters are worthy of a public conversation. He stated that this would really help them to decide what they are about as an entity representing the people and that was his recommendation and it needed to be done before the budget process began.

Mr. Lee stated that he had a copy of Jesse Davis’ letter for all of the Board members concerning the new schools construction and a possible committee of local

contractors. He stated that he had spoken to Mr. Davis and advised him that the School Board would have to be on board with any committee concerning the schools.

Mr. Lee made a motion that Mr. Gill and the County Attorney, Mr. Cornwell, initiate the process of preparing a referendum for the construction of new schools to be placed on the November 2019 ballot and that a draft of that referendum be presented at the Board of Supervisors' March meeting for their consideration.

Mr. Bellows stated that they have had a first look at the proposal, but the School Board has not formally adopted any plan and brought it to the Board of Supervisors, which would be the next step in this process that must occur.

Mr. Lee stated that, at the last Planning Commission meeting, they had to take some of the school requests out of the Capital Improvement Budget because of the unknowns, but they need to know by March. He stated that the items are prioritized in March and then go to public hearing in April.

Mr. Gill stated that the School Board had previously recommended \$66.8 million dollars for new schools before the VMDO presentation, so that was the figure included in the Capital Improvement Budget requests.

Mr. Lee stated the figure of \$66.8 million dollars was backed out because of the latest projections, but they need to have something to work with by the March meeting.

Mr. Bellows stated the figure of \$66.8 million dollars does not match with any specific plan or concept.

Mr. Lee asked how the Planning Commission could recommend anything without the figures as far as the Capital Improvement Budget goes.

Mr. Bellows stated that he agreed, but how can they draft a referendum without the numbers.

Mr. Larson replied that they have a number of \$114 million dollars. He stated that the Board approved \$2 million dollars for a study to come up with a number for new schools. He stated that they have paid a lot of money to get that number, so that should be the number that is used for the referendum.

Mr. Bellows stated that the School Board has not brought any official plan to the Board of Supervisors.

Mr. Larson stated that his point is that they have spent good money to get to where they are right now. He stated that the public can make the decision about whether or not they want to get behind the issue.

Mr. Lee stated that one of the things that he wanted Mr. Gill and Mr. Cornwell to do was to get in contact with the School Board and advise them about what the Board of Supervisors was doing and that they intend to use the figure of \$114 million dollars in the referendum. He stated that if the School Board had another number, then they can bring that forward.

Mr. Bellows stated that he had no problem with that, but they need to have the School Board get them something before they can actually draft the referendum. He asked Mr. Cornwell about it.

Mr. Cornwell replied that they will definitely need a figure for the referendum with wording such as “the voters of Lancaster County authorize the Board of Supervisors to borrow up to a certain amount”.

Mr. Bellows stated that they could include the number they have right now in the draft. He asked Mr. Cornwell if the Board of Supervisors can only act after the School Board has acted and voted on the plan.

Mr. Cornwell replied that the School Board will need to make a request, but the Board of Supervisors can independently act also.

Mr. Bellows stated that the Board of Supervisors could also decide on a number and use that.

Mr. Larson stated that he did not know why they would do that. He stated that he had previously said they had paid \$2 million dollars, but that also included purchasing the land. He stated that they had spent a lot of money in getting that number, so why would they ask the School Board to come up with some other number. He stated that they have seen a lot of numbers over the last two years and that is one of the problems out in the community. He stated that one of the citizens who spoke during the public input session, Mr. Marple, said that the schools idea hadn't been sold well.

Mr. Bellows stated that he agreed, but there was nothing to sell yet because the School Board has not finalized a plan.

Mr. Larson stated that Mr. Cornwell just said that the School Board not bringing a finalized plan to them was not a show stopper for entertaining the motion that Mr. Lee has put on the table.

Mr. Bellows stated that he did not think so, either. He stated that the next step in the process is that the School Board has to meet, decide on the plan or possibly decide to do things in phases. He stated that there were still some steps that have to occur on the School Board's part before a complete referendum could be sent to the ballot.

Mr. Larson stated that the only thing he would ask for in that regard is that they don't continue to spend taxpayer money identifying and describing something that hasn't

even been approved yet. He stated that they busted the seven percent fund reserve to approve these expenditures.

Dr. Westbrook asked if he knew they had busted the seven percent for sure.

Mr. Larson replied that they won't know for sure until they see the audit for FY19. He stated that they can come pretty close with their own accounting. He stated that the fact of the matter is that it wasn't even talked about, when two months earlier they had set the fund balance percentage threshold to help drive their decisions about funding.

Dr. Westbrook stated that the seven percent threshold on the fund reserve was in case they needed it and wasn't something that they could never touch. He stated that he was not saying it was an emergency, but it had to be appropriated, so they could get the answer to the question about the new schools. He stated that part of it was also to purchase the property, which he thinks they should do.

Mr. Palin stated that he was in favor of Mr. Lee's motion.

Dr. Westbrook stated that he thought the motion was premature at this point and would not support it.

Mr. Bellows called the question concerning Mr. Lee's motion.

VOTE:	Jason D. Bellows	Aye
	Ernest W. Palin, Jr.	Aye
	Jack D. Larson	Aye
	William R. Lee	Aye
	Robert S. Westbrook	Nay

VOTE: 4-1 (Motion passed).

### **COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR**

Mr. Gill stated that the purchase of the Good Luck Road property was brought up earlier and the contract has two dates. He stated that it was originally signed on March 26, 2018 and a change was initialed on April 11, 2018. He stated that a \$12,000 deposit had been paid. He stated that the Board needs to decide whether to purchase the property and close on it or extend the contract for another six months with an additional \$6,000 deposit. He asked for the Board's thoughts on the matter.

Mr. Larson stated that he had voted for the purchase of the Good Luck Road property. He stated that he did not vote for it for the purpose of new schools, but because

it was an opportunity to extend public access to tidal waters and he considered it a nice piece of property. He stated that he wanted a county-owned property, so they would not have to deal with people complaining every time a proposed public access site was near them. He stated that he was so concerned about where the County is financially since they had a shortfall coming into 2019 and they have things facing them such as the fire departments possibly needing more assistance because of the rising costs of their equipment. He stated that the fire departments have always tried to raise their own funds, but the equipment is so expensive, it is hard for them to do. He stated that there are going to be so many things that will be coming in front of the Board in the very near future, with respect to budget requirements, that he does not think the purchase would be a wise thing to do right now, even as much as he would like to extend public access within the County.

Dr. Westbrook stated that it seemed to him that there was an assumption that the revenue that is collected through taxes is what they have to work with and at the current rate. He stated that they are responsible for setting a tax rate that will allow them to pay for the things that they need to pay for. He stated that Lancaster County was in the bottom fourth of all the Virginia counties concerning the tax rate. He stated that if they simply adopted the median tax rate of all the counties in the state of Virginia, they would not have to have this conversation about what they can and cannot afford. He stated that his perspective is to define what they are supposed to be doing and the obligations that they have and then set a tax rate that will allow that to happen. He stated that part of those obligations is the schools. He stated that the assumption that they cannot afford it is the wrong assumption. He stated that the assumption that the County is losing both population and school-aged population and we have to live with it, is wrong. He stated that they can turn this around and the way to do that is with quality schools and employment opportunities. He stated that the Broadband Authority is working on providing adequate broadband service throughout the County as soon as they can and that will improve our employment opportunities.

Mr. Lee referred to the Good Luck Road property and stated that he thought they needed to move forward on it. He stated that Mr. Larson made a valid point about public access. He stated that the property is beautiful and something they needed to pursue. He stated that they did not need to pay another \$6000 for an extension, in his opinion.

Mr. Bellows stated that he agreed with Mr. Lee. He stated that public access has been a long-term issue for the County and this property would be a great opportunity for that at a fairly reasonable cost. He stated that they will have to do something with the schools and whatever that plan may be, they will need additional land for that as well. He stated that the Primary School is past its useful life and it was not reasonable to say that they can continue to send children there. He stated that it was a matter of doing this affordably and reasonably. He stated that the Board members are taxpayers, too and they are going to look at this in a way that was reasonable to everybody. He stated that may include a public referendum. He stated that he thought they should act on the Good Luck Road property.

Mr. Palin stated that he agreed. He stated that, as he looked at the plan that was presented, he noticed that the school facilities were proposed to be placed in the center of the property, which would possibly reduce the room available for public access. He stated that he would like to see the schools placed closer to the front, near the road.

Mr. Bellows stated that he thought the only thing that was depicted near the site for potential public access was a tennis court area. He stated that the whole area on the lower plateau of the property could be used or developed for public access.

Mr. Lee made a motion to move forward and close on the land transaction.

Mr. Larson asked how they were going to fund the transaction. He asked if they would draw down on the fund balance further or will they get a loan.

Mr. Bellows stated that will be the next question.

Mr. Larson stated that, before they vote on it, they should probably have some idea of what they are going to do. He stated that it was going to take some action on Mr. Gill's part if they need to apply for a loan.

Mr. Bellows stated that there was a motion on the floor.

VOTE:	Jason D. Bellows	Aye
	Ernest W. Palin, Jr.	Aye
	Jack D. Larson	Nay
	William R. Lee	Aye
	Robert S. Westbrook	Aye

VOTE: 4-1 (Motion passed.)

Mr. Bellows asked about the money for the land purchase already being in the Capital Improvement Budget from last year.

Mr. Gill replied that \$2 million dollars was approved in the Capital Improvement Budget for this when the Board approved it in August 2018. He stated that \$1 million was set aside for VMDO to complete their study and \$800,000 was for the land purchase with approximately \$200,000 as a cushion and for closing costs. He stated that the thought has been that the County would borrow \$2 million dollars. He stated that, in the past, they have engaged Davenport and Company concerning obtaining financing.

Mr. Larson suggested asking local banks for their best rates. He stated that the local institutions have been very supportive in the past.

Mr. Cornwell asked how much Davenport and Company charged.

Mr. Gill replied they charged \$5,000 the last time the County had a revenue anticipation note.

Mr. Lee asked if the County had to go through Davenport and Company.

Mr. Larson replied no.

Mr. Bellows asked what would be the option.

Mr. Cornwell replied that the County could do a request for proposals to financial institutions and basically do what Davenport and Company would do. He stated that there is also the preparation of loan documents, which he cannot do. He stated that the County would need bond counsel for that.

Mr. Gill stated that Sands Anderson would be the bond counsel.

Mr. Lee asked if there was in-house expertise to take care of these things.

Mr. Cornwell stated that it would be difficult.

Dr. Westbrook stated that he had spoken with Treasurer Bonnie Dickson about the Revenue Anticipation Note in the past and she told him that Davenport and Company throws out a wide net, but it always comes back to the local banks.

Mr. Larson stated that, in the past, Bill Pennell used to put out the requests for proposals.

Mr. Cornwell stated that the request for proposals is not the problem, but the closing documents can be complicated.

Mr. Palin stated that he thought it would be better to pay professionals because mistakes can be costly.

Mr. Bellows agreed.

Mr. Bellows made a motion to have Davenport and Company handle the request for proposals for the loan to purchase the Good Luck Road property.

VOTE:	Jason D. Bellows	Aye
	Ernest W. Palin, Jr.	Aye
	Jack D. Larson	Nay

William R. Lee                      Aye

Robert S. Westbrook              Aye

VOTE: 4-1 (Motion passed.)

Mr. Gill stated that he had almost completed the draft version of the FY20 Operating Budget and asked if the Board would like to set a date for a work session to go through it. He stated that Dr. Westbrook had brought up the possibility of having a separate meeting to define protocol before they get into the budget line-by-line. He suggested having that meeting immediately before the work session.

The consensus was to schedule the next meeting for Thursday, March 14<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Motion was made by Mr. Bellows to adjourn to Thursday, March 14<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m.

VOTE:                      Jason D. Bellows                      Aye

Ernest W. Palin, Jr.                      Aye

Jack D. Larson                      Aye

William R. Lee                      Aye

Robert S. Westbrook                      Aye