

VIRGINIA:

A meeting of the Lancaster County Board of Supervisors was held in the Administrative Building Board/Commission Meeting Room of said county on Tuesday, May 13, 2014.

Members Present: B. Wally Beauchamp, Chair
 Jason D. Bellows, Vice Chair
 F. W. Jenkins, Jr., Board Member
 Ernest W. Palin, Jr., Board Member
 William R. Lee, Board Member

Staff Present: Frank A. Pleva, County Administrator
 Don G. Gill, Planning and Land Use Director
 Jack Larson, Finance Consultant
 Crystal Whay, Building/Land Use Secretary

Mr. Beauchamp called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

PUBLIC HEARING

1. Proposed Fiscal Year 2014-15 Lancaster Public Schools Budget

Mr. Pleva stated that in accordance with Section 15.2-2506 of the *Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended*, the Lancaster County Board of Supervisors is holding a public hearing on the proposed fiscal year 2014-15 Lancaster County Public Schools Budget. He stated that once the hearing is adjourned, by statute, the governing body must wait at least seven days before it considers adoption of the budget either with or without changes. He stated that the synopsis of the budget has been advertised in the local newspaper, posted on the County’s website and a detailed copy has been available in the County Administrator’s office.

Mr. Pleva stated that on the revenue side of the proposed budget there are operating revenues totaling \$15,187,728, which includes revenues from the County of Lancaster, the Commonwealth of Virginia, the federal government and other miscellaneous sources. He stated that the largest contributor is the County of Lancaster with an amount of \$10,706,416, which is \$280,932 over what is currently budgeted. He stated that the total revenues from all sources, including food service is proposed at \$15,804,328, which is an increase of \$385,210 over the current year.

Mr. Pleva referred to the expenditures side of the proposed school budget and stated that the largest category is instruction and technology at \$11,698,308, which is \$158,307 more than the current fiscal year. He stated that the administration and health category is proposed to be \$700,203, transportation is proposed at \$1,204,038, operations and maintenance is proposed at \$1,497,785 and debt service is proposed at \$87,395. He stated that the total operating expenditures, which equal the total operating revenues would be \$15,187,728. He stated that, after adding the food service category, the total expenditures total comes to \$15,804,328.

Mr. Pleva stated that there were some names on the sign-up sheet for the public hearing.

Mr. Beauchamp opened the public hearing. He reminded the audience of the five minute limit on comments and the one time opportunity to speak.

Mr. Lloyd Hill, a District 4 citizen, stated that he was in support of the proposed school budget. He stated that he thought the County had an opportunity to have a new day and by that, he stated that there was a new superintendent, who needs to have all of the resources possible to be successful and be on the way to full accreditation. He stated that he hoped the Board would approve the proposed school budget.

Mr. George Bott, a District 1 citizen, stated that the school budget request is part of a larger request for County funds. He stated that the County, including the schools, needs capital improvements. He referred to capital improvements and stated that if the five-year plan that was forwarded to the Board by the Planning Commission of approximately \$2.5 million was rounded up to \$3 million and borrowed at 4 ½% for 15 years, the annual payment would be \$275,000. He stated that there are other ways of financing the requests and it is probably a good option, given the current interest rates. He stated that if the payment of \$275,000 was used, in place of trying to fund all of the capital improvements, it would result in a smaller total payment.

Mr. Bott stated that he was a supporter of the schools, but not an unreserved supporter. He stated that he has looked at school budgets and been in school budget meetings for several years and stated that the schools should look internally before they ask for a lot of money. He stated that for the past three years, the teacher absentee rate is 10% and if that was reduced to the national average of 5.3%, the schools could save \$276,000. He referred to the salaries for the top earners and stated that they are above the five adjacent counties. He stated that if those salaries were reduced to what the other five counties are paying, the school system could save \$78,603. He referred to step increases and stated that they already know that the salaries are skewed, so if the requested 1.5% pay increase is not given to top earners, it would save \$22,500. He stated that increasing the average class size by 1 student, would save 10 teachers and \$450,000 a year. He stated that contracting out non-core school functions of janitorial services could save 25% or \$85,511. He referred to transportation and school buses and stated that there could be a

savings of approximately 11%. He stated that with these items and other monies not spent, it gives a total savings of \$1,106,000.

Mr. Jimmie Carter stated that he was speaking on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce. He stated that the chamber represents approximately 275 businesses in the County. He stated that the chamber had asked him to express their support for the schools. He stated that they realize that the schools are an important part of the education and economic stimulation of the County. He stated that they wanted to go on record to say they would support appropriate funding for the schools.

Mr. Bill Warren, a District 5 citizen, stated that he wanted to speak in support of the school board budget. He stated that he thought the budget should be approved as submitted. He stated that the schools have been downgraded to provisional accreditation recently and it is critical to fund the schools now. He stated that he could not think of anything more important and it should be the number one priority to get the schools fully accredited. He stated that, from an economic perspective, a provisionally accredited school system will make it difficult to attract new businesses and families to the area. He stated that the schools, from a facility standpoint, don't pass the drive-by test as well.

Mr. Warren stated that the teachers in the County are significantly underpaid. He stated that, on average, Lancaster's teachers make \$4,100 less annually than teachers in Northumberland. He stated that they have lost good teachers to neighboring schools. He stated that he had been attending the budget meetings for 5 years and the school budget has gone down every time. He stated that the schools will not get back to being fully accredited by cutting the budget. He stated that cutting the school year probably had a lot to do with the current provisional accreditation too. He stated that Northumberland County has the same amount of students with the same demographics and have been funded with 2.2 million dollars more than Lancaster in the current school year. He stated that it is time to fully fund the schools.

Mr. Beauchamp stated that if Mr. Warren's written comments to the Board were meant to offend, in his opinion, Mr. Warren had succeeded. He stated that, to say the budget cuts by the Board of Supervisors is the cause of the schools' provisional accreditation is an outrageous statement. He stated that Lancaster's school system is continually in the top 12% of local funding per pupil state-wide and that is a fact that can be checked. He stated that the Board of Supervisors does not set teacher salaries, the School Board does. He stated that the school system has a very high number of administrators with excellent salaries compared to adjoining counties and those monies should be going to the teachers that deserve it. He stated that the Board of Supervisors has continually asked the School Board to reduce the administration positions and it has not been done over the years. He stated that there has been funding in the budget for teacher salaries and it has not been used.

Mr. Beauchamp stated that over the last 6 years, the school system has had annual unspent funds ranging from \$292,000 to \$1.155 million dollars and that is not under funding. He further stated that those funds could have gone to deserving teachers. He

stated that the only correct statement, in his opinion, that Mr. Warren made was that the new School Board chairman, the School Board and Mrs. Spears are working to remedy this situation. He stated that the Board of Supervisors is making every effort to work with them. He stated that he thought Mr. Warren was doing more harm than good to the cause.

Mr. Charlie Costello, a District 2 citizen, stated that he had been working in the schools as a volunteer for over 16 years and he stated that the students are not “widgets”. He stated that he did not know how you could take one student out or add one to another place to save on 10 teacher salaries and make it work. He stated that the number one priority should be education and if the County wants to attract people to come here, it has to have good education. He stated that, in his opinion, the budget that is before the Board is reasonable. He stated that it would require a one cent increase on taxes, if you only look at the schools and that is not unreasonable. He stated that teacher and administrator salaries need to be looked at as well.

Ms. Marilyn Warren, a District 4 citizen, stated that she had been in education for over 35 years and money is always an issue around education. She stated that after moving to the area, she has found that the students want a good education and it needs to be supported. She stated that she is on the Visions Board and with Lead Northern Neck and one of their awareness issues is education. She stated that she fully supported the proposed school budget and hoped that the Board would too. She stated that there was a saying in education, which is “ you pay for education and training once, but the lack of it, you pay for forever”.

Mr. Spike Nunn, a Kilmarnock citizen, stated that his waitress at dinner the night before said that she had SOL testing the day before and she was not sure how she did on the test. He stated that his waitress had said she had a new teacher who did not know a lot and therefore, she did not feel prepared for testing. He stated that, as he understood it, the School Board is responsible for assigning salaries and administering the funds that are available. He stated that if they have restraints on what they can spend in particular areas, it will affect their ability to negotiate and he thought they needed the flexibility to use the money as they see fit.

Dr. Robert Westbrook, the Chairman of the School Board, stated that he and the Acting Superintendent have worked very hard to do the right thing in the few months that they have been in their positions. He stated that the difficulty is that one cannot come into a situation and cut salaries. He stated that salaries can be renegotiated when the time is right and people can be hired to take the place of others and those are things that can be done to cut salaries. He stated that he did not know if the school system was the only entity that is required to give back the money that they do not spend and he stated that the Board of Supervisors had correctly pointed out that they have given back money every year. He stated that he fully intended, if possible, to bring the teachers up to a proper scale with any money left over in the instructional category and he stated that he was asked at the last meeting if the school system would be doing a lot of end of the year spending. He stated that there is a concern that the school system dumps money at the end of the year. He stated that, in his opinion, if they look at the total amount of money

spent by the schools, it cannot be determined what is spent at the end of the year. He stated that the School Board wants a good relationship with the Board of Supervisors and the school system has been wonderfully served by Mrs. Spears.

Mr. Beauchamp stated that he echoed Dr. Westbrook's comments concerning Mrs. Spears and he supports Dr. Westbrook's request. He stated that what has happened in the last 5 months has been outstanding.

Mrs. Sandy Zeiler, a District 2 citizen, stated that her husband has taught in the school district for 18 years and they have a daughter in the special education department for 5 years. She stated that in the last several months, she has seen a big change in the schools and she knew that administrators in the past have made mistakes, but the new superintendent needs to have the ability to come in and move things around and change things for the better. She stated that the schools need to be built up in the deficient areas because she sees families choosing other school systems to educate their children.

There was no more public comment.

Mr. Beauchamp closed the public hearing.

Mr. Pleva stated that the Board of Supervisors will need to wait 7 days to adopt the proposed school budget, so the earliest date would be Tuesday, May 20, 2014.

Mr. Jenkins stated that there is a work session scheduled for Thursday, May 22nd.

Mr. Lee made a motion to set the date for the adoption of the Lancaster County School Board Budget on Thursday, May 22, 2014 at 7:00 p.m.

VOTE:	B. Wally Beauchamp	Aye
	Jason D. Bellows	Aye
	F. W. Jenkins, Jr.	Aye
	Ernest W. Palin, Jr.	Aye
	William R. Lee	Aye

ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Mr. Jenkins to adjourn the meeting until 8:00 p.m.

VOTE:	B. Wally Beauchamp	Aye
	Jason D. Bellows	Aye
	F. W. Jenkins, Jr.	Aye
	Ernest W. Palin, Jr.	Aye
	William R. Lee	Aye