



AT A JOINT WORKSHOP MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS AND POWHATAN COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD HELD IN THE VILLAGE BUILDING AUDITORIUM, AT 3910 OLD BUCKINGHAM ROAD IN POWHATAN COUNTY, VIRGINIA, AND REMOTELY BY ELECTRONIC MEANS ON MARCH 15, 2022, AT 6:30 PM.

Board of Supervisors Present: David T. Williams, District 1,
Steve W. McClung, District 2,
Mike W. Byerly, District 3, Chair
Bill L. Cox, District 4,
Karin M. Carmack, District 5, Vice-Chair

School Board Members Present: Rick Cole, District 1,
Susan Smith, District 2, Vice-Chair
Valarie Ayers, District 3, (Remote)
James Taylor, District 4,
Kim Hymel, District 5, Chair

Board of Supervisors Absent: None

County Staff Present: Ned Smither, County Administrator
Eric Jones, Superintendent
Bret Schardein, Assistant County Administrator

Constitutional Officers Present: Brad Nunnally, Sherriff

Guests Present: None

1. Call To Order

Chairman Hymel called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

Mr. Cole made a motion to allow Ms. Ayers to participate via zoom. Ms. Smith seconded the motion.

Chairman Hymel, Dr. Taylor, Mr. Cole, and Ms. Smith voted AYE.

**VOTE 4-0
MOTION PASSED**

Chairman Hymel gave a brief announcement about the search for a new superintendent.

Chairman Byerly called the meeting to order.

2. Pledge of Allegiance



Ms. Smith held the pledge of allegiance.

3. Invocation

Mr. Williams held the invocation.

4. Requests to Postpone Agenda Items and Additions, Deletions, or Changes in the Order of Presentation

None.

5. Formal Approval of Agenda

Ms. Carmack made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Mr. McClung seconded the motion.

Chairman Byerly, Ms. Carmack, Mr. McClung, Mr. Williams, Mr. Cox voted AYE.

**VOTE 5-0
MOTION PASSED**

6. Public Comment Period (time limit 3 minutes per individual/5 minutes per group, 30 minutes total time limit that can be extended by the Board)

Chairman Byerly opened the public comment period.

Jacqueline Anderson, 3342 Pine Acre Drive, expressed concern about the quality of education in the County as well as unnecessary expenses.

Daryl Griffin, 2756 Dorset Ridge Circle, stated that he appreciated that students can now explore multiple career paths through the school. He also expressed concern with the mindset of many education professionals and overspending.

Steven Russell, 4209 Old Buckingham Road, asked multiple questions about the 3.4-million-dollar grant the County receives from the Cares Act and American Rescue Plan Act. He asked if the County planned to complete a full audit of how the grant money has been budgeted and spent, how many students are involved in virtual instruction, etc.

Seeing no one else wishing to speak, Chairman Byerly closed the public comment period.

7. Old Business

a. Discussion of Grant Award- Educational Connection Trail Project

Mr. Schardein gave a brief overview. He stated that the project has now been passed and is fully funded. He then explained that he does not have a timeline yet but will be in contact as soon as things are more concrete. Then, the County will begin reaching out to the schools.

b. Discussion of FY23 Budget- Open budgetary discussion between members of the School Board

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Dr. Jones gave a brief presentation. The presentation covered several topics, including academic highlights, staffing levels, standards of quality positions, average class size, enrollment, per pupil costs, composite index impacts, budget increases & priorities, proposed salary increases, etc. Mr. Cole explained that the School Board is getting more money, but it is being categorized differently. He stated that they are working to reduce costs, especially in the areas that have received public concern. Ms. Smith stated that the School Board had worked hard to be transparent in its use of funds. Dr. Taylor agreed with Ms. Smith and expressed his support for his and his colleagues' hard work to bring the budget in line.

Chairman Hymel stated that she has requested that the School Board go line by line and hold budget workshops. She also said that she wanted to ensure the County is compensating its teachers and creating a positive work environment. Ms. Carmack asked Dr. Jones for clarification on the timeline for the \$2 million and details on how they can spend that money. Dr. Jones explained that the General Assembly is currently looking at how to allocate the funds. In the Senate version, the funds would be part of the budget moving forward, and the House is considering doing grants based on need. He stated that he has reached out to their Representatives and said the County would prefer to receive the lump sum because it provides some flexibility. He also explained that the funds could be used for new construction, technology upgrades, or to pay debt. If the money is received, Dr. Jones stated that they have discussed placing it into the capital reserve fund. Mr. McClung asked if the reduction of full-time employees involved vacant positions or ones already filled. He pointed to the instructional assistant position as an example. Dr. Jones explained that some of those positions are vacant, and some are different positions they had created to help through the pandemic. Otherwise, some openings are going to be filled by current employees. Mr. Williams asked Dr. Jones if the dollar figure he is presenting is the difference between what the County is getting and what it could have gotten if it had the composite index. Dr. Jones confirmed this. Mr. Williams asked what a fidget is. Dr. Jones explained that it is a valuable tool for students with disabilities, anxiety, ADHD, or hyperactivity because it can help them focus. Mr. Williams expressed concern about the cuts being made to instructional assistants. He also asked why the School Board chose to reduce the percentage of traveling instead of lowering it on an as-needed basis. Dr. Jones explained that the schools have already reduced traveling by 50% and feel that the remaining 50% will be all that they need for required trainings. Chairman Hymel added that this policy would apply to School Board members, administration, teachers, and other employees. Mr. Williams noted that the number of students seemed to have decreased between 2012 and 2021. He asked if this was going to be projected for the foreseeable future. Dr. Jones stated that the School Board had seen an increase in their ADM and enrollment over the last couple of years, but they do not see any significant increases based on their projections. Mr. Williams asked if the County has any options regarding the five percent increase that the state is proposing. Dr. Jones stated that there had been the flexibility to do an average of five percent in the past, but they will have to wait to see the final language.

Mr. Williams asked how much of the budget is targeted for ongoing repairs and renovations, and Dr. Jones explained that he would have to look at those numbers and get

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back to him. Mr. Johns stated that he did not believe the regular repairs would qualify for those funds. Instead, the funds could be used for more extensive renovation projects. Mr. Williams noted that 50% of the capital maintenance reserve fund must be used for infrastructure, while the other 50% can be used with discretion upon approval from the Board of Supervisors. He asked if that fund had been used for anything other than infrastructure thus far, and Dr. Jones stated that they had only used it for infrastructure. Mr. Williams asked if the County had seen any returns from the energy savings program, and Dr. Jones stated that the schools are meeting their target for energy savings. Mr. Williams asked how well the County is doing in terms of addressing the bus garage issues that a citizen had brought to their attention at a previous meeting. Dr. Jones stated they are responsive to the requests and concerns they have heard from those departments. Mr. Williams asked that Dr. Jones send the Board of Supervisors something that shows how they are meeting performance standards. Mr. Cox asked if the current number being proposed includes a five percent raise for all employees or if it is reduced to account for any funds that the state may provide. Dr. Jones stated that the number displayed includes five percent of all employees. Mr. Johns explained that the expenditure side lists the total cost, but the revenue side includes the state share component. Ms. Carmack asked if Dr. Jones was expecting any dramatic changes in the proposed funds coming from the state. Dr. Jones stated that the County could see more money from the state. Chairman Byerly asked if the schools intended to use the technology funds to buy Chromebooks. Dr. Jones stated that there had not been a discussion with the School Board on how best to spend that money. Chairman Byerly also asked what the total amount of reduction on traveling was. Dr. Jones explained that it was \$60,000.00. Mr. Johns added that the first cut had reduced the travel budget by 20% to \$112,000.00. Then, the second reduction reduced the budget by 50%, which left the travel budget totaling \$56,790.00. Chairman Byerly asked how much travel there is from school to school. Chairman Hymel stated that there are a few different positions that travel from school to school on a daily basis. Chairman Byerly asked if the School Board planned on using any of the two million dollars to pay down debt. Chairman Hymel asked if that was something that he would like them to do. Chairman Byerly stated that he would like them to use some of the funds to pay down debt. Chairman Byerly asked why there aren't more cuts from the administration office in the budget. Ms. Smith explained that the School Board is still discussing how the raises will be disbursed. Chairman Hymel agreed with Ms. Smith. Dr. Jones explained that this discrepancy could be because when looking for areas to cut, teams often look at the areas where there are vacant positions first. Chairman Hymel added that she had recently asked for the organizational chart of the central office to be added to the School Board meetings. Dr. Jones agreed with Mr. McClung, Chairman Byerly, and Mr. Williams. Mr. Cole stated that the School Board had worked hard to reduce class sizes to a level that lessens the demand for as many instructional aids. He also mentioned that the central office is relatively small compared to other school divisions of similar size. Chairman Byerly asked for clarification on the staff members that were added using other funding. Dr. Jones explained that the positions he referred to were added using Title One dollars. Chairman Byerly asked if the County has callable funds. Mr. Smither confirmed that they do. Mr. Williams asked Mr. Smither if he believes taking the \$2 million and buying long-term debt is practical. Mr. Smither said it is worth looking at but will most likely not be



the best decision. Chairman Hymel stated that if these funds could help save the County money, then the School Board would like to be informed. Mr. Cox expressed concern about the amount of funding going to the schools considering the rate at which the County is growing. He asked Mr. Smither to clarify many of the presented handouts and numbers. Chairman Byerly asked if the County had any information from their perspective on grants, ARP, Cares Act, etc., being audited. Mr. Smither explained that any federal funds are audited annually by independent auditors. Ms. Smith noted that all of the grant money is still an ongoing process that has not been finalized yet. Chairman Hymel asked several questions about the details of the grants, including how they could use the money.

8. Public Comment (time limit 3 minutes per individual/5 minutes per group, 30 minutes total time limit that can be extended by the Board)

Chairman Byerly opened the public comment period.

[Darrell Griffin, Dorset Ridge Circle](#), stated that, from his experience, a chiller should last more than 7-10 years. He explained that the most common cause for this short life span is a lack of water treatment. He expressed concern about the transparency of certain statements, such as eliminating certain positions, and asked that the School Board be specific in their budget to reduce the likelihood of misinformation.

[Vicki Hurt, 482 Bell Bridge Circle](#), thanked the School Board for their hard work on the budget. She encouraged the School Board to go back and look at the organizational chart and evaluate the jobs once they hire a new superintendent. She gave several suggestions for future topics that she felt needed to be discussed, including the County's oversight of the bus garage and the potential for a purchasing agent.

[Jacqueline Anderson, 3342 Pine Acre Drive](#), expressed her appreciation for the transparency throughout the School Board budget workshops. She also expressed concern about the School Board's website and asked that they put any revisions on the main website to make it easier to find. Lastly, she mentioned some discrepancies in the phone bill that may need to be addressed.

[Steven Russell, 4209 Old Buckingham Road](#), expressed confusion about the grant money. He asked that the County provide more transparency on how the grant money is being spent. Seeing no one else wishing to speak, Chairman Byerly closed the public comment period.

9. County Attorney Comments

None

10. County Administrator Comments

Chairman Hymel asked if Dr. Tibbs could give Mr. Griffith a call to make sure that the County is treating the water correctly. She also stated that the School Board would answer

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Mr. Anderson's email tomorrow and try to work on something to create transparency with the grant money.

11. Board Comments

Ms. Smith asked that the Board write a proposal if they want to take over the transportation department.

Ms. Ayers thanked the Board of Supervisors for meeting with the School Board.

Mr. Taylor expressed appreciation for the Board of Supervisors' willingness to engage in collaboration.

Mr. Williams thanked the School Board for their comments. He requested that the Board have a presentation from the Dash Transportation Program in Hanover County at the following meeting.

Mr. McClung expressed appreciation for being a part of his first joint meeting with the School Board and for the instructional assistants of Powhatan County.

Chairman Byerly thanked the citizens who came and spoke. He also thanked the School Board for their hard work and willingness to work together. Lastly, he announced that the School Board would have a budget workshop on March 22 at 3 PM and welcomed anyone to join.

12. Adjournment

Chairman Byerly and Hymel adjourned the meeting at approximately 8:33 PM.

ATTEST:

**Ned Smither, County Administrator
Powhatan County Board of Supervisors**

**Michael W. Byerly, Chairman
Powhatan County Board of Supervisors**