

April 17, 2023
Special Called Joint Board Meeting

The Martin County Board of Commissioners met in Special Session with the Martin County Board of Education on Tuesday, April 17th, 2023 at 6:30 p.m. at the Martin County Innovation Campus, Room #145, 411 East Boulevard., Williamston, North Carolina.

ASSEMBLY

Martin County Board of Commissioners and staff in attendance: Chairman Ronnie Smith, Vice Chairman Dempsey Bond, Jr., Commissioner Joe R. Ayers, Commissioner Emily Biggs, Commissioner David “Skip” Gurganus, County Manager U. James Bennett, Clerk to the Board Julia S. Rease, and Finance Officer Janice Young.

Martin County Schools Board members and staff in attendance: Chair Van Heath, Vice Chair Renee Purvis, Board Member Gail Cargile, Board Member Abby Mason, Board Member Kenneth Harrell, Board Member Doug Baker, Board Member Gene Scott, Superintendent Tom Daly, and Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent/Clerk to the Board Sherry Scott.

Chairman Smith and Board of Education Chair Heath called the Joint Board meeting between the Martin County Board of Commissioners and the Martin County Board of Education to order around 6:30 p.m.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Board of Education Board Member Gene Scott. The invocation was provided by Martin County Commissioner Gurganus.

AGENDA APPROVAL

Commissioner Gurganus made a **Motion** to approve the agenda as presented, with a **Second** by Commissioner Biggs. The Motion was **Carried** unanimously.

School Board Member made the **Motion** to approve the agenda as presented, with a **Second** by School Board Member Purvis. The Motion was **Carried** unanimously.

GIFTS

County Manager Bennett and County Clerk Rease presented umbrellas to the School Board in appreciation of their service. The umbrellas were given to the School Board and Staff.

BUDGET MESSAGE

Renovations and School Budget

Dr. Daly explained the Martin County Schools Facility Age handout and the Martin County Schools Budget Sheet. Dr. Daly stated that the Central Office was around 87 years old and the most renovated portion of the office was 67 years old. Renovations were planed and outlined in the handout that was discussed. Most of the buildings discussed were reportedly built in the 70’s and 80’s due to a statewide bond referendum passed to help construct schools. Since then no other

referendums were made to help renovate or build schools as stated by Dr. Daly. Dr. Daly mentioned County Manager Bennett asking him how much the schools budget was and Dr. Daly responded that it was over \$54 million. \$10 million of the budget was reportedly ESR funds that would expire in September 2024. 500 full and part time employees were stated to work in the School system and the annual payroll was about \$32 billion dollars. The monthly payroll salaries and benefits were around \$2.6 billion, making up 73% of the school budget. These salaries and benefit funds were taken out of the school's budget before anything else. Dr. Daly reported the local current expense budget being a little over \$7 million. The fund balance as of the end of June 2022 was about \$3.8 million dollars. \$862,000 of the fund balance was allocated to balance out this year's budget, which left the school with \$2.9 billion remaining uncovered. In relation, the \$2.9 billion remainder reportedly took up around 40% of the local budget and 6.7 % of the entire school budget. A question regarding the amount of funding used from the budget towards district administration was mentioned. Dr. Daly stated that there were 10 positions in which he categorized as district administration and he referenced a handout that listed district administration roles. It was stated that district administration was allotted \$1.2 million or 2.7% of the total budget.

ESR Funding

ESR I funding was reportedly expended and the ESR II funding of \$163,000 was scheduled to be paid out in May 2023 as part of staff retention bonuses. Dr. Daly reported that \$1.7 million of the \$1.9 million ESR III funding, was expended. Dr. Daly stated that an additional \$7.4 million was allocated into projects as the year continued. As those projects are being bid, Dr. Daly stated the board would be asked to approve the project in the budget. Dr. Daly reported that the funding would be allocated for different priorities until funding was expended.

Capital Outlay Budget Request - Current Expense and Capital Outlay

Williamston Primary School

It was noted that some of the projects included in the Capital Outlay Budget Request were reoccurring every year because the school system had not made any action on them yet. Dr. Daly reported the Williamston Primary School needed whiteboards, tables, chairs, a new intercom system (including wiring and software system provider), Wi -Fi solutions for the intercom system, and trailers that were used for classes (\$150,000/trailer). Superintendent Daly reported a problem with water running through the Williamston Primary School property and adjoining properties. Superintendent Daly stated the drainage traveled through the roof, was breaking down the grounds soil from the top layer, and this caused sinkholes. Engineers were reportedly working with the school system to fix the issue at Williamston Primary and adjoining properties.

EJ Hayes Elementary School

Superintendent Daly discussed renovations and equipment needed for the EJ Hayes Elementary School. Dr. Daly reported that the elementary school needed battery backup systems with the current Wi-Fi intercoms, playground equipment, tile replacement (ESR Funds could not be used to replace tile with tile).

South Creek and Jamesville Elementary Schools

South Creek Elementary School reportedly needed new playground equipment, battery backup systems for intercoms, and clocks. Jamesville Elementary also needed the same items including a fence for the playground.

Chairman Smith asked how many children were enrolled at Jamesville Elementary School and Dr. Daly responded that there were around 200 students.

South Creek Middle School

Dr. Daly continued and stated that the second phase of the major roofing project at South Creek Middle School was underway. Dr. Daly noted that the school was in the same facility as South Creek High School. Therefore, some projects were grouped together between the two schools. One of the issues discussed was that the schools had buzzer systems at the front doors for security. Dr. Daly explained that there was no security measures preventing a person from exploring the schools after being buzzed in. Schools were in need of refurbished athletic tracks, which was mentioned to be an ongoing issue. Superintendent Daly reported that the tracks were built around the 1970's, they were breaking down over time, and at some point it would be expensive to replace. Repavement of the parking lots and replacement of the window panels were also discussed as a need.

Rodgers Elementary School

Rodgers Elementary School reportedly needed regular blinds replaced with black out blinds. The blackout blinds would reportedly prevent anyone from looking into classes during a lockdown. Dr. Daly reported that there was an issue finding someone to make the blinds complaint with the fire code. Dr. Daly stated a distributor was found that made custom black out blinds for schools that met all standards required in terms of fire safety. Rodgers Elementary was reported to need a new intercom system in their parking lot and window panels.

Riverside High School

Reportedly needed a refurbished athletic track (about \$670,000) and a replacement of the second floor exit platform. The exit also called an emergency exit was beginning to rust. Engineers were asked to inspect this emergency exit and they advised to replace the stairs (\$85,000).

Riverside Middle School

Riverside Middle School reportedly needed a commercial lawnmower and the mower would be shared with Riverside Middle School. New handheld radios were requested as well for security reasons. Dr. Daly stated there were hopes to standardize these radios to interchange them without issues.

Maintenance

LED lighting upgrades, a storage building or storage in general, scissors lift, ground site restoration based equipment was needed for the Maintenance Department. Superintendent Daly stated there were plans to move the Central Office to a building by the Innovation Campus. Dr. Daly mentioned that the school system was willing to conduct majority of the work, but engineering and architectural work was needed to meet standards (\$150,000). If the Central Office is moved, Dr. Daly reported there was a leak in the ceiling that would need repair. Lottery Funds were used to pay for a leaks at the Innovation campus, but these funds would be used to fix the leak in the proposed Central Office building. Dr. Daly stated that the Lottery Funding would only cover repairs for buildings that housed students or were student centered places.

Innovation Campus and Economic Development Building Repairs

Next, Superintendent Day discussed needs at the Innovation Campus. Furniture was stated to be needed as there was an increase in students attending the campus. Dr. Daly noted that the School Board signed a contract with Martin County Economic Development to lease a portion of the connected buildings that the Innovation Campus was part of. The terms of annual lease payments was included in the contract to be paid by Martin County Economic Development. The contract reportedly stated that the School system would handle custodial, maintenance, and some IT services. With this being said, Dr. Daly reported there was a roof leak in the Economic Development Building that could cost the School System \$75,000. \$30,000 was reportedly lost every year from the School System making these repairs. Dr. Daly stated that he initiated discussions with Economic Development to arrange the contract so that the Economic Development building repairs were not being paid through the School System.

Riverside High School Maintenance Repairs

Riverside High School was stated to need renovations to the auditorium and a new HVAC system. \$135,000 was estimated as the cost to repair the HVAC system. \$500,000 was estimated to repair the carpet in the auditorium. This included the removal of the 1970's seating and replacing it with new seating.

Technology

In terms of technology, District Chromebooks were being considered as well as centralizing computers and computer systems. Dr. Daly reported that centralizing the order of computers and computer systems would help keep better track of the devices. The instructional TV's, equipment, and the network information systems were leased yearly at \$55,000. Superintendent Daly mentioned that the teacher's laptops were on a recycled basis. In terms of child nutrition services; convection ovens, food holding cabinets, and sinks, and fixtures were in needed. A roof leak above the IT Department at the Innovation Campus needed repair that could not be fixed using lottery funding due to no students being in that office. Dr. Daly estimated the total costs of the capital expenditures to be around \$5.4 million including the Insurance deductible, equipment costs, and contingency fees.

Employee Salaries

Then, Superintendent discussed the state raising salaries for teachers and other school employees. The state reportedly did not pay for the cost of raising salaries for teachers. Dr. Daly explained that teachers who were paid through local and or federal funding, did not have this increase in pay at all. As a result, the salaries infringed upon the local budget in terms of making it functional. An increase was expected in the retirement rate of 26% and the school system had to match this rate. The prepaid health insurance costs were estimated to be \$7,800 and there was an expected 3% increase in utilities and insurance for the upcoming year. Dr. Daly then discussed the issues with newer employees being paid more than employees who had been in the school system. Supervisor Coordinators would cost the school's budget \$300,000 due to salary increases and there was a retirement settlement of \$163,000 that the school was waiting on receiving. Dr. Daly then reported on the salaries of the custodians (\$140,000), secretary, administration, and similar department salaries totaled to \$193,000

General /Current Expenses

Lastly, Dr. Daly discussed general expenses. The payment to the Charter Schools was estimated to be almost \$1.2 million based on the number of students attending. The cost of JROTC, operation of school buses, utilities, athletic settlements, water testing, and more were reportedly going to

remain the same cost as previous years. The superintendent search was included in the budget as well with Ms. Michelle White being chosen as the new superintendent. Sr. Daly estimated these general/current expenses to total \$8.9 million.

Discussion, Questions, and Answers

Martin County Manager U. James Bennett referred to a budget sheet that showed the remaining pay off balance for Riverside Middle School. Manager Bennett estimated and asked if the school had 3 fiscal years left before paying off Riverside Middle School. Dr. Daly agreed and responded that the lottery funds, Article 40, and Article 42 were used for these expenses as well.

Manager Bennett stated that there was \$359,000 payment occurring in May 2023 due to a reimbursement of \$17,000 that was paid twice by the County. Manager Bennett estimated that the upcoming payment in May 2023 would be \$59,000. Manager Bennett reported that the Board of Commissioners paid \$150,000 towards bus drivers, custodians, cafeteria workers, and similar employees. Dr. Daly stated that the school system was very appreciative of the payment as the non-certified workers (Custodians, Cafeteria personnel, office assistants, and etc.) were able to receive salaries that matched the state raises for teachers.

Manager Bennett asked for the number of public school students who transferred to a charter school. Dr. Daly stated that he did not have the number with him. A staff member responded that 532 students transferred to a charter school as of last month. DR. Daly added that the public school system had about 2300 students.

Chairman Smith asked if the rate of public school students transferring a charter school was increasing. Dr. Daly reported that he would analyze the data to see if there was a negative or positive trend.

Adjournment

School Board Member Gene Scott made a **Motion** to adjourn at 7:17 p.m., with a **Second** by School Board Member Kennett Harrell. Motion was **Carried** unanimously.

Vice Chairman Bond Jr. made the **Motion** to adjourn around 7:18 p.m., with a **Second** by Commissioner Gurganus. Motion was **Carried** unanimously.

Chairman Ronnie Smith
Martin County Board of Commissioners

Julia S. Rease
Clerk to the Board