

**MACON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
CALLED MEETING
MAY 5, 2014
MINUTES**

Chairman Corbin called the joint meeting with the Macon County Board of Education to order at 4:22 p.m. at the Iotla Valley Elementary School. All board members (with the exception of Commissioner Haven), the County Manager, Deputy Clerk, Finance Director and County Attorney were present. All of the members of the Board of Education, Superintendent Dr. Chris Baldwin, Finance Director Angie Cook and Administrative Assistant/Board Clerk Renee Burt were present, along with a number of other Macon County Schools central office staff. Also present were members of the news media. Jim Breedlove, chairman of the Board of Education, also called the school board's meeting to order.

Chairman Corbin explained that as the commissioners were awaiting the presentation of the County Manager's proposed budget next week, this meeting would be to receive information only.

Dr. Baldwin opened with brief remarks regarding Iotla Valley School, noting that it presently serves 380 students, and thanked the commission for its support for the facility. He then spoke to what he called the "negativity" that currently surrounds public education, and pointed out the support of the county in light of that negativity. He told the commissioners that it cost \$41,300,000 to operate the Macon County School system last year, and with 4,400 students that results in a cost of about \$9,000 per student per year. In other terms, that equates to \$52 per day per child, and he said \$12 of that amount comes from the county. In contrast, the state of North Carolina spends \$82 per day to house an inmate in a correctional facility, he noted.

NOTE: Commissioner Haven joined the meeting at 4:29 p.m.

The two boards and staff members then reviewed a draft of the school system's 2014-2015 current expense budget in detail, with Dr. Baldwin highlighting specific increases or decreases in certain line items. One topic of discussion centered around the state's proposal regarding 7.1 percent pay increases for teachers with less than five years' experience. Macon County has 37 locally paid teachers, down from 54 a year ago. Overall, the school system is requesting a county appropriation of \$7,839,090 for the upcoming school year – approximately \$500,000 more than the current fiscal year.

The County Manager pointed out that the commissioners called for no increase in the county's tax rate for the new fiscal year, and with the property revaluation looming, he had asked county departments to hold the line on spending. He reported they have done so, and the county is looking at a \$1.1-million decrease in the budget for 2014-15. Dr. Baldwin noted that there could be a possible cut in the state allotment to the school systems following the upcoming "short session" of the state General Assembly.

Dr. Baldwin then reviewed the school system's employee counts by classification, pointing out a reduction of 22 positions overall from the 2012-13 school year to the current one.

NOTE: Board of Education Chairman Jim Breedlove left the meeting at 5:13 p.m.

Dr. Baldwin went on to review the system's capital outlay requests for 2014-15 by individual school, which total \$700,450 for the "urgent" ones. Of particular concern is the sewer treatment plant at Nantahala School, which is at the end of its useful life.

The final item for discussion centered on a technology request of \$430,000, which is over and above the \$1.5-million the county recently provided to the school system to "refresh" its desktop and laptop PCs as well as network infrastructure devices. However, school officials explained that the state has severely reduced the textbook allotment to schools, and will now only fund digital textbooks, but not the devices on which to "run" them. So, the system is going to spend the remainder of the \$1.5-million to purchase some 400 iPads to be used by high school students throughout the county.

In closing, the County Manager said the school system was requesting just over \$1.6-million more than the current year appropriation.

With no other business, and upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Tate, the board voted unanimously to adjourn at 5:44 p.m., with the Board of Education likewise adjourning.

Derek Roland
Ex Officio Clerk to the Board

Kevin Corbin
Board Chairman