

**MACON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
CALLED MEETING
FEBRUARY 26, 2013 – 6 P.M.
MINUTES**

Following an invocation by Sheriff Robert Holland at 6 p.m., the members of the Macon County Board of Commissioners, the members of the Macon County Board of Education and their respective staff members shared a meal prior to holding a joint meeting.

Chairman Corbin called the meeting of the county commissioners to order at 6:30 p.m. at the Macon Bank Corporate Center, located at 220 One Center Court in Franklin, NC. All Board Members, the County Manager, Deputy Clerk, Finance Director, County Attorney, interested citizens and members of the news media were present. Likewise, Board of Education Chairman Jim Breedlove called the meeting of the school board to order. Board of Education members Tommy Cabe, Stephanie McCall, Melissa Evans and Gary Shields were present, as were Interim Superintendent Dr. Jim Duncan, Administrative Assistant/Board Clerk Renee Burt and Finance Officer Angie Cook, as well as a number of other school system personnel.

Following a welcome and comments from Chairman Corbin, he then recognized Chairman Breedlove, who remarked on the “exceptional relationship” between the two boards. He provided a brief overview of the reversion of funds from the school board to the state since 2008, and stated that the board members knew that “a fiscal cliff” was coming. “We’re cognizant of where we are,” he told the commissioners, and thanked them “for what you’ve done for the children of Macon County.”

The County Manager provided some background and historical information regarding the county’s funding of education. He also expressed his appreciation to the school board members for the relationship they have with the county, saying, “We have trust, others

don't." Over the last five years, he explained that the county has spent \$45,696,657 on capital projects for the school system, "and that is something to be proud of." With the school board unable to raise revenue, he said the major sources of funding were the state and county, and pointed out that nearly half of the money generated by the county's property tax goes toward education. He said that Macon County spends \$2,430 per student per year, compared to the state average of \$1,893, which ranks the county 15th among the state's 117 systems. However, the county ranks 56th in state funding received and 73rd in federal funding received. "Our job on the county side is to try to come up with enough adequate funding to give you what you need to operate your school system while balancing the overall tax burden on the people who live here," he said.

Terry Bell then provided a brief update on the status of two current projects, one of which is the installation of new windows at Nantahala School and the second is an asbestos abatement effort at Highlands School that must be completed prior to a much larger renovation project getting underway there.

Mr. Bell said that he and Sheriff Holland had been asked by Chairman Corbin and the County Manager to look at safety issues at each school in the system. Mr. Bell presented a PowerPoint presentation that covered needs at each school, including Cartoogechaye, South Macon, Union Alternative, East Franklin, Iotla Valley, Mountain View Intermediate, Macon Middle, Franklin High, Nantahala, Highlands and Macon Early College. From a system-wide perspective, providing proper door locks to control access would cost approximately \$43,500, supplying cameras would cost \$363,000, and there are additional needs that add up to \$52,195.

Sheriff Holland addressed the need for additional School Resource Officers (SROs), explaining that it would cost \$507,000 in the first year to fund six additional SROs, and \$316,000 of that cost would be reoccurring. The sheriff said he planned to ask for two additional SROs in the upcoming budget, but noted he cannot give up deputy sheriff positions in order to add them. Following discussion regarding priorities and expenditures, the sheriff said systems in nearby counties are also asking for additional SROs, and provided an overview of the situation in Swain, Jackson, Clay and Transylvania counties. Sheriff Holland closed by saying that if he is given one additional SRO, the position would cover both Union Alternative and South Macon Elementary, and if given two new SROs, the second would be at Nantahala.

Chairman Breedlove introduced Dr. Jim Duncan, the interim superintendent, and the new board member from the Nantahala District, Melissa Evans. Dr. Duncan explained that the school system had started the year in the red and projected a shortfall of approximately \$552,000, although the system has recovered about \$126,000 of that. However, he said the system will need additional funds from the county to finish out this fiscal year. In looking toward the upcoming fiscal year, he said, "We're in a tough situation." If everything is left "as is" for the 2013-14 year, the school board would have to request \$8,944,518 from the county, which is \$2,033,518 more than the current year appropriation. The County Manager pointed out that it would require a 2.25-cent tax increase to meet that need. Dr. Duncan then went over a list of possible reductions to the current expense budget that total \$1,950,393 (Attachment 1), a copy of which is attached and is hereby made a part of these minutes. It was pointed out that if the school system did not have to return \$1.1-million in reversion funds to the state, it would solve half of the problem. Dr. Duncan told county officials that a final number on this year's shortfall would be available in late April or early May.

The County Manager suggested that he and the county Finance Director meet with Dr. Duncan and Ms. Cook to work on these issues and then inform both boards of their progress before another joint meeting is scheduled. Chairman Corbin suggested that the boards get back together in early April.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Beale, seconded by Commissioner Tate, the board of commissioners voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:33 p.m., followed immediately by adjournment of the board of education.

Jack Horton, County Manager
Clerk to the Board

Kevin Corbin
Board Chairman