

**PASQUOTANK COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA
APRIL 10, 2013**

The Pasquotank County Board of Commissioners met today in a budget work session on Wednesday, April 10, 2013 in the Community Room in the W.C. Witherspoon Memorial Library.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jeff Dixon, Chairman
Joseph S. Winslow, Jr., Vice-Chairman
Lloyd E. Griffin, III
Gary G. White
Dr. William R. Sterritt
Frankie Meads

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Cecil Perry

OTHERS PRESENT:

Randy Keaton, County Manager
Rodney Bunch, Assistant County Manager
R. Michael Cox, County Attorney
Sheri Small, Finance Officer
Karen Jennings, Clerk to the Board

The work session was called to order at 3:00 PM by Chairman Jeff Dixon who welcomed School Board Member Harvey Beasley, School Superintendent Linwood Williams, School Finance Officer Jim Agar, and School Transportation Director Dan Lilly.

1. PRESENTATION OF PROPOSAL TO REPLACE ACTIVITY BUSES:

Mr. Agar presented a proposal from the Board of Education which would allow the school system to replenish its fleet of aging activity buses without going into fund balance. He stated that all of the surrounding counties, as well as counties all across the state, charge a per mile fee for the use of activity buses and the Elizabeth City-Pasquotank School System does not currently charge a fee.

Mr. Agar stated that there are twelve activity buses in the fleet and one is only about 18 months old and has about 30,000 miles on it. By the end of this school year, five of the buses will have in excess of 200,000 miles and two in excess of 220,000 miles. A number of the other buses are approaching 200,000 miles. Mr. Agar said there are two activity buses that are not even allowed to leave the county because they are in such bad shape and four more need to be restricted. He stated from an age standpoint, one bus is 27 years old, a couple of the buses are over 20 years old and a couple are not far behind. The average age of the buses is 18 years old. He noted that the state normally uses 200,000 miles as its marker for replacing a bus. He said activity buses sometimes break down late at night when they are loaded with students returning from a field trip or an athletic event.

He explained that he has learned of a municipal lease purchase program that would allow the school system to lease four activity buses at a low interest rate over a five-year period for \$76,169 per year. The school system would take ownership of the buses at the end of the five-year term.

Mr. Agar said the Board of Education believes it can generate about \$75,000 per year to pay for buses by charging \$1.25 per mile to the groups that use the activity buses. The buses currently pick up a total of 85,000 to 89,000 miles per year. Even if the use dropped off to 60,000 miles per year due to the fee, the buses can still pull in \$75,000 in revenue per year which would be enough to make the lease payment on four buses.

Mr. Agar stated that the Board of Education needs authorization from the Board of Commissioners to move forward with this proposal. Superintendent Linwood Williams said if the Board of Education is allowed to do this, the school system can provide activity buses for the children of the community to travel safely on the highways. He added that there will not be any cost to the county under this proposal.

Commissioner Lloyd Griffin expressed concern that this would have an impact on the students by requiring that they pay a portion of the cost in some way either through fund raisers or activity fees.

Commissioner William Sterritt stated that he does not see any drawbacks to approving this idea. He said it is innovative and if the county is serious about student safety, then the Board needs to allow the school system to take some action, otherwise the Board of Education will be requesting the county to provide funds to replace some of the buses because students are in peril.

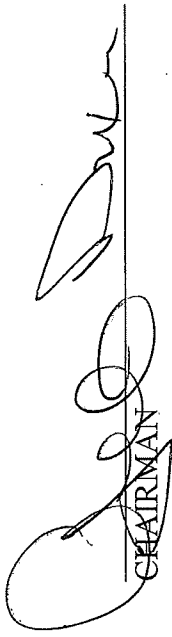
Chairman Dixon asked why this idea has not come to the Board before now when surrounding counties have been doing it for years. Mr. Williams responded that the school system is trying to provide as many opportunities for kids from all walks of life without them having to worry about trying to pay for parts of their education. He said the school system has been trying to cover these costs for a long time but no longer has a choice when looking at the age of the activity bus fleet and the need for new buses.

After discussion and questions, the Board reached a consensus to approve the proposal from the Board of Education. This item will be placed on the agenda for the April 15 Commissioner meeting for final approval.

2. BUDGET WORK SESSION:

The Board held a work session on the 2013-14 county budget. County Manager Randy Keaton outlined a list of mandated and non-mandated services. He reviewed anticipated revenues for the general fund and expenditures for several departments in the general fund.

The work session was adjourned at 5:30 PM.


CHAIRMAN


CLERK TO THE BOARD