



**JOINT MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS AND
THE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Tuesday, August 6, 2024

**Hosted by Durham County Government
Commissioners Chambers
200 E. Main Street
Durham, NC 27701**

9:00 a.m.

MINUTES

Present: Board of County Commissioners – Chair Nida Allam, Commissioners Heidi Carter and Wendy Jacobs

Board of Education Members – Chair Millicent Rogers, Vice Chair Jessica Carda-Auten, Board Members Natalie Beyer, Emily Chavez, Joy Harrel Goff, Wendell Tabb, and Betinna Umstead

Other: County – Dr. Kimberly Sowell (County Manager), Claudia Hager (Deputy County Manager), Curtis Massey (Interim County Attorney), Deborah Craig-Ray (Chief Communication Officer), Monica Wallace (Clerk to the Board), David Ades (Assistant Budget Director), Keyar Doyle (Tax Administrator)

DPS – Dr. Anthony Lewis, Superintendent (virtual), Catty Q. Moore (Interim Superintendent), Dr. Nicholas King (Deputy Superintendent), Dr. Alvera Lesane (Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources), Dr. Todd Lofrese, Interim Chief Operating Officer, Cierra Ojijo (Interim Chief Financial Officer), Dr. Deborah Pitman (Assistant Superintendent of Specialized Services), Nicole Smith (Board Executive Assistant), Sheena Cooper (Sr. Executive Director of Public Affairs), Mathew Palmer, Executive Director of School Planning

Call to Order and Welcome

Chair Allam welcomed everyone and called the August 6, 2024, meeting to order.

Agenda Review

The agenda was presented for review. No corrections were made.

Approval of Minutes – May 14, 2024

The Board reviewed the May 14, 2024, minutes. Chair Allam asked if there were any corrections noted prior to the approval. Hearing none, a motion was entertained.

Commissioner Carter moved, seconded by Board Chair Rogers to approve the May 14, 2024, meeting minutes.

The motion carried unanimously.

Introduction of the New Superintendent

Board Chair Rogers introduced Dr. Anthony Lewis, the new Superintendent – who attended via zoom – and asked him to share a few words.

Dr. Lewis expressed his excitement and looked forward to his role with Durham Public Schools. He thanked the Board for their continued support with the Pre-K efforts and their continued investment in the school system as they continued to work toward competitive salaries and wages. Dr. Lewis stated he also looked forward to additional partnerships with the City of Durham. He added that he was excited to continue the work and to make progress in Durham and would ensure his availability to the Board, Leadership and Community Partners upon his arrival.

Dr. Lewis shared his need to meet with the community and his desire to schedule listening/learning tours in the community so that he could meet and hear the successes and concerns of the district.

Chair Allam and Board Chair Rogers both thanked Dr. Lewis for attending and introducing himself virtually. Chair Allam thanked the School Board for their leadership in selecting Dr. Lewis and thanked Interim Superintendent Moore for stepping in during a critical time in Durham.

Chair Allam opened the floor for additional comments from Board members and Leadership.

Synchronizing Enrollment, Capacity & Residential Development in Durham

Mathew Palmer, Executive Director of School Planning shared a presentation titled “*Synchronizing Enrollment, Capacity & Residential Development in Durham*” which highlighted the following: Interconnected: DPS Enrollment & School Facilities, Past, Present & Future (10yr Enrollment Forecast), Growth Management for NC Public Schools, and Intergovernmental Collaboration: DPS, County, City.

Commissioner Jacobs asked for any recommendations on legislative goals to be put forward by Friday. She added as a member of the Joint City-County Planning Committee, there were limited tools available and wanted to talk about the role of rezoning. Commissioner Jacobs asked that they think through the process of where changes could be made. She recommended that this matter be shared with City Council because they make the decisions around rezoning and should understand the cost and the impact it had on the County and the schools. Commissioner Jacobs also stated she hoped in the coming year that there would be a process around how former school sites were used once the new site was complete. This could include a formal process with the community as well.

Commissioner Carter stated this was a great presentation and agreed that it should be shared with City Council. She was curious about the adequate facilities ordinances – inquiring about seeing models from other jurisdictions. Mr. Palmer responded that Orange County had a standing School Adequate Facilities Ordinance (SAFO) in North Carolina and shared an overview of its purpose.

Commissioner Carter stated that the BOCC and BOE should complete an analysis of the potential benefits and drawbacks of the SAFO for Durham County. Chair Allam and Board Chair Rogers agreed to discuss this with both Boards, the Superintendent, and the County Manager before making a decision to move forward. Chair Allam suggested inviting Orange County to a future meeting to discuss and she asked Interim County Attorney Massey to reach out to the Orange County Attorney for a conversation about their ordinance.

Board Member Umstead asked for clarification about the conversation with Orange County – asking would this be about a taskforce or facilities maintenance. Mr. Palmer responded, while being cautious about the landowner’s case in Orange County, he would recommend the work continue with the City-County Planning staff. He added, the taskforce was a subset, so it established that a taskforce existed. Board Member Umstead asked what the next steps were – were we working towards a taskforce or a group. Chair Allam continued by adding it would be better if a committee was formed instead of two taskforces. Commissioner Jacobs asked if this could be discussed during the DPS/City/County Leadership meeting.

Board Member Beyer stated as they looked toward the new bond, these would be critical conversations to have; adding the work with the County landbank to plan proactively on where we need sites and proceed with the purchases due to the possibility of increased prices. She also noted it was important to understand conversations being held by Durham Public Schools; adding that staff needed better office spaces as well as advocating for adults and children.

Board Member Chavez shared details about the growth in the Eastern Durham region; stating she was interested in knowing about the growth planned for that area. She stated she was also happy that the County would submit the addition of school impact fees as a legislative goal. Board Member Chavez asked were property owners responsible for children in the community; adding the idea of a taskforce or next action steps on this issue would be great.

Board Member Tabb asked were we collaborating with transportation as well. He wanted to be sure that they were at the table with regards to bussing students to and from school. Mr. Palmer responded yes; we were fortunate to have staff on hand to ensure transportation was at the table.

Expanding Access to Early Education (PreK) in DPS

Dr. Deborah Pitman, Assistant Superintendent of Specialized Services shared a presentation titled “*Expanding Access to Early Education (PreK) in DPS*” which highlighted the following: Background – Vision and Progress, Progress – Growing Together Elementary Plan, 2024-25 Plan for PreK, Physical Classroom Spaces – Current and Future, PreK Licensure, DPS PreK Student Enrollment and Capacity, Full Implementation – Projected Timeline Operational and Student Service Factors, Cost Modeling – What does it take to open ONE licensed PreK Classroom?, Annual Recurring Cost, Considerations for Long-Term Commitment to PreK Expansion, and Next Steps.

Board Vice Chair Carda-Auten mentioned the need to expand multilingual services and asked what services were currently available for English language learners. Dr. Pitman responded that the team provided support to parents and students; adding they have found that earliest learners were language sponges and acquire English quicker. Board Vice Chair Carda-Auten asked of the current kindergarten students were from Durham PreK, private PreK or no PreK; also, were we assessing whether they were being serviced by Durham PreK then going to a private or charter school. Dr. Pitman stated there was data on students entering kindergarten and whether they attended Durham

PreK.

Commissioner Jacobs appreciated DPS listening to the County's request and bringing back the information needed. She questioned the role of Durham PreK and the involvement of the committee; adding it was important that Durham PreK was at the table so that they were directly funded. Commissioner Jacobs stated the next step was how do we pull together a taskforce around universal access to PreK. Interim Superintendent Moore stated it was important for DPS to dig into what our piece was as we moved forward. Without having a clear understanding of the cost, goals, and components limited how well we all work together. She added that a greater understanding created a greater alignment.

Commissioner Carter stated there were PreK schools in the community funded through the Durham PreK program and then those within DPS. If a child did not qualify for Title I or EC Combo services, would they be enrolled into a Montessori PreK. For clarification, Commissioner Carter noted it appeared DPS PreK programs were for Title I students or EC Services for children, where the remaining children would fall into the Durham PreK category. Thinking about who administered the expansion, it may be easier for it to be administered and funded to Durham PreK. Interim Superintendent Moore responded that DPS controlled funding for Title I and had a legal obligation to implement the services. This was the notion of how DPS graded services and strategies on how DPS also graded licenses for classrooms.

Dr. Linda Chappel, Sr. Vice President of Child Care Services stated the biggest priorities were to have every classroom be as diverse as possible. She added there were seats funded by different streams of funding in each classroom as well, that prioritized the children with the greatest needs first. Dr. Chappel continued to say that Title I classrooms graded with NC PreK and Durham PreK funding was to have a wide range of diversity. Durham PreK was a leader in screenings while other programs did not require the same restrictions. She noted through the universal process we could identify the best placement for the child.

Board Member Chavez questioned how we connected families with other families regarding Durham PreK. Dr. Chappel responded that Childcare Referral Specialist accessed family needs and families were also partnered with Human Service Organizations. She highlighted that the referral specialist was a free service for families in Durham.

Chair Allam stated she would like to see how DPS tied into the Immigrant and Refugee Services within the City and County.

Board Member Beyer asked if there was a priority around PreK funding in the County's legislative goals request. Commissioner Carter responded that it was not; however, it should be. She requested advisement from Dr. Chappel.

Dr. Chappel shared the presentation on "*PreK Data Sharing Agreement*".

Board Chair Rogers shared her excitement in seeing the collaborative efforts to help move toward a memorandum of understanding. She asked if there were infrastructure issues that stopped this data from being shared previously. Dr. Chappel stated they were building a system; however, many teachers needed more training and instruction around this issue. She added the original hope was that they would see what services were provided to the children prior to kindergarten. Dr. Chappel spoke about the new strategy; adding, it was about finding the best way to use what was already in

place. Board Chair Rogers stated it was time for the memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Board of Education and the County Commissioners to be reviewed so that it was inclusive for the desire to streamline PreK and support it in DPS.

Commissioner Jacobs stated it would be a good idea to revisit the MOU; adding, they would have to determine how it was financed and how to make the suggested updates happen in the community.

Salary/Finance Update from DPS

Interim Superintendent Moore shared a presentation titled “*Joint BOCC/BOE Quarterly Meeting*” that highlighted the following: Desired Outcomes, Budget Allocations, Salary Changes – Certified and Classified Staff, Capital Needs, Next Steps and Timeline.

Commissioner Jacobs inquired about the link availability on the classified staff slide. Interim Superintendent Moore responded the link was only available to staff to view their information – it was not available to the public and clarified that moves between the mid-range and max would be a Board decision. Commissioner Jacobs asked, was there something that showed where the budget once was and where it currently was. If that information was available, she would like it to be shared. Interim Superintendent Moore stated she would have to check the file provided by the comptroller. Commissioner Jacobs stated the County’s budget staff provided the Board with an updated financial report, highlighting that the County was in unchartered territory. She noted that the budget approved by the Board for school funding was not sustainable and DPS along with the School Board would have to work together on a monthly basis to track spending. Commissioner Jacobs inquired about what would happen if the dollars provided were not spent. Interim Superintendent Moore responded it was their plan to spend every dollar on necessary expenses. She discussed previous conversations during the budget process about how the Board of Education needed to adopt financial or fiscal policies and how it would be helpful in the future for the Commissioners to know about those adoptions. Interim Superintendent Moore added in the upcoming weeks, all bookkeepers would attend a training to have a foundation of laws and best practices on how to manage school funds.

Board Chair Rogers stated all updates should be shared with the County Commissioners in that way they were receiving all information and not just the financials.

Commissioner Carter stated she was proud of the community, families and everyone who spoke during the budget process. She was also proud of the partnerships and felt hopeful about how close we were to getting the lowest paid staff within a competitive salary range with other City/County employees. Interim Superintendent Moore responded that the competitive market range was getting close; however, it was different from the living wage. Commissioner Carter noted the lowest paid employee within DPS was \$18.00 while the lowest paid employee within the County was \$19.79. She expressed the desire to be sure that the City/County and DPS were all making the same lowest minimum wage.

Board Chair Rogers asked how the Commissioners could help DPS get all staff to the same lowest minimum wage. Interim Superintendent Moore responded DPS staff would need to do the work and provide scenarios. She suggested moving not only the lowest paid but everyone to eliminate compression in the future.

Board Member Umstead stated there should be a multi-year salary conversation and hoped the

Joint City/County and DPS were all having this conversation so that we could be more strategic with aligning increases as a whole.

Pre-K Written Memo Update

A written memo was provided in the agenda packet.

Public Comments

John Hodges-Copple, stated he was representing Durham School of the Arts (DSA). He noted the lack of urgency in the need to relocate DSA. Mr. Hodges-Copple discussed the study conducted and questioned how the move did not meet the requirements of the state statute.

Adjournment

Having no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 11:52 a.m.

Recorder

Monica Wallace, Clerk to the Board of County Commissioners

**Next Meeting Scheduled for November 12, 2024, at 9:00 a.m.
Hosted by the Board of Education**