

Clay County Commissioners

Regular Meeting

Thursday, October 5, 2017

Chairman Clay Logan called the regular scheduled meeting to order at 7:00PM. Those present where: Clay Logan, Chairman, Robert Cline Penland, Vice-Chairman, Randy Nichols, Commissioner, Dr. Rob Peck, Commissioner, Merinda Woody, County Attorney, Mark Pullium, County Manager, the press, and general public.

Commissioner Randy Nichols led the group in Prayer to open the meeting.

The Pledge of Allegiance was said by all in attendance.

Amendment of Agenda

Commissioner Nichols made a motion to add a presentation from Mark Leek, Clay County Schools Superintendent, to the regularly scheduled meeting's agenda. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Peck. The motion carried unanimously 4-0.

Item 1 - Public Comment

Chairman Logan thanked Dennis Hughes, Manager of the local Ingles supermarket for bringing food to the Water System workers who were working over the week-end to repair a water main leak. Mr. Logan further expressed his gratefulness for living in a community where folks will still go the extra mile to help others out.

Item 2 - Approval of Minutes

The Board of Commission meeting minutes of October 5, 2017 stand approved as presented.

Item 3 – Presentation of 2018 Schedule of Values, Standards, and Rules for Clay County

Nancy Kimsey, Clay County Appraiser and Ron McCarthy presented the 2018 Schedule of Values, Standards, and Rules for Clay County.

- a. The County is required to allow the Schedule of Values to be available for inspection by members of the public for 30 days prior to adoption.
- b. A public hearing is required and must be held at least 7 days prior to adoption of the proposed schedule of values for Clay County.
- c. Once adopted by the Board of Commissioners, the schedule of values, standards and rules will provide the basis for property appraisals for eight years.

Item 3 – NC DOT – Grant Application – Consolidation and Coordination of Public Transportation Systems

Marie Gunther, Director, Clay County Transportation, requested authorization to apply for about \$40,000 in grant funds through NC Department of Transportation. If awarded, the grant would provide funds to offset costs associated with transporting individuals from neighboring counties of Macon and Swain to Asheville, NC for medical visits. Director Gunther, read a resolution into the record and asked the Board of Commissioners to authorize her to proceed with submitting the required documents for this grant and the associated funding. Commissioner Nichols made a motion to authorize Clay County Transportation Department to apply for the grant, seconded by Commissioner Penland. The motion passed unanimously 4-0.

Item 4 – Grant Application – Needs based Public School Capital Fund

Clay County Superintendent, Mark Leek asked for the support of the Clay County Board of Commissioners to apply for a grant through the Needs Based Public School Capital Funding program for the purpose of building a new Primary School Building at the Hayesville Campus. Superintendent Leek explained that the needs based program was a new program that was passed into law by the general assembly during the 2017 session. Superintendent Leek outlined the details of this new grant program as follows:

1. Only Tier 1 counties will be eligible for this funding in FY 2017-2018 as well as FY 2018-2019.
2. County Eligibility: County cannot have received more than \$8.75 from the Public School Building Capital Fund from FY 2012-2013 to FY 2016-2017, inclusively to be eligible.
3. Project Eligibility: Projects under this program must be “new capital projects,” defined as new facility construction, major facility renovation, or facility rehabilitation. Only projects that address critical needs will be considered.
4. **State-wide Available Funding:**
 - a. FY 2017-2018 - \$30 million with a maximum project award not to exceed \$15 million.
 - b. FY 2018-2019 - \$75 million with a maximum project award not to exceed \$15 million.
5. **Matching Funds:** \$1 in local funds for every \$3 in grant funds
6. Tier 2 Counties will also be eligible beginning in 2020-21
7. Note - if a county receives a grant fund award from the Needs –Based Public School Capital Fund, that county will be ineligible to receive allocations from the Public School Building Capital Fund that are appropriated during a five-year period beginning with the fiscal year the grant funds were awarded.

Item 4 – Grant Application – Needs based Public School Capital Fund - Continued

Superintendent Leek provided the following rationale for the new Primary School Building:

This construction project would build a 69,500 square foot Pre-K through 2nd Grade school facility. Clay County and Clay County Schools currently possesses the plans and blueprints for this construction. This new facility will enable Clay County Schools to eliminate a building that was constructed in 1950 that is currently being used by the Pre-K, Kindergarten, 1st Grade, Exceptional Children, middle school and high school classes. The current building is being used in this manner to accommodate student population growth and required educational program expansion. The proposed construction project would relocate the entire placement of the students currently housed in the existing facility and place them in a 21st Century educational setting that is both age appropriate and safe. The proposed construction of a Pre-K through 2nd Grade facility would also allow the school system to transform the open classroom buildings (constructed in 1972) currently being used for the balance of Kindergarten and 1st Grade for the Arts, Music and Computer courses currently being taught.

This proposed construction project addresses multiple capital, educational and safety needs and concerns on Clay County School's campus. Although the proposed construction project provides a new facility for the Pre-K through 2nd Grade, it significantly impacts to some degree all of the Pre-K through 12th Grade students on our campus. These impacts would greatly enhance student outcomes and development.

Initially, it would provide an educationally appropriate 21st Century learning facility for the Pre-K through 2nd Grade. The proposed construction would relocate many of the Pre-K through 1st grade students from an outdated facility as well as eliminate educating the balance of the Kindergarten and 1st Grade from the open classroom structure where they are currently placed. The open classroom facilities will not be abandoned but reutilized for the Arts Music and Computer programs for 3rd through 5th Grades. The proposed construction is critical for student outcomes as research has indicated the importance of early childhood development and educational preparation. The early childhood education and development has been linked to future academic successes and healthy social development. The proposed facility would be age appropriate and designed to enhance student growth and outcomes. This enhancement would not only be evident in the early childhood years, but also throughout continued schooling of the students.

The proposed construction project would also assist Clay County Schools in redesigning the structure of schools to be more educationally suitable for all students. The construction of the Pre- K through 2ndGrade building would enable the proposed facility to become Hayesville Primary School and allow us to take the current elementary school building and accommodate grades three through five, thus creating Hayesville Intermediate School. This would remove the 5th Grade from the middle school and

Item 4 – Grant Application – Needs based Public School Capital Fund – Continued

enable Hayesville Middle School to become a 6th through 8th Grade facility and school. Currently, Hayesville Middle School serves students in 5th through 8th Grades. Thus the proposed construction project places all Pre-K through 8th Grade students in age appropriate educational structures and facility settings.

The proposed construction project also addresses significant safety concerns on the Clay County School's campus. The existing facility that would be replaced has many safety concerns involving unsecured access to classrooms, various entry points to the facility and moving vehicles around the building. The proposed construction project would better enable us to remove the traffic presence from the students, restrict access and secure the building and grounds. This is critical in assisting in efforts to keep all students in a warm and safe environment.

Replacing the existing building with the new primary school facility updates our campus significantly. The building that would be replaced by this project (see attachment) was designed to meet educational and safety standards of the 1940s and 1950s. This building has all classroom exits to the outside of the building as well as restroom facilities that are entered from the exterior of the building. This feature is severely outdated and presents many safety concerns in today's society. The proposed replaced building also has many environmental concerns that were not issues of the date of construction. Such concerns involve but are not limited to lead paint and asbestos which has to be continually monitored on a regular basis. The newly proposed primary school building will replace a building which does not meet educational needs and standards of modern educational setting and programming. The new primary building also would alleviate the integration of Pre-K through senior high students utilizing the same facility.

The proposed construction project would include a full functioning kitchen/dining space cafeteria. This would take the pressure off of the existing cafeteria (constructed in 1967) that currently serves approximately 1350 students in Pre-K through 12th Grades. The proposed construction project's cafeteria would be designed to accommodate students that are Pre-K through 2nd Grade ages. It would also alleviate many of our scattered dining schedules and enable all students to participate in breakfast and lunch at more appropriate times during the day.

This proposed construction project is a critical need for Clay County, Clay County Schools, the students and future students of our school system. It has been an identified need for many years and this grant will greatly assist this project becoming a reality in our county. This construction project will benefit Clay County for many years in the future and address long term growth and expansion that the county will experience. With Clay County located in rural Appalachia, the assistance of this grant will enable our county and school system to continue to provide a high quality education for all of our students and aid in leveling the playing field with our neighbors in the state.

At the end of Superintendent Leek's presentation, several members of the audience spoke in favor of this item.

Commissioner Penland made a motion to authorize the grant application to move forward, which was seconded by Commissioner Nichols. C

Commissioner Peck shared his long-standing and well-known concerns about county finances and articulated how the county commissioners have taken steps to turn things around from a fiscal perspective. The County has downsized departments through attrition and is beginning to see the fruits of these decisions on the bottom line. Fee structures have been addressed to augment the County's general fund financial position. Combinations of spending cuts along with millage rate adjustments are positively impacting the county finances. Commissioner Peck stated his assertion that the County's finances have been turned around and are heading in the right direction. Commissioner Peck stated that doing this grant now is another example of being fiscally responsible. This grant is one where the county can pay one quarter of the costs to construct a badly needed facility while the state would pay three-quarters of the costs to construct this facility. It is a need and everyone agrees to the necessity of the new Primary School building and a need that should be met. If the school is not built now and the project is pushed out five more years the cost will exceed \$17.5 million due to inflation. One way to guarantee not getting the funding for the grant is just not to apply. Commissioner Peck indicated his support for this motion and thanked the Superintendent of Schools, the School Board and expressed his belief that we have a great school system and that the County should continue to invest in public education in Clay County. It is an extremely wise investment and in the long run this grant money if approved will save money down the road.

Commissioner Nichols expressed his thanks to Mr. Leek and the school board. Clay County schools produce good students and graduates every year. Nichols further explained that over time some things eventually wear out and need to be replaced. Commissioner Nichols shared his belief that this is a sweetheart of a deal. Commissioner Nichols could not recall a deal like this one in his lifetime. Mr. Nichols said it was his concerns that we could be putting a bigger burden on the taxpayers of Clay County down the road if we don't move forward by trying to get these grant funds while they are available. Commissioner Nichols expressed his opinion that Clay County is in the best financial position that it has been in several years. In closing, Nichols expressed his support for this grant and his hopes that Clay County comes out on top.

Commissioner Penland said he would like to thank Dr. Leek for the work on this to-date. Commissioner Penland agreed with Commissioner Peck with regards to cuts and changes to fee structures and further stated that results of cuts are showing favorable results. Commissioner Penland stated his belief that Clay County will be able to fund the primary school building project matching funds without the need for a tax increase. Commissioner Penland emphasized the County's ability to handle the local match for this

project would not necessitate a tax increase. Penland further shared his agreement with Commissioner Nichols that Clay County may never see an opportunity like this where the County can receive \$3 in state funding for every \$1 of local match. Eventually, the County has got to have a new school, so let's try to get some help from the State to build this new school.

The Chairman called the question and the motion to authorize pursuit of this grant carried unanimously by a vote of 4-0.

Item 6 – Bid Award Concession Stand Construction Recreation Park

Motion made by Commissioner Peck to award the concession bid to Tighe White Construction who was the sole bidder on this project and to negotiate costs after having reviewed the specifications, seconded by Commissioner Penland. The motion carried unanimously 4-0.

Item 7 – Approval of Refunding Tax Payments

Commissioner Robert Peck made a motion to approve refunding tax payments as presented, seconded by Commissioner Randy Nichols, motion carried unanimously.

Item 8– Approval of Budget Amendments

Motion by Commissioner Randy Nichols to approve budget amendments as presented, seconded by Commissioner Dr. Rob Peck, motion carried unanimously.

Item 9 – Closed Session

Commissioner Dr. Rob Peck made motion to enter into a closed session, seconded by Randy Nichols, motion carried unanimously. The commissioners entered into closed session at 8:10 p.m. After a discussion of legal matters, Commissioner Randy Nichols made a motion to exit closed session, seconded by Commissioner Dr. Rob Peck and the Board enter back into Regular session. Regular Session resumed at 8:40 p.m.

Item 10 - Public Hearing Consolidation of Board of Health and Board of Social Services

Commissioner Dr. Rob Peck made a motion to schedule a public hearing to consider consolidating the Boards of Health and Social Services on November 13, 2017 at 7:00 pm, the motion was seconded by Commissioner Robert Penland. The motion carried by a unanimous vote 4-0.

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There being no further business to bring before the Board, Commissioner Dr. Rob Peck moved to adjourn the regular meeting of the Board. Commissioner Randy Nichols seconded the motion, and the motion carried 4-0. The meeting adjourned at 8:42 pm.

Chairman, Clay Logan

Commissioner, Ed Roach

Commissioner, Robert Cline Penland

Commissioner, Randy Nichols

Commissioner, Dr. Rob Peck

Attested: Clerk to Board