

**SPECIAL MEETING
NORTHAMPTON COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
Thursday, May 2, 2013**

Members Present: Kelvin Edwards, Chair; Erica Smith-Ingram, Vice Chair; Donald Johnson, Marjorie Edwards, Rhonda Taylor, Phil Matthews, Clinton Williams, Dr. Eric Bracy, ex officio

Others Present: Administration

The Northampton County Board of Education held a special meeting on May 2, 2013 in the Board Room of the Northampton County Schools administrative building. Chair Kelvin Edwards called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m.

Student Dress Policy

Mr. Williams: I don't know if this is a good time to mention revisiting the Student Dress Policy for the upcoming year. I thought we needed to do that sooner than later. What are we going to do regarding it for the upcoming year if we are going to make changes with it? I don't think we necessarily need to hash it out as much as we may need to make some comments toward when we want to address it, but I am assuming the sooner than later so that we don't run into the issues like we did last year for any changes that we might make.

Chair K. Edwards: Is it your desire that we add it to the agenda tonight or have it on the agenda for the next Work Session?

Ms. Johnson: As far as comments, are people unhappy with any of the things we are doing now versus what we discussed in this room the day we changed from the Uniform Policy to the Student Dress Policy? Has there been any complaints regarding the Student Dress Policy?

Mr. Williams: I think overall the folks are happy. I think there are a few other issues that have come up as a result of that and the students may be in their colors now. I think there may be an issue with some of the logos and the writing on the clothing. In most cases that I have seen they are quite neat and quite appropriate for the situation, but our policy does not allow for it so I think some of the schools are still dealing with some of those minor things. I feel we need to talk about how we might be able to tweak that policy a little bit if the Board is in agreement with that, but overall they are happy with the changes that we made. At least we need to revisit it if we want to do that and if so we can do it in a timely manner so that we don't run into the issue that we did last year.

Chair K. Edwards: Mr. Williams, what if we put the Student Dress Policy in every Board Member's hand once again and that will give us time to study it for the next Work Session as one of the agenda items.

Dr. Bracy: I will have those Student Dress Policy copies ready for you at the Board Meeting on Monday.

Mr. Matthews: As I can recall, there use to be a Uniform Committee that met and made recommendations to the Board. Does that committee still exist and if it does, maybe we could have them review the policy and give us feedback as well. I guess that would be a question for Dr. Bracy.

Dr. Bracy: I don't believe that committee exists at this time.

Mr. Matthews: I believe Ms. Byrd-Robinson use to chair that committee and Ms. Edwards served on the committee.

Ms. Taylor: I have also served on that committee.

Chair K. Edwards: Dr. Bracy will have the copies of the policy in everyone's hand on Monday and when we convene our next Work Session everyone would have had time to review it and then we can discuss it.

Approval of Board Agenda

On a MOTION by Ms. M. Edwards, SECONDED by Mr. Johnson, the Board unanimously APPROVED the Board Agenda, as recommended by the Superintendent. The motion passed by a vote of 6-0. Ms. Erica Smith-Ingram was not present for the vote.

Business Before the Board for Information

Service Solutions

Dr. Bracy informed the Board that Attorney Rod Malone drafted a letter to Service Solutions Corporation and each of you should have received a copy. At our last meeting or work session we informed you that the administration would bring you information back that would help you with the decision whether you wanted to continue services with Service Solutions or that you wanted to cancel the contract with Service Solutions. We are prepared to give a presentation to talk about Service Solutions and what direction you wish to go in. This presentation will give you cost, effectiveness, sanitation grade, etc.

Ms. M. Edwards: Is this the same information we have already heard? Is the sanitation grade report the same one we have already heard?

Dr. Bracy: You may have heard some of the information, but I don't think you have heard the cost because I haven't heard it. I will only present this information if the Board feels they need this information.

Chair K. Edwards: If there is anything new in the presentation then just present the new information as we are going to stay on task with the agenda tonight.

Dr. Bracy: Mr. Lassiter will present at this time.

Mr. Hans Lassiter distributed handouts to the Board as follows:

~Letter drafted by Attorney Malone to Service Solutions advising them of the possibility of nonrenewal.

~Principals' statements regarding their opinion of Service Solutions' effectiveness. No statements were coerced and every administrator was given the opportunity to express their opinion.

~A recent Inspection Report (April 30th) of Northampton County High School. We met with Mr. Rich Rocobaldo this morning regarding this issue. The yearly inspection was done at NCHS and the locker rooms were not very favorable at all. The school received a rating of 70.5 from the NC Department of Health & Human Services. According to Mr. Rocobaldo, there seems to be one particular section of the school, the boys' and girls' locker rooms, that were not very well-maintained. However, the school itself received favorable ratings, such as the kitchen prep area, hallways and bathrooms, etc. It seems that the high traffic areas, Health & P.E. and athletic purposes, were not marked favorably.

Ms. Taylor: In the report it appears that most of these items are not cleaning areas, but areas that need fixing.

Ms. M. Edwards: I am looking at what the principals were saying and a lot of their verbal comments about Service Solutions were fine, okay, etc. I don't see where anyone stated they were doing a super job, a great job, a wonderful job or much improvement.

Dr. Bracy: Those comments are straight from the principals. You will not be voting tonight, but you will vote on Monday whether this Board will continue this contract with Service Solutions. We wanted you to have that information tonight for your review. This item will be on the agenda for approval.

Mr. Johnson: In the correspondence with Service Solutions is there any stipulation in there that might cause us any problems financially if they do not return?

Mr. Holloway: If we discontinue our relationship with them, there is a fee of \$14,000.00 plus the prorated expense for supplies that they brought in at the beginning of the contract. You have the document showing the equipment cost.

Ms. M. Edwards: I thought it stated before that we paid for the supplies already.

Mr. Holloway: This was prorated in their monthly cost.

Ms. M. Edwards: Initially, we received a paper at one of the meetings that said the extra cost was there because we had to pay for supplies. It was my understanding that Service Solutions was supposed to be providing what we needed as far as cleaning supplies and all of the equipment. I understand also that equipment has been purchased and when they leave the equipment will go with them. Is that true also?

Mr. Holloway: This was new equipment that they purchased and they were high dollar items, such as varnishers, mobile backpack vacuum cleaners and those types of equipment. That was a portion of the prorated monthly cost that was included in their cost.

Chair K. Edwards: That was broken down within so many years you have to pay for it.

Ms. M. Edwards: My confusion is that we can purchase equipment for them, why couldn't we purchase the equipment that was needed for the men and women who were already working here? These are not things that were initially talked about. I don't remember all of these extra things being spelled out in the contract.

Mr. Holloway: I will provide a copy of the contract for you tonight and I believe the list was near the last two pages in the contract. The purchase also included a pick-up truck. All of that cost was spread out over a three-year contract to include the high dollar equipment items.

Dr. Bracy: I suggest that the Board get all of the information that you need from this staff so that you can make a decision on Monday. Ms. Edwards has asked some wonderful questions so that we can make a final decision on Monday.

Mr. Williams: I think that it would be reasonable if we had a layout of what this would cost us if we bailed out. It was my understanding that we would end up paying whatever the balance is and then we would keep the equipment.

Mr. Holloway: That was one of the options in that we would pay the additional cost; in other words, what we paid the first year and then the additional cost that was prorated over the next two years would be a part of it.

Mr. Johnson: That would be your three-year agreement.

Mr. Holloway: That is correct. If you are looking for a figure as to where we are to-date with them, it will cost us approximately \$225,000.00 up to the end of August. The agreement was for the first year, \$176,000.00 and we have gone about \$30,000 over that because we have had three of our employees to go out on sick leave and eventually to Workman's Compensation. Service Solutions had to get substitutes in here and we absorbed that cost. That drove the price of the contract for the first year to about \$205,000.00.

Ms. M. Edwards: The employees who came in didn't they already work for us?

Mr. Holloway: Most of them did, but I believe they hired four more.

Dr. Bracy: Ms. Edwards, when someone got sick Service Solutions hired someone to take their place and we had to pay them.

Mr. Holloway: They were substitutes, but we had to pay them.

Ms. M. Edwards: Didn't they work for us and weren't they in a pool?

Dr. Bracy: They were just people who Service Solutions hired.

Mr. Lassiter: Ms. Edwards, Service Solutions collaborated with Human Resources and Financial Services. They picked up applications on a regular basis, screened them, provided drug testing and pre-employment screening and made recommendations to hire them. Those persons worked through Service Solutions.

Mr. Johnson: This is the first time we have had substitutes when a custodian was absent. In the past, we had someone fill in so that the school would not go lacking.

Mr. Lassiter: In every instance where we have had a custodian out due to sickness, Service Solutions was able to provide a custodian to fill in and the work was still maintained.

Ms. M. Edwards: I believe that in the past people were moved from other buildings when people were out sick.

Mr. Williams: Wouldn't this be a situation where we talk about our staff and taking care of our staff. Isn't this a situation where someone could do some evening work or overtime and be paid? I wonder if we could have managed that amount of money differently if we had offered those opportunities to our own people?

Dr. Bracy: I don't know about overtime, but we have always stayed away from overtime as much as possible to my recollection. My goal tonight is to get you as much information as you need to make your decision. Whatever this staff does not answer today and whatever answers you feel you need, let me know so that I can get those answers so that you can make a decision as to whether you want to continue with Service Solutions. We have to make a decision, whether it is financial or production in services, because that is what it is going to come down to.

Mr. Williams: It looks like we did incur quite a bit of additional cost going with the contract and that does not necessarily mean that my mind is made up.

Dr. Bracy: If this was under the old traditional model and say there was no Services Solutions, a custodian gets sick and we hire someone to fill in while he/she is on sick leave, which is the same thing. We are still paying the custodian and the substitute as well.

Mr. Williams: It still boils down to the fact that we have someone in place here who can manage this service just like a substitute teacher.

Dr. Bracy: Whatever model the Board chooses to go with, we are going to get you the information to help you make a decision. Please ask all of the questions so that we can get you what you need.

Ms. M. Edwards: What I would like to see is the initial contract and the one that says we have to pay all of this additional money.

Dr. Bracy: Are you talking about the \$14,000.00?

Ms. M. Edwards: Mr. Holloway said it was going to cost us \$205,000.00.

Mr. Holloway: That is just the yearly cost for right now and that is from August 2012 until the end of August 2013 – one year.

Ms. M. Edwards: You are saying it is going to cost \$14,000.00 to get out of the contract? I was under the impression that Attorney Malone had reviewed the contract. I want to see how it jumped and how we owe so much additional money.

Dr. Bracy: A lot of the additional money came from custodians being out. The custodian at Willis Hare basically missed almost a year. Someone had to clean that building so Service Solutions went out and hired someone to clean in the custodian's absence.

Mr. Williams: Did he use his sick leave?

Dr. Bracy: Yes and Northampton County Schools was invoiced for the person that worked for Service Solutions.

Mr. Holloway: That scenario happened at three different schools.

Ms. Taylor: Either way you are going have to pay someone regardless.

Chair K. Edwards: I would like to intervene at this time and touch basis with everyone. As I look at our agenda we have at least 10 more items left and I suggest that we limit each item to 10 minutes. I am mainly speaking of the presentations. This of course would be at the pleasure of the Board.

Ms. M. Edwards: When we come to these Work Sessions, time is the problem. We tackle all of these heavy-duty things that are of grave concern. We come here and hear what they have to hash out to us and if you have any questions a lot of time you can't get out all that you want discussed, because everybody has questions and that is the problem. When you get on these items and you don't get clarification properly or totally, questions go unanswered and they are not the ones making the decision.

Chair K. Edwards: In my spirit of saying that Ms. Edwards it is about the presentation and not about the question. I apologize if I was not clear.

Mr. Holloway: I will retrieve the contract information that Ms. Edwards has requested.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: I call for the Point of Personal Privilege. When Mr. Holloway was getting ready to present, some of that content from the budget is directly related to the Service Solutions discussion. If you will look at the budget on page #9 of #29 and as the Finance Committee met last week, we discussed the questions that we knew would bear in the decisions that we would be making regarding Service Solutions. Looking at the items (Contracted Services for Services Solutions) and some maintenance items, we asked Mr. Holloway for a comparison from last year to this year. If we could identify the items that need to be done together, because the finance budget proposal in looking at some of the projects, will depend upon the facilities and will depend upon the budget. This is a great agenda and might it be easier to try to cover the items that may take up less than five minutes first, then we would go back to the more time consuming ones?

Chair K. Edwards: Absolutely, it is the pleasure of the Board.

Disposition of Surplus Equipment

Mr. Holloway: This request came in from Ms. Rhonda Moses regarding the real old computers that are pretty much outdated and have been stored in the Jackson Gymnasium. They have not been put out for auction that we normally have every year. The proposal is to go ahead and get those computers moved, because they don't sell and we end up moving them back on the inside. Ms. Moses is asking the Board to consider declaring them surplus so that they can be disposed of.

Ms. Smith-Ingram requested that Dr. Bracy bring a proposal to the Board Monday night to vote on declaring the old computers as surplus. We will put it under Business Before the Board for Approval.

Services Solutions Continued

Chair K. Edwards: Board Members, do we have any more questions regarding Service Solutions?

Mr. Williams: Generally, I would expect the administration to put something together that the Board can look at. It would be like a presentation stating: you may want to go with Services Solutions and here are the reasons why or you may not want to go with Service Solutions and here are the reasons why not. For instance, my mind is still stuck on the substitutes and I don't agree with what you are going to pay anyway. If a staff member is out and he or she used their sick time, what happens to that pot of money that the state has given us for that position anyway?

Dr. Bracy: If a person takes a sick day, he is being paid for that day. The custodian at Willis Hare missed a big portion of the year due to shoulder surgery. He got paid and should have gotten paid, because he had some sick leave. We also needed a custodian to help the other custodian out. In the custodian's absence, Service Solutions hired a custodian to work in his absence and they turned around and invoiced Northampton County Schools for the manpower to fill that custodian's place.

Mr. Williams: Where does that money come from to pay Service Solutions?

Mr. Holloway: That came out of the Local Contingency Fund.

Mr. Williams: You have local money, state money and paid leave money. The gentleman received paid leave and we are paying money out of local to add to the contract. What happened to the state dollars, because the employee may have accumulated sick leave from last year?

Ms. Smith-Ingram: Can anyone else give an explanation to Mr. Williams?

Ms. Priscilla Vincent addressed the Board as follows: That pot of money is PRC 003 and is not only for custodians, but it is also used for paying substitute teachers. We use that money to pay substitutes, but it is not just for one category.

Mr. Williams: If that gentleman who was out most of the year had been here, would at least a portion of that money still have been our local funds to do something else with?

Dr. Bracy: Yes it would. We paid twice for one position because he was out sick. We are still paying whether it is state or local.

Ms. Matthews: Let me add that custodians are paid from state money. They are not reimbursed and they are not paid like teachers are paid. The state pays for teacher salaries, but the custodians are paid from a pot of money that the state sends to Northampton County, which is PRC 003. The state sends a finite pot of money to Northampton County and if Northampton County chooses to pay substitutes with that finite pot of money they can. This pot of money is different from a teacher, because the state pays for the teacher salaries.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: You are telling me that all custodians come out of PRC 003 the substitute budget?

Mr. Holloway: Not all of them because I believe we are paying two custodians out of local.

Mr. Williams: I just want to understand and it seems to me that there are three pots of money and somehow we were still losing out with the contract. That is what I wanted to clarify.

Dr. Mark Rumley: If you had not had those three custodians out this year, you would not owe that extra money and would be right on what your contract was supposed to be.

New Alternative School Redesign

Mr. Hans Lassiter distributed a handout regarding the current Northampton County Alternative School. He informed the Board that they had charged the administration with examining the current state of affairs of the Northampton County Alternative School and to perhaps perform a needs assessment to determine how we can better serve the students there. We have considered even converting the Alternative School into a functioning secondary school as opposed to the allegations of it being a dumping ground.

Chair K. Edwards: What I recall being discussed was just the location of the Alternative School.

Mr. Hans Lassiter: I think there may have been some conversation regarding its functionality such as: 1) Was the Alternative School serving in good faith its students? 2) Was the Alternative School doing the job it was set out to do or was it simply being a dumping ground? That is the recollection that I have from the conversations that we had formally and informally. We have taken a look at the redesign of the Alternative School and from that comes a proposal to integrate into the Alternative Program a 22 (twenty-two) credit diploma. This 22 credit diploma falls short of the 28 (twenty-eight) required credits of the traditional high school component, but there are some issues in it to abbreviate the articulation process for students in an alternative setting. This program highlights such and the package contains the following information:

- 1) The mission and vision into the aims of the alternative program,
- 2) The protocol and process under and by which we would operate as a district and the school would operate as a self-serving educational entity along with the application process, consideration for

application process and documented interventions that were tried at the base school prior to recommending alternative placement of a student,

- 3) The superintendent, under statute, still reserves the right to place (or the district can place) a student in an alternative setting for chronically and habitually misbehaving or either a parent request for reasons listed in this proposal.

On page 2, it talks about the procedures of the recommendation for the referral to the Alternative School:

- (1) Placement criteria and information regarding the alternative school (why we are doing it),
- (2) A behavioral guide and they will check the referring agency, such as: school, guidance counselor, parent, or student himself,
- (3) Includes substance abuse and criminal acts,
- (4) Referral process for the pathways using the credit program,
- (5) A screening process,
- (6) A behavior program referral package (I emphasize and recommend that the alternative school be thoroughly staffed with behavior counselors, behavior specialists and transition counselors just like a traditional school),
- (7) An Exceptional Children component to serve exceptional children.

Mr. Lassiter further stated that we have to make a commitment to implement the fidelities of the Alternative School Program. Do it right or don't do it at all. Mr. Williams is very adamant and passionate in his presentation about the lack of relationships that seem to affect how our professionals in the classroom and administration dialogue with our students. If there is not a relationship that exists, a positive one or a negative one between and among the administration, teachers and the student body of that school cannot be successful.

Mr. Williams and Ms. Smith-Ingram are very passionate about intervention strategies attempted. A scale model of this is the C.S. Brown Alternative School in Hertford County and a scale model may have been linked to the Alternative Program in Durham Public Schools. If there were not documented school-based interventions to assist a child, to modify the child's behavior and to improve academics, those avenues had to be exhausted before the district would even consider a recommendation for placement. That indicates a good faith effort on behalf of the base school to serve that child more than adequately.

Dr. Bracy: Mr. Williams, you and I have had conversations about the Alternative School for three to four years now. This is our effort to get it right and we are ready to take this step forward for our Alternative School.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: Mr. Lassiter, I appreciate this but it is a day late and a dollar short. We had 22 (twenty-two) students initially assigned there from the beginning of school until January. Of those 22 students, 19 (nineteen) of them were only there because they were aged-out. They were aged-out because for whatever reason they did not get their prior academic needs serviced, met or there were no interventions in place when they were at the middle school or even as early as the elementary school level. They start getting put out of school, their academic performance is hampered, they don't perform, they are not able to pass their grade and they end up being 16 years old at an elementary or middle school level. So we have to house them in an Alternative Program because they are aged-out. Again, I appreciate this and it would have been great three or four years ago. We have tried four different models since I have been a Board Member and I almost feel insulted, because we clearly stated that we wanted the Alternative Program brought in as part of our building so that we could close that facility. We don't need a separate structure or a separate building. If this can all be housed at the high school I am all for it. If you are going to have them there, how are they going to get their credits and interventions? We

need an Alternative Program within our existing school structures so that it will cut down that facility expense.

Dr. Bracy: It is our hope that we can have it at one of our existing structures.

Chair K. Edwards: Looking back at my notes in March, the discussion was about the Alternative School and the discussion was about the location of the Alternative School, not the formation.

Dr. Bracy: I thought the Board had concerns about the way the Alternative School was functioning.

Ms. M. Edwards: As I can recall that was a part of it.

Dr. Bracy: We can put the location anywhere, but we want to know what the Board's thoughts are on this model right here.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: We did not say that it needed to be a separate building. Last year, we had grades 2nd through 12th and we can do better than that, especially when we look at our students who are there because they were aged-out. This behavior management program would be great, but we need it in every school and on every level. It needs to be systematic and consistent. At the school that I teach at we do have an Alternative School. There are 13 (thirteen) kids in the program and it includes middle and high school kids. They come during the day, they are in separate, big vocational classrooms and there is a partition between them, but they are in the high school. So if I need to go and work with a student in geometry during my planning period I can, because that student still has to take the same statewide tests so that they can get the same credit. They are not allowed to have lunch or interact and they have to stay in the Alternative School Program. That is why we were looking at it, but it is in an existing building so they can get those services.

Dr. Bracy: That is easy to do to put it in an existing building, but my question is, how does the Board feel about this model? Do you feel this model is beneficial or not?

Ms. Smith-Ingram: This is what we need instead of those kids sitting down there in front of a computer. The one program that we were told they would have academic support, every time I went down there those kids were sitting in front of a computer sleep. They could not get the support they needed and kids were concerned about being there and not being able to pass the statewide test because they did not get the academic support. The grandmother who called me about her son did not have an EC teacher there. If we would have had the school at one of our existing structures, they would have had access to EC teachers. That kid was given homebound services for 1.5 hours per week. That was the best that we could do, because we did not have an EC teacher there. I think this is a great plan, but it needs to be in one of our existing structures.

Ms. M. Edwards: We even talked about bringing the program down to the western end, but it never went anywhere.

Dr. Bracy: We did not want to move it in the middle of the year. All the Board has to do is take action saying that we want the school there. I don't remember the Board deciding that is where the school is going to be. I need to know if you like this model.

Mr. Williams: This model is definitely a good model in terms of the intervention pieces and that would be great. I was thinking of some really good benefits that we could get from this if it is actually on one of the existing campuses.

Ms. Taylor: My only concern is in reference to the situation that happened not to long ago with a suspension from the high school. If the student had gone back on campus, my concern would have been for his safety not the safety of the other children. Therefore, I am looking at a situation like that in the future with the Alternative Program if it is on the same campus. I can't say what happened in the past, because the past is the past and we are trying to move forward. This is a good plan, if we go with this plan and we go with it onsite that would be wonderful!

Ms. M. Edwards: But they are not supposed to be interacting, they are not supposed to be on lunch together and no interaction at all.

Mr. Johnson: That is left up to the building principal. I have been there and done that.

Ms. Taylor: I am just saying that if we go with it onsite we just need to think about that incident. I want every child to be safe, not just one student.

Dr. Bracy: I guess Board Members, when we talk about where it will be it will probably depend upon what this Board decides in the structure of this school district facility-wise for next school year.

Chair K. Edwards: Dr. Bracy, when we were at the Work Session at the Hampton Inn, I spoke of the RTI Model, but I don't see that.

Dr. Bracy: We are still in training on RTI.

Chair K. Edwards: When I see the team of director of student services, the principal, the designee and the counselor it has to have that teacher, the LEA and that team needs to convene weekly. It cannot be an appointed team, because the help process says, "What are we doing to instruction that is going to effectively rule the children?"

Dr. Bracy: That is some informative stuff and is that something you recommend me adding to this process?

Chair K. Edwards: I think it is the only thing because we are already talking about at-risk students.

When Ms. Joyner spoke at the Retreat I was listening, but I did not hear one thing that equated to RTI. I am saying that this is the only thing I would ask the administration to interject. This model sounds great, but if you don't incorporate RTI into this, it goes back to what we know. If we are talking about helping students and if RTI is not included, it will be like old habits die hard and the Student Assistance Team (SAT) Model cannot get us to where we need to be with at-risk students.

Ms. Lassiter: In talking with Ms. Joyner late last week and early this week, Dr. Bracy has already introduced this concept. There will be training on the RTI Model in our district over the summer. We will also work with the Positive Behavior Intervention Support Team (PBIS) Model. That as you know is in place, but is it being done with fidelity. Those are the two big pieces we are going to do this summer along with the customer service piece.

Chair K. Edwards: I believe RTI is the component and are we offering the services, such as EC teachers and a guidance counselor that we need for students to be successful once they arrive at the Alternative School?

Ms. Smith-Ingram: Two years ago we did have an EC teacher there, but they did not cover all of the exceptionalities and that is why one particular student could not be served.

Dr. Bracy: Was that when Alternatives Unlimited was there?

Ms. Smith-Ingram: When the EC teacher was there and I asked why he couldn't serve him and I was told that it was a different exceptionality that he fell under and we did not have the manpower to put another EC teacher there.

Mr. Williams: When that school was first developed and I sat around the table at that point as a consultant, the one point that I made was not only should staff be qualified, but should staff be suitable. I think consistently that has been an area that we have not addressed with the Alternative School. We have a plenty of qualified folks there, but I don't believe all of them are necessarily suitable, because of the population of students we have there. If you don't have the suitable people to deal with those students you are going to have a very difficult time educating them.

Follow-up on Camp "Get Connected" Staff

Dr. Bracy and the Board held a discussed hiring process regarding Camp Get Connected.

Mr. Matthews: I will propose that the Board be in consensus to start the whole hiring process all over again for Camp Get Connected.

It was the consensus of the Board of start the interview process over again for the employees of Northampton County for Camp Get Connected.

Dr. Bracy announced to the Board that the camp dates are: June 24-27, July 8-11 & July 15-18, 2013. I instruct Mr. Lassiter to notify Ms. Squire in writing to start the entire process over.

Dr. Mark Rumley: Dr. Bracy, is it possible to get those interviews completed for approval at the May 14th Special Meeting; otherwise, it will be at the June Board Meeting and time for the camp to start.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: Can I get the time of the May 14th Special Meeting?

Chair K. Edwards: The meeting will be at 5:00 p.m.

Customer Service Proposal

Mr. Lassiter informed the Board that the next item is one of interest and one that the Board talked about regarding your disappointment with the level of customer service and professionalism of some of our school staff members. This Board charged us with handling that concern and Dr. Bracy charged me with going out and preparing a customer service audit of our district. I reached out to Mr. Jeff Nash of whom I worked with in Durham Public Schools. He owns a division called Turning Point Solutions and I present to you his proposal. I have had him to evaluate our facebook page. The first process is the customer service audit to examine, highlight and talk with us about our current state of affairs. This is the way it will work as follows:

1) Site evaluation (your sites will be visited, telephoned, emailed and evaluated)

Ms. M. Edwards: Just this week I called the high school about three or four times and you can't get anyone. I thought we paid all of this money for this phone system and even if you hit "O" it does not go to anyone's extension. When I call to the Central Office I can dial Ms. Harris' extension and it will prompt you to leave a message. But, if you dial out to the high school it does not give you an extension and you cannot leave a message. I have mentioned this before, because if you cannot leave a message why is the operator not available? Even if you hit "O" you still cannot leave a message. So where are they?

Mr. Lassiter: Sometimes they put it on night service, because the front desk operator is entitled to two breaks and a one-hour lunch. Also, the Superintendent explained to the administrators in our last Administrative Staff Meeting that we have to do better in how we are treating our constituents in our schools, because the parents, the students, and the community are our lifeline.

2) Recommendations for improving customer service (they will audit the schools to include the Central Office)

3) Training (two days of customer service training with one in July and it will involve bringing back and paying a stipend to the administrative assistants) – Dr. Bracy decided that he wanted every school administrator, principal and assistant principal, administrative assistant and anyone who is charged with interacting with the public to go through this training. In a lot of cases Mr. Holloway, the administrative assistants would have to be paid for that day instead of a stipend.

4) The number of participants for each class will not exceed 25 and we are responsible for providing class notice and Turning Point will email these things.

5) Turning Point will design a customized guide for customer service standards. We will be issued a site license for limited training for document use in the district.

We have a chance now to have a uniform system on how the telephones are answered in this district. If we decide that for standard practice and unless the building is on fire or busy, a human being will answer that phone where possible.

Chair K. Edwards: Do we need Jeff Nash to do that, because if you say that is the expectation, it is the expectation? I am also looking at the bottom line at the cost of \$12,200.00.

Mr. Lassiter: We may be able to work with that cost a little bit, but my answer to your question is yes because we need that external link.

Chair K. Edwards: The way it is that if this gentleman right here, Dr. Bracy, says at Central Elementary School the expectation is that the telephone will not ring more than four times before it is answered and enough is said. At Northampton County High School, after four rings the telephone is answered and upon entering the door you have 8 seconds to greet someone. Disney Way has the model to follow.

Mr. Lassiter: Mr. Nash and I have talked about this a couple to times. Each employee who works in customer service will be given some search-based articles on the importance of customer service delivery in branding the image of the school system. We are all experts in our chosen fields, but we may not be experts in how we can brand our image. Ms. Edwards, you made some great statements when you said, "our image in the community is not very favorable". We have to do something to improve our standing with our community. This is our chance to re-brand our image.

Ms. M. Edwards: Let me just add this little caveat with it. My thing is that we have people who are supposed to be mature and know how to handle business on a job and at least the secretary. I have been on this Board going on five years and Ms. Harris has been the secretary since I have been here. She is very courteous. I don't care if you call her and she doesn't answer her phone, but her message is there and she calls you back. She has been here a long time and she can do just as much with those people as we can do here. Why not give Ms. Harris the \$3,000, instead of giving someone else \$12,000. I am just being real and we have to stop trying to pay everybody else for something they are not going to do. Once you get those folks they are going to get in there and do whatever they want to do anyway, unless Dr. Bracy says, "If you do it again I will send you home." People have got to learn that this is no play game. I know in my job when we hire people we have a book. When you open that book up it tells you, "good afternoon, Roanoke-Chowan may I help you". You must have a nice voice and it is almost like you are smiling on that end.

Dr. Bracy: Do you want documentation that if they call this particular school and this particular person answers the phone this particular way? Am I hearing from this Board that if this person cannot answer the telephone right and it happens repeatedly that we need to bring in a recommendation for termination? Is that what I am hearing if they are not doing their job? I am talking about after the training is done and these customer service mishaps happen, what do you suggest happens next?

Mr. Williams: Then you start the process of writing them up and counseling or do whatever you have to do.

Dr. Bracy: We will have to document all of those individual cases and Mr. Lassiter will meet with these people and go over these cases. But, if it keeps happening, what action does the Board want me to take?
Ms. M. Edwards: You will have to terminate them.

Dr. Bracy: I can't fire anybody, but I can recommend them to the Board. What my question is, if all of these violations keep happening and I make a recommendation to this Board for termination, how is the Board going to receive such recommendation?

Ms. Smith-Ingram: We receive it like we receive everything else. First, we must clearly communicate what the expectations are. We also need to scale down some of this cost, but see what we can do on a lower scale financially, because some of this stuff is just common sense. Like Ms. Edwards was saying about Ms. Harris, because she could train all of the receptionists and people who regularly deal with customers. Then we could develop a document saying this is what you do or maybe even buying 100 copies of this book at \$8.00 per copy. I like this proposal and it is wonderful, but I just feel we need to scale it down financially.

Mr. Matthews: Mr. Lassiter, what does the audit include? Does the audit take place before the two days of training takes place?

Mr. Lassiter: Yes, that is the assessment.

Mr. Matthews: I concur with my fellow Board Members about the \$12, 200.00, but I also concur that this school system as a whole can improve on it. What I don't see is where I think Dr. Bracy was going. We have the audit performed, we have the two days of training, we have the handbooks and we have the copies of the articles; then August comes and secretary X comes back to school and says I am not doing this crazy mess. I got my stipend this summer and I am going to answer this phone like I want to. The part that I see missing in this whole thing is quality. I don't want to spend any more money and don't want to spend the \$12,000.00, but in order for it to be effective I would think it would be something like this. Mr. Williams, you may want to piggyback on this a little bit. If this audit could be split and we use \$3000 worth of audit before the training to determine the needs. Then you would have one day of training along with the handbook and articles; then in August we pick back up and the audit goes on from August through December. Then in December, if the audit has produced that secretary X is not at the point where we want that person to be at, that is when you come in and put in a second day of training and then the audit continues from December to June. Then comes June and the audit is showing that secretary X is still not there, then Dr. Bracy needs to bring us a name and we need to answer him. That gives us a procedure, there is some follow-through, there is some evidence that we are getting what we are paying for. That is the piece that I see is missing.

Dr. Bracy: Ms. Edwards, when you talked about that piece with Roanoke-Chowan, if they did not follow through what happened to them?

Ms. M. Edwards: After people don't do what they are supposed to do and they are given so many warnings you already know. On any job, if you are given so many warnings you are in trouble and on the verge of losing your job. You did it to yourself, because you got the warning. The children answer the phone sometimes as well at the school and sometimes they don't know how to pick it up properly.

Mr. Williams: The sad thing about that Ms. Edwards is that a lot of times they do better than the staff. In terms of the question, it is about expectations. When I worked at the Holiday Inn, I started out cutting grass and graduated to the dishwasher. We had a program called, "Customers Are Our First Concern".

Mr. O'Neal was the CEO at the Holiday Inn during my time and I was a dishwasher. If any customer walked through that door, I knew how to greet them. If I answered the phone, I knew how to greet them and I was courteous to every customer who came there, because "customers are our first concern". If you did not do that you had a problem. You are going to be jobless and you are at least going to know that you are going down the wrong path. You have the opportunity to correct it or you are going to be jobless. In a lot of cases, people were jobless right away. Ms. Harris for instance does a great job and is an ideal person. She is Central Office and working in the Superintendent's Office, why not. I was the Operations Officer at Greensville Correctional Center and Mr. Brown was one part of programs and I was over security. He said these words, "As you have done unto my brother so have you done unto me". I said that to say this, if Ms. Harris was talking to a group of staff Dr. Bracy did not have to be anywhere in the room, Dr. Bracy is talking to that group of staff. If everybody carried that out we can do that. What I would be in favor of is saying to some parents out there, give them a \$20 gift certificate to have a dinner somewhere or partner with a restaurant that might do a \$20 dinner for us to partner with them. Let the parents call in here and get them involved.

Mr. Johnson: Mr. Edwards, how much training does your executive secretary have. The reason I am asking is because when I call Belmont Elementary she says, "Good morning Belmont Elementary School where failure is not an option" every time. If I go to see Mr. Edwards, she is a congenial person,

speaks appropriately to the customer and I am just wondering how much training did your people go through in Roanoke Rapids. I have not called any of the other schools and are they the same?

Chair K. Edwards: I will answer that in this way. As Dr. Bracy said, there are expectations. When you say you will answer an email within 24 hours or someone will call you. That is why I said a few minutes ago, phones are answered in the first three rings. The answer to your question came up, where is the follow-up? That is your building level school executive under managerial leadership, human resource leadership. The bottom line is where does that policy come from? It comes from managerial leadership. The cheapest way is what we regard to watch and Disney Way was about 90 minutes. Everybody knows Disney consists of the number one satisfaction and the DVD costs about \$49.00.

Dr. Bracy: Ms. Harris, have you had any customer service training since you have been here?

Ms. Patricia Harris: No Sir. I can recall that Mr. Edwards presented the Disney Way training when he was here before. The staff had to go over to the Alternative School for the training.

Dr. Bracy: In Durham, I had four secretaries and they did not go through any training. They just had it. They were professional and pleasant. If someone came in and told me that they snapped at them, I was going to close the door and get at them and that is the bottom line.

Chair K. Edwards: They knew that and as a building level leader in Northampton County, if I know that the Superintendent as you say is a mystery shopper it should be who you are.

Dr. Bracy: I never talked to Ann Dillinger like that and she would bite my head off if I ever called her about something like that. It was my building and I got it figured out real quick.

Ms. M. Edwards: Ms. Harris is a great example and I think she could sit and share information relative to how to use the phone and deal with people in the community. I have never heard anybody up to this point complain about Ms. Harris. I am very serious and I talk to a lot of folks and I have not had one person tell me anything about Ms. Harris. Can we deal with it in another way and/or get a book, because when our children are out there answering the phone they need a handy tool.

Dr. Bracy: The thing is that Ms. Harris is probably embarrassed that we are talking about this because this is just another day in the world.

Mr. Williams: Before we move this agenda, I am hearing us going in the right direction, but we are not going all in the right direction. I want you to understand that this customer service is not about school level secretaries or office workers. It really is not. This is about the principals, assistant principals and teachers.

Dr. Bracy: The school-based administrators and the secretarial staff are all a part of the same model.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: After we get to the necessary budget items, can we look at a way that we can move this customer service item back to the July Board Meeting, because I am sure we can understand where we are going by then and scale it back to implement it in modules as Mr. Matthews was saying. We may not have the same people working next year. I say that once you get your staff situated and at the July Board Meeting we decide which model we are going to use: (1) put it in the pre-service days for all of our staff from the top on down to be served; (2) start plugging the pre-audit during the months of August and September; (3) implement the first day of training during one of the mandatory teacher workdays; (4) perform the follow-up audit to see how we are doing.

Mr. Williams: You have made a very good point. If this Board has such concern that we are having this type of discussion, then I think a directive goes to the Superintendent from us and when the Superintendent says, "This is an issue of concern in this district and this is what we are going to do" it is done.

Dr. Bracy: It has already been said and done.

Chair K. Edwards: We can all give you a testimony. You have kids in school, I have kids in school and every Board Member could probably give you a testimony of how our schools' customer service is. I know I can and I believe it needs a whole lot of work.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: I call for the Personal Point of Privilege. We have several of our Central Office Directors who need to present and we don't want to keep them too late. Can we break at eat at this time? Can we get a time on what is remaining on the agenda?

Chair K. Edwards: We have covered the following agenda items: 3.01 Service Solutions, 3.02 New Alternative School Redesign, 3.03 Follow-up on Camp Get Connected, and 3.04 Customer Service Proposal.

Dr. Bracy: Ms. Smith-Ingram asked that agenda items 3.10 Facilities – Reorganization Plan and 3.11 New Tech High School be put on the agenda. Ms. Ingram, how do you want that discussion to go because we don't have anything prepared for the New Tech High School?

Ms. Smith-Ingram: We can delete the New Tech High School for this meeting, but with item 3.10 Facilities – Reorganization Plan, there are a lot of decisions to be made.

Dr. Bracy: I assumed that you wanted to talk about those options so I had Mr. Lassiter to print those options for the Board.

Chair K. Edwards: Every Board Member received the email regarding the Principals' Survey that was created. I wanted to make sure that every Board Member reviews the survey so that we can get the feedback. When we look at the timeframe in regards to the invitation extended to the principals as we are coming back to the table on May 14th for a Special Called Meeting. Please review the survey that was created, provide feedback and when we look at the timeframe we can set our next meeting to have that conversation with the principals as they take the survey and after everyone reviews it. We can come back on May 14th at 4:00 p.m. instead of 5:00 p.m. and that way we will stay on track.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: Were there any problems with the survey or did anyone have any questions?

Ms. Taylor: I have been having trouble with my emails since I returned from the national conference.

Ms. M. Edwards: I have reviewed the survey and I don't have a problem with it.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: I apologize because I have also had a problem with my email.

Chair K. Edwards: I call for a ten-minute recess of the Board Meeting.

Break

The Board recessed in a ten-minute break at 6:02 p.m. The Board reconvened the meeting at 6:15 p.m.

Facilities – Reorganization Plan

Mr. Lassiter presented the Facilities – Reorganization Plan to the Board in regards to the proposed options stating that there are five (5) proposals for school/grade reconfiguration & realignment that have been presented for consideration by various members of our local Board of Education. Each proposal features a total number of students (data source: Principal's Monthly Report Month 5, 2013) each school would house. The five options are listed below:

Option 1 (County Wide Upper School Organization):

Conway MS RENOVATED/CONVERTED to house Willis Hare, Central, & Creecy PK-5 and will become Conway Elementary School with a student body of 656.

Gaston Elementary School becomes a PK-5 school with a student body of 414.

Central ES RENOVATED/CONVERTED to house all 6-8 graders to form Central Middle School with a student body of 612.

Gaston Middle School RENOVATED to house all 9-12 graders to form Northampton County High School with 526 students.

CLOSURES: Willis Hare Elementary, Northampton Alternative, NCHS, Squire Elementary.

Option 2 (Curriculum Organization):

Conway MS RENOVATED/CONVERTED to house all PK-2 students with a student body of 671.
Gaston Elementary School to house all 3-5 students with a student body of 548.
Central Elementary School RENOVATED/CONVERTED to house all 6-8 students with a student body of 612.
Gaston Middle School RENOVATED to house all 9-12 graders to form Northampton County High School with 526 students.

CLOSURES: Willis Hare Elementary, NAS, NCHS, Squire Elementary.

Option 3 (PK-12 Organization on each end of our county):

Conway MS RENOVATED/CONVERTED to house Willis Hare, Central, and Creecy PK-5 to become CONWAY LOWER SCHOOL with a student body of 656.

Central ES RENOVATED/CONVERTED to house grades 6-12 with a STEM focus; enrollment contingent upon district lines.

Gaston Elementary School will house PK-5 with a projected student enrollment of 414.

Gaston MS RENOVATED/CONVERTED to house grades 6-12 with a specific academic/career ready focus such as HSTW, IB/AP with a student enrollment contingent upon district lines.

CLOSURES: Willis Hare, NAS, NCHS, Squire.

PROVISION: Allow 9-12 student-athletes/extracurricular to compete under a single banner.

Option 4

Conway MS RENOVATED/CONVERTED to become Conway School with PK-8 with student enrollment contingent upon district lines.

Central ES RENOVATED/CONVERTED to become Central School with PK-8 with student enrollment contingent upon district lines.

Gaston ES RENOVATED to house PK-5 and Gaston MS housing 6-8 students.

Build NEW NORTHAMPTON COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL. Students remain at NCHS while new building is being constructed.

Option 5

Conway MS RENOVATED/CONVERTED to become Conway School with PK-4 with a student enrollment contingent upon district lines.

Gaston ES RENOVATED to house PK-4 with a student enrollment contingent upon district lines.

Gaston MS RENOVATED to house 5-7 with a student enrollment contingent upon district lines.

Central ES RENOVATED/CONVERTED to become Northampton County High School with grades 8-12, featuring an Early College and an 8th grade transitional wing to allow for some 8th graders to take high school courses.

CLOSURES: Willis Hare, Squire, NAS, NCHS

The Board held the following discussion regarding the Facilities – Reorganization Plan:

Ms. Smith-Ingram: I guess we can open up the floor for any questions or concerns regarding the options, but we can say right away that option #1, #2 & #5 all call for the closing of four schools and that seems to be a priority.

Mr. Lassiter: There are four recommended school closings after the new high school is built.

Mr. Johnson: I did not see anything in there about a new building.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: Option #4 is to build a new Northampton County High School.

Mr. Johnson: Knowing how the County Commissioners have expressed themselves in their thinking in terms of 3-5 years and could go as long as 10 years according to law, my personal opinion would be that we would be looking at something in terms of cutting down the cost of what a new school would cost versus the reconfiguration of the Central Elementary building as mentioned previously by Ms. Ingram.

Ms. M. Edwards: Those schools you are talking about closing I have no problem with that.

NCHS-E has been in bad shape forever and all of the money we have spent to bring it up to par I am very disappointed. It is still a mess and there is no need of going back and beating a dead horse to death. If we close the four schools, we need to have someone tell us the truth and put the things that are necessary and needed there for our children to get the highest quality

education they so deserve and that they would be able to go off to any college they want go to and not have to go through remediation. We want teachers who really want to be teachers and whom are concerned, involved and care about our children. If they do that they are going to go that extra mile. Let's put the money where it needs to be.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: As we look at the options, I would like to see us scale down to the three most viable options. I would like to see us go ahead and eliminate Option #2, because Option #2 would require us to bus the smallest children and there are two reasons why I don't think it is viable. Option #2 is a curriculum center where we would have all PK-2 students at Conway Middle School renovated to a PK-2 center. I understand curriculum wise because those grades are not tested, but we have to build strong relationships with our parents and I am just not for busing PK kids. If we get them early in elementary school and keep them vested in Northampton County Schools with our wonderful customer services then we need to keep a PK program on each end of the county to feed into our other schools. We took a hit when the Charter School opened up their Kindergarten classes so we have to be proactive about getting the PK students already into the system. If we can agree to eliminate Option #2 and eliminate Option #4 only because I was blown away at the amount of a \$39 million dollar cost for a high school and that did not include the desks and all of the furniture and equipment.

Ms. M. Edwards: Where did you get that price?

Ms. Smith-Ingram: It was at the Retreat. I forgot you had left Ms. Edwards, but we had a presentation by Schuler Ferris and the cheapest school was \$39 million and that did not include an auditorium, desks, furniture or equipment--that was just a structure. So because of that price tag and we have not recovered economically, I just don't think it is viable for us to go to our citizens asking for a \$39 million dollar high school. I would like to get a consensus to cross out Option #2 and #4, because busing 3, 4 & 5 year-olds to Conway Middle is not feasible and we run the risk of losing too many children. Let us keep a PK-5 program on both ends of the county with one elementary school feeding a middle school and one middle school feeding a high school.

Ms. M. Edwards: Where is the middle school going to be on that west end?

Ms. Smith-Ingram: If you look at Option #1 you have PK-5 at Gaston Elementary and at Conway Elementary. That gives you a PK-5 on each end of the county. That is the way we can establish the relationships, the commitments and the loyalties with the families so that we can feed our one middle school and feed our one high school. Also, because it will involve closing facilities we will have to go through the hearings, the notices and the town hall meetings. If we could just narrow them down to three options, present that, develop the committee and follow the check off list and do what we need to do.

Mr. Matthews: I don't see the option on here, but I think it has been talked about and I don't know if the option is viable. It was talked about a long time ago and it hinges on the PK-8 student population to be housed on the eastern end of the county and the western end of the county; leaving Central Elementary to be converted to a high school. One of these options and I believe Option #5 has us converting Central Elementary to a high school 8-12. I would think all PK-8 would go to Conway or Gaston and come back to Central and convert that to a high school. That could be converted for half of what you could build a high school.

Ms. M. Edwards: Dr. Bracy, what was the cost to convert Central to a high school.

Dr. Bracy: The cost was \$12 million dollars four years ago.

Mr. Matthews: Skinner, Lamm and Highsmith was the architect for that school and whenever the Board was talking about converting Central to a high school I called them. They sent me a

cost projection and I believe the cost was \$12 million dollars to convert Central to a high school.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: That took place last year in January 2012. There was a Town Hall meeting at the Wellness Center and those options were presented and it was stated that the conversion would cost \$12 million dollars.

Mr. Matthews: The negative I see in here would be the PK, kindergarten and 1st grade students who live in the Jackson area would have to leave the Jackson area to go to elementary school, which is not good. The trade off of it is when they get to be high school students and the school would be in their back door. But, I still don't like the PK & kindergarteners having to leave the middle of the county to go to each end as kindergarteners. It is hard to discuss this, but that might be more doable than, like Ms. Ingram said, building a \$39 million high school. Is this Board at a point where we are going to give up on a new high school? I hesitate to see that, because even if we go with one of these plans now, I still don't think this Board should give up on a new high school even if it takes the Commissioners ten years to build the new high school and we have to go with one of these plans in the meantime until the ten years passes. The reason I am saying this is because I am thinking that 20-25 years from now, with Gaston Middle School already about 20 years old now and if it takes us ten years to get a new high school constructed, then it is getting close. I am not saying build one tomorrow, but I would hate to see this Board give up on the effort to build a new high school. I realize that we can't do it immediately, but 25 years from now you are going to have to have a new high school. The fire burn is now and you may not have it 25 years from now.

Mr. Johnson: I talked about Option #5 the night we had the meeting at our church and the next morning I called Dr. Bracy. We discussed grades 8-12 and I asked could we include that one in mine which was Option #5. After looking at other things, looking at the configuration and what could develop, if we began to renovate Central and while it was being renovated those children could go to Seaboard. They are still in the district and they are still not far away from home. Then if we are renovating it, go with grades 6, 7 and 8 at the school because of the close proximity of the athletic facilities we would have there at the Wellness Center. Things we would not have to purchase as far as money, because they have a \$2 million dollar complex there that could be utilized. If we could go with grades 6-8, then NCHS would remain as it is now, students at Central would move to Seaboard, and the school could be renovated with no children on the campus. Then after all of the renovations are over and they came back with the 6-12 grades, we could close what we have been trying to close for a few years and that is the Seaboard complex. I would also like to say, if the Facilities Committee could meet week after next with the representative of the firm that built Central to find out what it would take and those are my thoughts.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: All of what Mr. Johnson is saying, that is something we can look at when we go through our study just like we did last time. We have narrowed down to three options, we looked into investigating what each one would cost, looked at all of the details of each option and then we would come back and have our Town Meeting and hold our information sessions. It is a process and we have to agree on narrowing down to three options. Then we will go through the exploration of all of the options and come back and make a decision after we have met the statutory requirements. We can't start that if we cannot agree on three options and put that out as a presentation. It would be premature for the Facilities Committee to meet and just go look at that one option. We need to look at all options at one time.

Chair K. Edwards: I want to piggyback on what has been said across the room. When you talk about a high school, I look at those numbers every week. We are a county that is slowly deteriorating. We see the DPI projections and the County Commissioners put it on the table for us when we met. When we saw what the cost of the high school was going for, I said look at the declining numbers in Northampton County, because there is no population creating babies here. We have some serious decisions to make and it is not only for our current sense of urgency. We all know our numbers in our schools right now and every building we have is under capacity. We as a governing body are asking for money for a high school. I say looking at the dwindling numbers Mr. Matthews, you are right, we should not lose sight of looking at a new high school, but I say look at a new K-12 facility. As we talk about narrowing that focus down to a ten-year window, we are so under capacity in our schools. When I looked at the budget with the annual amounts for Capital Outlay (\$345,000) and Current Expense (\$3.1 million) it would be near impossible to run all of these campuses. Also, an Alternative School with 22 kids in it, but the lights are on along with heating and air conditioning and the bus is running.

Dr. Bracy: Who said the Alternative School didn't cost much money?

Chair K. Edwards: Every proposal is saying school closure, but school closure for the betterment of keeping our eye on the prize when you talk about let's build a school. We have Willis Hare over there built in the 1960's as well and Squire over here. I really like the viable options, but we do have to narrow it down and look at a K-12 and a K-6 or a K-5 and a 6-12. That high school is only going to have 350 students and graduating 75 students countywide. Almost everyone in this room can remember this county having four comprehensive high schools, Gaston, Gumberry, Creecy and Northampton. There were more kids in the high school than we have in the county. There were 900 students at the high school when I was there and 20 years later we have 2,200 students total.

Dr. Bracy: People aren't moving back here.

Chair K. Edwards: That is because there is nothing here to come back for. How many of our grandchildren have come back or are coming back? Until we have some College and Career Ready, as is the slogan in North Carolina, we have to build some careers here and folks need to have some babies. No children, no schools.

Ms. M. Edwards: That is the County Commissioners' job.

Chair K. Edwards: We have to have the focus to keep our eye on the prize of maintaining and getting a new school, but what does that truly look like--a K-12 campus. You just cannot keep coming back to a Board in an area where you don't have any growth asking for \$40 million dollars and what we know about construction is that it goes up annually.

Mr. Matthews: I consent that it might be a K-12 school, but my objective is we don't need the Commissioners to get a new school out of their vision.

Chair K. Edwards: That is correct don't ever get it out of their vision, but what is the best structure that we can have while we put an okay on a new focus vision?

Ms. M. Edwards: I agree with a K-12 school as long as we can go on and close these schools that are falling down. I don't agree with sending our kids or any kids back down there to Seaboard-Coates for renovations or whatever. It is not a good school to send anybody in. Let our children be in an environment where when they walk in it is pretty, they have the equipment that they need, the teachers are engaging with the students like when we went to school. It makes a difference. We have a lot of laptops and computers here and we have kids out there in the schools who can use them during class. I am in agreement that K-12 is something down the

road we need to look at. In the meantime, those four oldest schools need to be shut down: Willis Hare, Squire, NCHS and the Alternative School. I feel hurt that I was so quick to make sure that NCHS was taken care of and brought up to standards so it would look good and be inviting. When I saw what we had put all of that money in at NCHS I was appalled. I did not vote to have what happened, I voted to give our high school students something they would love and be excited about and that was not what we got.

Dr. Bracy, I don't believe you would let anyone come in your house and half do the work and you pay them for it. NCHS did not come off like we said and I was very disturbed by that. Are you saying the Board should close Willis Hare, Alternative School, the current NCHS and close Squire?

Ms. M. Edwards: Those are the schools that are in bad shape as far as I am concerned. I do think they need to close.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: I was quoted in the paper in October of saying, "If I am an old hag and I put red lipstick on I am still an old hag." Some people were offended. We put lipstick on that old hag. We know that the painting and the projects got done, but at the end of the day we can all say it just was not what we thought. I said that to say this, in October we brought this up and this was initiated at our January Board Retreat. The discussion was even before January, because if you recall we had that Board Meeting and the Facilities Committee went out to the high school the next day and saw the mold issues I was talking about. I am just tired of us putting off necessary decisions. There are statutory requirements that we have to meet before we can close any of these schools down. We have capital outlay projects Mr. Holloway and some are at Willis Hare that we don't need to do. What we need to do is to come in here on Monday and I am going to be prepared to make a motion. I will look up the statutory requirements. We brought this up in September, October and January at our last Retreat and here we are in May and if we don't make the decision now we are not going to be able to make it. We will waste more money pouring it into these buildings that are inefficient. You have to show good stewardship over what you have before you can convince anybody to support you getting something new. We are proving to the citizens, taxpayers and County Commissioners that we are going to be good stewards and we are going to best utilize the facilities that we have. If we look at the dynamics, I don't think that the cost will be as much as we believe that it is going to be, but nothing will happen until the decision is made to move forward and select Options #1, #3 and #5.

Ms. Taylor: Include Option #6 that Mr. Matthews gave us.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: I am saying that I will not come in here another Board Meeting and we not take action. I am coming in here Monday night prepared to make a motion. My fellow Board Members who understand the process, I would hope that we will all do some homework over the weekend, because this process takes time and we don't need to spend anymore money on these schools that are not up to par and we need to make wise decisions about the money that we have.

Mr. K. Edwards: Starting at that point, every option calls for the closing of four schools. We can't just close four schools. Are we saying we are going to start a cycle if we go this route? That is just food for thought. As we look at population, I see Squire School and the Alternative School as the beginning point.

Ms. Taylor: What I am saying in reference to that high school issue, and I understand you are talking about moving the high school, but when we looked at everything before there was no concern about the high school because the western end students were not in that high school.

Your grandchildren were in there last year and my children were in there the last couple of years. There was no concern about mold at that time.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: It is in the minutes that I went on record about the mold.

Ms. Taylor: As a parent at these meetings, I never heard it. What I am saying is that I believe we need to find a new facility. I am not against that, but my other concern was the number of students on the east end of the county. I could understand and I could be totally for a high school being on Central Elementary School's campus, because you have the sports facility there. But, if you sit down and you look at the number of kids, as you had concerns for those coming from the tip of Henrico, and you will have more kids coming from the tip of Scotland Neck, Pinetops Road and Murfreesboro going to Gaston. They did not abandon this school system and go to KIPP; whereas a lot of the western kids did and that is why we don't have a lot of kids there. As I said before, I can honestly support the high school being at Central Elementary.

Mr. Williams: My concern would be that you have a high school that is already retrofitted and was built as a high school. As Mr. Edwards alluded to in terms of the dwindling population and how we are looking at things right now, we have had another school that came into this county that is so poor and they are moving into another county to accommodate all of their students. We as Board Members had lot of tough decisions to make around the table and became pretty upset from the comments that were made, because those people wanted to move into one of our buildings to educate their children. I am wondering that in addition to looking at how we are going to reorganize, we need to look at how we are going to revitalize as well. So with the 3.11 agenda item that we agreed to take off of the agenda might be one of the things that we need to look at for something that will somehow put our district back where it needs to be to retain our students. Ms. Taylor, this is going to be a big issue and I do not want to present myself as hypocritical. I had an issue with students traveling so far from the western end of the county to go to the eastern end and I will have a very similar issue with the students traveling from the east end going to the west. I think we need to talk about what are the options, but one of the best things that we need to consider is that we are an emotional people in this county. What we have got to do is get the people involved. They have to feel wanted, they have to feel a part of and they have to feel that their opinions are appreciated. What we have to do is bring people around the table and get the shepard first. We have to strategize and take a different tactic. This time, let us get the people involved and start with the shepherds (preachers, parents, business owners) first. If you sell it to them and let them help sell it to their people. This is a good option and this Board is trying to move us in the right direction. We are headed there and let's embrace this. If they are able to get their people to agree, you can move, but if they get their people to resist it is another bad day.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: Ms. Taylor has a right to say what she can support and everybody in here has the right to say what he or she can support. In all honesty, don't make up your mind ahead of time. What if Option #1 or some other option tends to be the more viable one? Let's not look in the past anymore, because there were only a few numbers difference of 8-10 students in reference to the eastern end students who had to come the farthest distance versus the western end students. Let's move forward, keep our minds open, collect the data and the information and let's look at the most optimized option that is going to give us the biggest bang for the bucks. We can't do anything already making up our minds. We need to come in here Monday and say we are going to look at these three options, because Option #3 and Option #5 have us renovating Central Elementary.

Ms. Taylor: Don't forget Option #6 that Mr. Matthews gave us.

Mr. Matthews: I said, Central would become a high school grades 9-12; PK-8 grades in the Town of Conway and PK-8 grades in the Town of Gaston.

Ms. M. Edwards: What happens to all of these other schools?

Ms. Smith Ingram: There will only be three schools? The difference in that option and Option #4 is (build a new high school). If we take off build a new high school that is the same as Option #4. Now we have four options and there are only going to be four schools with the PK-8 grades spread out between two schools, Gaston Elementary and Gaston Middle. The same four schools are closed. We are now down to four options, but do we want to keep Option #5 in? Let's just agree that when we come in here on Monday that we are going to agree to do the exploration and the feasibility study for the five options and to follow the statutory requirements.

Ms. M. Edwards: What if we can't close all of these schools at one time?

Chair K. Edwards: That decision is going to be a Board decision.

Ms. M. Edwards: I would think that we would need to let the people know what we are doing as to why we are closing those four schools.

Chair K. Edwards: What I was saying is that it needs to start with the small population at Squire and the Alternative School.

Ms. M. Edwards: Could that be a part of what we are saying is that it will be done in increments?

Chair K. Edwards: Correct and what I was saying is that the immediate impact would be where the least operation is.

Mr. Johnson: How can you make a decision based upon no statistics and no promise involved in what you are doing? You are making a decision on Monday. How do you know what you are doing is going to be sufficient and if we don't have enough money there are a lot of other variables?

Ms. Smith-Ingram: We are not making a decision for any of these options. We are making the decision to start the feasibility study of the options. Now for the Alternative School, we put that on the table three months ago. We have been said we wanted to close the Seaboard-Coates building.

Dr. Bracy: You still have to do a closure and a feasibility study.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: We need to come in with a calendar on Monday of the things that we need to do.

Dr. Bracy: Before any of that takes place shouldn't we know what the Board wants to do?

Ms. Smith-Ingram: That is why I am saying we need to come in Monday prepared. I am prepared to put it on the floor to close Squire School and the Alternative School and then we will follow the statutory process. Then you are going to look at opening up for us to go and formally say that we are going to look at different options for reorganization.

Chair K. Edwards: Would that be your recommendation Dr. Bracy?

Dr. Bracy: I have not decided what I will recommend to the Board about the school closings.

Mr. Williams: If you move the students is that considered closing a school?

Dr. Bracy: Yes that is considered closing a school. Rod and I have had that discussion.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: Chair Edwards, I move the agenda.

Ms. Taylor: We have talked about buildings and we have talked about schools, but this is something that applies to the Board. Let's not bad mouth our own Board and our school system. If there is something wrong, let's us just say we are working on it, because I have a

problem with that. Just because we may disagree on this issue, we might agree on something else. We should not bad mouth what we are trying to do and what we know we need to do. We need to talk positive and work towards a common goal. We do not need to portray ourselves in the public with this issue as well as other issues. We are not going to always agree, but let's all try to be positive about this. Whatever we decide let's all support the decision that we vote on.

Mr. Matthews: My opinion is that Squire should be closed and the sooner the better. If this Board decides to move in that direction we are almost already too late for next year, because it is going to require about \$300,000 worth of work to be done for the PK and I assume those students would go to Gaston Elementary. If you are going to try to do this for next year, it is going to be an aggressive schedule because Mr. Tillery or someone should be getting contractors to bid on something right now so that they will be lined up and ready to start as soon as the students get out of that building.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: That is my frustration and we talk about how sometimes we don't get follow-up from other places. That is why I brought this up at the January Retreat. Here we are in May, six months after we started this discussion and we don't have a decision made. I feel like it is that way because you don't want it to happen. I can't be positive about this Ms. Taylor when we are in this predicament and we are dragging our feet. We are Board Members and this is a decision that we need to make. I brought this up at two different retreats and nothing has happened. Mr. Chair, we need to come in on Monday and vote to do what we need to do and then start the statutory process. Mr. Holloway needs to know that to include it in the budget. We have to look at where this money is going to come from and we don't need to keep Squire School open for another year with less than 100 kids.

Dr. Bracy: It is going to be less than that next year.

Ms. M. Edwards: Those contractors can move forward aggressively and do it, because they have moved forward and done other things.

Mr. Williams: All of these folks who are out there unemployed and are looking for work to do.

Chair K. Edwards: Thank you to every Board Member. When you look at the numbers we know what we are up against. The other part that was never in the configuration was the amendment to the K-4 completion cycle. That is currently happening right before our eyes. You will still always be competing with that component. That is here and it is going to be K-12 by the time those babies come that are born from the high school. I want to remind every Board Member, thank you for bringing up the great discussion and we can all agree to disagree like Ms. Taylor said. We don't always see things the same way, but the bottom line is once the decision is made. When you want something to come to an action item, it takes a motion, a second and it takes a vote. I don't want any member to feel that we are not going to address an issue, but when you are ready for that to happen go ahead and make a motion.

Dr. Bracy: Let me share this with the Board as I have already shared it with Mr. Holloway that the State House voted 63-46 today to cut in half the number of children eligible for PK and now the bill is headed to the Senate.

Mr. K. Edwards: If it has passed the House that means it will pass the Senate.

Mr. Matthews: I just want to make sure my mind is clear about the Alternative School that was discussed. In closing the Seaboard building, are we looking at maintaining a school or are we looking at a closing?

Dr. Bracy: I have always maintained my hope to maintain a school number. If I can remember, the last time we talked about it that was not a concern as long as it was housed in a school location.

Mr. Matthews: If it is going to be a school my next question is, if a student in the high school gets suspended for the remainder of the school year, the safety net has been to keep them from being out of school has been the Alternative School. Is that correct?

Dr. Bracy: You are correct.

Mr. Matthews: Let's just say that the Alternative School ends up being in the building with the high school and it would need to be with a four-year program. Then, if a student is in regular high school and they get suspended for the remainder of the school year, in my mind that suspension is from the high school campus. Will it remove that option for them if it is on the same campus?

Dr. Bracy: Ideally, the Alternative School is on a separate location and that is ideal. For some of those students, they can make threats to a teacher, a principal or another student and being on the same campus does lead to the possibility that it will fall on those same individuals.

Mr. Matthews: My question is more like is it illegal, because if they are long-term suspended from that campus can they even legally go back on that campus?

Mr. Holloway: There may be something illegal because the state says something about trespassing.

Mr. Matthews: That is what the school law reads.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: When I taught in Northampton County Schools in 2003, the Alternative School was right down the hallway.

Mr. Matthews: But, had the students been long-term suspended? That is the question.

Dr. Mark Rumley: At that time, they probably were not going to the Alternative School, but were probably going home.

Ms. Taylor: I am concerned about whether they can go back on campus and the safety issue.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: Remember, there are different models of Alternative Schools. There is currently an alternative program that runs from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., as we are only gearing it to high school students anyway. You extend the day so that they are not with the general population.

Dr. Bracy: Would we run buses then or not?

Ms. Smith-Ingram: We used a few state cars in certain situations, but you were not looking at a large population. There was also a shorter bus that was run, but there are different ways that we can address that.

Mr. Matthews: My question again is, if a student gets long-term suspended for the remainder of the school year from this school, can they come back on that campus?

Mr. Williams: I believe our suspension letter says that. Is that a state, federal or local mandate?

Mr. Matthews: I just don't want to relocate that Alternative School and next year find out if a kids get long-termed suspended there is nothing we can do for them.

Mr. Williams: But, isn't that what we put in the suspension letter?

Dr. Bracy: It is a local decision.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: We could even pull in a mobile unit on campus and they would only have access to that one building during specified hours. We can make it work.

Dr. Mark Rumley: It will depend upon how Dr. Bracy modifies it.

Budget Questions from Finance Committee Meeting

Mr. Joe Holloway reviewed the Local Current Expense Budget for 2013-14 with the Board and addressed the following budget questions that resulted from a recent Finance Committee Meeting. He expounded on the following line items within the budget:

(a) PRC 706 – Increased Workshop Expense line item (an increase of \$3,000.00 was made in this line item).

(b) PRC 801 – Added a Refund of Meals line item (\$10,000.00) – Mr. Holloway stated that this line item was created at the request of the Board along with a document entitled, Child Nutrition Meal Charge Notice. This item will possibly be an action item at the next Board Meeting, but I don't think it will require a board policy number to be issued for it. Also, there are still some revisions needed within this document.

Ms. M. Edwards: Under paragraph #5, I don't agree with that last sentence "Under no circumstance will the monthly amount loaned to any student exceed \$10.00." We don't know their circumstances and we have a lot of people who are out of work.

Mr. Holloway: That statement was put in there to get involvement with the Free and Reduced Lunch from Mrs. Williams. We talked about it and we believe it could be changed to \$20.00.

Chair K. Edwards: If a person loses their job shouldn't their status change?

Ms. M. Edwards: I also thought that once that application goes in that was it.

Mr. Johnson: They can always re-apply when their status changes.

Dr. Mark Rumley: I discussed this with Mrs. Williams again today and one of things we talked about was the use of the word we all use a lot and that is "intervention". That is when you see a child's account in need that invokes the principal, assistant principal, cafeteria manager, social worker and any number of intervention personnel that can say, what is going on with this family and how do we respond to it. But, without that it is almost like you have created an open credit line, which will cost you far more than what you have planned.

Ms. Taylor: We don't want to be taken advantage of, but we want the parents to know that if it gets to this point, we are going to intervene and ask questions.

Dr. Mark Rumely: That was also Mrs. Williams' pledge that we will intervene with our personnel or a variety of these personnel to investigate what is happening and how to respond.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: Mr. Holloway, I know you said this item would be Business Before the Board for Approval, but we would like to see this document incorporated into a policy.

Mr. Holloway: You want this to be policy instead of procedure, because between Dr. Rumley and me we did change a lot of the wording in this document in the last few days and we were trying to get it as generic as possible.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: If the Board does not object, since the Board has been as one Policy Committee we need to have this document put in the form of a policy and give it to Attorney Malone so that we can incorporate it into our policy manual. We would have to agree to adopt it on first reading or suspend the other reading.

Ms. M. Edwards: I don't know if this is the right time to mention this, but since we are talking about line items I wanted to ask about having a line item in there for our children who are having problems getting the things that they need for graduation. While this past week has been very tight and emotional for families and I am sure one family member has called several persons, as the Minister's Council has taken care of some of that family's obligations as far as college needs. However, I think the Council has been informed that a count of about 10-12 students have not picked up their graduation packages. We have been informed that they have until the end of May of pick them up. What I am saying is that if it comes to the point where those students cannot get their cap and gown that they ordered by that time, can we put a line item in the budget in the amount of at least \$1,000 or \$2,000 if we need it? This would be an anonymous thing and the parents would still owe the money to the school system. There is a strain on some of the students right now and they are expressing it to some of the teachers.

There are a lot of parents who don't have the money for graduation. The company has left the items at the school, but the students cannot get the items without the money being paid.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: Is this a request for next years' budget or are you talking about now? Let us take care of the Child Nutrition piece first and come back to your item.

Ms. M. Edwards: Ms. Ingram, the need is for this year. These are our children and when we are out there campaigning we say we will do anything that we can for the betterment of our children. Again, I am saying that we want it to be an anonymous intervention, but the parents will still owe the money or we will have the same ones every year. I want to see it become a line item every year just in case we need it. If the school has the money Dr. Bracy, you can waive the senior dues if that person just cannot come up with the money for the cap and gown. Dr. Bracy: I don't know what kind of money the school has in its General Fund.

Mr. Johnson: I have one concern with that because once they walk across the stage they have no obligation to this school system. Who is going to assure us that once they get that diploma that the money they owe is going to be repaid? I have been through it and I have been in the chair that they are sitting in right now.

Chair Kelvin Edwards exited the meeting at 6:45 p.m. due to another engagement. Vice Chair Erica Smith-Ingram chaired the remainder of the meeting.

Ms. Taylor: I don't believe this is fair, because I believe you are opening the door for a whole lot of things. Even with the food item you have a limit of \$10.00 and I agree with a limit.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: I understand what everyone is saying, but can I bring the Board back to the Orders of the Day to finalize the budget?

Ms. M. Edwards: In regards to the budget, I am still looking on page #8 and I need to know why our telephone bill is so high for the Central Office and the schools with the new telephone system?

Mr. Holloway: Some of this cost is refunded through e-rate, because previously the rate was much higher.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: How may cell phones do the school system pay for?

Mr. Holloway: There are 60 for the Bus Garage (each bus driver), a majority of the directors, principals and maintenance.

Dr. Bracy: Do the bus drivers turn them in at the end of the year?

Mr. Holloway: Most of them have elected not to receive one, but they have to turn them in at the end of the year as part of the departure.

Mr. Williams: Who is the carrier for the school system?

Mr. Holloway: It is U.S. Cellular. The Board Chair has a cell phone and any other Board Member can have one who so desires to have a cell phone. One Board Member has a cell phone that is being paid for through the school system and that person has prepaid for their cell phone for four years.

(c) Cost for Janitorial Supplies/Equipment versus Previous Year – Mr. Holloway stated that Mr. Matthews asked about what our supply cost would be if we do not have Service Solutions for the upcoming year versus what the supply cost is for right now. Mr. Lassiter has required certain things to go into the schools as a special part of getting the schools ready for the annual review. The cost of supplies and materials would take about \$65,000.00 and the equipment cost would be \$32,000.00. Most of the equipment would go towards floor care.

Ms. M. Edwards: Since we will not have Service Solutions that means we will not have to pay out all of that money?

Mr. Holloway: That is correct.

Dr. Bracy: We would have to hire those custodians back.

Mr. Holloway: We will have to hire an additional five (5) full-time custodians and maybe two (2) part-time custodians. That salary cost for those personnel would be \$133,000.00, plus \$50,000 in benefits. We try to put as many as we can in PRC 003 and some in PRC 019 if they are school-based. If they are centrally based and there is no other pot of money and they would have to come out of local.

Mr. Williams: What about the cost of the equipment from Service Solutions? Are we still going to keep that equipment and pay the cost?

Mr. Holloway: We will have to research that as far as the contract goes. I do have copies of the contract for you as I have pointed out two items #2 & #3 already. The contract does state according to the monthly amount we are currently paying, at the conclusion of five (5) years the equipment would be paid for and would become ours, but right now by agreement the contract is for one year not five years.

Ms. M. Edwards: That has been my concern, because the contract has five years under section #1, item #2. We only agreed to the contract for one year. It is our attorney's job to review the contracts.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: I would like to request that Mr. Holloway give us a comparison for contracted services (uniforms, mops, janitorial, SSC Service Solutions) from this year to last year and what the projections would be for next year with or without Service Solutions. Can you have that comparison for us on Monday, May 14th?

Mr. Johnson: According to this agreement it says that anything that Service Solutions bought goes back to them if we break this contract. I understood you to say that they purchased a truck and that means the truck goes back to them also.

Mr. Holloway: That is part of the monthly amount of \$16,000.00 that we pay plus everything they are billing us for as their part of the venture is included in that dollar amount to include the equipment that they purchased.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: Are you saying that they bought a truck, but we are paying for the truck and they get to keep it?

Mr. Holloway: That is correct, because it is a part of the contract.

Ms. M. Edwards: That is what I have been saying that was not part of the contract. I don't recall the purchase of a truck being discussed in the contract. I would have never agreed for them to purchase a truck.

Ms. Taylor: The other part of that is if we were to keep Service Solutions for three years, the truck would be ours.

Mr. Johnson: Mr. Tillery, if we do away with Service Solutions will we have the proper equipment left and accessible to be used and what is that going to do to us with the kind of equipment we will bring back next year?

Mr. James Tillery: I have been looking at the equipment that we have and some of it we will need to service it. If you are going to maintain and have the kind of equipment like Service Solutions has, as they have brought in a lot of equipment, we estimate that it would take approximately \$32,000.00 to upgrade our equipment.

Ms. M. Edwards: We did not have a lot of equipment to work with.

Mr. James Tillery: The buffer machine that the schools wanted before Service Solutions was one that you could strip the floors without putting any wax on the floors and it was at a cost of \$10,000.00. Service Solutions brought in a lot of high-tech equipment and propane equipment.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: Mr. Tillery, in that \$32,000.00 that you spoke of would that amount include the price of a buffer?

Mr. James Tillery: It would include some things like that and we could only purchase one of them.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: I would like to make reference to the Service Solutions contract on the first page under item #2 – Invoices Payment and it states: If this agreement is terminated by either party for any reason prior to five years following the effective date, Northampton County Schools shall either pay any unamortized balance remaining for the cost of the equipment purchased. That means it was amortized over five years so we really did not pay the whole amount. They broke it up into five payments and we will not get what we paid in these twelve months. I feel a lot better knowing that we did not buy them a truck.

Mr. Williams: We need this equipment anyway and we had this discussion a few meetings ago that we could pay the additional amount or whatever the balance is to keep the equipment. We do need some of that equipment and I don't know if we have already paid the cost on some of that so that we could get it at a reduced cost or not. Is there an option to purchase two or three pieces or is it all or nothing?

Mr. James Tillery: I believe there is an option where we could purchase some pieces if we want to, but the main advantage that Service Solutions has over us is that the figures they have are based on five years and we based ours on one year.

Mr. Williams: Maybe we could look at that if it makes sense to you and go from ground zero to get what we need. In terms of the \$10,000.00 pieces of equipment, why don't we see if we can get the inmate workers and we could save a lot of money? I have worked in the department of corrections in North Carolina, Virginia and an internship in the State of Pennsylvania and those guys take those buffers and they can strip, clean and make those floors shine better than Service Solutions clean them. I know they don't pay \$10,000.00 for those buffers. Why can't we explore that as an option to get some of those schools that we still need to work on and have the work done over the summer months? We could also explore bringing the inmates in during the evenings after school closes.

Mr. Johnson: This contract with Service Solutions goes through August, therefore there is no summer that is involved because of the contract we have agreed to. We are locked in until August.

Mr. Williams: We really need to budget that amount of money so that we can get propane buffers and other items of equipment and we need someone who knows how to use them.

Dr. Bracy: Let me ask this question, has a decision been made?

Ms. Smith-Ingram: No decision has been made, but we are exploring those options so that we can make a more informed decision and we need to look at the list of equipment and how much it will cost.

Mr. Holloway: Dr. Bracy, as far as the July date the Board has had some disagreements with the contract regarding the additional pieces added as far as the actual itemized list of the equipment they were going to buy, the addendum to the contract and also what was to be done at each individual location. That part was not finalized until some date in August and it was by agreement with the Board that we would go ahead and sign the contract, but the attorney would work out those questionable pieces at a later date.

Dr. Bracy: For those of us who do not think we should continue business with this organization, what are your reasons?

Ms. Smith-Ingram: Can we hold off on that question for now, because we will get into a lengthy discussion regarding that on Monday relating to Service Solutions?

Dr. Bracy: If it is possible, I would rather have this discussion tonight and walk through this on Monday night.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: We had discussed while you were out that we would discuss this in closed session on Monday night. We are also going to take into consideration the testimonials from the principals, as well as the figures and look at the projections from last year to this year and what it will be with or without Service Solutions.

Dr. Bracy: Is it possible that whatever the decision is we can place this agenda item under the consent agenda? We have had our discussion tonight and we will have our discussion in closed session. The Board has gotten into the meat of the corporation, the pros and the cons, they have made a decision and the Board has had a great discussion tonight.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: We will confer with our attorney to see if the item needs to be an action item or just the consent agenda.

Mr. Williams: We are still making a decision even if it is under the consent agenda whether we are going to go with it or not. You are going to vote one way or another.

Dr. Bracy: I will recommend it under the consent agenda and the Board can vote yes or no. We could also have it on the May 14th Personnel Meeting agenda.

Mr. Williams: It could already be on there no matter how you are going to vote on it.

Mr. Holloway: The budget itself does not affect the action you might take right now and the implementation of the budget. We can adjust the budget anyway you want.

Ms. M. Edwards: Mr. Holloway, can you tell me what is Contracted Services – Imaging on page #10 in the amount of \$30,000.00?

Mr. Holloway: That is the cost of moving student records from being stored all over the county to them being digitized (student transcripts and cumulative folders).

Ms. Smith-Ingram: Ms. Edwards, as promised that brings us back to the item you brought to us earlier.

Ms. M. Edwards: Board Members, I wish to ask Mr. Holloway to budget some money in a line item just in case a student or students do not have any money for graduation cost at the end of the year. I feel that you can put \$1,000.00 to \$2,000.00 in that line item whether we use it that year or not, but just in case we need it. If the school has some money not obligated maybe it could be used for graduation also. Again, make sure the parents know that they owe this money back to the school system.

Dr. Bracy: We could also organize some fundraisers.

Mr. Holloway: We could name that line item, Student Fees Contingency.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: Dr. Bracy, can you find out what is in the General Fund at the high school?

Also Mr. Holloway, can you find out where we have a pot of money that can be used for student fees?

Dr. Bracy: I understand that everybody cannot afford some things and need help, but I have a concern that the senior class has not had a fundraiser this year. Also, why are they going to Williamsburg, Kings Dominion and Bush Gardens for their senior class trip? That is because they have not done any fundraisers.

Ms. M. Edwards: If the students have not done anything there is a person who is supposed to be over the students, such as the Senior Advisor. The advisors are there to help, lead and guide the children.

Dr. Bracy: I am not talking about the kids, but if you have strong, healthy fundraisers going on that will help offset some of these things. We have had kids washing cars trying to get to summer camp in the past.

Ms. M. Edwards: This may not happen next year, but it is happening this year.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: To move this conversation forward, I wish to ask Dr. Bracy and Mr. Holloway to complete the investigation whether we get it from contingency expenditures, because we really have to certify that there is a need. We are looking at how many students have a need, how much is in the General Fund and how much of that need can be met from the school's General Fund. If you can give the Board a report on Monday so that a motion can be made to set up a contingency fund for student needs.

Dr. Bracy: We are not going to have any of our students going across the stage not in the proper regalia. That is not going to happen and we are going to find the money somewhere.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: We just want to have a systematic way of doing things by addressing the need now and do it for the future. We have to have the measures in place for the students who really need it.

Ms. Taylor: My concern is that if you helped a child last year to go off somewhere and you are helping the same child again this year for something else. I don't mind helping children, but when the focus is on one child every year I have a problem with that. There are other children out there that I know are in need.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: To make sure we are all on the same page, we will ask Dr. Bracy and Mr. Holloway to look into the contingency expenditures as well as the General fund for the school. We will come back on Monday and be prepared to make a motion and move forward.

Fuel Costs (last four years)

Mr. Holloway reviewed the fuel costs comparisons with the Board for the last four years. There was no discussion.

Cost for Classified Staff "Step Increase"

Mr. Holloway distributed copies of the Classified Staff Salary Schedule to the Board.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: Board Members, none of the Classified Staff have moved up a step in over ten years. I know we cannot address the problem all at one time, but Mr. Holloway has come up with a suggestion.

Mr. Holloway informed the Board that the Classified Staff has not moved up a step since 1999. The last time they moved up was when Mr. Cecil Stroud was hired as Interim Superintendent and a study was performed by a firm from Durham, NC. We paid them approximately \$45,000.00 for that study. Mr. Holloway reviewed the Classified Staff Salary Schedule with the Board. He stated that the administration is projecting a step increase for the Classified Staff and it would be based upon the years of service and based upon the Governor's budget. This is state money not local money provided that the Governor does not cut any of these positions.

Dr. Bracy: Wouldn't it be more prudent to wait until the Governor makes a decision?

Mr. Holloway: That could come by the end of July, but normally it is done before the first of July.

Dr. Bracy: We also need to wait until July or August and get the reversion from the state so we will know to the dollar what we have to send back. By then we will have the Governor's budget and we will know what we have to send back and after we get all of those facts we will come back to this Board and Finance Committee with those facts.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: I hear what you are saying Dr. Bracy, but don't we need to allocate that now to be put in the budget? No money will be spent until we have sent in our reversion. You are right because we need to get all of the information in order to make an intelligent decision.

Dr. Bracy: We will come back to the Board with the reversion of approximately \$612,000.00 back to the state. DPI has talked about ADM increasing and that means the state is going to cut our number of teachers again. We would have already hired these teachers and then they will send us something in October stating that this is how many teachers that have been certified for Northampton County Schools. We will have all of that information and then we will come back to the Board with the facts. I will say to the Board that the state said this is how many teachers they are going to pay out of PRC 001, but we did not know that in July and we hired VIF teachers. Now, we have to find funding to pay these teachers. That is why I want to give this Board some accurate information, accurate recommendations and have the facts on the table.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: If we allocate the money, but don't spend it we will also know whether we can do one-third, one half or the whole thing for the Classified Staff. We need to do something and move these people, because we have dealt with this problem. We cannot afford for this salary discrepancy to continue to go on.

Dr. Bracy: Mr. Matthews I believe proposed a model tonight of two Pk-8 schools and a centralized high school. A friend of mine who was Superintendent in Kansas City used these words, "we need to right size our school system." I say that to say this, if we "right size" our school system with three schools we could pay our people better. Let me make it clear, a lot of these people will not have jobs if we "right size" our school system. My heart goes out to these people.

Ms. M. Edwards: We need to get it right Dr. Bracy and we don't need to wait another year, because we have been waiting at least three years.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: I admire this Board for taking the hammer and being willing to do something that should have been done a long time ago. It is going to hurt, but we are doing the right thing.

Ms. Taylor: Even if we cannot do it all at one time can we at least pay one-third of it now. I just don't want anyone to lose his or her job, but I don't want to see us in a bind either. If we can't do it all, let us work with what we have.

Dr. Bracy: When we get the reversion and the Governor's budget, we will come in here and say this is what one third looks like, this is what a half looks like and this is what the whole thing looks like. Mr. Holloway, will they move every year on the step or is that not how it works?

Mr. Holloway: They will not move every year automatically, unless the Board puts something in place to make it happen like that.

Mr. Matthews: The main issue is not that they haven't moved it is that some are underpaid drastically as a result of them not moving.

Mr. Holloway: There are employees who are being encouraged to do better and get more education that have degrees. If we could create a scale for some of them as we do have a few who have obtained BA and MA degrees. In their request for positions, if we could think about setting up a special code so that they can get some type of additional financial recognition.

Board Information

Ms. Taylor announced that the Personnel Committee was supposed to meet tonight following this meeting, but we will reschedule the Personnel Committee Meeting for Monday, May 6, 2013 at 4:30 p.m.

- Next Regular Board Meeting – May 6, 2013 – Board Room – 5:00 p.m. (Closed Session) – Open Session beginning at approximately 6:30 p.m.
- NCSBA Community Use of Facilities Webinar – May 7, 2013 – 12 noon – 1:00 p.m. (Speaker: Janine Murphy, NCSBA Assistant Legal Counsel)
- Special Board Meeting (Personnel) – May 14, 2013 – Board Room – 5:00 p.m.

Adjournment

On a MOTION by Ms. Taylor, SECONDED by Mr. Johnson, the Board adjourned the meeting at 8:20 p.m.

Approved: August 12, 2013

Dr. Eric C. Bracy, Superintendent

Follow-up on Camp “Get Connected” Staff

Dr. Bracy informed the Board that we are here to address the questions you have about Camp Get Connected. Were our people given the opportunity to apply this year? Mr. Lassiter is going to address this issue at this time.

Mr. Lassiter: Upon the direction of the Superintendent we embarked upon investigating the answers to your questions. I first inquired about the interview selection protocol and immediately I was given links to the online application, which I personally posted for the CTE Director on April 22, 2013 on facebook. We then started looking at persons being recommended for employment and I had done that as a request so that you would be aware of who is working for you on your site this summer and receiving compensation. Of concern to us, were some out-of-district folks in positions where our internal candidates been had not been given the opportunity to apply? The answer is yes. The persons orchestrating the camp this summer made available to principals and school officials on numerous occasions, in Principals’ Meetings and emails, the application process, the coordination of the camp, the pay structure and the positions that would be available. The directions were for the Principals to share this information with their faculties in the staff newsletters, faculty meetings and PLC Meetings.

Dr. Bracy then charged me with speaking with teachers in the areas where out-of-district folks had been identified as prospects to see if these opportunities had been made available to them. The teachers were very forthright and they said the principals did not necessarily share this with them in faculty meetings and so forth, because these things were shared with us in emails. One teacher spoke and indicated that she had been personally approached by a Camp Get Connected representative for employment this summer and was advised to apply for XYZ position. The teacher did and never heard anything back from the Camp Get Connected staff. When the selections were made, she was stunned to see that she was not among the ones who were selected. She spoke with personnel from Camp Get Connected and her response that she gave to me was the person she spoke with said, “O my bad I forgot”. It was dropped until some inquiries were made and we reposted the opportunity for Camp Get Connected and of course she reactivated her application. We spoke with another person who wasn’t aware and did not have any information about the camp, but has expressed an interest. I advised the Superintendent when I concluded my investigation that there seems to have been a communication breakdown. My concern from an administrative prospective and I shared this with Dr. Bracy in February that I had some tension, heartburn, and discomfort with recommending or even not having a hand in or as part of the team with the selection of persons who are coming to the district to receive compensation and work with our children. It does not matter that they have been cleared in background checks by their LEA, it does not

matter that you may go to church with their cousin, but the bottom line is that you don't know these people and you have the right to know who is receiving compensation and serving our children. That is why we made the personnel list available to you as an information only item at the last Personnel Meeting and Board Meeting. Upon my return from PANC, I learned that the personnel list was not approved, because you had questions about the protocol. You had questions about the process that was behind Camp Get Connected.

Dr. Bracy: Mr. Lassiter, in your conversations with me would we were to re-advertise these positions?

Mr. Lassiter: On April 22, 2013, I received an email from the Coordinator asking me to repost Camp Get Connect of which I did immediately on our facebook page. Ms. Moses also put it on our district webpage. On the district webpage when you follow the link, it is a dead link so we have to get that fixed.

Ms. M. Edwards: There was a list sent out recently of the people and I would like to see that list.

Dr. Bracy: Was it the one that you saw in the Personnel Meeting?

Ms. M. Edwards: No, there was another one that came out and it showed who was hired. The people who are on this list are you saying these are the ones who have been hired?

Mr. Lassiter: Those are the ones who have been recommended to work, but they can't now. The thing that gave me grave concern was the Office of Human Resource Services, nor the Superintendent, nor the Board, would have known who was working with our kids. I mentioned to Ms. Taylor that I have grave concerns with the protocol, because we have folks coming in our district that we don't know.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: The strangest thing is that we used our district people last year.

Ms. M. Edwards: There were a couple of teachers who approached me saying, "Why weren't we given the opportunity to apply for Camp Get Connected?" They didn't know about it, because it was lost out there and we didn't know about it. Especially, when it comes to math, science and one other course and these people were coming from out-of-district. We have our own people here already teaching in those areas.

Mr. Lassiter: They were saying they did not know about the opportunity or the protocol behind it.

Ms. M. Edwards: That is why we did not approve it, because we received that information. When we have our own people who want to apply I can see them doing it versus bringing someone from another county.

Mr. Lassiter: I shared this information with the Superintendent and I advised that I would like to have seen this list come through the Office of Human Resource Services for discussion. Again, this is not to put anyone under the bus, because we have some concerns about protocol and processing.

Dr. Bracy: There should not be anybody getting a check that this Board does not know about it. No adult and no child should get paid by this Board of Education that this Board has not approved.

Mr. Lassiter: That is the conversation that Ms. Taylor and I had when I received this information. I stated that we cannot move forward with this, because you don't know these folks who will be working.

Dr. Bracy: Mr. Lassiter, I am charging you, because I cannot see every document with following through with this process.

Ms. M. Edwards: Since the new application process went out on April 22nd, when will those applications come back so that we can look at them and see the names?

Ms. Smith-Ingram: Who are the interviewers?

Mr. Lassiter: Ms. Geneva Squire and Ms. Tomeka Branch-Powell. Ms. Squire is the Coordinator and Ms. Branch-Powell is Site Administrator and those two persons interviewed face to face or by skype.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: Would you be able to participate in the interviews or hold the interviews?

Mr. Lassiter: Certainly.

Dr. Bracy: Basically, this process is starting all over again and that list means absolutely nothing.

Mr. Lassiter: With the internal candidates, are you advising that these positions be vacated or are we relying on the external candidate positions to be reposted and try to get the best available?

Ms. Smith-Ingram: My only concern is being that there was a breakdown in communication and everyone may not have had fair access to be able to apply. It seems to me that to keep it clean, simple and fair so that everyone receives notice we put one in every teacher's mailbox and open up the process again to everybody.

Mr. Taylor: We had discussed the fact that we were fine with the local ones who were hired.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: Even though they are our people, we can clearly establish the fact that everybody may not have received full notices that this was an opportunity.

Dr. Mark Rumley: Dr. Bracy, in the last meeting in closed session I don't recall whether this Board voted on the internal candidates.

Ms. Taylor: We did not vote, because we wanted all of our people to know about the opportunity.

Ms. M. Edwards: If our people don't want those positions that is fine, but I know some of them have said they were interested in summer jobs and the jobs were given to other people. They had heard about them, but did not see them advertised.

Dr. Bracy: Am I hearing from this Board that we are starting all over with the process for Camp Get Connected.

Mr. Johnson: My question is, the ones in the county who are employees now will have to re-apply? Is that what you are saying?

Dr. Bracy: That is what I am asking of the Board.

Ms. M. Edwards: I don't think they should have to re-apply?

Ms. Smith-Ingram: I will give you this scenario. I am employed with Northampton County Schools. Mr. Edwards is also an employee of Northampton County Schools. Mr. Edwards was not informed and he really wants to work in Camp Get Connected, but no one told him about it. I have an advantage over him because I got my application in because someone approached me about it. Therefore, Mr. Edwards did not get the opportunity. We want to be fair to all of our employees and I think the best and cleanest thing to do is to open up the process and have everyone re-apply all over again.

Ms. M. Edwards: That is ironic you said that because one of the persons made the statement that people were picked because they knew the people. I don't know if any other Board Member got any information outside of that or not.

Dr. Mark Rumley: Dr. Bracy, is it possible to get those interviews completed for approval at the May 14th Special Meeting? Otherwise it will be at the June Board Meeting and time for the camp to start.

Mr. Matthews: I will propose that the Board be in consensus to start the whole process all over again. It was the consensus of the Board of start the interview process over again for employees of Northampton County for Camp Get Connected.

Dr. Bracy: The camp dates are: June 24-27, July 8-11 & July 15-18, 2013. I instruct Mr. Lassiter to notify Ms. Squire in writing to start the entire process over.

Mr. Matthews: I have a little misunderstanding on the interview process. If there is a math position open and Dr. Bracy and I are both math teachers in Northampton County and we both want the job we have to interview to determine which one of us will get it. But, if there is a math position and I am a math teacher in Northampton County and Dr. Bracy is a math teacher in Warren County, why would I need to interview and shouldn't I get privilege to the position, because I am already employed by the Board? I am just curious. The concern that we had at the Personnel Meeting was that we should offer it to people who are already employed.

Ms. Smith-Ingram: Can I get the time of the May 14th Special Meeting?

Chair K. Edwards: The meeting will be at 5:00 p.m.

