

Joint Board of County Commissioners and Board of Education Committee Meeting
February 24, 2021
9:00am
Chowan County Public Safety Center
305 West Freemason Street

Minutes

A Joint committee consisting of three Chowan County Board of Commissioners and three members of the Edenton Chowan Board of Education met on Wednesday, February 24, 2021, 2019 at 9:00 am at the Chowan County Public Safety Center, 305 West Freemason St. Edenton, NC 27932.

Attendees:

County Commissioners/Staff

Chair Bob Kirby
Commissioner Ron Cummings
Commissioner Larry McLaughlin
Mr. Kevin Howard, County Manager
Susanne Stallings, Board Clerk

Board of Education/Staff

Chairman Gene Jordan
Mr. Ricky Browder
Mr. Paul Clifton
Dr. Michael Sasscer, Supt.
Sarah Hare, Board Clerk

Commissioner Chairman Bob Kirby called the Commissioners to order and welcomed all in attendance.

Chairman Gene Jordan of the Board of Education called the Board of Education to order and welcomed all in attendance.

This meeting was recorded, a copy of the audio recording is in the meeting file labeled February 24, 2021.

The public was provided a number in which to call in to listen to the meeting. Board Clerk Susanne Stallings called the roll.

Community Design Preference

Superintendent Dr. Michael Sasscer provided the Committee with a PowerPoint presentation. A copy of the PowerPoint is in the meeting file and incorporated into these minutes.

Dr. Sasscer stated he wanted to provide the Committee with the information and feedback on the community design preference. He stated that he would like to discuss financing design options for Phase 2 and have a discussion about the proposed Community pool.

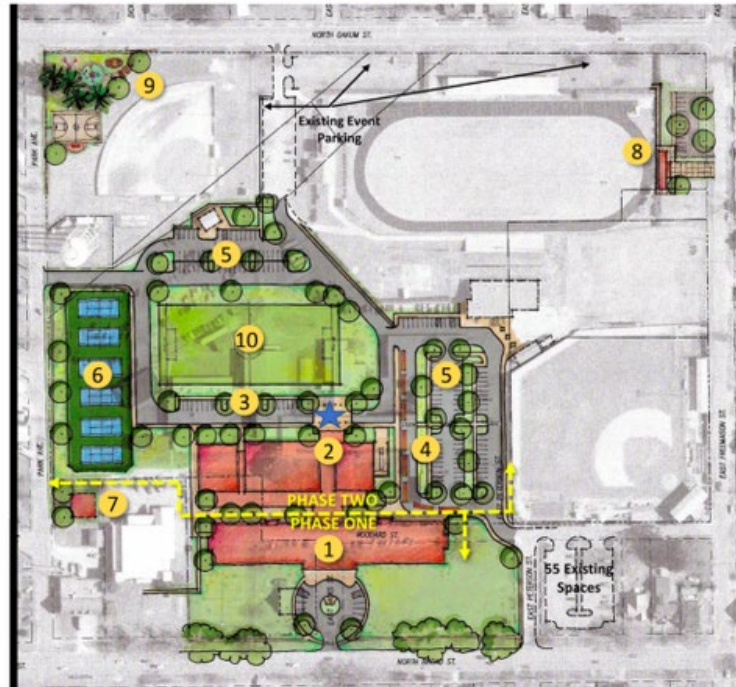
He provided information on the conceptual site plan.

Conceptual Site Map

- 1 Formal Front Entrance for new visitors only.
- ★ Star denotes school entrance and car loading area in Phase Two
- 2 Entrance for student drivers and parent drop-off/pick up
- 3 Visitor/Administration Staff Parking
- 4 Staff parking and bus loading area
- 5 Student parking
- 6 Relocated tennis courts (current court pavement is failing)
- 7 Relocated Boy Scout Hut (maintaining strong connection to school)
- 8 Proposed Field House in Phase Two
- 9 New Neighborhood Park
- 10 Proposed Multipurpose Field

Parking:

- Currently 436 spaces
- Proposed 400 spaces (accommodate Hicks Field capacity - 1,200)
- 363 + 24 + 38



He noted that there is additional parking being added to bring the current parking capacity (436 spaces) adding an additional 800 spaces to meet the 1,200 space requirement.

He asked for Board comments.

Commissioner McLaughlin commented on the use of the proposed rear greenspace to maximize space.

Dr. Sasscer stated that there is room for over 70 tents in that space.

Commissioner McLaughlin discussed his concerns over fire access in the circular entranceway.

Dr. Sasscer stated that the fire department needs access all the way around the building.

Board of Education member Ricky Browder stated the area allows for more access and greenspace.

Chair Kirby asked about the greenspace will be used for parking for Hicks field.

Dr. Sasscer stated that there is no plan currently to use the greenspace for parking.

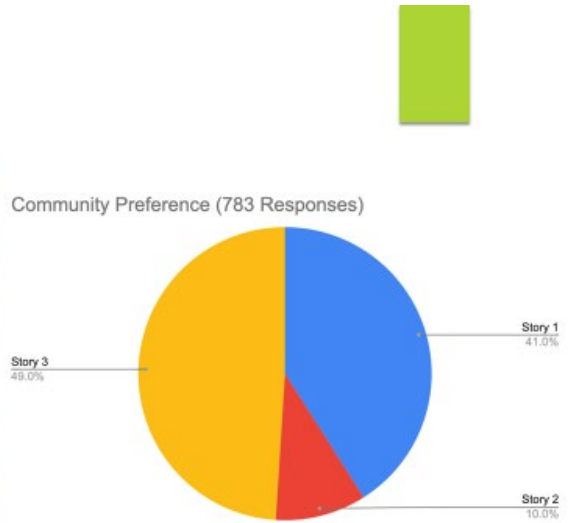
Chair Kirby stated he prefers that no parking be allowed on the greenspace.

DESIGN STORIES



Community Response

Online Survey
 In-person meetings
 Storefront display & survey Flyers



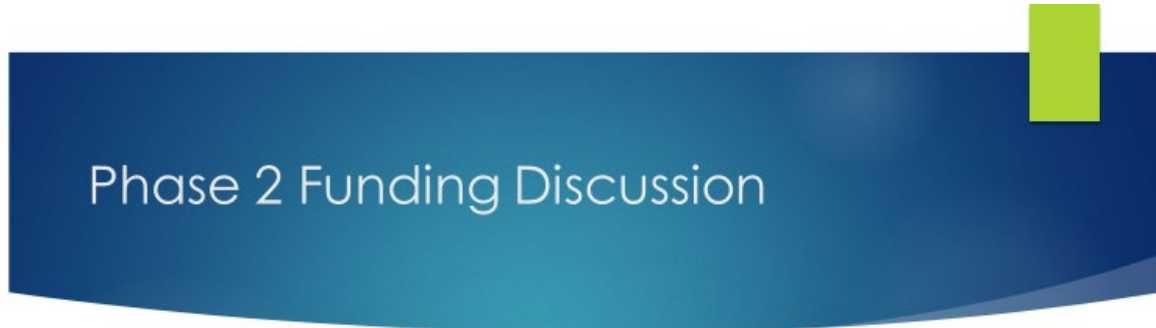
Dr. Sasscer discussed the community forums about the project. He stated that the three designs were shared and the feedback preferred the more modern story. He stated there has been a lot of response to the designs. He stated that the architects are looking at a design that will speak to both of the top two preferences.

Commissioner Cummings asked about a per square foot cost.

Dr. Sasscer stated that the architects have indicated they are keeping the pricing comparable.

Commissioner McLaughlin asked if the preference selections were made by adults or children.





Dr. Sasscer stated that he is not able to tell that.



USDA Loan or Bond Referendum?

Dr. Sasscer stated that funding has been secured for Phase I however there have been questions about Phase II. He stated he had the architects put together any implications for the phased design. The following slides detail the implications of the separate phased designs.

DESIGN IMPLICATIONS – PHASE I & PHASE II

BUILDING SYSTEMS	
 ELECTRICAL	<p>Just Phase I: Smaller service size, with a dedicated service entrance. Potential Phase II: Would bring in another service when this would happen. All at once: Single service entrance with large enough size for entire facility.</p>
 FIRE PROTECTION	<p>Just Phase I: One service entrance, with potentially a fire pump. Potential Phase II: Would bring in another FP water service, with potentially a second pump All at once: Single service with a pump sized for the entire facility</p>
 DOMESTIC WATER	<p>Same concept as Fire Protection water service, but without the fire pump</p>
 GEO FIELD	<p>Benefit of doing it all at once would be the remobilization of the drilling rigs. There is a large cost to get rigs in and set up.</p>

Commissioner McLaughlin asked about some plans that had a retention pond, he asked if that has been changed.

Dr. Sasscer stated the multiuse field and more greenspace, helps to reduce the stormwater cost/need.

Board members discussed the use of the field house

DESIGN IMPLICATIONS – PHASE I & PHASE II



CONSTRUCTION

- Extended timeline and increased costs by duplicating efforts:
 - Re-advertising for bids
 - Multiple contractor mobilizations and restaffing for every scope of work
 - Removing and reimplementing safety precautions (specifically for students, teachers, staff, and visitors)
- Potential loss of contractor experience (i.e. rebidding means potentially bringing in new contractors)
- Inflation in construction material costs (5% annual average over the last five years)
- Inflation in labor costs (potential increase in federal minimum wage)

DESIGN IMPLICATIONS – PHASE I & PHASE II



CONSTRUCTION

- Extend total project duration by 18 to 24 months
- Increase project cost by \$5 MM to \$6 MM due to construction cost
- Increase project cost by \$1 MM due to increase in labor, technical, and dual permitting costs
- Increased duration of construction impacts to students and community

Chair Kirby discussed the need to put increased property taxes as a potential implication.

Mr. Howard stated that the debt payoff schedule of the County would impact the County's ability to borrow.

Commissioner Cummings stated his concern over the impact to tax payers by doing both projects.

Dr. Sasscer asked if the \$20 million for Phase I, he stated that the School would not draw on the loan until occupancy in 2025.

Mr. Howard stated that 2025 is when the County is free of debt. He stated if you can phase it that way maybe it would work. He stated the heaviest debt is paid off last on the County's debt schedule.

Dr. Sasscer stated that the County would be looking at \$30 Million for Phase II. He stated he is of the understanding that the debt would not be incurred until 2025.

Mr. Howard stated that USDA may require interim financing. He stated it may be able to be worked out however timing would be key. He stated he is unsure of the procedures currently for USDA.

Chair Kirby noted that there will be bills forwarded for payment during construction of Phase II. He stated that those bills will have to be paid.

Mr. Howard stated that you typically make an interest payment for what you have drawn down so far. He stated that depending on the length of time you may not have to make a construction payment until occupancy.

Chair Kirby noted the interest payment is part of the cost. He stated his concern was a year and a half ago the total cost was \$45 million and now it is \$50 million.

Chair Jordan stated that he recalled \$49 million.

Mr. Howard stated that the \$45 million was an early number.

Chair Kirby asked if the school could be done for \$45 million, he encouraged the Superintendent to look into getting the cost down to \$45 million. He stated that it is important to reign the cost in. He asked if the \$49 million includes contingencies and stated his concern is the total cost will go up to \$55 million. He noted that he and Vice Chair McLaughlin have forwarded a letter to the local representatives requesting the additional \$11 million that the General Assembly pulled from funding.

Commissioner McLaughlin stated his concern over the unknown mechanics for financing.

Mr. Howard stated that Davenport and Associates will help the County with this projection.

The Committee recommended that staff gather the information on the procedure for utilizing USDA funding and the procedures for such.

Board of Education member Paul Clifton discussed the interest rates with USDA being low and bond rates are unknown.

Mr. Howard stated he has a conference call with Davenport and will have additional information soon.

Dr. Sasscer stated he is of the impression that the timeline with UDSA is about 9 months. He stated that if the Committee agrees he will work with Mr. Howard, the architect and put together financing information to present to the committee.

Auditorium - 399 or Larger

- ▶ DPI only recommends going up to seating for 600
- ▶ Using total size of 8,545 times \$375/s.f., cost is \$3,204,375
- ▶ Only increasing theatre and holding all other additional areas the same increases the total size to 10,345 s.f.
- ▶ Using total size of 10,345 times \$375/s.f. times = \$3,879,375

- ▶ *Summary – Net increase of about \$750,000 to add 200 seats while holding all other areas the same*

Discussion Points

- ▶ Professional input was solicited and received from fellow educators and other theater arts professionals (band, theater, and theater management and consultation)
 - ▶ Suggested a facility of no less than 500 up to 750 seats for both single performance and multiple performance contracts
- ▶ If school use only, then 399 falls short of housing your ADM.
- ▶ If for school and local rentals, space will be tight and barely adequate.
- ▶ If for a balance and meeting school, local, culture/entertainment/tourism, then it needs to be 500 to 750
- ▶ The proposed stage area of 2500 s.f. and the pit at 500 s.f. was sufficient

Commissioner McLaughlin discussed the use of Swain Auditorium and its current capacity noting that previous events at Swain have only been at half capacity or less. He stated he did not know if increasing the capacity at the auditorium would be beneficial.

Chair Kirby noted that the gym has a capacity of 1,000 that that provides additional capacity.

Community Pool

- ▶ Significant community impact
 - ▶ Access to natural environment / water
 - ▶ Swim test (early education)
 - ▶ JAHHS Swim team
 - ▶ Vidant Health – Sports Medicine and Rehabilitation
 - ▶ Recreation

Chair Kirby stated that he would like to know where the pool falls in the overall scheme for funding. He stated it has not been on the radar as far as County capital. He stated a new fire station is needed because the current station is not adequate. He stated that a new high school is needed. He stated Chowan Middle School has upcoming needs. He said a Jail and a Water Plant are needed and the County's EMS Station has needs. He asked if this is more important than the items he has listed. He stated the cost is \$11 million and the annual upkeep has to be budgeted forever.

Chair Gene Jordan discussed his concerns over the current expense the school has for transporting students to Elizabeth City. He stated his concerns over children who do not know how to swim in this County that is surrounded by water. He stated that addressing the problem of drowning is very important.

Chair Kirby stated that the high school is a need. He stated if there was a need for a pool was greater than the fire station and middle school. He stated he did not feel this is an advanced need.

Chair Jordan asked if it is necessary to develop a plan to get a pool and the lifetime costs for maintenance of a pool.

Board of Education member Browder noted that many community developments have a pool and the upkeep of the pools are maintained by Homeowners Associations. He stated that dues or fees could be considered to pay for the pool.

The Board members discussed the use of fees at other community pools.

Chair Jordan asked if the Board of Education could look into information for the swimming pool such as cost, upkeep and user fees.

The Committee discussed the next committee meeting date for March 22, 2021 at 9:00am.

Dr. Sasscer stated that they will present on a USDA loan.

Chair Kirby asked for any information that the Manager can provide information from Davenport.

Board members asked that the options include with and without a pool.

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.