

February 21, 2024

**MINUTES OF MECKLENBURG COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
BOCC – Special Meeting**

The Board of Commissioners of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education met in an Informal Joint Session in Room 267 of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center located at 600 East Fourth Street, Charlotte, North Carolina, at 1:00 pm on February 21, 2024.

ATTENDANCE

Present: Chair George Dunlap, Vice Chair Mark Jerrell, Commissioners Leigh Altman, Patricia “Pat” Cotham, Arthur Griffin Jr., Vilma D. Leake, and Laura Meier
County Manager Dena Diorio
County Attorney Tyrone C. Wade
Clerk to the Board Kristine Smith
Deputy Clerk to the Board Arlissa Eason

Also in Attendance: School Board Chair Stephanie Sneed, School Board Members Thelma Byers-Bailey, Lisa Cline, Melissa Easley, Liz Monterrey Duvall, Summer Nunn, Gregory “Dee” Rankin, Lenora Shipp, and Monty Witherspoon, Student Advisor Ailen De Bonis, Superintendent Crystal L. Hill, CMS CFO Kelly Kluttz,

Absent: Commissioners Elaine Powell, and Susan Rodriguez-McDowell

-INFORMAL SESSION-

CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Dunlap and School Board Chair Sneed called the meeting to order, which was followed by introductions and invocation, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag; after which the matters below were addressed.

24-0105 Joint Meeting Between Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners and Charlotte

Mecklenburg Board of Education

Background: Superintendent Crystal L. Hill, CFO Kelly Kluttz, and Chief Strategy and Innovation Officer Beth Thompson presented on the phase-out of Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding.

Comments

Commissioner Griffin asked about the difference between reading growth and comprehension. Ms. Thompson explained the differences between stages of comprehension and growth.

Commissioner Griffin asked about the relation between ESSER investments and grade-level proficiency. Ms. Thompson explained that the implementation of new standards had improved outcomes.

Commissioner Cotham asked about the loss of students and teachers since 2020. Dr. Hill said that student enrolment had been flat since 2020 and that she would provide detailed data.

Commissioner Meier asked about data presented on science outcomes. Dr. Hill explained that projected science outcome growth had improved in recent years.

Commissioner Jerrell asked about data on learning loss. Ms. Thompson explained the origin of the information from a recent report from the State government.

Commissioner Leake asked about communicating the CMS' data to parents. Ms. Thompson said that the best information was individual student benchmarks, which were given to parents once per quarter.

Commissioner Leake asked about the continuation of K-8 schools. Ms. Thompson said that an ongoing comprehensive review was underway, but no current changes were planned.

Commissioner Leake asked about the number of failing schools. Ms. Thompson said that the State government at the time designated 58 as low-performing.

Commissioner Griffin asked about the Board of Education's college and career readiness goals for graduates. School Board Chair Sneed confirmed that the Board had those goals, as defined by the State government. Ms. Thompson explained that the CMS would have liked to meet and exceed these goals.

Background: County Manager Diorio presented a budget overview for fiscal years 2024 and 2025 (see PDF attached).

Comments

School Board Member Monterrey Duvall asked about changes to the forecast between 2024 and 2025. *County Manager Diorio explained that the changes mostly came from lower sales tax revenue.*

School Board Chair Sneed asked about the difference between growth revenue and fund balance. *County Manager Diorio explained that the fund balance couldn't be used for recurring costs.*

Chair Sneed asked about priorities identified from community surveys. *County Manager Diorio explained that education was not included in the recent survey because it always ranks at the top of priorities.*

School Board Member Rankin asked about the CMS fund balance in the FY 2024 budget. *County Manager Diorio explained that if the BOCC were presented with a one-time cost from CMS, they could consider it.*

Commissioner Altman asked about the provision for CMS building repair in the recent County budget. *County Manager Diorio said that it was provided via debt service.*

School Board Member Byers-Bailey asked about the auto loan stretcher system and continued sign-on bonus items in the budget. *County Manager Diorio said that those items were for the paramedic service.*

School Board Member Byers-Bailey asked if the Cabarrus Rowan Community Health Center sprinter van was in the budget. *County Manager Diorio explained that it supported community members in Mecklenburg County.*

School Board Member Nunn asked about support for technology upgrades. *County Manager Diorio said that they were for County projects.*

School Board Member Nunn asked about fund balance requests from CMS in the current year. *County Manager Diorio explained that the County had not received any requests that year.*

School Board Member Shipp asked about the definition of fund balance. *County Manager Diorio explained that it would be exhausted when the fund balance reached zero.*

School Board Member Monterrey Duvall asked about CMS project funding. *County Manager Diorio explained that there wasn't a specific line item for projects but that fund balance monies supported CMS priorities.*

February 21, 2024

School Board Member Easley asked about affordable housing funding. *County Manager Diorio explained the structure of the County's initiatives.*

School Board Member Nunn asked about loss of revenue due to the loss of federal inmate revenue. *County Manager Diorio explained that the Sheriff made the decision due to problems with staffing at the County Jail.*

School Board Member Rankin asked about a revenue decline in the next budget years. *County Manager Diorio confirmed the necessity of budget prioritization in the coming years.*

School Board Member Cline asked about the change in property revaluation. *County Manager Diorio confirmed that the revaluation would affect projected revenue.*

School Board Member Byers-Bailey asked about the Three Sisters Market. *County Manager Diorio explained the reorganization of the Market.*

School Board Member Sneed asked about the County's business partners mentioned in the budget. *County Manager Diorio explained that those partners included CMS, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Library, Medic, and Central Piedmont Community College.*

Chair Sneed asked about supporting employees through fund balances. *County Manager Diorio explained that fund balances could be used for bonuses as they were non-recurring.*

Commissioner Leake asked about CMS's wrap-around services. *County Manager Diorio said that she would provide a list.*

Commissioner Meier asked about state law regarding CMS funding. *County Manager Diorio explained that CMS must be funded at least at the previous year's level, barring general budget reductions.*

Background: Dr. Hill, Ms. Kluttz, and COO Brian F. Schultz presented on the CMS budget planning and development process (see PDF attached).

Comments

Commissioner Griffin asked about the determination of success in the enrolled, enlistment, and employed goals. *Chair Sneed said that additional information behind those goals would require the collection of further data, which staff was currently working to define. Dr. Hill said that those specifics would be outlined in the upcoming strategic plan. She explained that the School Board's goals were defined by state standards.*

School Board Member Rankin discussed the enrollment, enlistment, and employment goals. Commissioner

February 21, 2024

Griffin said that he thought the CMS' goals should be higher. Chair Dunlap stated that it was the responsibility of the School Board to set goals for CMS, and the responsibility of the BOCC was to decide on funding for the CMS to help reach those goals.

Commissioner Altman asked for an explanation of the evolution of the CMS' goals over time. *Dr. Hill outlined CMS' four older goals, which are expiring that year.*

Commissioner Altman asked about the hiring and retention of social workers. *Deputy Superintendent Dr. Melissa Balknight explained CMS' social workers.*

Commissioner Altman asked about the safety evaluation of each campus. *Mr. Schultz outlined the parts of the safety evaluation process.*

Commissioner Cotham expressed concern that the hourly wages recommended in the CMS budget were too low.

Commissioner Leake expressed concern about a variety of issues.

Commissioner Jerrell said that CMS' goals couldn't be solved in one budget cycle but rather needed to be addressed in the long term. *Dr. Hill highlighted the CMS' multi-year plan.*

Commissioner Jerrell asked about violence and violence prevention. *Dr. Hill outlined CMS' strategies to address violence.*

School Board Member Witherspoon addressed issues facing hourly-paid employees in the CMS.

Chair Dunlap explained that the CMS presented its needs and the County presented its financial situation; adding that although there was a gap between the two positions, each would need to work to find common ground.

School Board Member Rankin asked about the status of CMS campuses rated very poor or poor. *Mr. Schultz gave an explanation of the sites. County Manager Diorio explained that deferred maintenance spending had been provided in the past.*

Chair Dunlap suggested that the joint meeting begin a period of open dialogue between the School Board and the BOCC.

February 21, 2024

Commissioner Griffin discussed potential problems for students who do not excel in the enrolled, enlisted, and employed goals. *School Board Member Easley explained the process behind creating the goals.*

Commissioner Altman asked about the use of goals and guardrails in the reduction of achievement gaps in the new strategic plan. *Chair Sneed said that those goals and guardrails would be used to guide all of the Board's actions in the future.*

Commissioner Altman said that data about the closure of achievement gaps would be helpful for the BOCC in the future. Chair Sneed and Chair Dunlap outlined the ways in which this information would be shared in the future.

School Board Member Nunn mentioned that the Board had moved away from point-in-time data towards tracking changes over time.

Commissioner Leake discussed the significance of close cooperation between the BOCC and BOE.

School Board Member Shipp said that it was important to avoid overly negative narratives about the achievement of the CMS' children. She said that proficiency, especially in literacy, was more vital than college and career readiness.

Commissioner Jerrell said that it was a very productive joint meeting.

School Board Member Rankin thanked everyone for their participation in the meeting.

Commissioner Griffin emphasized the need for a close relationship between the County and CMS.

Chair Dunlap and Chair Sneed thanked the participants for their contributions to the meeting.

Kristine Smith, Clerk to the Board

George Dunlap, Chair