

April 21, 2015

At the special meeting of the Board of Supervisors of Prince Edward County, held at the Court House, thereof, on Tuesday, the 21st day of April, 2015; at 7:00 p.m., there were present:

Pattie Cooper-Jones

Calvin L. Gray

Robert M. Jones

Charles W. McKay

Howard F. Simpson

C. Robert Timmons, Jr.

Jerry R. Townsend

Jim R. Wilck

Also present: Wade Bartlett, County Administrator; Sarah Elam Puckett, Assistant County Administrator; and Dr. David Smith, Superintendent, Prince Edward County Schools.

Chairman Simpson called the recessed meeting to order. Dr. Holcombe offered the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

In Re: Public Hearing: Fiscal Year 2016 County Budget

Chairman Simpson announced this was the date and time scheduled for a public hearing on the Fiscal Year 2016 County Budget. Notice of this hearing was advertised according to law in the Friday April 10, 2015 and Friday, April 17, 2015 editions of THE FARMVILLE HERALD, a newspaper published in the County of Prince Edward.

Chairman Simpson asked Mr. Wade Bartlett, County Administrator, for opening remarks.

Mr. Bartlett thanked all for coming and stated he wished to clear some misconceptions he has been made aware of recently. He stated that it has been said that local funding to the schools has been cut in the past. This is not correct. The Board of Supervisors has increased funding to the schools nearly every year for the last 20 years. Mr. Bartlett said that from 2007 to 2014, the most current audited year, the County Operations and Management Fund increased from \$9.2 million to \$9.9 million, while the local school

funding has increased from \$6.8 million in 2007 to \$8.3 million in 2014, an increase of approximately \$1.5 million, or 23%. Mr. Bartlett added that due to the decrease in debt at the school, the local funding available for operations to the schools actually has increased by \$1.9 million.

Mr. Bartlett said the school's State funding has decreased and encouraged the audience to speak with their State Delegates and State Senator. Federal funding has also decreased by over a million dollars just in the last year. School funding has decreased but it is not because of the Board of Supervisors, who have tried to offset those cuts. The County taxpayers cannot make up the state and federal cuts that have been made.

Mr. Bartlett said the Required Local Effort is an attempt by the State to level the playing field; it is the minimum the State expects each County to fund. Prince Edward County funds its schools 95.62% greater than the minimum set, and is in the top third in funding in the state. Prince Edward County also spent \$10,987 per pupil in FY 2014; 71% of localities provide less per pupil than Prince Edward County. Mr. Bartlett stated it is important the citizens understand that local funding has not been cut.

Dr. David Smith, Superintendent of the Prince Edward County Schools, asked the Board to consider the hard work and effort that went into the school budget to make the budget request locally level funded. He said cuts included seven teaching positions, two instructional aides, and \$58,000 in instructional materials and supplies. Additional cuts in positions, services and programs would need to be made if funding is cut further.

Dr. Smith said questions were asked regarding the declining ADM and where the students are going; access to that data is no longer as complete, but in 2008, the Triennial School Census reported 180 went to Fuqua, 68 to Charlotte County, 20 to Appomattox County, 11 to Nottoway County, 5 to Cumberland County, 36 to New Life Academy, and 73 were home-schooled. He continued, stating that in 2014-2015, 79 are going to Charlotte County, 25 to Appomattox County, 146 are home-schooled and 20 have a religious exemption in part due to the growth of online course offerings. He added that this year, 34 students come to Prince Edward County schools from other counties, not counting the children of staff members who are able to come to Prince Edward County.

Dr. Smith then stated there are 32 aides division-wide: 16 are in the Elementary school, seven are in the Middle school and nine are in the High school. Of the 16 at the Elementary school, six of the aides

are in the Pre-K program, one in each classroom. Three of the aides are in the Accelerated Reader program helping students with reading skills; seven are in Special Education classes. At the Middle school, there is one aide in the in-school suspension program and the other six are in Special Education classrooms. In the High school, one coordinates in school suspension, seven are Special Education aides, and one at New Horizons Academy.

Adam Wolf, President of the Prince Edward Education Association, stated the Prince Edward County teachers do more than is required and requested the funding not be cut. He stated the elimination of funding would mean higher class sizes, fewer programs and less materials and supplies. Mr. Wolf stated the children deserve a high-quality education and invited the Board members to the school and to observe the classes.

John Dudley, Hampden District, urged the Board to fully fund the schools and stated Prince Edward County cannot construct its budget on the needs of other counties. He presented several statistics comparing Prince Edward County with Appomattox County:

Prince Edward County	36% non-white
Appomattox County	23% non-white
Prince Edward County	6% ESL
Appomattox County	1.2%
Prince Edward County	65% homeowners
Appomattox County	80% homeowners
Prince Edward County	\$17,000 per capita income
Appomattox County	\$23,600 per capita income

Mr. Dudley stated that with Prince Edward County's history of under-funding its schools; despite having numerous teachers recognized for their outstanding work, Prince Edward County's schools have not shaken the poor reputation it earned decades ago; and many parents do not want their children in public schools as economically, socially and racially diverse as Prince Edward County schools. He requested the Board look at the County's unique needs before making their decision.

Heather Edwards, Farmville District, said the statements made by members of the Board of Supervisors regarding the schools being closed two generations ago cannot be cited to explain the current struggles in the schools, and felt that statement is incorrect and insensitive. She stated steps must be taken

to move beyond Prince Edward County's unique past as a healed community and requested the Board fully fund the schools.

Barbara Rice, Hampden District, stated she is a teacher in the Prince Edward County schools, and told the Board of several current programs, including a garden and aquaponics. She said these may not be able to succeed if there are budget cuts.

Sam Detrick and Ben Edwards, students in the Prince Edward County schools, expressed their appreciation for the teachers and their concerns about funding being cut.

Barbara Arieti, Prince Edward County Elementary School Counselor, invited the Board members to spend a day with the teachers to see the challenges they face daily. She stated School Administrators and School Board members also don't visit the schools. She stated several issues facing the schools, including lack of aides, infrastructure needing repair and lack of water in one of the Elementary school buildings for three months.

Kelly Malone Dudley, Hampden District, asked the Board to find a different way to balance the budget; she thanked Mr. Bartlett for his opening statements and stated she understands the difficulties but Prince Edward County is failing and will continue if the Board turns its back on education. She asked the Board to think differently to find other solutions. She encouraged the citizens and the Board of Supervisors to voice the concerns to the State.

Queen Lyles, Hampden District, stated that cutting the funding will move the school backwards and urged the Board to think of the children in need that may fall through the cracks if the funding is cut.

Harriett Fentress, Leigh District, expressed her concern about the odds facing the children, and requested the Board provide funding to the Virso Recreation Center to provide a place to develop the children's self-esteem. She stated those in the Virso area are unable to pay for transportation to the YMCA and into Farmville for the activities provided in town.

Bryan Lucie, Leigh District, stated he is an 11th grade student and requested support for the Virso Community Center; he thanked the Board for what it has already done and its support to make the Virso area a better place.

David Magill, Farmville District, asked what it would take for the Board to not cut the school budget. He thanked Mr. Bartlett for his opening remarks and asked what it will take for the Board of

Supervisors to understand the ramifications of the budget cuts. He stated Prince Edward County is not like the other localities in that it has a higher incidence of children on free or reduced-price lunches. He stated the education must be judged not by its being efficient but by its effectiveness. He said the school is efficient; its accreditation suggests improving effectiveness. He said cuts from the local level now will reduce and retard this progress. He said the Board of Supervisors needs to fund strong schools that will attract business and commerce to the area.

Caroline Shoenthal, Farmville District, stated Prince Edward County Schools have dedicated, caring teachers and diversity in the school population. She stated the SOLs are one piece of the puzzle and most parents and teachers agree that high stakes testing comes at a very high price. She stated it is the Board's responsibility to fund these programs.

Ellie Shoenthal, Farmville District, stated she is a fifth grader at the Prince Edward County Middle school, and participates in the Leader In Me program. She said if the school cuts funding, class sizes could be bigger, they may lose teachers and electives. She asked the Board to reconsider cutting the funding and come up with another solution.

Sarah McElfresh, Farmville District, stated the perception is that the Board does not care about funding the schools. She encouraged the Board to not just observe the classrooms but to volunteer their time.

Bruce Davis, Farmville District, stated cutting the school budget will affect all employees of the schools, and will include the after school activities. He said these after school activities provide more than fun but provides incentive to keep their grades up. He stated everyone has an obligation to fund the schools as much as they can.

Teri Kidd, Farmville District, expressed her displeasure regarding the proposed cuts to the budget; she stated cutting the budget this year and over the next four or five years is unacceptable. She said that Board is the leadership that is trusted to hold the highest ideals.

Lucas Dudley, Farmville District, stated he is a fifth grader and is concerned that the budget cuts may eliminate track and programs at the Career Technical Center.

Joy Speakes, Buffalo District, thanked Mr. Bartlett for his opening remarks and stated that at 12 years old, she was fighting the same battle for teachers and materials for a good education. She asked if any

of the parents had been polled regarding why their children attend other county's schools and what it would take to bring them back. She asked the Board to reconsider the funding cuts.

Edna Lee, Leigh District, asked that the Board consider supporting the Virso Recreation Center.

Lonnie Calhoun, Buffalo District, urged the Board to support the school budget request and asked the Board and School Board members to work together so the decisions are grounded regarding the complex realities of how schools function. He asked the School Board to attend school functions, and asked that the members of State Education Finance Committee be invited to inform the Board on how State funding is connected to local financial support. He stated he is opposed to the proposed decrease as incentive to improve performance or achievement of the school administration. He stated he is concerned that the per pupil cost is substantially higher than surrounding localities, adding that the administration could set yearly targets to gradually get the per pupil expenditures more in line with peers. Mr. Calhoun praised the school band, the Tech Center, and the students in the AP classes. He asked the Board for level funding.

Peggy Epperson, Director of the Farmville-Prince Edward Community Library, requested the Board to approve the increase in funding for a raise for the Library employees. She reviewed the hours of operation and the training and services offered by the Library.

Pamela Venable, Hampden District, expressed her concerns regarding the budget cuts; she stated the programs and opportunities need to be funded. She requested the Board to fully fund the schools.

Chairman Simpson thanked all for attending the meeting and especially thanked the children that were in the audience and participated.

There being no one further wishing to speak, Chairman Simpson closed the public hearing.

On motion of Supervisor Cooper-Jones, seconded by Supervisor Gray, and adopted by the following vote:

Aye:	Pattie Cooper-Jones	Nay: None
	Calvin L. Gray	
	Robert M. Jones	
	Charles W. McKay	
	Howard F. Simpson	
	C. Robert Timmons, Jr.	
	Jerry R. Townsend	
	Jim R. Wilck	

the meeting was recessed at 8:27 p.m. until Thursday, April 30, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. for a Budget Work Session and Adoption of the County & School Budget, and to Set Tax Rates.