

**Minutes  
Joint Meeting  
Anson County Board of Education  
Anson County Board of County Commissioners  
Tuesday, April 28, 2020, 10:00 a.m.  
Virtual Go To Meeting**

The Anson County Board of Education hosted a virtual joint meeting with the Anson County Board of County Commissioners on Tuesday, April 28, 2020, at 10:00 a.m. Members present virtually from Board of County Commissioners were Lawrence Gatewood, Jim Sims, Ross Streater, Vancine Sturdivant and Jarvis Woodburn (Bobby Sikes and Harold Smith were absent). Others present virtually from the County Government were Barron Monroe (County Manager) and Cary Garner (Finance Officer).

Those present virtually from the Board of Education were Marilyn Bennett, Lisa Davis, Carol Gibson, Frank Liles, Bobbie Little, Gay Lookabill, Beulah Pratt, George Truman and Mike Turner. Other school personnel present were Michael Freeman (Superintendent), Howard McLean (Associate Superintendent), Marty Godwin (Assistant Superintendent – virtual attendance), Holly Berry (Finance Officer), Mike Napier (Administrator: Maintenance), Pete Swails (Administrator: Technology), Mike Flake (Board Attorney) and Anne Hyatt (Board Clerk).

**Welcome and Opening Remarks**

George Truman welcomed all in attendance.

**Call to Order**

Dr. Truman called the Anson County Board of Education Meeting at 10:00 a.m.

**Invocation**

Dr. George Truman gave the Invocation.

**Adopt Agenda**

Upon a motion by Frank Liles, seconded by Lisa Davis the board unanimously adopted the agenda. Motion carried.

**New Anson Middle School/Presentation**

(Michael Freeman, Superintendent)

(Morris-Berg Architects & EDIFICE General Contractors)

Morris-Berg Architects & EDIFICE General Contractors shared an overview via slideshow presentation on the new Anson Middle School.

Mr. Freeman started the conversation by sharing significant data that he said got us to this point today. He explained in August 2018, the board of education and county commissioners agreed a new Anson Middle School needed to be constructed and submitted for a capital needs grant that was awarded a several months later. Mr. Freeman further explained, at the recommendation of the board of county commissioners, a task force was formed with commissioners and board of education members represented. He said those appointed to the committee were Jarvis Woodburn (commissioner), Vancine Sturdivant (commissioner), Dr. George Truman (board of education) and Lisa Davis (board of education). Mr. Freeman mentioned others that served on the task force committee included Barron Monroe (County Manager), Cary Garner (County Finance Officer), Superintendent Michael Freeman and Holly Berry (School Finance Officer). He explained that the task force committee would explore options collaboratively. Mr. Freeman said the next request the commissioners made was that Superintendent Freeman have a conversation with representatives from Moseley Architects which is a firm the county had worked with previously. The commissioners shared a document with Mr. Freeman dated August 2018 with a cost projection of this new school which is very much in line with other firms that we

have been engaged with and it is clear what was presented by Moseley Architects are in line with current figures that are involved with the school construction business. Mr. Freeman further explained he has Morris-Berg and EDIFICE present to share cost information and a design for a new middle school as well as potential ways for cost-saving options. Mr. Freeman said the hope and desire is we will receive additional school construction funds from the state in the future. Mr. Freeman turned the screen over to Morris-Berg to share the presentation.

Tarik Hameed with Morris-Berg shared a presentation of the rendering of the school with meeting participants. Tarik said they have been aggressively working on the project for a little over a year now and explained the project is ready to get moving with construction. Tarik stated he has felt like this has been an engaged process while involving many key people in the process from school staff to the task force representatives to visiting the prototype school. After Tarik Hameed's presentation, Mike Calisto took over from EDIFICE and shared his background and the numerous projects he has worked on with Morris-Berg for the past 17 years with most being K-12 projects. Mike gave information on the construction process and how they would tap into the local market as much as possible with the project. He also shared similar projects across North and South Carolina and their cost summary as well as inflation data over the years. Mr. Freeman shared, as it relates to the facility study slide, the facility study was a law mandated for 10 school districts and Anson County was one of them. He stated the firm chosen for the study was chosen by the general assembly and was not generated from local stake holders and the study is an unbiased opinion. He said he wanted to remind everyone of this due to the cost involved on the slide regarding renovations (cost of renovation vs. new construction slide).

Mr. Freeman reminded the group there was a recommendation early in the process for the board to go with a prototype design due to cost-savings and Mr. Freeman said they went that route and have saved a significant amount of money. Mike Calisto shared cost-savings information if the auditorium, football field, or track areas were removed. Mr. Freeman stated our current enrollment as of today is 728 students and approximately 734 students would be enrolled at the time of the opening of the new school. He said he has heard there are some that think the enrollment is around 600 students and that is not true.

Dr. Truman asked what it would cost to have the football field crowned and drained. Mike said it would be \$600,000 approximately but it would include no lighting and would be daytime use only.

Jarvis Woodburn asked about the comparison of renovating vs. new construction slide and the current size and why does the school design have to be much larger than what we currently have at Anson Middle.

Mr. Freeman said the current design is based on 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching and learning requirements that involve a lot of technology needs, the auxiliary gym and auditorium which is becoming the norm in most middle schools. Mr. Freeman said there was a different rubric that was used back in the day when the current middle school was built. Todd Berg with Morris-Berg said Mr. Freeman covered it well and the base line design was a prototype school which was Mt. Pleasant. Todd said Anson Middle School was originally designed as a high school and middle schools are not designed that way which may contribute to additional square footage. Mr. Freeman said, as he has mentioned at commissioner's meetings before, there has never been a middle school designed in approximately 100 years in Anson County with a true middle school design concept.

Mr. Woodburn said there is probably differences between elementary and middle schools and the price difference is \$30+ million compared to \$52 million. Mr. Woodburn asked where that cost difference comes from. Mr. Freeman said he has researched that as well and there is a definite difference in price point. He said citizen Lawrence Gatewood (at that time) did a price point summary of an elementary school and middle school and the research showed there is a definite price difference between elementary and middle school construction. Todd Berg said the site work is a big difference with athletic fields, outbuildings, lighting, etc and those things could all be a driver to that cost difference. Todd also said adding an auditorium, gym and even science labs are a cost difference that you wouldn't see in elementary schools. Mr. Woodburn said the cost is an issue and he's trying to see what it would take to make it affordable. Mr. Freeman thanked Mr. Woodburn for his comments and questions and said the dialogue is important. Mr. Freeman said we should all continue

lobbying with legislatures to help with school construction. He said he knows there could be a possible \$11 million more that could come from the state and adding that with the \$20 million we currently have (\$15 million from the grant and \$5 million from the county) would help tremendously. Mr. Freeman said he does not recommend that we delay the process because we would have to end up paying more. He said he stood before the commissioners around 15 years ago discussing a new middle school and the prices then were much lower. Mr. Freeman said he is pleased to hear the dialogue today.

Carol Ann Gibson asked about the Rock Hill Middle School and the sizing for the student population. She asked why our design is much bigger. Todd Berg said the Rock Hill School is one they had nothing to do with but they will try to track down an answer to that question. He said it could be the gym or auditorium that could drive up the square footage when you compare to other schools.

Mr. Barron Monroe asked to go back to Mr. Woodburn's questions and he said they are concerned about the \$11 million not being around the next budget year for the state. Mr. Monroe said no one will dispute the need for a new school but he asked what else is out there to fund this middle school. Mr. Freeman said he is not aware of other options because typically that is channeled through the board of county commissioners and the institute of government as we look at school funding options and borrowing power. He said years ago there was a tax increase done for the elementary schools that were built and QZAB was done for the renovations where Anson Academy is located. Mr. Freeman told Mr. Monroe maybe he should continue to explore options that are available for county commissioners to explore. Mr. Monroe said he knows they have significant borrowing power in the county; however, the situation will be paying the money back. Mr. Monroe said the idea they have tossed around was a bond referendum but the tax increase may be significant for tax payers. Mr. Freeman said in previous meetings (prior to Mr. Monroe's employment with Anson) there has been a perception in the community as to where the funds have been directed from the property tax increase that occurred when the elementary schools were built simultaneously. Mr. Freeman explained, at a previous meeting in past years, Mr. Streater had the interim county manager at that time to pull reports during an open meeting one night and they were not able to show where those funds were designated when that was paid off. Mr. Streater said they have increased teacher supplements and other things and that's where some of that money was used. Mr. Woodburn said the tax rate has been lowered since it was paid off. Mr. Freeman said he knows the tax rate was lowered in the legally mandated years of reevaluation. Mr. Freeman explained, as far as the teacher supplement increase and as you know, that was done through the voting of our citizens when they authorized the quarter percent sales tax increase so that was a different fund source than any fund utilized for teacher supplements. Mr. Freeman said there is a \$65,000 supplement that has been awarded to teachers and to his knowledge that is the only amount that has been added from regular county funds for teacher supplement. Mr. Monroe said he went to the ballot and the quarter sales tax was for the general public and was adopted for general public dollars. Mr. Monroe said those dollars were for general purpose dollars. Mr. Freeman said there was a resolution done and it specifically said for teacher supplements, materials or supplies. Mr. Monroe said this can be discussed more offline. Mr. Freeman said he thinks the discussion should occur but he does want to go on record that Anson County Schools has a record for having the difficulty of recruiting and retaining quality teachers so if we have to cut teacher pay due to a decision made by the board of commissioners, he thinks that will hurt Anson County Schools and would advise against any reduction in pay for teachers in Anson County. He explained the teachers in Anson County are phenomenal and we need to keep them. Mr. Monroe said their concern is paying for the school and they know they have the grant funds and there are some capital funds they allocate throughout the year. Mr. Monroe said there needs to be a tough conversation on how this school can be built. Mr. Freeman said he agreed and that a future meeting should be scheduled to continue having those conversations. Mr. Monroe said as far as the \$20 million (\$15 million from the grant and \$5 million the county matched), we are at \$19 million since some of the money has already been spent with EDIFICE. Mr. Freeman said they have also spent money other places due to surveys, etc. Mr. Freeman explained they are spending the money so they could get to this point in the progress. Mr. Freeman also explained before those funds can be pulled down, there is a process for approval by the board of education, county commissioners and the Department of Public Instruction before that money can be spent. Mr. Streater said he agrees with Mr. Freeman but they are talking

about moving dirt now but shouldn't we be talking about when we can move dirt. Mr. Freeman said when the agreement was made in August 2018 for the capital needs grant, he understood that commitment was made then about building the new school. Dr. Sims said he has multiple questions and he needs to see blueprints and drawings and he thinks Mr. Streater and Mr. Monroe make important points and will take a look at those documents before he makes comments.

Mr. Freeman said they will continue with the meeting agenda. He also stated the county commissioners decided not to do an agenda for this meeting. Mr. Woodburn requested a copy of the documents and Mr. Freeman said an electronic copy will be sent as well as hard copies.

Dr. Truman commented that we are adding a lot of different programs at the middle school in Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Science and those programs require more space and areas for students to do teamwork and for infrastructure. He said there is a lot more that goes into a vocational classroom than a regular classroom and this needs to be done for our young people.

Mr. Streater said at their May 5 meeting they had to adjourn their meeting and that's why they couldn't call an order at today's meeting but he said they will discuss this at the next meeting and get back with him.

Dr. Truman thanked everyone for being online and helping with this discussion and he said it will take a lot of give and take but it's our responsibility to do what is right by our citizens and the children of Anson County.

### **Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn the joint meeting was given by Lisa Davis, and seconded by Carol Ann Gibson. There was no discussion. The motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 11:39 a.m.

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Dr. George Truman, Chairperson

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Mr. Michael H. Freeman, Secretary