

VIRGINIA:

A meeting of the Lancaster County Board of Supervisors was held in the Administrative Building Board/Commission Meeting Room of said county on Wednesday, April 11, 2018.

Members Present: William R. Lee, Chair
Jason D. Bellows, Vice Chair
Jack D. Larson, Board Member
Robert S. Westbrook, Board Member
Ernest W. Palin, Jr. was absent.

Staff Present: Don G. Gill, Assistant County Administrator and Planning/Land Use Director
Crystal Whay, Building/Land Use Assistant

Mr. Lee called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Lee stated that Mr. Palin was absent due to illness.

PUBLIC HEARING

Mr. Lee asked anyone who wished to speak during the public hearing to sign up on the sheet. He asked that anyone everyone limit their comments to five minutes and stay focused on the subject, which was the school budget.

Mr. Gill stated that he would give a brief overview of what was being proposed. He stated that tonight’s public hearing was being held in accordance with Sections 15.2-2506 and 22.1-93 of the Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended to receive public comments on the proposed FY19 Lancaster County Public Schools Budget. He stated that, on the screen, was the adopted FY 18 budget as well as the proposed FY 19 budget, with the far right hand column being the increase or decrease between the two years. He stated that, under the revenues side, the County of Lancaster proposed revenues was a little over a half million dollar increase over FY 18. He stated that funds from the state were projected to be increased by approximately \$62,000 and federal government funds were projected to be decreased by approximately \$13,000. He stated that miscellaneous funds were down just under \$1,000. He stated that total general operating revenues were projected to be up by \$553,445. He stated that textbook revenues from the County showed an increase of \$4800, from the state showed a decrease of \$4500, with a total textbook revenue increase of \$230. He referred to food service and stated that the FY 19 budget was projected to be

down by approximately \$13,700. He stated that total revenue from all sources for the proposed FY 19 budget was \$16,859,039, which was an increase of \$539,882.

Mr. Gill referred to the expenditures and stated that, in the instruction category, there was an increase of \$377,299 in the FY 19 budget. He referred to the attendance and health category and stated that there was a small decrease of \$18,552. He stated that the administration category was up by almost \$58,000. He stated that transportation had increased by \$73,803 and that operations and maintenance had increased by \$107,431. He stated that the technology category had a decrease of \$44,431. He stated that the total general operating expenditures had an increase of \$553,445. He stated that the textbook category showed a \$230 increase, food service showed a decrease of \$13,793 and total expenditures for all categories showed an increase of \$539,882.

Mr. Gill stated that, after tonight's public hearing, the Board of Supervisors is required, by law, to wait at least seven days before they can adopt the school budget, with or without modifications.

Mr. Lee opened the public hearing.

Bill Warren stated that he wanted to speak in support of the budget that had been presented to the Board of Supervisors. He stated that he liked the budget because it preserved the pre-school program and provided a modest salary increase for the teachers. He stated that, even at the level that the budget had been submitted, Lancaster County would end up in fourth place in teacher salaries in the Northern Neck. He stated that even with the increase, other counties are doing better.

Mr. Warren stated that he thought that the budget was actually less than what was realistically required to operate a school system that size. He referred to his hand-out that compared Northumberland County's budget to Lancaster's budget and stated that Lancaster's budget was four percent more, overall, than Northumberland, but Northumberland was giving nine percent more to its schools than Lancaster in the current fiscal year. He stated that the bottom line was that the adjacent, look- alike county was basically funding their schools at significantly higher levels than Lancaster.

Charlie Costello, a District 2 citizen, stated that the \$539,882 increase was roughly two cents in property taxes. He stated that in the great scheme of things, it was an increase and he knew that the Board did not like to do tax increases. He stated that, in the first time in a long time, they have a great team with the superintendent, assistant superintendent, staff, principals, teachers and students. He stated that the pre-school program was a big part of the students' success. He stated that he appreciated the Board making the property purchase for future facilities. He stated that Lancaster County was starting to turn around its schools and the momentum needed to continue.

Amanda Gordon stated that she was a preschool teacher and wanted to share some of the benefits of the preschool program and why it was important to continue to fund it. She stated that preschool provided an opportunity to disadvantaged students to catch up

and perform on the same level as their peers. She stated that there were a lot of disadvantaged students in Lancaster County. She stated that preschool was an opportunity for growth. She stated that preschool teaches children to learn to share, to follow directions and to begin the foundation for learning that occurs in elementary school. She stated that the children learn social and emotional control as well as how to manage frustration and anger. She stated that preschool students learn how to focus on the teacher, listen to instruction and wait their turn. She stated that preschool promotes language and cognitive skills. She stated that Lancaster County had a high quality pre-kindergarten program that assures parents that their child was well cared for and was building the knowledge, skills and confidence to do well in kindergarten. She stated that she hoped when the Board of Supervisors was considering the budget, that they see that the preschool program was an area that needed to be funded.

Margaret Socey stated that she was the founder of the Lancaster County Education Foundation, was a volunteer in the school system for over twenty years and a concerned citizen. She stated that the approval and passage of the presented Lancaster County Public School Budget should be, without question, a resounding yes. She stated that the Lancaster County Public School Administration and School Board members have been excellent stewards of our tax dollars by returning unused funds for the past three years and maintaining a nearly flat budget while other agencies have had significant increases. She stated that the teaching support staff must earn an equitable wage. She stated that Lancaster should not be known as the county with the lowest pay scale. She stated that the teachers and staff should not have to work a second or third job, which many do, to support their families. She stated that they were fortunate to have dedicated and enthusiastic teachers, but the county needed to make sure that they remain here.

Ms. Socey stated that they needed to make sure that their students have the tools to succeed in the competitive twenty-first century. She stated that the tools needed today are completely different from the time that she was in school. She stated that they had to make sure that students had access to technology, stem programs, robotics and trades as well as course material that will enable them to earn college credit and possibly earn an associate's degree while still enrolled in high school.

Ms. Socey stated that they had to have schools and pay scales that will attract and retain our teachers. She stated that this would bring in professionals and businesses and in turn, create a higher tax base. She stated that schools were the base of this equation. She stated that nobody wanted their taxes increased, but if this requires higher taxes, so be it. She stated that many people moved to this County from areas with a much higher tax base.

Jamilah Sawyer stated that she had served on the Lancaster County Virginia Education Foundation Board for eleven years and was currently the chair. She stated that, at their meeting yesterday, her board asked her to present the following statement: "The Lancaster County Virginia Education Foundation fully supports passing the budget as presented by the Lancaster County School Board. It is a modest budget with increases primarily related to teacher pay that are necessary for Lancaster County to compete with

neighboring counties in the Northern Neck. Over the last decade, the school budget has been static and during that same period, the foundation has worked diligently to solicit funding from area residents, granting organizations and federal programs to supplement the school budget. Sadly, many of the programs' initiatives funded by our organizations are operating budget line items in other school districts. At this time it is imperative for this County to invest in the education of its children. Please do what is necessary to adopt the Lancaster County School Board Budget as presented."

Ms. Sawyer stated that she was also school counselor at Lancaster Primary School and had been in the position for thirteen years. She stated that she had seen a lot of change with respect to student needs and those needs have definitely increased. She stated that she had also seen a lot of positive change, and approval of the proposed budget would help to continue. She thanked the Board for its service and stated that she would be willing to pay more taxes if necessary to meet the needs in the community.

Tom Coye stated that he came to the Board as a citizen and one whose spouse has been part of the school system for a long time. He stated that his son was a graduate of Lancaster High School. He stated that he supported the budget and he felt very good about the administration that was in place. He stated that he had a lot of confidence in the budget that was being presented. He stated that he saw the biggest increase was in instruction and was about a 3.3 percent increase. He stated that was basically inflation to keep pace with how things are going. He stated that he thought it was a very fair increase.

Mr. Coye stated that he knew the Board of Supervisors had to deal with issues of not just the school budget, but the entire budget for the County. He stated that it was important to contain the costs. He stated that he saw the school budget as an investment in both the teachers and students. He stated that he encouraged the Board to support the school budget. He stated that, as a taxpayer, if taxes have to be raised to make things work, he would be okay with that.

Carolyn Young stated that she was the District 5 representative on the School Board. She stated that she hoped, in the next seven days, the Board would remember what everyone had said and take the school budget seriously. She stated that she was there to strongly advocate for the single line item of teacher salaries. She stated that their high school principal gave a report yesterday concerning the teacher recruiting team that went to Pennsylvania last week. She stated that, at these events, school districts put out cards that say what the starting salaries are and Lancaster could not put their cards out. She stated that Lancaster needs to be able to do that. She stated that professional respect requires fair pay for our teachers. She stated that she has known teachers that had jobs at Lancaster and now work in districts that surround our county. She stated that they are happy and say they have good pay and high morale. She stated that Lancaster needed to retain those teachers.

Ms. Young stated that the best bang for the County's buck were three things. She stated that was teacher salaries, decreasing the number of students in a classroom and lengthening the school year. She stated that teachers are human capital as well as the

students. She stated that they talk about a Capital Improvement Plan with new schools and that was terrific, but they need to invest in the human capital and that needs to come before the new schools were built. She stated that it was the teachers that needed to talk to the architects to help with the design of the facilities that will work for the way children will be educated in the future. She stated that she would like to see the Board of Supervisors' stamp of approval on this school budget.

John Henley stated that he lived in the Laurel Point Subdivision. He stated that Laurel Point was located on the Eastern Branch of the Corrotoman River. He stated that he came before the Board because of the picture in the lead article of the Rappahannock Record last week. He stated that the County was planning on putting a school in the wrong place. He stated that he was a registered professional engineer and anything that can be wrong with that location is. He stated that there would be environmental impacts on the Eastern Branch of the river.

Mr. Lee stated to Mr. Henley that the public hearing was being conducted to discuss the public school budget only. He stated that on April 19th, there will be a public hearing in which he would be able to address the property. He stated that tonight's meeting was strictly on the operating budget and does not include the property that Mr. Henley was referring to.

Mr. Henley stated that he would come to the meeting on April 19th.

Devin Carter stated that he was a Social Studies teacher, the National Honor Society advisor and Assistant Varsity Softball coach at Lancaster High School. He stated that he was in full support of the school budget. He stated that the proposed budget would be an investment in the teachers and students. He stated that he would like to further his own education to become certified to teach more classes in the high school, such as dual enrollment, but those classes are not cheap. He stated that a modest pay increase would help him take more classes that would help invest in the County. He stated that he would love to stay in the area for his teaching career, but needs a reason to stay.

Adam Reddinger stated that he was a first year teacher in Lancaster's schools. He stated that he was in support of the school budget that has been proposed. He referred to the pay increase for the teachers and stated that it would help retain the current teachers and help to draw new, young teachers to the area. He stated that he had spoken with friends from Pennsylvania in the teaching profession who told him that they would not consider coming to the area because the pay was simply not enough.

Sam Terry stated that he supported the proposed school budget. He stated that he was a tax payer, a parent of two children who attend public schools, a teacher and a wrestling coach for nine years at Lancaster. He stated that, with all due respect to Mr. Warren, he did not think it was fair to compare Lancaster with any other county because he thought it was setting the bar too low. He stated that he thought Lancaster County should be the high water mark of every neighboring county. He stated that he thought Lancaster County should be the county that everybody in the area looks to and says

Lancaster County was doing it right and everything possible for education. He stated that the proposed budget was a small step in the right direction.

Sarah Terry stated that she was a member of the Lancaster County school system, a parent of children in the school system and a taxpayer in District 4. She stated that, twenty-two years ago, when she came to the area, she made a little over \$1400 a month and now she brings home approximately \$3300. She stated that some improvements have been made, but there was still a lot to gain. She stated that it was not all about teacher pay. She stated that, as a parent, she wanted her kids to have the best. She stated that she wanted Lancaster County to set the bar and be the county that everyone else was judging themselves against. She stated that she estimated she was paying a quarter of the taxes her father pays in Pennsylvania and as a taxpayer, she was willing to pay more. She stated that she thought the school budget was very reasonable and was looking forward to hearing the Board's decision.

George Bott, a District 1 citizen, stated that he supported the schools, the principals, the school administration and the school board and there was a good team in place. He stated that for the past five years, the school budget has either returned local money to the County or requested little. He stated that no one in the counties around us has been more efficient than our schools in terms of their financial responsibilities. He stated that changes with this proposed budget, which requests approximately \$505,000 more in local funds. He stated that this increase was historically large if you look back over fifteen years. He stated that it was equivalent to a two-cent increase in taxes. He stated that they have heard a lot of support for that and if the general county population wanted to support a tax increase of two cents or more to help us have excellent schools, then he was all for it. He stated that it was the Board of Supervisors' decision.

Mr. Bott stated that, in 2019, the schools have requested in the capital budget about ten million dollars. He stated that if the County went to finance that money and used its regular procedures, there were going to be fees paid to Davenport and Company as well as Sands Anderson. He stated that the County could go to local banks for a ten-year loan and that would be about four more cents on the taxes. He stated that would bring the increase to about six cents. He stated that separately, but related, the County's proposed budget was out of balance at the moment and at today's numbers, there would be an additional two cents tax increase, so now they were looking at eight cents on top of five cents last year.

Mr. Bott stated that everything was important, like education, emergency medical service coverage, enforcing laws, public safety, broadband and replacing aging buildings. He stated that everything might not be practical to do all at once. He stated that the Board of Supervisors took a significant step last month and established a reserve policy and that helps balance the budget. He stated that he recommended the following be adopted to have a responsible 2019 budget and associated taxes that come with it. He stated that the first recommendation was to adopt a pay raise policy, not to exceed the annual rate of inflation. He stated that, for this year, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the inflation rate was two percent. He stated that his second recommendation was to fund

what was required in a responsible manner. He stated that his third recommendation was to spread the requested schools' pay increase over two years. He stated that his fourth recommendation was that the schools use some of the 2019 future local reversions. He stated those are the monies that are turned into the County every year and have averaged \$497,176 a year for the last four years. He stated that, in other words, they could dip into that and still do what they want to do. He stated that his fifth recommendation was the schools could contract for non-core functions. He stated that he wanted the Board to keep in mind that the impact of taxes was on everyone here and those that may be looking to come here.

Thirza Trant stated that at a prior meeting of the School Board, a gentleman had made the comment that he did not think the teacher salaries should be raised because the schools were not accredited. She stated if that gentleman thought that, then probably the community thought that way as well. She stated that when the community thinks that, then the kids would think it too. She stated that she has been in the school system for three years and the school was not accredited, but very close to being so. She stated that the students have made great progress and it was not a fluke, but a trend that has been going on for the last couple of years. She stated that the school system has some of the most dedicated teachers that teach with their heart and don't teach for the salary. She stated that she would have to work in Lancaster either thirteen or seventeen years to make the starting salary in the area that she came from. She stated that the County needed to make an investment in the children and the teachers that were teaching them.

Tom Kinney stated that he was President of the Kids First Foundation and had been a resident of Lancaster County for thirty years. He stated that a few years ago, there was frustration in the schools due to not being able to help some children acclimate to the school environment and reach their true capabilities. He stated that experienced kindergarten teachers were able to identify children who later would fall short of their personal aspirations and possibly be disruptive of the learning of others. He stated that teachers of the upper grades felt that they had been too late in the child's life to help them achieve those aspirations. He stated that, later, the Sheriff gets to know too many of these kids. He stated that his team embarked on a two-year study of how to fix this problem and get these children ready to achieve their goals. He stated their research led them to Rutgers University Institute of Early Childhood Education's research that went back to the 1960's. He stated the study showed that if the child that needs the extra help could be identified very early and provided with a full day, high-quality preschool program, that child would be as ready to learn and adapt to the learning environment just as well as any other student. He stated his group found that Lancaster Public Schools was ahead of them in solving this challenge with a high quality preschool class, but it was not reaching all of the children that needed it. He stated that his group provided seed money for an additional class. He stated that no one wants to go back to the problems and failures experienced previously. He stated that the County needed to retain the entire preschool program.

Katie Bavuso stated that she agreed with those who were in support of the budget and thought that the budget was low for what it should be. She stated that she thought the

schools had been excellent stewards of the taxpayers' money for the past four years and she thought the schools should be rewarded for the money that was given back. She stated that maybe the returned money could be used for things that Dr. Parker felt could not be afforded this year. She stated that strides for improvement are being made, such as the early college academy and robotics. She stated that some of these things are happening because of volunteers and non-profit organizations to make up for what the County was not providing. She stated that she was a school volunteer and had three children in the school system.

Michael Schoelwer stated that he was a citizen and a member of the local Republican committee and wanted to speak about the teacher salary. He stated that the schools' leadership was good and producing results. He stated that if the school system has good teachers, then everything was possible and without good teachers, not much else matters. He stated that teachers may start with idealism, but they stay because they can earn a living. He stated that if they are serious about the schools, then they must retain good teachers. He stated that he would also propose allowances, such as a child care allowance. He stated that the County did not need to pay equal to surrounding counties, it needed to pay better.

Regina Howard stated that she was the Dean of Students at Lancaster High School and it was her first year in administration. She stated that when she started her career, she was a special education teacher. She stated that she wanted to say why she did not come to Lancaster County as a teacher. She stated that when she went to a recruiting fair after graduation, Lancaster County was there, as were other localities, with the posted salaries. She stated that the salary was not what she was interested in and she was advised by her advisor to take a job in a rural county if she wanted to go into the special education field with a provisional license. She stated that she was specifically looking for a rural county to work in. She stated that she compared Lancaster to Dinwiddie and chose Dinwiddie. She stated that she wanted to bring to the Board's attention that there were people who were specifically looking to come to this county, but they need a reason to come to a rural area. She stated that Lancaster County had a great welcoming committee and she has felt welcome. She stated that she wanted the Board to keep in mind that they were asking teachers to relocate and accept a salary that was out of their comfort zone. She stated that she would love to stay in Lancaster and contribute to her retirement and did not want to be one of those people that jump from county to county looking for a better salary.

Anna Kellum stated that she was an educator in Lancaster County and was a teacher for quite a few years. She stated that she was now an instructional coordinator, but her most rewarding role was that she handles the mentoring program. She stated that she really needed the Board's help. She stated that over the past three years, she had the honor of working with over twenty teachers a year and training them in all of the things that the state was requiring of them, only for the teachers to leave the following year and she was exhausted. She stated that she was a taxpayer and if there were an increase in taxes, she would be willing to pay. She stated that the teachers were in the trenches everyday, doing the work and should be rewarded.

Roger Donaldson, a White Stone resident, stated that he had lived in Lancaster County almost all of his life. He stated that he had lived through decades of discourse between the School Board and the Board of Supervisors. He stated that he applauded both boards today for their cooperation and the interest in moving things forward and never thought he would live to be able to say that. He stated that he would be happy to have a tax increase if it helped the school system.

Dr. Steve Parker stated that he was the school superintendent and a resident of District 3. He stated that the Board of Supervisors had been very fortunate to hear from some of the fantastic staff members and how much they want to stay in Lancaster. He stated that many people have heard him say that he did not like to follow or play catch-up. He stated that his motto was that if you are not the lead dog, the view never changes. He stated that, when he made his presentation to the Planning Commission on the Capital Improvement Budget, he and Mr. Chupp, one of the Planning Commission members, got into a discussion where Mr. Chupp stated that our children deserved the best education that we can afford and Dr. Parker stated that his opinion was that our children deserved the best education period.

Mr. Lee closed the public hearing.

Mr. Lee stated that, by law, they have to wait seven days before they can adopt the proposed school budget. He stated that they had talked about doing the adoption on the 19th since they were coming out for a work session. He stated that another option was to wait until the regular meeting on April 26th.

Mr. Bellows stated that he thought April 19th would be fine.

Mr. Bellows made a motion to set the adoption date for the proposed school budget on April 19, 2018 at 5:30 p.m.

VOTE:	William R. Lee	Aye
	Jason D. Bellows	Aye
	Jack D. Larson	Aye
	Robert S. Westbrook	Aye

ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Mr. Lee to adjourn the meeting.

VOTE:	William R. Lee	Aye
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Jason D. Bellows Aye

Jack D. Larson Aye

Robert S. Westbrook Aye