

Surry County Board of Commissioners
 Meeting of April 28, 2021
 Budget Work Session

The Surry County Board of Commissioners met at 6:00 p.m., April 28, 2021, for a budget work session. The meeting was held in the Farm Bureau Training Room, Service Center, Dobson, N.C., virtually via Zoom and YouTube.

Board members present in-person for the meeting were Chairman Mark Marion, Vice-Chairman Bill Goins, Commissioner Larry Johnson, Commissioner Van Tucker and Commissioner Eddie Harris.

Others present in-person for the meeting, at various times, were:

Chris Knopf, County Manager
 Sandy Snow, Assistant County Manager
 Rhonda Nixon, Finance Officer
 Martha Brintle, MIS Director
 Nathan Walls, Assistant to the County Manager
 Dr. David Shockley, Surry Community College President
 Tony Martin, Surry Community College Chief Financial Officer
 Dr. Kim Morrison, Mount Airy City Schools Superintendent
 Mount Airy City Schools Board of Education and Staff
 Dr. Myra Cox, Elkin City Schools Superintendent
 Elkin City Schools Board of Education and Staff
 Dr. Travis Reeves, Surry County Schools Superintendent
 Surry County Schools Board of Education and Staff

Chairman Marion called the meeting to order. Commissioner Goins delivered the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Marion requested the Board review and approve the agenda. Upon motion of Commissioner Goins, seconded by Commissioner Harris, the Board voted unanimously to approve the agenda.

Dr. David Shockley, Surry Community College President, presented the college's budget request. He said over the past fiscal year, the college used CARES Act funding where possible to fill in budget gaps.

Dr. Shockley detailed his County budget request, which totaled \$2,760,000. He also discussed how the college has been proactive vs. reactive with finances.

Dr. Shockley also discussed the viticulture center and industry. He said the community college is the only in the state with that type of specific program that does not receive recurring funding.

Dr. Shockley talked about the importance of Surry-Yadkin Works and how it is a model of success for the entire state. The Health Sciences apprenticeship program, which placed students in RN and LPN careers, was discussed. Commissioner Harris and Dr. Shockley discussed the importance of a vocational program being added to Surry-Yadkin Works.

Dr. Kim Morrison, Mount Airy City Schools Superintendent, presented her school system's budget request. Commissioner Harris informed Dr. Morrison of Sen. Phil Berger's praise of the three local public school systems.

Dr. Morrison said that in the last fiscal year, Mount Airy City Schools was the only school district in the state to come back to school five days a week. She said the school district was very successful with

COVID-19 safety. She detailed services and programs related to COVID-19 safety.

Dr. Morrison pointed out how Mount Airy City Schools and Elkin City Schools gained students this year.

She discussed additional costs created by COVID-19 safety measures, workforce development/internships, completed capital outlay projects and budget details.

Mount Airy City Schools staff reviewed funding sources, budget projections for FY22, special capital requests and debt issuance requests.

Dr. Morrison requested that the school system's ADM funding be increased from \$1,190 to \$1,325 per student and regular capital outlay per child funding be increased from \$115 to \$150.

The Board discussed with Dr. Morrison prioritization of budget requests and Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding.

Dr. Myra Cox, Elkin City Schools Superintendent, presented her school system's budget request. She discussed staffing for the school system's Finance Office following the retirement of the former finance officer.

Dr. Cox discussed stages of reopening during the COVID-19 pandemic.

She talked about the school system's enrollment number of 928 students and requested a per pupil funding increase of \$1,190 to \$1,325. Dr. Cox also discussed a requested regular capital outlay per child funding increase from \$115 to \$150. Dr. Cox said she would like to leave the City school tax at 13.2 percent.

She reviewed operating expenses, retirement increases, capital expenses, special capital outlay costs and ESSER funding.

Dr. Cox thanked the Board for their contribution to the Elkin school gymnasium project.

The Board and Dr. Cox discussed the new schedule for out-of-district student rates, which is planned to go up each year from FY22 to FY26 from \$400 to \$800. Totals for second, third and fourth children are \$100 less each. Commissioner Harris said he thinks that out-of-district students should pay more than the current rate of \$200 per year, but not the full ADM as Surry County Schools students. Commissioner Goins disagreed about the ADM, saying he doesn't think it's right and that the rate increase should accelerate more quickly than what Dr. Cox presented. Commissioners Tucker and Johnson said they agree with Commissioner Goins, that out-of-district students should pay about the same as the ADM for Surry County Schools students.

Discussion about tax revenues and ESSER funding occurred.

The Board took a five-minute break.

The Board returned to the budget work session.

Dr. Travis Reeves, Surry County Schools Superintendent, presented his school system's budget request. He read a letter from Franklin Elementary School Principal Molly Anderson about how a parent decided to enroll their child at the school because of how nice it looks after a recent construction project.

Dr. Reeves discussed school construction projects nearing completion, the Surry-Yadkin Works program and ADM history in area County schools. He said population is decreasing in Surry County, and rural counties' ADM is being reduced regularly across the State. Dr. Reeves pointed out how Surry County Schools is receiving less low wealth funding since moving from Tier 1 to 2, which is an economic distress ranking from the State.

He detailed his school system's reopening phases during the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Reeves said the pandemic has made operations more expensive for schools.

He discussed federal budget highlights and ESSER funding.

Commissioner Harris and Dr. Reeves discussed the approximate \$24 million in funding Surry County Schools could receive in ESSER funding. Donna Bryant, the school system's Finance Officer, said the funding must be spent on COVID-19 related expenses and projects. Dr. Reeves described how the school system would prioritize the funding.

The school system is requesting that ADM per child be increased from \$1,190 to \$1,275, based on salary, retirement and State Health Plan increases. Dr. Reeves said the Surry County Schools Board of Education sees a need for 2 percent salary increases for teachers, with 3 percent salary increases on certified teachers. He said that, according to a chart he showed, since 2011, teachers in the school system have only had a 1 percent increase per year on average.

Ms. Bryant reviewed the complications associated with the low wealth funding formula.

Dr. Reeves discussed capital outlay budget highlights, which include a requested increase from \$115 per child to \$125 per child. He also detailed a needed roof painting project at Central Middle School, other capital needs, a Surry-Yadkin Works funding request, \$350,000 supplemental appropriation request and Statewide ADM rankings.

Upon motion of Commissioner Goins, seconded by Commissioner Johnson, the Board voted unanimously to enter closed session pursuant to G.S. 143-318.11 (a) (3) legal.

The Board returned to regular business.

Upon motion of Commissioner Goins, seconded by Commissioner Tucker, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 10:02 p.m.

Nathan Walls
Clerk to the Board