

DICKENSON COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD
Joint Meeting of the Dickenson County School Board and Dickenson County Board of Supervisors
March 6, 2017
5 p.m. – Ridgeview High School

PRESENT: Susan Mullins, Chairman; Rocky Barton, Vice-Chairman; Dr. Lurton Lyle; Shanghai Nickles; Reba McCowan, Clerk; and Haydee Robinson, Superintendent.

ABSENT: Rick Mullins

ROLL CALL AND MEETING CALLED TO ORDER BY CHAIRMAN, SUSAN MULLINS:

Chairman, Susan Mullins: I would like to call this joint meeting of the Dickenson County School Board and Board of Supervisors to order and note for the record that all Board Members are present except for Mr. Rick Mullins. As well as, our Superintendent, Mrs. Haydee Robinson and Board Clerk, Reba McCowan is present. We will now stand for the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence. Thank you and please be seated.

We have an agenda before us. Is there a motion to approve the agenda?

Dr. Lurton Lyle: I make a motion that we approve the Agenda. Mr. Shanghai Nickles seconded the motion. All votes aye.

Chairman, Susan Mullins: Shelby do you have an agenda?

Chairman, Shelby Willis, BOS: I don't but I need to declare our Board, Dickenson County Board of Supervisors, to order with all members presents with the exception of David Perry. David Perry is absent. We will turn it back over to you.

Chairman, Susan Mullins: On the agenda is Superintendent Robinson and apparently there is a presentation.

Superintendent Robinson: Good afternoon everyone. Welcome to our first joint meeting of the year. As Mr. Moore and I planned this meeting we thought it would be more of a roundtable discussion. This is the first opportunity that we've had for both Boards to meet together and we want thank each one for your time this evening. I know your time is precious but we think it's such a crucial time of the year to do this. At this time I would like to ask Mr. Barton to come and update us on the 2016-2017 Budget and also next years' budget. You have a copy before you. Again, this is a roundtable informal discussion. Please feel free to ask questions, clarification, anything we can do to help you as we go through this process.

Mr. Larry Barton: Madame Chair, Members of the Board, thank you for your time and allowing me to speak this afternoon. Before you is some information and I will update you on

the 2016-2017 Budget for Dickenson County Public Schools and anticipated budget issues for FY 2018.

Mr. Larry Barton reviewed the following information provided to the Boards. (See attached.)

Attachment # 1: Update on 2016-2017 DCPS Budget, Update on 2016-2017 Enrollment, Proposed Amendments to the 2016-2018 State Budget, Anticipated Budget Issues for FY-2018

If anyone has any questions, I'll do my best to answer those.

Superintendent Robinson: So, what we are looking at if we project our school budget on 2,000 students then with the things that are coming?

Mr. Larry Barton: We will have \$800,000 less than where we are and I'm not totally sold on that 2,000 number right now.

Superintendent Robinson: We are real concerned that it may be less than 2,000.

Mr. Larry Barton: That's not going to cover any decreases we have in federal funds and there are other areas I'm looking at too. These are the issues we are looking at as we get our budget started.

Superintendent Robinson: Board Members are there any questions?

Mr. Larry Barton: If anybody has any questions, I'm in my office every day; long days, long nights sometimes. I've been here a year now. I've learned a lot since I've been here. It's very different than public accounting, business accounting. I feel like we've made a lot of changes in the past year for the better. I feel like we are trying to use our resources wisely. We've got a pretty good grip on what we're spending. We are watching everything spent even printer cartridges from buying bands for \$75 to purchasing no brand for \$25. Little things like that add up. We are watching everything spent and everyone has been really good division wide. We have kind of had a spending freeze since I came, buying only what we have to have. Tony has gone out to schools and gathered items that are not being used and offering them to other schools. We want to be good stewards of what we have and be accountable for what we get. We are very grateful for you guys and we know you do what you can to help us. We know you were in a terrible situation last year yourself. I will be happy to share and give any information to your board, to our board, to anyone who has questions. I will try to explain it as best I can and if I don't have an answer I will try to get you one.

Our staff does a lot with little. I am surprised with what some of these folks do. They know we don't have a budget for things and they try to make it work. I think if you look at our SOL scores there is evidence of that. The outsider looking in Dickenson County is doing pretty well. We compare with SOL scores, our schools are accredited and we are working with less each year, and doing a good job at it. The enrollment is really scary and we don't know where it's going to stop. We are just hoping for the best.

Chairman, Shelby Willis (BOS): Larry, how many homeschooled children do we have?

Mr. Larry Barton: Denechia?

Mrs. Denechia Edwards: Seventy-three.

Chairman, Shelby Willis (BOS): That's a lot of money for that.

Mr. Larry Barton: That is a lot, about \$500,000 basically.

Superintendent Robinson: We've discussed that and it's a national issue.

Mr. David Yates: Any thoughts giving to changing health insurance carriers?

Mr. Larry Barton: We have looked with the State plan and have got some preliminary data back on that a couple of weeks ago. We went ahead and made the election which is non-binding commit to continue in the process. Those rates right now are a 33% increase over where we are right now, but we are holding out just to make sure before we let it go. So, when the final rates come out in November we'll know and we don't mess up there. That's what we've looked at so far and of course at renewal time we will look at it again and the Board may want to put out an RFP. I know last year we did make some changes in our coverage to save some money there.

Mr. David Yates: Do we know how many we have insured on the plan right now?

Mr. Larry Barton: Counting retirees? Reba?

Mrs. Reba McCowan: Around 400.

Mr. Larry Barton: We're estimating about 400.

Mr. David Moore: We have about 140 totaled. They're about three times our size.

Mr. Larry Barton: We are looking at everything. Every option is on the table.

Mr. David Yates: As I look at the cost, it's an albatross. We give you 6.1 million last year and 5.1 million is your insurance. I have to think that somewhere in a competitive market that could be beat.

Mr. David Moore: I've been down that road three times and I will tell you right now that their rates are better than our rates.

Mr. Ron Peters: So, you are saying the new plan their proposing is 33% higher?

Mr. Larry Barton: Yes, they are very, very high.

Mr. David Moore: Actually, I was shocked at how high they are and that was projected on some really large numbers of participation. I think that is really going to scare a lot of people away and as the number of participation goes down the rates are going to go on up.

Superintendent Robinson: David, we'll be glad to send that information to you and you can distribute it to your Board.

Mr. Larry Barton: I've got that comparison with me and I can get a copy and give it to them tonight.

Superintendent Robinson: We have a comparison that we've done with our KeyCare 300 and the State Plan and it's frightening. It's like 31% higher, 51% higher; the State Plan.

Mr. Ron Peters: The whole business is changing. I mean some of your employers around here are cutting family members out and everything.

Mr. David Moore: As a point of reference for us, in the six years I've been here, our claims are roughly the same as six years ago. Our premium rates have gone up 88% in six years.

Mr. Ron Peters: Their cutting out their spouses, not children, but cutting their spouses from insurance.

Mr. Larry Barton: Yes, if your spouse has coverage available then not allowing them to enroll in insurance. We've talked about that.

Chairman, Susan Mullins: We have talked about that.

Mr. Larry Barton: We've got to consider all options. Thank you all for the time and if anybody has any questions, just let me know.

Superintendent Robinson: One of the things at this time of year and I know David Moore and I said; it gets to be a very stressful time of the year. We were talking how we just don't enjoy spring as much as we used to and I'm sure that's true for every board member. About this time of the year it comes up and I'm sure it's in the back of your minds; how can they ask for that much? How dare they! One of the statues for a division superintendent is that school divisions have to request what they need to operate. We've always had a very good relationship with the Board of Supervisors and our Board together. I know that you've had that thought. How can you ask for that much knowing what condition we are in? The School Board, the Division Superintendent could not and would not do their job if we asked for less than what we need to operate. This morning we had a very good Principal's meeting and our Principals were saying; our community does not understand what we are going through. They see that we pick up children. We transport them. We have teachers for them. We feed them. We send them home. We do our job. They see that they're learning. They see what we are achieving but they don't see the nitty gritty, the ends and outs, the things that each school is facing. Our Board hears it all the time. In every Board meeting they hear,

here are the needs, this is what we need and they're all legitimate. So, today in looking through our meeting we have some stakeholders, we have some parents, we have some students, we have some teachers that just ask could we come and just address. They have about three minutes and could we come and talk, address the Boards about what's going on in our schools, what's going on in our classrooms. So, I thought that would be an excellent opportunity it's not going to take that much time but I hope it gives us another view. This is where we are, this is the impacts that we've had in the last year and all in all our school division is still flourishing. As Larry said; we're accredited. That's not just important to us but that's a statewide accountability. You see Ridgeview, we're sitting in Ridgeview and we know all the Boards that worked together. We knew if we were going to have economic development we knew if we were going to have industry coming into our community the first thing they are going to do is go to the schools and I can tell you and Mr. Nickles tells this story that he would take physicians to Clintwood High School that we love and Haysi High School that we love; they look around and they say we'll go somewhere else. We have school, we have the programs, we have what it takes to move our county forward. Again, working together we can do that. I know all of you have been very kind and you've heard me until I know the back of your eyes are just rolling. Here she comes again. I just wanted and I'm so thankful for these people to have people that have other views and other perspective on what's happening. They have children in schools. They're there and just have them to come and our first is Mr. and Mrs. Boyd. I will ask them to come and their daughter's name is Julia and I would like for them to tell you about Julia. They came to our Board member is December and they have a powerful story to tell. Thank you, Rod and thank you Mrs. Boyd for coming.

Mr. Rod and Mrs. Allison Boyd: Mr. and Mrs. Boyd shared the story of their daughter, Julia, who has special needs and is in the 2nd grade at Sandlick Elementary School. Although they live in Buchanan County, because of the programs Dickenson County Schools provide, they chose to transport her to Sandlick Elementary School. Mr. Boyd stated that Julia's progress was remarkable over the past year and they felt it was a direct result from the work of Teresa Lyons; Autism Specialist that was contracted, her Classroom Teachers, Aides and everyone at Sandlick Elementary School, who truly care, are compassionate and dedicated.

Mr. and Mrs. Boyd shared Julia's school picture from the previous year and current picture to show the visible change stating; Julia is more engaged, can interact better, use more words and has come a long way. Mr. Boyd said that a big part of that was because of funding that provided an aide to work with her and the work that Ms. Lyons did the past year. Mr. Boyd thanked the Board for appropriating the money last year which made a true life difference for Julia and for them as parents. Mr. Boyd ended by saying; thank you very much for the expenditures on our students' behalf and especially for Julia. We appreciate it.

Ms. Betty Newton: I want to speak on behalf of Clintwood Elementary School but I know that a lot of I say can be extended to Sandlick and Ervinton. As of today, we have an enrollment of 522 students. In Kindergarten we have 87 children and 4 teachers; that's a 22 to 1 ratio. For any of you that have 5 year old children or grandchildren, just imagine taking care of 22 at one time for six hours. It's a daunting task. In one of those Kindergarten classes we have 23. In 5th grade we have 83 students with only 3 teachers; 28 to 1 ratio. I know they are bigger and can take care of themselves in many ways that our Kindergarteners can't but

they also have needs. I know a lot of you probably remember going to school with classes that large, but classes of today are quite different than classes most of us attended. Going back to what Mr. Boyd said, our population of children with special needs continues to grow each year. Teachers and those numbers that I just conveyed to you, they are serving those kids in addition to trying to accommodate their special needs. They are trying to carry on with instruction of an ever demanding curriculum as dictated to us by the State.

When I began teaching Special Ed. in the 1980's, children were not usually diagnosed with disabilities before 2nd grade. That is no longer true. We have many children coming to us at a much younger age with disabilities some even before Pre K. We try to have aides in the classes that have identified students with special needs; however last year at Clintwood Elementary 6 of those 8 positions were lost. Of course when that happens it's left up to our teacher to pick up and carry the ball, which they have done admirably. I invite any of you to drop by Clintwood Elementary School in the evenings. Often I have teachers there until 7:00 and 8:00; sometimes they go home and take care of their own kids and then pop back in at 8:00 and work until who knows when. On Sunday afternoons you will often see teachers there doing what they feel they have to do to take care of their children.

Four years ago elementary students at Clintwood, Sandlick and Ervinton all received instruction in the fine arts, including Art and Music. Often those lessons were coordinated with the classroom teacher to enhance the instruction that was going on in the rooms. However, in the past 3 years our students haven't had that. To go along with what Mr. Compton and Mr. Whitner will probably report in a few minutes, many students thrive in those categories. They may not be great in English, but they are a great artist. They may not be super good in Math, but there is something about music that just hits with them. But we are not able to provide that foundation that would help them develop that talent. I think our 4-H programs in the County do a great job providing opportunities to showcase the talent but we're not able to help develop that.

In addition to the instructional aspect I want to take you to the cafeteria. Our cafeteria staff decreased this year by one full time employee. We now have 3 full time cooks plus 1 manager. On any given day this is what those 4 people do from 7 o'clock to 1 o'clock. They prepare and serve breakfast for 190 to 200 students. They prepare and serve lunches for 325 students. Often as many as 40 extra entrees are prepared to serve those students that request extra and an average of 25 adults are served lunch each day. That amounts to an average of 550 plus meals per day.

As you can see, our people are called upon to do a lot more with a lot less. I just want to say; you've always stepped up and you've given us the support that we need perhaps when the State failed to come through with its share. We appreciate that from the bottom of our hearts; we do. Without the County funding the programs like Mr. Boyd has just referred to we wouldn't have been able to do a lot of what we've done.

The 522 students at Clintwood Elementary, as well as all the students across the county, are depending on you in the future to provide them with the key to their future. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to come and speak with you tonight. Thank you.

Mr. Rodney Compton: Welcome to Ridgeview High School and first I would like to thank you, and everyone involved, it's a beautiful facility. We've been here a year and a half, and in traveling to other facilities, building for activities, you think my goodness. It pales with what we have and our students have. I know it was a lot of hard work for all of you. And on behalf of our students, our staff and myself; thank you for getting us here.

This year has been a lot easier than last year. Last year we opened up a new school, bringing in three communities and there were a lot of issues that you have to face. I think it all went fairly well and every month we tried to tweak things and improve. We won the State last year in girls' basketball. This year they have made it to the State finals. Our Robotics team has place second place this year and has won some other awards and you will hear about that later. Tomorrow, our SKILLS USA will be going to Russell County to compete; those are CTE programs. Our business students will be going over to the college to compete; professional dress is required and an email has gone out this week for anyone who wishes to loan professional attire to our student for the competition. All of these things are experiences that they have.

As we speak, the facilities that we have here, we probably have over 200 students out here right now participating in track, tennis, soccer, softball and baseball. If you looked at our eligibility for the year we probably have 400 students involved in activities; anything from One Act Play to Forensics and athletics. All of these take money and effort on a lot of people's part. We have students. We have the teachers. We have the facilities to make a lot of these things happen. I think it's our obligation to give them the best opportunity that we can. To make them the best citizens and educated people we can so they can compete. When they go to Virginia Tech they might be in a classroom with 500 to 1,000 people; it swallows them up sometimes. But, I think our chemistry labs being up to snuff and larger class size can help them. I know at Ervinton you may only have 5 in a chemistry class.

In December we had a first round of SOL testing. Last year when we moved into Ridgeview it was a standalone year. If you fall short one year you've got the 3 year average to help make you accredited. Last year we didn't have that option. Wherever we fell with the Spring and Fall SOL testing, that's where we would be. If we didn't make the 70% mark then; we were going to be writing plans. Last year we made it with no problem and then this Fall, and I know it's half-time, but when our test scores starting coming in we were at the 90% mark, which is phenomenal! Math – 96%, English – 94%, Science – 92%, History – 93%. The best part about this, our Special Ed. population taking the regular test scored 71% taking the regular test. In Virginia to get your diploma you have to pass your six verified credits and testing the Special Ed. students; 85% of them passed the regular test and are on their way to a verified diploma. Last year our graduation rate, the State wants you to have 85%, Ridgeview High School was at 94%. That's phenomenal! This year we are hoping for the same thing.

At the Principal's meeting today we talked about the term graduation. Term graduation is where student's that are falling behind in their SOL's will have some more opportunities to get those up. In all my years as a Principal, English reading and writing test, you have to

pass that test to get a diploma. As of today, in term graduation, all our kids right now have passed their test. Those things are very positive things.

Now the negative thing, the room we are sitting in is the Choir Room. For years, I have wanted our schools, our students to have a Choir to sing in. I guess I'm more passionate about that because my wife sang; that was her thing. Last year we finally had a Choir and to hear those kids sing. Some kids play football; some kids have band; some kids do 4-H; some kids have robotics, some kids do CTE things; some kids do music. When we had to drop that program, those kids that were so into the singing and music don't have anything. Also losing that position we lost our wrestling program. That program is really one that I would like to get back if it's possible. I would like to get back the music program for those kids that; that's their thing. In the area we live in music is big. We have a lot of talented young people that really thrive in music. We need to give them that opportunity. That's all I have.

Mr. David Yates: How many faculty members do you have?

Mr. Rodney Compton: Faculty, I'm going to guess around 60. Cooks, Aides and all, I'm going to say around 95.

Superintendent Haydee Robinson: April Collins.

Mrs. April Collins: Good evening, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to everyone tonight. I will be brief, but I wanted to speak a little bit on the importance of Ervinton Elementary to the Ervinton community.

Ervinton community gets a little scared this time of the year after Ervinton High School was jerked away from us 4 years ago now. Often we feel like we've been left behind and forgotten when it comes to other things. It is very important to us to be able to maintain Ervinton Elementary. Not only for the students there, I know we are small in number, but the families that are there. A lot of the families are lower, as far as income based and need even more importantly the small class size that Ervinton allows our students to have. The economy and community in McClure, Nora area don't have many businesses left but the businesses that remain there are really dependent upon the elementary school. For traffic through, but you also have Triple T gas station there, people coming through to the diner in McClure; it's very important to our sense of community.

Not only that, but Mr. Barton was talking earlier on the number of students that have been lost and obviously those numbers are great, but my fear would be that if Ervinton Elementary School closes after speaking with several of the parents there the numbers in a lot of those areas would leave and either go to Eastside or Castlewood. The commute would just be impossible to go to either Clintwood Elementary School or Sandlick.

I just want to stress the importance, and the appreciation that we still have the school there, but the desire that our community has to keep the school. Like I said, we feel if Ervinton would close it would still be a loss to the school system, because you would not actually save money but suffer an additional loss due to the number of students that would leave from the

Hazel Mountain area, West Dante area, Sandy Ridge. All of those localities would be much closer to provide transportation to either Wise County or Russell County.

I appreciate your time and wish you luck with lots of hard decisions you have coming.

Superintendent Robinson: Mr. Whitner, Principal at Ridgeview Middle School.

Mr. John Whitner: First of all, welcome to Ridgeview Middle School. We do share this part with Ridgeview High School. I am very thankful for being part of this building and any of you that contributed to the building of this building. As Mr. Compton said, you go to other places.....we compare very favorably.

We are very blessed to have an outstanding faculty and staff. I'm speaking for Ridgeview Middle, but I know there are some great ones at Ridgeview High School; ours are doing an awesome job with our students. I would like to personally invite you back to visit. There is just excitement in the halls when I walk through and seeing what's happening in the classroom. They only have about 65 minutes to work with these students and they don't waste a second. They are on top of things. We have co-teaching going on. We have students that are receiving help from Special Ed. to those students who are not identified but are slow in Math and English. Those are areas that we work real hard to get to. I want to thank you for your support and making sure that we were successful this year. Thank you for what you do.

I have a David Yates philosophy, he was my math teacher in high school and then principal and now he's on the board, everywhere I go he's there. I'm very thankful for his connection because he's been supportive and guided me all the way through.

Mr. David Yates: I'll interrupt just a moment; Ms. Newton worked for me, Ms. Edwards worked for me and was a student, Ms. Harrison I taught senior math. *(laughter)*

Mr. Rocky Barton: I was a senior your first year. *(laughter)*

Mr. John Whitner: Mr. Yates was very supportive as a new band/choir director when I came in and one of his philosophies that I kept all the way and I'll put it in my words. Get a student involved in some kind of activity beyond the academic. You can say it better, but something that would make them want to come to school. Whether its sports, band, choir or something that makes them want to get up and go. If you can do that you will have a better chance of that student becoming successful. So, that's been my philosophy all the way through. Find those opportunities for our students to be successful. We are offered lots of clubs for our students to be involved.

Just briefly I want to share some of the impacts. We've lost our guidance clerk to budget cuts. We don't have an attendance clerk. Requests for records, schedules; those don't change. We have deadlines we have to make. Ms. Phipps does an outstanding job of balancing those. But sometimes, without an Aide, a decision has to be made do we meet a deadline or do we help a student. Students always come first so we do that but those are needs that

Mrs. Robinson has heard from me, if not weekly; monthly. We need this, we need this and she will say we don't have the money for it.

Without an attendance clerk, we've had to delegate some of those duties and responsibilities to the teachers. So, instead of being able to use their planning time fully to prepare for our academic work to help our students they are having to use some of that time to contact parents about students that are absent. Not ideal. We want them to spend as much time as they can with the students but we have to make sure that these students get here so we can teach them. That's where an aide comes in handy. They are very necessary for what we do.

We've lost 3 core teachers last year; Spanish, Choir and Drama. Areas where we want our students to participate because there are students that want to be involved in those areas. There are kids that came excited about those areas. That has caused some scheduling challenges and some students have had to repeat a course because we didn't have enough areas for them to make it to.

I want to leave you with one more thought. As a former Band and Choir Director, I would have loved to have a room like this. At Haysi, Mr. Yates was there one of my last years; we had 70 students in Choir. Went to Clintwood for a few years as a math teacher and ended up with 40 students that auditioned for a choir and had at least 20 at my year at Ervinton; 130 students in just one year at each of those schools. We are in a room with 0 choir students because we don't have a Choir Director. We need that.

I know you want what's best for our schools. I don't envy you. I don't want your job. It's tough, I know. Like you I want the best for our students. I believe our students need and deserve more than the basic minimum of reading, writing and arithmetic. So I ask you to help us prepare them for the world they are going to be entering. We need your help to make sure our students can be successful.

Thank you for your time. Please come and visit us. I want you to see what I see. Thank you.

Mr. Jason Compton: Mr. Whitner, you were a student of his and I was a student of yours. *(laughter)*

Mr. Wade Rose: Most of you have probably seen me in the community and I'm Wade Rose. I'm married to Kelly Rose who is the 4-H agent and I'm very proud to be married to her. We do a lot with the students here at the middle school through the 4-H program.

Mr. Rose shared the story of his son, Jordon, who has special needs and was born with disabilities. He expressed the difficulty in getting his son diagnosed and how the school system worked hard to provide an IEP and services to Jordon. Jordon was taught at home for a couple of years because of issues that were a direct result of his disability and he was not able to be in a classroom. This year the implementation of a self-contained special education classroom at Ervinton Elementary School with an exceptional teacher, Mrs. Cynthia Bennett Carty and exceptional principal, Mr. Brian Baker, Jordon has returned to school. Mrs. Carty

has helped unlock Jordon. One of the amazing things about Jordon that is in all his limitations, he has some very special skills. He drew a map of the intersection at Clintwood High School at the age of 2 and 2 years ago drew a DNA helix of how to genetically engineer a pine tree. Jordon has special qualities and skills that need to be developed because he has other skills that are missing.

Our experience with the Dickenson County Schools is that we were at a point where we had no services to provide for him. They tried Special Education classrooms and different things and it really wasn't suitable for him, but they did not give up. They continued and kept working. This year he is scoring advanced in his studies. He has not missed a day due to behavior. We've only had 3 or 4 days that were not particularly good and they were mild in what the problems were. Mr. Rose credited creating the self-contained classroom with Jordon's success and improvements.

Mr. Rose spoke in favor of keeping Ervinton Elementary School open and asked for support. Mr. Rose told the Boards that if that meant an increase in his tax base of \$50 per year he was will to put that out. We have to look at the kids, the services and what they need. We have to fund what they need, from Special Ed. to Music and Art, that help make a well-rounded education.

I would like to say that last week I got to come up and take part in a program that the Virginia Department of Education sponsors for teachers and it was a wonderful experience. I am amazed at how much effort is put into teaching. It's not just me that is seeing this but I was at a meeting for a Board that I'm on and Todd Pillion bragged to the entire State about what we are doing here with this campus. When we fund schools and education it comes back on us in ways we don't even expect. Thank you.

Mr. Chris Owens: I just wanted to share that we've started a Robotics program and we've been working in the evenings after school and this year we had a class. I had 25 students sign up for Robotics class this year. We had a sustainable renewable energy class and pre-engineering class, with about 60 students in those classes. We went to the Robotics competition and we came in second with 356 Robotics teams in the State of Virginia. I have always felt like an underdog being from Southwest Virginia. I've always felt that way. We were always the smallest band at the competition. We've always been that way. Robotics was the same way. We show up with 4 or 5 students with black tape on our robot and other divisions show up with \$8,000 parts on theirs. Even though we're small, I feel we've always come out ahead because of the work ethic that we have here in Dickenson County. I have always been proud of being from here. I went to school at Haysi, Mr. Yates was the Principal. Mr. Compton and I had classes together. Mr. Minion, Mr. Whitner and Mrs. Edwards taught me. I've been here for 37 years and I feel like Dickenson County has the finest people. I've been all over the country fighting forest fires, met people from everywhere you always run into somebody who know where you're from. I came here to say thank you for supporting the student and continue to support the schools. Good things are going on; Trenton is going to VA Tech. He was accepted in the Engineering program. It's hard to get into the Engineering program. He's been accepted as a freshman. You remember the movie October Sky? That was just over the mountain from us. We put the rockets in the air. That is people from

Southwest Virginia doing that not people from the cities; it's from here. I would just like for you to keep that in mind. Thank you.

Trenton Deel: I've already had the opportunity to thank the School Board and I would like to thank the rest of you for giving us the funds to make that happen. That class not only has short term benefits, but it has long term benefits. Short-term you've got people who are not normally going to be able to participate in STEM events; robotics and things of that nature. Football players, basketball players can't participate without the class because of practice schedules. I know students that this class has changed their life. I didn't know what I wanted to do or where I wanted to go to college, but robotics and classes like this have helped me decide. As was mentioned, I was accepted into Virginia Tech. I never imagined myself being accepted into the Engineering program at Virginia Tech before I started participating in STEM events, FTC and things of that nature.

I want to thank you all for supporting STEMs and ask that you continue to support things of this nature. Furthering technology classes, specialized classes that students can learn what they are really interested about and what they want to do for the rest of their lives. Thank you.

Superintendent Robinson: Thank you for your time this evening. Our last point is this, if we don't work together to get the funding that our school division...

Chairman Susan Mullins: What about the DEA? Are we going to let them speak? They're prepared.

Superintendent Robinson: They can. Yes, thank you and come on up.

As I was saying, if we don't work together for the funding of the school division many of the programs; robotics, many of the things you've heard today, they will not be available next year. Ms. Mullins.

Ms. Allison Mullins: Thank you. I'll be brief and I know this has been a long meeting. The DEA will be joining Mrs. Robinson and the School Division in requesting full funding of the Dickenson County Public Schools by the Board of Supervisors for the 2017-2018 school year. Of course, we know the numbers are not all in and we don't know what that is going to be yet.

I just want to talk about April and I appreciated what she said about the Ervinton community getting kind of scared this time of year. I remember how that was at Haysi High School. Of course we still have that anxiety in the Haysi community about Sandlick Elementary and what's going to happen there.

As far as the DEA, we are an association that has bus drivers, cooks, janitors and administrators, central office staff, teachers and aides; we have the whole genre of the school system and this is a very anxious time for everybody in the school system because of the budget issues we've had the last several years. I will say that when the school budget is cut, when we

don't get the amount we need to function, it has a devastating effect. First of all on our students, they're the ones that feel the impact the most. When students lose programs and when they lose teachers, and when they lose aides; those have been the sacrificial lambs at budget. Programs, aides and teachers primarily – students feel that impact.

The DEA would implore you to make fully funding the school system your top priority for 2017-2018. We can't afford in this county to continue cutting programs. We are losing enrollment. We're losing good teachers. We've heard all good things and we want to continue having good morale, positive morale in our school and in our community. I feel like all of you are public servants that service, you don't really get paid anything. You're donating your time; the School Board is and the Board of Supervisors. I appreciate the Board of Supervisors standing up last year and saying we are going to be the example. We've got a budget crisis. We are going to take a pay cut. That is leadership; that's awesome. But, I think we all have to be on the same page and we all have a role to play. The School Board is to oversee the school system and make sure that the school system is functioning properly.

We need more transparency in the way we handle money in the county. We need the stakeholders to have a voice. I think tonight, if we can all say we want to be on the same page, and the page we're on is uniting to putting kids first. Because if we don't do that, and we have our own interest, if we have other issues that detour us from the future of Dickenson County; we won't have a future. So the DEA would ask the Board of Supervisors tonight, to make putting the kids first your very top priority and to do as much as you can. I understand maybe the Board of Supervisors may have concerns about allocation of funds in the school system. I would say be more involved in it; have greater supervision in how funds are allocated. I shared some of my concerns. I shared my concerns with School Board Members. I would say you have a duty to know how those dollars are being spent, but for goodness sakes don't take them away because who ends up getting hurt is the kids. If you have concerns about allocation of funds, how its budgeted, what's going on with salaries and so forth; be more involved. I think the stakeholders in the community need to be more involved in things like that.

I would just close by saying that the young people in Dickenson County are the only possible future we have. We don't have a future without them. We've got to get on the same page for them. We need to give them opportunities to shine like Trenton; and he was one of my students by the way in 8th grade. We need to give kids like that an opportunity to shine and they need to know how much we value them. How much we are behind them. How much we are supporting them. How much we believe in them and how much we are willing to invest in them. That's where our investment needs to be; in them. We need to give them a reason to want to stay in Dickenson County. Show them that we have pride in our school and in our community. Let's not just say we have pride. The way we show them is by action. That's by putting our money behind them. We all, I feel like, School Board, Board of Supervisors, DEA, community; we need to be behind them putting our kids first. That's all I have. Thank you all so much.

Chairman Susan Mullins: That brings us to our last item on our agenda which is adjournment. Do I have a motion? Shelby, do you need to adjourn your meeting?

Chairman Shelby Willis (BOS): We need to recess. I need a motion for us to recess until March 9th.

BOS Motion was made and seconded for Board of Supervisors to recess until March 9th. All votes aye.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Rocky Barton: I make the motion to adjourn this meeting. Mr. Shanghai Nickles seconded the motion. All votes aye.

Adjourned: 6:50 p.m.

Susan Mullins

CHAIRMAN

Approved: April 27, 2017

Reba McCowan

CLERK