

**DICKENSON COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD**  
**Special Called School Board Meeting**  
**May 31, 2017**  
**5 p.m. – Dickenson Center for Education and Research**

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

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

**Chairman, Mrs. Susan Mullins:** I would like to call this meeting to order and note for the record that all School Board Members are present along with our Clerk, Mrs. Reba McCowan, and our Superintendent, Mrs. Haydee Robinson. I have the Agenda before me. Are there any additions or corrections? Then I would entertain a motion to adopt the Agenda.

***Mr. Shanghai Nickles: made the motion to adopt the agenda as presented. Dr. Lurton Lyle seconded the motion. All votes aye.***

**Chairman, Mrs. Susan Mullins:** As we start every meeting, we will go ahead and say the Pledge of Allegiance and follow by a moment of silence. Thank you. Please be seated. Item II is Superintendent Robinson:

**Superintendent Robinson:** Good evening Board Members. In order to help the School Board make a decision for the location of the new elementary school the School Board requested certain information to be presented. One of the pieces the School Board requested was the enrollment trend analysis and projections of the Dickenson County Schools. This evening it is my pleasure to have Susan Kooch and Dr. Carl Chafin with K and C Associated to present the student enrollment trends and projections for our school division for 5 and 10 years. Since we also have members of our partnering boards with us tonight, the School Board will change its protocol. After the presentation, the School Board will certainly have an opportunity to ask questions about the presentation. The Chair will also recognize any Members of the Board of Supervisors or the Industrial Development Authority who wish to ask questions. A copy of this presentation will be made electronically to all Board Members. It will be placed on the Dickenson County Public School Website and will be available at request. At this time I would like to introduce Susan Kooch and Carl Chafin from K and C Associated.

**Dr. Carl Chafin:** Good evening and thank you all for coming out tonight. I am the “C” and she is the “K” of K and C Associated. We wanted to give a brief introduction of who we are so you wouldn’t think we just dropped in or got lost and found a job. Susan and I have many years of experience doing the kind of work that the county asked us to do in terms of planning and looking at student enrollment. We have done it in large school systems over the past 10 plus years. We have done the kinds of studies that we are talking to you about tonight. We stopped counting at about 25 school systems throughout Virginia. Most recently we have done similar studies for Bristol, Hanover County, Spotsylvania, Powhatan County and Newport News City. So we are all over the place. We enjoy doing this kind of work, and our goal tonight is to present you all

with a lot of data and having it make sense to you by the time we get ready to jump in the car and head home. Have it make sense to you to the point of view that as you plan your future with respect to what you may or may not do with your schools. You will have a really good sense based on how our analysis of five years from now and ten years from now how many kids you could expect to have in your schools. You will have that be one of the building blocks for making big decisions in order to move forward. The way Susan and I work is we don't tell folks what to do. We try to illuminate issues with data and have folks not only on the Board but in the community with a good understanding of what at least our snapshot of the future would be. That is our goal for tonight. We are going to throw a lot of stuff at you with the numbers. We hope to efficiently get through this so we aren't here through the wee hours but slowly enough so that people have a good understanding of what we are talking about. What we would like to do is work through the presentation and then take whatever questions the Board might have and do our best to answer them. We don't like talking about ourselves. We like talking about our data. We know you wouldn't know us from Adam so we wanted to give you a brief introduction. The way we like to do these studies and do these presentations is kind of like the game show "Jeopardy". We like to start with the answer and then walk you through some of the basic building blocks that we use to give you the answer. We want to start with where we think the county will be in the next 5-10 years: (See attached)

- ***Attachment A: DCPS – Enrollment Trend Analysis and Projections***

**Superintendent Robinson:** Let me just say that your presentation copy is just the draft. It is not exactly like what you just saw.

**Mr. Rocky Barton:** I think it is on the 3<sup>rd</sup> page where you had 995 in the fall of 2016. On the next one you have 1,081.

**Ms. Susan Kooch:** I can tell you that probably what I did was include Pre-K. That is one area where you pull that data down it will either have Pre-K or not have Pre-K. That is probably the function of Pre-K.

**Mr. Rocky Barton:** I think it probably would be because the Pre-K at Sandlick would be more than that, and the Pre-K at Clintwood would be more than that. It would be more than 1,081 for the fall of 2016.

**Ms. Susan Kooch:** I will go to the DOE site and pull that information down for you. I can definitively give you an answer when I pull that down. I will give that to Mrs. Robinson.

**Mr. Carl Chafin:** We will reconcile those numbers for you.

**Mr. Rocky Barton:** So most of the study didn't include Pre-K?

**Ms. Susan Kooch:** No. The enrollment ranges do not include Pre-K. What we were trying to do is we wanted to put actuals in so you could see where your starting point was. That was something that we did at the last minute of the presentation. I apologize for that. It is easily reconcilable. Pre-K is based on the program side that you would like to present to your community

not necessarily on their need to serve the population unless they are Special Ed. Is there anything else?

**Chairman, Mrs. Susan Mullins:** Are there any more questions? Please turn the lights on. If someone from the Board of Supervisors or the IDA has a question, you may ask it now.

**Mr. Larry Yates:** Could we go back to the slide at the end of the program that represented the Buchanan County Middle School.

**Ms. Susan Kooch:** It shows that six students are coming from Buchanan County.

**Mr. Carl Chafin:** If we didn't point out, we offer that if something occurs to you later tonight or tomorrow, we are happy for Mrs. Robinson to get in touch with us to answer any questions. We want to follow up and make sure that you all understand. We want to make sure that it serves its purpose for you. We are available for that.

**Chairman, Mrs. Susan Mullins:** Mr. Peters, do you have a question?

**Mr. Ron Peters:** It is great to look at this data, and I applaud you for that. I like seeing data. I see the numbers that we know are in middle school. We know the people that we brought into our school district. Do we have the number of our kids who have left our district?

**Ms. Susan Kooch:** No. That would require other divisions to share that information.

**Mr. Rocky Barton:** So in all, kind of adding up here, we had 42 students from Buchanan County.

**Mr. Carl Chafin:** 44 or we can't add, it's 45.

**Ms. Susan Kooch:** There is a reason behind that.

**Chairman, Mrs. Susan Mullins:** Mr. Compton, do you have a question?

**Mr. Jason Compton:** Yes, you gave us the estimate used for the location throughout the county. You broke it down for elementary, middle and high school. Is there any way that you could get us a map of all of the student population?

**Ms. Susan Kooch:** It is there.

**Mr. Larry Compton:** I'm sorry. I didn't see it. So that would give us a pretty good idea of where the population is.

**Mr. Rocky Barton:** Of course, it doesn't show the 45 from Buchanan County or the 30 some from Wise County.

**Chairman, Mrs. Susan Mullins:** Mr. Perry, do you have a question?

**Mr. David Perry:** In respect to the numbers that you guys have gathered, is there anything associated with why those numbers dropped? Is there anything that can be tied to the economic factor?

**Mr. Carl Chafin:** As the high school data shows for this most recent year, you lost more students than the previous data has given. We have no idea what the answer to that is. You could say that there is something in the trend that looks a little different. We can't answer why, but you all certainly can. Any of those question marks removed makes this kind of planning even better because now you can say that was just one year, or something new is going on here. If you look at the babies being born to the moms in your county, there is a definite path. What is dropping in the pattern is for the folks here, the community leaders and other interested people to try to get to the bottom of.

**Chairman, Mrs. Susan Mullins:** Yes, Mr. Peters?

**Mr. Ron Peters:** Back to the slide that showed where the kindergarten trend peaked, I may have misunderstood something. I just want to get clarification on the graph. You pointed out that it peaked at 195, but we had 162 births a year earlier.

**Mr. Carl Chafin:** This was back in 1999. We didn't look all the way back that far for multiple years. What we wanted to do was give you a snapshot of one group which is your current senior class. So in the late 90's and early 2000's whatever was going on here, the trend was different.

**Mr. Ron Peters:** But it grew 35 so it could have been many factors.

**Mr. Carl Chafin:** Yes. We wanted to go back with the one group.

**Ms. Susan Kooch:** As you can see, we have left these open, and I will go back. Let's say something should change, and more children are showing up or babies being born, you have the ability to populate these and manage the trend. If more babies are showing up, you will have more kindergarteners walking through the door. If you see more kindergarteners showing up, then the numbers will show up elsewhere. If you watch it, you can see them coming.

**Chairman, Mrs. Susan Mullins:** Okay. I think Mr. Perry has another question.

**Mr. David Perry:** In consideration of consolidation, you guys have done these studies throughout Virginia. Have you seen a pattern where consolidation has caused the enrollment to drop the following year? Is there anything to support that?

**Ms. Susan Kooch:** I can't say that because every county is unique. The right answer for another town or city may not be the right answer for you. It is always different. The division I worked in had over 25,000 students, but we still had problems with students entering the elementary schools. So it is something only you, as a community, can answer.

**Mr. Carl Chafin:** We frankly haven't done studies where we have taken that particular perspective on five years ago, and what did that look like. There may be a pattern, but we wouldn't know.

**Mr. David Perry:** It may interesting to see if you have consolidation in a community, and you see a sudden drop in enrollment. It could be a pattern across the State.

**Mr. Carl Chafin:** That is a good question, but we can't help you on that.

**Ms. Susan Kooch:** I know a lot of schools along the coal belt are gathering data, so it could be something that you could reach out for information. It is always regarding something unique, be it large or small.

**Chairman, Mrs. Susan Mullins:** Ms. Willis, do you have any questions?

**Ms. Shelby Willis:** No. I was just amazed at how many students ten years down the road that we would lose. If that is the case, we have the room to put them all in one school.

**Chairman, Mrs. Susan Mullins:** Mr. Yates, do you have anything?

**Mr. Larry Yates:** No.

**Mr. Rick Mullins:** Historically, since you all have been doing these studies for years, what percentage would you say has been accurate?

**Ms. Susan Kooch:** We have repeat studies which I think is a complement to our work.

**Mr. Carl Chafin:** What we typically hear is that you gave us a good number. I can think of two instances, and I won't name the counties, where we actually got the phone call saying that you were within three. I remember when I got that call, I said couldn't you have gone out and found three more kids? (Ha, Ha!) What I would say is that you can be reasonably comfortable with those ranges to say low to high. I would also say at the same time that it is just like I talked about earlier, projecting enrollments is like predicting the weather. We have given you the analysis for a ten-day core case, so don't wait until the 10<sup>th</sup> day to take a look at updates. Take a look at the new data and say maybe we need to adjust that. Don't wait until the 10<sup>th</sup> day and say you had planned a picnic, but it is raining. We have given you our best thinking, and we have also given you a couple of things to keep track of to know. Is our projection going to be on the money, or are we trending differently? As we said to Mrs. Robinson earlier, when you see that and want us to do something, give us a holler and tell us the pattern has changed. What is going on? Tell us about it. We will be happy to talk you through it over the phone. We would say, wow! Maybe you ought to go with the low number or maybe you need to tweak it this way, and we are happy to do that.

**Ms. Susan Kooch:** We would consult the DOE also, so if things should change in Dickenson County such as an industry coming in, and there is a reason for people to come in and start having babies then that trend will change, and we can redo it. Again, outside of being able to read a crystal ball that is what we can do. Thank you.

**Mr. Carl Chafin:** Thank you.

**Chairman, Mrs. Susan Mullins:** Okay, if there are no more questions, that brings us to Item—excuse me, do you have a question?

**Superintendent Robinson:** I think she needs to make a clarification.

**Ms. Susan Kooch:** The reason why the high school numbers are different is that there was a child coming in from Kentucky. So it was my gut reaction not to list that singular child because

it raises the question of who that child is. We were trying to give him or her anonymity because I failed to do it miserably. I'm sorry.

**Mr. Rocky Barton:** I think he actually comes through Buchanan County because Sandlick is a lot closer.

**Superintendent Robinson:** Thank you, Ms. Kooch. We wanted to make sure that we clarified that, Board Members, because we talked about it and wondered where do we put that child. We certainly didn't want to mislead anyone. I appreciate you doing that, Ms. Kooch. I just want to thank Carl and Susan for being here. They drove a long way to be with us. The information that they presented today was not only interesting but very thought provoking. It is going to take time for us to process this. While we are here, Madam Chairman, I would like to introduce our audience to our new Elementary School Committee. The committee has been formed to coordinate the construction of our new elementary school. I would just like to introduce the members now. These Board Members represent each of the partnering boards. The role of each Board Member will be to discuss issues in the Elementary School Committee, report back to their respective boards and come back to the elementary school with recommendations. Let me just take a couple of minutes to introduce them to you:

- Representing the IDA, would you please stand, Larry Yates
- Representing the Board of Supervisors, Rick Yates
- Board of Supervisors Attorney, Steven Mullins
- Representing the School Board, Haydee Robinson
- School Board Attorney, Scott Mullins
- Financial Coordination, Larry Barton and David

Did I leave anyone out? Thank you. This will be our new Elementary School Committee. As you can see, it does follow the same protocol as we had at Ridgeview with all Boards collaborating together. The next logical question is what are the next steps? We are asking that and our Boards are asking that. Now that we have the enrollment information, the next step is to use this information and identify the potential site for the new elementary school, knowing that we have a limited budget of approximately \$20 million for the elementary school. I would just like for Mr. Mullins to address the cost of real property. Mr. Mullins:

**Mr. Scott Mullins:** Thank you. I always say this, and I think it is something that we all should remember. We have issues, but it is great to have these issues because we have the money to build a school. We can never forget how blessed we are to be able to say that especially if you look at surrounding counties and see what they are going to pay for a school. We are very lucky to be having this discussion and money to follow through. I also think that it is always worth remembering that the reason we are blessed is because we worked together, we listened to each other. I always think it is like the Founders of our country. We have three different branches. We have three sets of basic wisdom who are looking at this and are trying to debate this, not about ideas, but about people. We work through things together, and I think we are going to be very successful. I think of these things like going down the interstate. If you go too fast, you get in trouble. If you go too slow, you get in trouble. I think tonight we sort of got off the entrance

ramp and gotten on the interstate. I will speak for myself when I say that I look at the data and find it interesting, but to really wrestle with it is what I would need to do in order to interpret it and hope it makes sense to me. I hope that it will help me in looking at my Board and giving the information. I step back from this a little bit because I think that it is very important to remember this data is not the end all answer here. From my simple way of looking at it, I think of it as a pie with three big slices. The slices may not be exactly equal, but they are three slices of the pie. The slices are important. You have your real estate cost because we are going to go somewhere, and we are going to buy some land. Some of that land is not just buying the surface, but some of it we would have to buy some coal because you can't build a school over coal reserves. If you do that, the owner of the coal will say you can condemn my coal effectively. So you have to look at the cost of real estate. We have all heard the three sites talked about, Clinchco, Upper Backbone and Ridgeview. All of them come with their own benefits and burdens, but ultimately you have to buy that land. That is one slice. The next slice is you have to build something on it so that is the construction cost. On some pieces of land it is easier to do than on others because you will have to move more dirt. Everything you have to do by moving dirt and the environmental studies are things that take away from brick and mortar. The third slice is what we started on tonight and what we as Dickenson County residents consider what is best over the next 20 or 30 years because that is how long it has been since we have built schools. This is a long-term vision about where our student population is going to be. When we start this process, I do believe it is three pieces of pie that we have to look at and analyze. We have to recognize that each one of them has to be developed. You don't want to just run out and start spending money until you really have consensus. Debate is great! I think each of us came here tonight with our own preconceived ideas about how things ought to be. We jokingly said during the Ridgeview experience that there are things that you realize you don't know. You can deal with those things. You can hire experts. You can study it, and you can figure it out, but it is the things "that you don't know that you don't know"! Those are the ones that can really set you back. Before we invest significant money, we have to make sure that we have done our best to cut down those variables out there that can cost us significant money. That is my way of saying that it is a process. I think the three Boards will be challenged. The Elementary School Committee will be challenged. I hope that if we do this right, you will read about us in the paper. There will be meetings that will be announced. When we come to milestones and things that significant, I think it is incumbent upon us to let the public know what is going on and let you see exactly what we are dealing with. You may agree with it or disagree with it, but that is democracy. We will try to be as transparent as we can, and it is one step at a time. I think tonight is a good first step. I'm sorry if I am long-winded, but I thought that those of you who have taken the trouble to be here need a lot of explanations about how this process will go. I think it is important that you understand that, and I hope you will tell your neighbors to get involved because this is important to the community. Thank you.

**Superintendent Robinson:** As I was thinking about the elementary school and Ridgeview, when we first started Ridgeview, we didn't really have all the money. We had never built a school here in 50 years. Now we have money for an elementary school, and we know that three Boards can work together to accomplish great things. I know that all of us will face tough ques-

tions. We will have tough issues. I think what we can go back to is we have the money for the elementary school, we've done this before, we've been successful and working together we can again be successful. Again, I want to thank Susan and Carl for being here with us today and giving us this presentation. I will be calling you, and I thank you for your time. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**BOARD COMMENT:**

**Chairman, Mrs. Susan Mullins:** That brings us to Item III Board Comment. Dr. Lyle:

**Dr. Lurton Lyle:** I would also like to thank the presenters here tonight. Now we have to digest the information and move ahead.

**Mr. Rick Mullins:** I think the presenters did a very good job and answered everyone's questions very well. I think this is something like Dr. Lyle said that we will have to analyze and take a look at.

**Mr. Rocky Barton:** I think it was very interesting to see some of those numbers. I told Susan that it was probably just in my head, but I would have thought that in the coming years Ervinton Elementary School would be down to 80 students. So I think that is a positive. Of course, like someone said it is all due to the economy. The last six months we have seen an upswing in our economy. I hope it continues. So I am anxious to get started on it.

**Chairman, Mrs. Susan Mullins:** I would like to comment that I appreciate your time and every effort you put into this. I think it is a good investment of our resources of where we need to go. It gives us a better idea, and I hope you have a safe trip back.

**Mr. Shanghai Nickles:** I appreciate the data and the questions asked by the other Boards. They were very good questions and answers. Thank you so much.

**Chairman, Mrs. Susan Mullins:** With that I will entertain a motion that we adjourn.

*Dr. Lurton Lyle: made the motion to adjourn. Mr. Shanghai Nickles seconded the motion. All votes aye.*

Adjourned: 6:00 p.m.

**Susan Mullins**

---

CHAIRMAN

**Approved: 6/28/2017**

**Reba McCowan**

---

CLERK