



the economic and business development point of view, there are concerns about achievement in our schools and the Chamber is working to be a part of the solution. He reported that there are 170 businesses engaged in education through the Oasis Program and the Education Cabinet. Mr. Nichols stated the Chamber supports:

- Legislation that provides equitable and adequate K-12 funding
- Shortened school board terms from six to four years
- Reduction in the number of school board members from twelve to nine – one from each of the six districts and three at large
- Have new school board members take office thirty days after their election

He stated the Chamber believes leadership and accountability of a school system start at the top. Mr. Nichols commented that the Issues Committee and Board of Directors took positions on issues of a legislative nature regarding funding and the governing body of our school system which is the Board of Education. He stated their position had to do with effectiveness, efficiency and accountability – nothing personal. Mr. Nichols stated a delegation from the Chamber recently met with the Pitt County legislators in Raleigh to express their views as noted above, and were told that the legislators are unwilling to pass legislation on any of the governance points without a request from the Board of Education. Therefore, the Chamber representatives came tonight to share their opinion and ask for the Board's leadership in making changes in the governing structure for our school system. Mr. Nichols stated after the merger of the two school systems, the Board was reduced once from fifteen members to twelve, but the contemplated reduction to nine never occurred. He commented that the Board portrayed negative energy throughout the community and that all Board members should represent all students, not just the ones in their respective attendance zones. Mr. Nichols commented that the Chamber believes that a smaller Board will create better focus and transparency, alleviate dissension among members and create better opportunities for consensus building for the good of the whole system as opposed to personal agendas. He shared that the two largest school systems in North Carolina – Wake and Charlotte/Mecklenburg – only have nine members on their Boards. Mr. Nichols stated the achievement scores keep going lower and the Chamber's vision is to advance our school system to be the best in the state. He asked on behalf of the Chamber that the Board send a Resolution to the legislative delegates with these changes outlined.

Chair Peaden then shared the purpose of the Called Session – to discuss and vote on the size, term length and lapse of time between being elected and being sworn in for the Pitt County Board of Education members. He stated he will go around the Board table having each member express their thoughts regarding each issue and then a vote will be taken. First, Mr. Peaden asked In-House Counsel Rob Sonnenberg to share with the Board an update on his research regarding current requirements of approaching the State Legislature with possible changes to the electoral process involving the Pitt County Board of Education.

Attorney Sonnenberg gave a brief history regarding an earlier meeting with the Pitt County Legislators when the Board had been advised that a Resolution stating desired changes in Board criteria would have to have unanimous support from our Board members. During this time period, legislature was in short session. More recently

Attorney Sonnenberg has contacted the Pitt County delegates, who are now in long session, and was told that a Resolution for proposed changes in Board criteria can be submitted upon approval by a majority vote of the Board. He commented that he had been advised by several representatives that the greater support from the Board behind the Resolution submitted will increase the likeliness of its success in going through the political process. Attorney Sonnenberg also stated in response to a question from a Board member during at earlier meeting, the Office of Civil Rights has no say so regarding Board scenarios as they are not involved in these issues.

Attorney Sonnenberg did state because of the Voters' Right Act of 1965, there is a requirement that if the State Legislature decided to carry forward said Resolution and adopt it into law; an application for pre-clearance has to be submitted to the U. S. Department of Justice to see if the change would have any discriminatory impact on the population of Pitt County. He stated the proposed bill may state "subject to the approval of the U. S. Department of Justice".

With no further questions, Chair Peaden then stated the first item to be discussed will be term length.

Bishop Ralph Love stated he had been on the Board almost twenty years, and is taking the same stance he did when the subject was discussed during short session last year. He commented that he does not have a problem serving for six years and knew the term length when he was elected. Bishop Love said the length of term does not present a problem for the children.

Ms. Barbara Owens stated sometimes six years seems like a long time, and then again it doesn't. This feeling varies with what the Board is involved with at the time. Ms. Owens has considered that a shorter term may open the door for others to serve and has contemplated that thought. She commented that she has made her decision and will vote accordingly.

Mr. Sean Kenny commented that there are very few offices that have a term length of six years (the U. S. Senate). He stated that Board members are dedicated to the work that we do, and he wants to encourage involvement from parents, family and the community. Mr. Kenny did question if an election for Board of Education members every two years would increase family and community involvement.

Ms. Mary Williams stated she is going to stick by her past decision from last year's discussion. She knew the conditions for office when she ran and was elected for her district. Ms. Williams commented that outside entities do not come in our school to lift a finger to help our students but only to give negative influence. She affirmed that the current term length is fine with her.

Ms. Chris Waters stated she has thought about the term length from the day she signed the form to run for the position. She commented that during a child's twelve years of education, it's possible that there would only be one opportunity to elect a school board

member (Seat A) and does not feel the Board can be accountable to the public it represents with a six year term.

Mr. Worth Forbes stated term length of a Board member does not make a heel of difference to a child's achievement. He commented that constituent input should be from the entire district – not specific sections or from those who talk the loudest. As a teacher, principal, administrator and associate superintendent, Mr. Forbes found that the number of years a board member served had no impact on the achievement of children. He likes to hear from his constituents, teachers through the PCAE and the media regarding issues, but most important to him is getting students where they need to be academically and addressing instruction. Mr. Forbes mentioned that in 2012 a Referendum could be placed on the ballot regarding these criteria for the Board of Education.

Mr. Marc Whichard commented that as he worked in education, the school board has no impact on his day-to-day job as an administrator and even less on a teacher. He stated that the State and Federal Government have more to say regarding his day-to-day duties. Mr. Whichard feels the number one person in a school district that has impact on each school in terms of performance is the superintendent, who also drives instruction for the district. Mr. Whichard feels that board members should represent their constituents and be knowledgeable; but most importantly, we have to do what we feel is right for the students we serve. He also concurred that the length of term does not affect student achievement. Mr. Whichard feels that what will change a failing school is a change in mind set, which does not necessarily begin with the Board.

Ms. Jill Camnitz commented that all of us who sit around the Board table care about the achievement of students above all other things. She feels decisions made by the Board do affect student achievement. Ms. Camnitz stated that we talk constantly about accountability for students, teachers, administrators and the superintendent, but we don't hold ourselves accountable any more often than every six years to the people that we are elected by and that we are responsible to. She does not think that it's good for the school system that the Board is not accountable any more often than every six years.

Dr. Matthew Ward commented that he has made his decision.

Ms. Jennifer Little stated that she is passionate regarding the platform on which she ran for office and believes in hearing from constituents across the county. She stands on her belief that every decision, every policy, every comment and all the Board does impacts student achievement. Ms. Little stated we were elected by people who trusted our word during our campaign to do the right thing. She commented that self-examination and change for the board has proven to be very difficult as it's been discussed for twenty plus years. Ms. Little stated we assess our students, principals, teachers and administrators every single day and asked why the Board should be exempt from the same evaluation from our constituents. She feels they deserve the right to hold us accountable, and we should empower the people who voted us in. Ms. Little respects the fact that everyone here tries to make the right decision and that we need to get along while we do this, but thinks the perception of lack of accountability, transparency, effectiveness and making

good sound decisions was an issue when she ran amongst many Board members sitting here today – to herself and the constituents who voted us in. She plans to honor her pledge and her promise to her constituents that she will vote for the term to be reduced.

Mr. Benjie Forrest stated in principle, some adjustments could be made in all three areas. However, in his opinion, changes in criteria need to be made at the right time and right situation. Mr. Forrest feels these decisions need to be made by the people of Pitt County and not the Board. He commented that a Referendum could work, as mentioned by Mr. Forbes, to hear what the community has to say. Mr. Forrest feels that if changes are made in all three criteria pertaining to the Board, they will be better received and more successful by a unanimous consent from the Board of Education. Without accomplishing this objective, he stated it may take a long time to reach a resolution. Mr. Forrest feels going before the General Assembly in a year of economic crisis with the question of deciding the length of a board member's term versus how do we save teaching jobs is not the priority we want to pursue.

Chair Peaden stated he agreed with Mr. Forrest's last statement.

Following discussion, Ms. Jennifer Little moved, second by Ms. Jill Camnitz, that the term length for Board of Education members be reduced from six years to four years beginning with the 2014 election. As discussion, Mr. Worth Forbes reiterated that whether the term length is six or four years, this will not have a direct impact on student achievement. Chair Peaden then called for a vote by the Board with the "ayes" being Ms. Jill Camnitz, Ms. Jennifer Little, Mr. Marc Whichard, Ms. Christine Waters and Mr. Sean Kenny. The "nays" were Mr. Benjie Forrest, Mr. Worth Forbes, Ms. Mary Williams, Ms. Barbara Owens, Dr. Matthew Ward, Chair Billy Peaden and Bishop Ralph Love. Motion failed.

The next criteria for the Board of Education to discuss is the time period between election and being sworn in.

Chair Peaden called on Mr. Worth Forbes to begin the discussion. Mr. Forbes stated again that student achievement is the number one issue for the Board. He commented that in the interim period between being elected and being sworn in, he attended redistricting sessions listening to the community's input, attended Board meetings to become acquainted with the process and visited different functions to become more familiar with his role as a board member. Mr. Forbes reported that he had not heard from any constituents regarding these changes, but has heard from the community concerned with student achievement. In looking at Unitary Status, if we had a vote where all the minority members on the Board voted one way and the white members voted another, that would be concerning to him.

Mr. Benjie Forrest stated his remarks continue to be the same as with term length.

Ms. Christine Waters stated she has no strong feelings regarding this criterion. She did state she would not choose to run and campaign for nine months waiting for the election in November with all the politics involved.

Ms. Jennifer Little stated the decision for this issue should be a “no brainer”. She commented that she takes offense to any racial issues regarding changes in criteria for the Board except for the Board size which she will explain later. Ms. Little stated there is no required training during the interim period of being elected and being sworn in other than the orientation session held. She feels that having the election in May and being inducted in June would have members ready to come in as the new school year begins in July. Ms. Little stated it makes no sense to have the current guidelines in place and doesn't understand why it was set up like this.

Ms. Mary Williams stated the time lapse may not make sense, but can be used as a learning curve. She concurred that there is no formal training set up, but commented that a person is still sitting in the seat representing a specific district who could answer questions as needed by a newly elected Board member.

Dr. Matthew Ward stated that he has made his decision.

Mr. Sean Kenny reported that he does not know of any elected office that has a seven month waiting period before taking office after being elected. He feels we can do better. Mr. Kenny stated he heard Mr. Forbes, but recognizes that the school system has many issues to discuss and cannot have one topic to be considered at each meeting. He did state that he did not find that attending the meetings in the interim period as mentioned earlier really helped as they provided tunnel vision focused on reassignment. Mr. Kenny also stated that once he was elected in May, he received calls from the community asking him about particular issues and had to inform these folks that he had not taken his seat on the Board at this time. He questioned if the public fully understands this process, but does not think so. Mr. Kenny feels being elected in May followed by induction in June would be appropriate.

Ms. Jill Camnitz stated she had nothing to add.

Ms. Barbara Owens commented that the time between election and being sworn in could be a time of orientation of Board procedure and for visiting different departments with questions about what they do.

Mr. Marc Whichard stated he's listened to what has been said and has heard the community speak regarding specific issues. When he's asked how the community feels regarding the three questions in reference to the Board, he's received blank stares as most people don't know what he's talking about. What they do want to know is in reference to student achievement. Mr. Whichard commented that the Board members have stated you have lots to learn, but he's not sure of this. He stated that July is the beginning period for the State, and it would make sense to start with new members at the same time. During the lag time, Mr. Whichard had the impression that big decisions were being sped up to a

certain extent before the new members took their seats so plans would not be changed, but feels actions were happening in another direction. He reiterated that he's not hearing from people, but understands that certain people are being called and feels he would have to question their motives.

Bishop Ralph Love spoke of the challenges for the Democratic or Republican parties in November. He commented that we don't have to deal with those challenges as the Board of Education members are elected in May. Bishop Love stated that most people running for the Board of Education do not realize that there are committee meetings, hearing panels and other events that members attend which require a commitment to their office. Bishop Love stated they won't get their money back they spent in campaigning, but the time lapse between election and being seated could be an opportunity to learn.

Motion was made by Mr. Sean Kenny, second by Ms. Jennifer Little, that the time between election and the induction date be reduced – being elected in May and taking office in June. Those members in favor of the motion were: Ms. Jennifer Little, Ms. Jill Camnitz, Mr. Marc Whichard, Mr. Sean Kenny and Ms. Christine Waters. Those Board members against the motion were: Mr. Benjie Forrest, Dr. Matthew Ward, Mr. Worth Forbes, Ms. Mary Williams, Ms. Barbara Owens, Bishop Ralph Love and Chair Billy Peaden. Motion failed.

The last criteria to be discussed by the Board was the size.

Mr. Marc Whichard reported that he had not heard from a single person regarding changing the size of the Board. He feels people want the size of the Board changed when they are unhappy with how a particular Board member stands on a specific issue. Mr. Whichard feels representation and listening to constituents are most important. He commented that what really troubles him regarding this issue is that Pitt County was built on rural and agricultural roots. He questioned if the Board size is reduced, could it end up being a total Greenville representation? Mr. Whichard feels some people may not have a problem with this as it's where the majority of the population now lives, but asks, "Are not our people in the rural areas just as important?" In looking at reducing the size of this Board, should we also look at reducing the size of the State Legislature? Mr. Whichard stated there are 100 counties in the state with 120 General Assembly members.

Bishop Ralph Love reminded everyone to look at the size of the Board, the number of schools we have and the number of students we have attending those schools. He asked how many hospitals and community colleges do we have in Pitt County with associated Board members? Bishop Love commented that the majority of our students are black while the majority of our Board members are white. He informed the Board that there has to be an equal playing ground somewhere and our constituents need to be represented. Bishop Love reported that at least four black representatives were provided to sit on the Board, but only three are currently in place. Bishop Love asked if the Board size is reduced, would that mean Dr. Ward and he will run against each other and reduce that representation even more?

Ms. Jill Camnitz stated that she would have a problem if all Board members were white, black, from the city of Greenville or from Winterville. She strongly feels the Board needs diversity and that each one of us represent **all** children. The idea that she can't represent, in her decisions at this table, the interest of all the children in Pitt County; and that somehow or other she only represents her district and white children - she finds the thought extremely troublesome and offensive and does not like us thinking that way.

Ms. Barbara Owens stated that she represents a Board member from the intersection to the crossroads, from the country store to the downtown shop or wherever. She commented that all twelve Board members represent all students in Pitt County.

Dr. Matthew Ward stated personally he believes twelve members are a good size Board. He commented that in the recent 101 Board Training Session he attended, the director who was speaking stated that there are several counties with twelve members on their Board and one with thirteen. Dr. Ward asked what is the urgency to change the number of Board members and would that mean putting Bishop Love against himself and Ms. Williams against Chair Peaden? He feels there needs to be a balance in Board members or perhaps one extra person to break the tie. Dr. Ward would like to see the Board get its priorities right and focus on the children – helping them go forward with better test scores and providing cleaner schools for them to attend

Mr. Sean Kenny confirmed that in the 101 Board Training Session it was stated that Rockingham County had thirteen Board members; but reported that since that time, their Board had been reduced in size. He stated currently Pitt County does have the largest number of Board members as compared to counties across the state. Mr. Kenny commented that he had heard the media discussing the divisiveness among members of the Board of Education. He stated that if the members agreed on everything, we would not have a democracy. Mr. Kenny stated the twelve members agreed to have this called meeting; all members are present and here for discussion which demonstrates that the Board is not divided. He further responded that on many different topics, members of the Board will disagree. Mr. Kenny reported that he's in favor of reducing the size of the Board, but he had heard other members express their opinions which provided him with different ideas to think over. He thanked all for their attendance at the meeting.

Ms. Jennifer Little stated yes, she supported a reduction in the size of the Board. She informed the Board that she had met with several black leaders, and one of those was Dr. Parker of Sycamore Hill who shared his insight with her. Ms. Little commented that they shared a great conversation with Dr. Parker speaking of the past and of the future. She learned that there is a fear of diversity being compromised which she understands and gets the fear factor – in that nine members might reduce diversity among Board members. Ms. Little believes that all districts should be fairly represented, but believes that a smaller board would be more effective. She confirmed that she will stand behind her campaign, but it's time to move on.

Ms. Mary Williams stated in her opinion, if we reduce the size of the Board, it will have an effect on minority students and the minority representation throughout our county.



She commented that she appreciated Ms. Little speaking with minority leaders in our county; but that she will never get how reducing the size of the Board or one Board member running against another will be productive for the 23,000 students in Pitt County. Ms. Williams stated that she had received very little response regarding reductions from the community and had heard the opposite when discussing diversity. She added that there is a large Hispanic population in Pitt County, but there is no Hispanic representation on the Board. She asks why take another voice from the Board, and who has complaints about any member in a district? Ms. Williams asked who is speaking and what is their vested interest in making changes?

Ms. Christine Waters stated she is a “rainbow” person and is here representing all races and creeds with no ego and no agenda. She commented that she has no strong feelings either way regarding this issue. Ms. Waters stated that a colleague of hers reported that “the perception of the community is that this department is top heavy”.

Mr. Worth Forbes feels we need a called meeting on achievement. He stated that Race to the Top funding in the amount of \$1.5 million has been spent but no report has been seen. With this extra funding, he questioned why achievement is down when it should be going up. Mr. Forbes commented that the Board needs to focus on achievement not issues like the one tonight. He wants focus on why a school is not productive, why teachers are failing and why principals are not holding staff accountable. Mr. Forbes believes if we reduce the number of board members, we will reduce minority representation. He ended by stating there is nothing wrong with representation – commenting that a black parent in his district might feel more comfortable speaking with Ms. Williams, Bishop Love or Dr. Ward than him and they need to have that opportunity.

Mr. Benjie Forrest stated his response is the same as stated at the beginning under term length.

With no further discussion, Mr. Sean Kenny moved, second by Ms. Jennifer Little, that the Board of Education size be reduced from twelve members to nine members effective with the 2014 election. Ms. Christine Waters then asked regarding the nine member number with six districts involved as she’s opposed to at large members. Mr. Marc Whichard agreed and stated that having an entire Board elected at the same time would not provide a favorable turnover period, with Ms. Waters commenting that term length did not change so elections would still be rotated.

Ms. Jill Camnitz then motioned that an amendment be made to the motion that the Board follow the format of the County Commissioners with one Board member elected per district (6) and three (3) represent a super-district (one member representing two districts). Ms. Christine Waters seconded the amendment motion. Mr. Sean Kenny, who made the first motion, and Ms. Christine Waters, who seconded the first motion, accepted the amendment. Mr. Benjie Forrest then stated that a unanimous vote of the Board is necessary for approval of the amendment to the first motion. In-House Attorney Sonnenberg then asked for a vote from the Board regarding the amendment for the Board using the format of the County Commissioners with one Board member elected per

district for a total of six and three elected to represent a super-district bringing the total Board of Education size to nine members. Board members voting for the amendment were: Ms. Jill Camnitz, Ms. Jennifer Little, Mr. Marc Whichard, Mr. Sean Kenny and Ms. Christine Waters. Those members against the amendment were: Mr. Worth Forbes, Ms. Mary Williams, Bishop Ralph Love, Mr. Benjie Forrest, Chair Billy Peaden, Dr. Matthew Ward and Ms. Barbara Owens. Motion for the amendment failed.

Chair Peaden then asked for a vote from Board members regarding the first motion made – that the Board of Education size be reduced from twelve members to nine members effective with the 2014 election. Ms. Christine Waters again asked how the nine would be selected. Chair Peaden asked that the Board take a vote to see if the reduction in size passes, then the discussion regarding how the nine will be selected will follow. Those members for the motion were: Ms. Jennifer Little, Ms. Jill Camnitz, Mr. Marc Whichard, Mr. Sean Kenny and Ms. Christine Waters. Those opposed were: Mr. Worth Forbes, Mr. Benjie Forrest, Dr. Matthew Ward, Chair Billy Peaden, Ms. Barbara Owens, Bishop Ralph Love and Ms. Mary Williams. Motion Failed.

There being no further business to discuss, Ms. Jill Camnitz, second by Bishop Ralph Love, moved that the meeting adjourn at 8:40 P.M. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectively Submitted,

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Mr. Billy Peaden, Chair

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Dr. Beverly B. Reep, Superintendent