

Education Committee

February 7, 2011

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Steve Lowrance. Roll was called, in attendance were: Richard Renfro, Joel Street, Gebe Ritchie, John Lewis, Charles Von Cannon, Pat Hicks Steve Lowrance, and Scott Sams sitting in for Sonja Culler.

Motion to accept minutes of the last meeting was made by John Lewis, second by Scott Sams. Motion carried.

Old Business

School Director's Report was given by Assistant Director Dr. Kevin Ward. Possible planning firm that could conduct the study for the school system was MPC of Knoxville who offered to do the assessment in two phases: a future conditions study, including enrollment projections and population study, and a capital plans study. Dr. Ward said MPC was recommended as a reputable company, but he also stated that there was at least two other firms that they may consider. The estimated cost of the study is \$90,000 and MPC has offered to do a presentation to the committee on the study. Ward also stated that the study could be scheduled as soon as May or June and could take 3-4 months or longer.

New Business

A Comprehensive Needs Assessment was provided to the committee. Short term capital needs of the schools were discussed and presented to the committee with a priority list of seven items, developed over the past year by Dr. Ward, Facilities Director Philip Nave and Supervisor Jimmy Hampton.

Other items needed are roof repairs, fencing, new restrooms, windows and lockers. Dr. Ward stated that the funds generated from the sales tax referendum of two years ago have mostly been used for school roofs, adding that \$1.4 million should be available for capital projects as of June of this year. Power service upgrades are also included in future plans.

Chairman Lowrance ask Dr. Ward if he thought MPC could meet with the committee at the next Education Meeting on March 7. Dr. Ward agreed to contact MPC and inquire as to their availability for the meeting.

Gebe Ritchie presented a petition of 700 names requesting a new gym at Unaka Elementary; he also stated that the gym was 74 years old (oldest gym in the State of Tennessee), and in need of repairs. Other members pointed out that the study may determine that a new gym or school at Unaka would become a priority. Ritchie stated, regardless, he wanted Unaka to be put on the front burner.

Dan Holder expressed his concerns about the importance of the research. Jerry McMahan agreed a comprehensive study of the overall needs of the school system is a necessity to determine the future direction of the schools and would also save taxpayers' money.

Steve Lowrance also articulated his thoughts that local politics needs to be left out of the plans "This is something that has killed us for decades." Lowrance also stated that school consolidation might be an area to save costs.

Dare Program-Steve Lowrance ask for the committee to look into extending the DARE Program from the fifth grade through the high schools. Dr. Ward stated the Sheriff's Department will no longer have funds available for the school resource officers, new funds will be needed to continue providing the six officers who currently run the DARE program.

Carter County Adult Education Program-Adult Education Director, Richard Renfro spoke on the Carter County Schools Adult Education Program. Renfro stated that 12,500 people out of approximately 72,000-74,000 in Carter County do not have a high school diploma. The cost for a practice exam is necessary before taking the GED exam. The exam fee is \$55 and many people cannot afford the fee for different reasons. Currently the program serves 160 participants. Out of the 160 enrolled, 50 have received their GED and 75 are attending class to prepare for the GED test. Day and evening classes are being offered at the Workforce Development location. A GED Preparation class has been opened at the Little Milligan Elementary and has already proved successful. Monday-Friday Orientation and Assessment, along with official Practice Testing and Official GED Testing is offered by appointment only. The purpose of the program is to enable our participants to become more productive, taxpaying citizens. The goal is to have funding available to cover the \$55.00 GED Testing Fee to assist at least ten participants each year. The Carter County Schools Adult Education Program would set up an Advisory Board to oversee the funds and determine the eligibility requirements for this special funding. Currently a total 70 GED recipients attend Northeast State Community College. Renfro requested \$550 to assist 10 people in the program to provide funds for those who are unable to pay the fee.

Motion to approve the \$550 funding was made by Charles Von Cannon and second by Gebe Ritchie. Motion carried.

School Board Member Vacancy-Mayor Leon Humphrey announced the resignation of School Board Member Noel Church of the 1st district. Advertisement was posted in the Elizabethton Star on February 6 and will run again February 13; the deadline for applications is set for February 14, 2011. The Carter County Commission will elect a replacement at the next regular scheduled meeting February 22, 2011. Applications may be obtained and submitted in the Mayor's Office.

Comments were made by the School Board members and concerned citizens.

Motion to adjourn was made by Pat Hicks, second by Gebe Ritchie.

Respectively submitted,
Debbie Street