

A Special Meeting of the Albemarle County School Board was held April 24, 2010 at 1:30 p.m. in the Paul Goodloe McIntire Room, Jefferson Madison Regional Library, Charlottesville, VA 22902.

School Board Members Present: Mr. Brian Wheeler; Mr. Eric Strucko; Mr. Steve Koleszar; Mrs. Pamela Moynihan; Mrs. Diantha McKeel; and Mr. Ronnie Price, Sr.

School Board Members Absent: Mrs. Barbara Massie Mouly.

School Division Staff Present: Dr. Pam Moran, Superintendent; Dr. Bruce Benson, Assistant Superintendent for Operations and Planning Systems; Ms. Debbie Collins, Director of Elementary Education; Ms. Annie Kim, Senior Assistant County Attorney; and Mrs. Jennifer Johnston, Clerk.

Board of Supervisor Members Present: Mr. Dennis Rooker; Mr. Lindsay Dorrier; Ms. Ann Mallek; Mr. Ken Boyd; Mr. Duane Snow; and Mr. Rodney Thomas.

Board of Supervisor Members Absent: None.

Albemarle County Staff Present: Robert Tucker, County Executive; Mr. Tom Foley, Assistant County Executive; Mr. Bryan Elliott, Assistant County Executive; Larry Davis, County Attorney; and Ms. Ella Jordan, Clerk.

Charlottesville City Council Present: Mr. David Brown; Ms. Holly Edwards; Mr. Satyendra Huja; Mr. Dave Norris; and Ms. Kristin Szakos.

Charlottesville City Council Absent: None.

Charlottesville City School Board Members Present: Ms. Collette Blount; Ms. Llezelle Dugger; Mr. Ned Michie; and Mr. Juandiego Wade.

Charlottesville City School Board Members Absent: Mr. Alvin Edwards; Ms. Kathy Galvin; and Ms. Leah Puryear.

Charlottesville City School Division Staff Present: Dr. Rosa Atkins, Superintendent and Ms. Linda Bowen, Clerk.

Legislators Present: Mr. David Toscano and Senator Creigh Deeds.

Call to Order

At 1:30 p.m., the meeting was called to order with Delegate Toscano facilitating.

Ms. Mallek called the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors to order.

Mr. Norris called the Charlottesville City Council to order.

Mr. Price called the Albemarle County School Board to order.

Mr. Michie called the Charlottesville City School Board to order.

Introductions.

- a. **The Context for City/County Cooperation**
- b. **Short History of Annexation and Revenue Sharing Agreement**
- c. **The Challenges of Education for the Global Economy**

Mr. Toscano thanked everyone for attending the meeting, which is the first time that all entities have meet together. He then opened the discussion with looking at the things that the two jurisdictions do together as a community. He also provided a brief overview of the history of the revenue sharing agreement. In closing his remarks, he noted that the strength of the community rests on the educational system within.

What We Do Well As A Community

- a. County Perspective reported by the Board Chair**
- b. City Perspective reported by the Mayor**
- c. County Schools Perspective reported by the Board Chair**
- d. City Schools Perspective reported by the Board Vice-Chair**

Mr. Toscano then pointed out the ideas posted from each governing body participating today.

Ms. Mallek stated that she was born in Charlottesville, but grew up in the County and feels a very personal connection and understanding of the greater community. She said that in her work with VACo and other localities, she has become aware of the very positive reputation shared by the City and the County because of their ability to collaborate. The County's recent Resource Utilization Study also stated that the community works well together.

Ms. Mallek commented that the localities already work well together in many ways – on the water supply system and long-term plan, the Regional Jail, Commission on Children and Families, the investment in the YMCA, the Airport Authority and Commission, the regional library system, fire and rescue operations and shared equipment, Darden Towe Park and the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court. She is proud of all the collaboration.

Mr. Toscano noted that the joint YMCA involves County dollars invested in a project that will reside in the City.

Mr. Norris said that the City recognizes the same items mentioned by Ms. Mallek, including emergency operations center, 800 MHz, the JADE and internet crimes task forces, public safety, regional parks including Ivy Creek and the skateboard park, community festivals, local nonprofit, transit service, the regional water supply, the Health Department, Court Square projects, and the regional Visitors Center and tourism.

Mr. Price stated that the County School system has excelled in benchmark testing and eliminating or closing the achievement gap, using technology to meet the needs of students, high performance organization – and works cooperatively with the City on CATEC, the Piedmont Regional Education Partnership (PREP) Program, Ivy Creek, enrichment opportunities such as Odyssey 2025, and professional development classes. He said that the collaborative vision for the future includes a shared virtual school, professional development, adult education, GED and SOL instruction, electronic resources and possibly transportation – which the schools are confident will help reduce overall costs.

Mr. Toscano commented that Odyssey 2025 is a joint undertaking with the City and County School Divisions, funded in part through a private foundation.

Mr. Price noted that the idea behind it is to give kids hand-on science experience, outside of the classroom in different learning environments.

Mr. Toscano said that there is a private endowment that has been created, which supports this program and also provides training for science teachers.

Mr. Michie commented that both school divisions are excellent, and Charlottesville schools have been winning state and national awards for raising achievement of at-risk students. He stated that there have been programs in place for exceptional students, and the schools have invested a lot in interactive technology – with

Smartboards in every classroom. Mr. Michie added that the Fine Arts program is one of the best in the state, and the School system continues to keep small class sizes and supports a diverse student body. He said that the three-year-old preschool classes continue to thrive, with five full classes anticipated to be in place by next year. Mr. Michie stated that the superintendents of both divisions have always had a “great relationship,” as have both School Boards. He added that they will work with Albemarle on digital programming and the virtual school – as well as programs such as Odyssey 2025 and professional development. Mr. Michie stated that there are potential savings in transportation, purchasing and adult education.

Mr. Toscano then introduced Mr. Alex Horniman of the Darden School, who has offered to help facilitate a process by which the Schools can discuss these issues over the next few months to see if they can arrive at some mutual agreements. He also introduced Senator Creigh Deeds, stating that other legislators were invited but couldn’t attend and instead asked for a written report. Mr. Toscano noted that there may be some things that come out of this process that will have to be done legislatively. If these approaches are developed together, he thinks the legislators will also be on board to support and hopefully get passed.

What We Can Do Together:

- a. City Schools – 1 - 3 Items**
- b. County Schools – 1 - 3 Items**
- c. City Council – 1 - 3 Items**
- d. County Board – 1 - 3 Items**

Getting to Yes:

- a. Identification of issues to work on and protocol for so doing**
- b. Possible short-term agreements**

Mr. Norris commented that there are a number of opportunities to collaborate and/or consolidate services to save taxpayers money and produce more efficient operations, i.e., fire, social services, housing, and parks. The City Council would like to propose working groups to study which are the best candidates – then come forth with recommendations. He said that areas of the County that are adjacent to the City merit collaboration among both Planning staffs and Planning Commissions, including economic development. Mr. Norris stated that the County has taken a proactive approach with economic development – and the City should be working closely on that initiative as it will benefit both jurisdictions. He said that he hopes in the future both localities will work on a jointly operated transit system, transportation improvements, including bicycle and pedestrian amenities; water and sewer planning should also be considered for merger, as should fire and rescue services, parks, housing and social services.

Ms. Mallek stated that the overarching goal is to improve communication between the localities, and to keep the public involved in the process. She said that City residents have indicated an interest in having a more cohesive revenue-sharing agreement, and a better solid waste authority. Ms. Mallek commented that costs and responsibilities need to be identified and explained when collaboration is embraced, and perhaps joint funding of conservation should also be discussed. Other specialty areas for consideration could include training, arson investigations and SWAT.

Mr. Huja said that a joint social services department should continue to be discussed, as the City’s is in transition right now.

Mr. Dorrier asked about possible exploration of disbanding the independent City and County concept. Senator Deeds commented that for everyone to be together without arguing is a phenomenal accomplishment. He said that he’s represented Rockbridge and Alleghany for 20 years – with current discussions happening there about consolidation. He said that since the 1960s there have been four separate studies that have “resulted in absolutely nothing,” so several years ago he put forth a measure to examine the studies and come up with a concrete set of proposals to produce as much efficiency as possible – which made it through the Senate but not the

House. He does not think it is realistic to think that we are going to break down the walls completely between cities and counties for some time.

Mr. Toscano added that the closest the State has come to moving forward is the creation of the town reversion statute.

Senator Deeds said that there was a provision put in the Code to allow cities of less than 6,000 people revert to town status through public referendum – with South Boston doing it in 1990 and Clifton Forge doing it in 2000.

Mr. Toscano stated that Charlottesville had a big debate in the mid 1990's about reverting to town status, but the General Assembly has not expressed an interest in continuing the effort.

Senator Deeds emphasized that constituents are going to demand it if there isn't a better effort toward efficiencies, adding that it's happening everywhere in the State – not just here. There are 49 other states, and they all do it a different way than Virginia. There is a responsibility for everyone to look how to do things more efficiently.

Mr. Toscano said if the governing bodies were to decide jointly that the legislators should take a bill to the General Assembly related to this then everyone should work together on how to do it. He thinks it is something the local legislators would consider.

Mr. Rooker said that he hopes they come out of this with concrete proposals for efficiencies or better services for the residences – not a study – and the best way to achieve that is to create working groups focusing on specific areas, such as Parks and Recreation. He said that he has advocated for a universal recreation pass that can be used by residents in both localities, citing Darden Towe Park as an example of how this can be done successfully. Mr. Rooker stated that he would also like to see a working group that focuses on revenue-sharing with the composite index issue, one that focuses on schools, one that focuses on purchasing that affects local government and Schools, and one that focuses on public safety.

Mr. Strucko stated that he likes Mr. Rooker's practical approach, but he also wants Mr. Dorrier's issue – the biggest issue in the room – to be at the forefront. He commented that consolidation of schools and public safety systems would be "years in the undertaking," and he would like to make sure that goals set are realistic. Mr. Strucko noted that if they can achieve success in certain areas – such as student-based to include enrichment programs, virtual classrooms, and teacher development; and then other areas such as transportation and purchasing – then they can be used as positive examples from which to move forward. He added that while the City and County are similar, there are important uniqueness and fundamental differences – such as a priority on rural preservation. He noted the impact major development in the County has on the City, i.e., Biscuit Run. Mr. Strucko said he thinks the Planning Commission and subsequently the Board of Supervisors, worked hard to secure proffer money from the developer to use for City roads and did not require an agreement with the City. The County used "good government" practices in the handling of the Biscuit Run proposal. He added that Albemarle and Charlottesville are distinct and have important uniqueness which is why there is separate representation and government. Mr. Strucko then added that he thinks the lists produced by the School Boards are refined such that they can begin working on the items to take them to the next step.

Ms. Dugger said that some of the areas mentioned on both School Board lists already reflect "considerable agreement," such as purchasing – which is really a "no-brainer." She commented that Dr. Atkins and Dr. Moran work closely together, and the School Boards meet four times per year together – noting that CATEC and PREP are good examples of successful collaboration.

Mr. Wade said that the School Boards have already taken the baby steps and they need to go to the next level. They are already doing an incredible amount of things jointly. He thinks it is time to show the public results. He thinks that there must be steps taken now to address the needs of the community's youth, as it won't matter in the future where they live or whether they went to school in the City or the County.

Mr. Price said he would suggest laying out the desired outcomes and work on them. Maybe it is also it is necessary to have this type summit once a year and come back to discuss what has been resolved. Mr. Toscano commented that he is hearing that it is important that this be an ongoing process, with the group meeting again after goals are set.

Ms. Blount said that the joint collaboration with schools has been very successful, and strategies to address a lot of the issues being raised are already moving forward. She thinks it is also important for the communities to talk about the issues that have recently made headlines.

Ms. Moynihan commented that there have been many discussions in the past about collaboration, but that hasn't always translated into action. She suggested having joint work sessions to address specific issues, then having staff proceed. If we have the will and we have the way, then we need to do it and stop just talking about collaborating.

Mr. Toscano said that he is encouraged to hear about "Project Charter" because it is about deliverables. The individuals in this room have the power to do something, and make an effort towards some kind of action, even though there are always staffing issues to be considered.

Mr. Koleszar stated that in the School Division, some of the most at-risk students are transient students that move from City to County and back again. That is one area of great need.

Ms. McKeel agreed, adding that there has been a plea from County educators to get the jurisdictions together to provide a more seamless operation for students in this situation. She said that social services could be better involved when this issue arises.

Dr. Moran commented that a meeting of Board Chairs on July 12th could focus on developing "Project Charter," with full school boards and superintendents reviewing it in the fall.

Mr. Rooker said that he would like to move ahead with the smaller working group concept, with two Board members and two Councilors to look at specific issues with some help from staff. The smaller working groups could make specific recommendations back to the Board and/or Council.

Ms. Moynihan suggested that the School Boards continue to work together on some issues in a joint work session, independent of other small-group meetings that might be taking place.

Mr. Price noted that some approaches may work better for one issue whereas a different approach might be needed for others, but he also likes the idea of small working groups.

Mr. Toscano said he is hearing there is consensus to meet on July 12th to work out details on "Project Charter" followed by joint school work sessions sometime in early fall. The School Boards will also look at potential areas for collaboration and decide what they want to tackle first.

Mr. Brown commented that this is a great idea, but he would also like to address the questions from the public regarding the merging of certain departments. He said that we haven't merged because it's hard to merge, noting that both entities are resistant to give up control – and the focus needs to remain on whether services will be better if they are joined. Mr. Brown stated that the students who need the most help are actually the ones that spend time in both school systems, and said that perhaps merger of social services would provide better service for these at-risk populations.

Mr. Huja reiterated that there is an opportunity now for merging social services.

Mr. Toscano said that this is a good time to talk about the working groups and their role in this.

Mr. Koleszar emphasized that real savings will only be realized through consolidation.

Mr. Dorrier commented that this also involves the level of funding from the state and federal governments.

Mr. Boyd commented that the school boards and local governments have previously discussed possible mergers, and it's important not to throw away the studies that have been done before. He said that nothing on the table so far today has directly addressed the \$2.6 million shifted between localities, and that conversation needs to happen.

Mr. Rooker stated that he has suggested forming a working group to look at that issue.

Mr. Toscano agreed that that is a huge issue and maybe the working group include members of both governing bodies and school boards.

Mr. Boyd said he is concerned about the challenging economic times that we are facing on all levels. It is important that the needs of citizens be considered in these discussions.

Mr. Price commented that one reason he thinks that mergers haven't happened thus far are because of resistance from citizens. He does not want to go down a road and just "spin our wheels". The issue of why consolidation of the schools hasn't happened is the first issue that needs to be addressed and if that cannot be addressed, then we need to move on to the next issue. His biggest concern at this point is funding of public education – which is being further pushed onto localities by the state. It is tough for local officials to raise taxes when the state is not doing its part. He does not think there is going to be a change in the Revenue Sharing Agreement. He said that the County schools do have a problem with counting monies on their books that are ultimately transferred to the City. He thinks we have a better chance of having that conversation than consolidating the City and the County.

Mr. Toscano clarified that Mr. Boyd is raising the issue that there needs to be a discussion about the money issues, and Mr. Rooker is suggesting having that discussion take place within the working group. Ms. Szakos said her concern is about taking the \$2.6 million from one locality's kids and giving it to another locality, and she does not know that there will be an agreement on that issue. She thinks that the working groups can work and come to some kind of agreement.

Mr. Boyd emphasized that this is a fairness issue.

Ms. Szakos commented that "it was in the agreement."

Mr. Toscano stated that the issue isn't going to get resolved today, but will only be resolved through a number of conversations – with representatives of each jurisdiction having these discussions. The working group is a good way to proceed. This is not going away; there are legitimate points of view arising out of each jurisdiction.

Mr. Strucko said that the finance issue is more complex than revenue-sharing and composite index, and the County schools had to deal with something that the City schools weren't faced with. The County schools biggest cuts came from Albemarle County local government. That's something that really complicates the financial issues.

Mr. Wheeler stated that he has been an advocate for having discussions about consolidation, but he would suggest that the focus needs to move away from the legislative measures such as the Bell Amendment and future plans for pursuing change in that fashion with regard to the \$2.6 million. We can always come back and revisit that, if we're not happy with the track these small group meetings are taking. That opens up the possibility for moving forward cooperatively.

Mr. Toscano said it may be difficult to get something like Mr. Wheeler suggests without getting something in exchange. He would prefer that the Bell Amendment not be there.

Senator Deeds said that local government “is where the rubber hits the road.” He mentioned the book *Reinventing Local Government*, which looks at future shifts in local government. Senator Deeds said that the decision about the \$2.6 million will happen in this room. You have to consider whether there are legislative roadblocks that get in the way of cooperative efforts you want to consider. In the past the General Assembly has written into the budget certain measures to provide a “softer landing” for local governments. There are things the General Assembly can do to help localities.

Mr. Toscano stated that if the working groups can get moving on specific issues, it will instill confidence and pave the way for other changes that might mitigate the need for legislation. He said that it’s important to convene the group on revenue-sharing and local composite index, adding that there are ideas out there such as changing the local composite index based on different criteria or putting the revenue-sharing money into a fund that can be shared. Those ideas have not currently been discussed because they will take some time. The decisions will be made by the people in this room.

Mr. Rooker said that if a group starts working on that issue, by the end of the summer they will either have an agreement or know that one cannot be reached. He suggested that the County Executive and City Manager appoint some people to serve on a working group to begin immediately discussing the issue. The group would then report back to their respective bodies periodically.

Ms. McKeel commented that there is something wrong with the formula, if 15 families in the County were able to sway the whole composite index change based on their income. She hopes that the working group is not going in with the idea that there will be no changes proposed for the General Assembly.

Mr. Rooker pointed out that land use is affecting the composite index, and that is being looked at as a separate issue.

Mr. Toscano said there is nothing being ruled out in the working groups. He then asked for, and received, general consensus from individuals around the table that they wanted to proceed in this fashion.

Mr. Toscano asked about other working groups to look at parks, fire and rescue, and social services.

Mr. Huja asked if there is an interest in having a social services working group.

Mr. Rooker responded that there is a significant statutory overlay with social services, and he would like to talk with staff about whether consolidation is even possible.

Mr. Strucko commented that he and Ms. Mallek had formed an ad-hoc working group on fire and rescue, and he would like to see that continue.

Mr. Toscano commented that there are a number of studies that have been done and they need to look at those studies, and not redo them all.

Ms. Edwards said she would like to echo the concerns about social services. She said that the best way to prepare children to learn is to strengthen their households. That would be a good work group that could define the legislative roadblocks. Housing is the underlying reason families move from the City to the County, and the economic issues they struggle with. There are issues related to the Comprehensive Services Act and having systems of services that can cross the City and County.

Ms. Mallek noted that the first step for any work group would be to evaluate the mandatory requirements for local social service departments.

Ms. Szakos said she also thinks this is a good time to look at social services.

Mr. Rooker added that the social services work group would need representation from Board, Council, and School Boards.

Mr. Dorrier commented that he thinks it is important to focus on the library issue. He thinks they need to look at the current agreement.

Ms. Mallek replied that the Library Board is already getting ready to engage with each jurisdiction to discuss their status and future issues.

Mr. Rooker commented that the library is a larger issue than just Charlottesville and Albemarle.

Ms. Blount said that the working groups will be very fruitful, and she wants to be sure the results of those discussions come back out to the public.

Mr. Toscano said it seems important to him that this group reconvene possibly in March 2011 with the idea of reporting back and seeing if there is a next step. It is helpful to have a feedback group, and it's hard to put that together after the fact.

Ms. Mallek suggested reconvening for an interim report in November 2010.

Mr. Rooker said this involves a lot of work. It won't take convening this entire group to implement these measures.

Following some general discussion, the group agreed to reconvene in April or May 2011. Mr. Toscano said he would send out a notice.

Adjournment.

Mr. Toscano thanked the participants for attending. Hearing no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:17 p.m.

Chairman

Clerk