

Joint Meeting with County Commissioners
July 21, 2021

The Gates County Board of Education met in a special called session joint meeting with the county commissioners on Wednesday July 21, 2021 located at the Gates County Historic Courthouse, 115 Court Street, Gatesville NC. The meeting took place at the Gates County Historic Courthouse. Mr. Ray Felton called the Board of Education meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. The following board members were present: Mr. Ray Felton, Mrs. Glendale Boone, Mr. Leslie Byrum, Mrs. Amanda Pacitto and Mrs. Sallie Ryan. Dr. Barry Williams (Superintendent of Schools) was present. School Board attorney, Will Norrell, was present. Commissioners present were Dr. Althea Riddick (Madam Chair), Mr. Ray Freeman, Ms. Linda Hofler, Mr. Jack Owens and Mr. Jonathan Jones. Mr. Tim Wilson (County Manager) was present. The county attorney, Pitt Godwin, was in attendance.

Dr. Riddick called the meeting to order; and then, Dr. Williams called the meeting to order for the Board of Education.

Dr. Williams provided the following opening comments:

Good Afternoon Commissioners, Board of Education, and Gates County Citizens,

I appreciate the opportunity to share with both boards, and the citizens of the county, the status of the Community Center, the director, and to provide information to assist in making decisions as we move forward.

First, I would like to share that we have appointed Mrs. Bobbi White as the Interim Director of the Community Center. Mrs. White is the former Director of Parks and Recreation at Elizabeth City/Pasquotank County Parks and Recreation. Mrs. White has a degree in Recreation Administration from UNC-Chapel Hill and has a vast array of experience in the field.

In April of this year upon notification of the retirement of Ms. Eure, I recommended to the Board of Education that I speak to the County for input in hiring a new Community Center Director. The board responded for me to contact Dr. Althea Riddick. With that discussion came a review of the documentation of how the community center came to be a shared entity:

- The County is the owner of the Community Center.
- The Gates County recreation program began in 1978 when the Board of Education gave the County 3 acres from its high school campus so that a federal grant could be secured to build a Community Center in the middle of the county.
- During the ensuing years, the Board of Education operated and expanded the Community Center and recreation program and by 1997, the Community Center made available 7 gymnasiums, two baseball fields and two softball fields to the community on an almost year-round basis.

- In 1997, an application for a Parks and Recreation Trust Fund grant, commonly called a PARTF grant, was submitted through the collaborative efforts of the County and the Board of Education. The grant application was submitted in hopes to expand the range of facilities available to the community on a centralized site that was partially owned by the County and partially owned by the Board of Education.
- The application for the PARTF grant was approved in 1997 resulting in the PARTF Agreement between Gates County and the North Carolina Parks and Recreation Authority.
- In 1997, the County did not own the required land to build all the facilities detailed in the PARTF agreement. Through collaboration and the joint interest of both the County and the Board of Education, the Board of Education sold the land needed for the new facilities to the County for \$10.
- The PARTF agreement stated that the project was to be completed during the period from June 1, 1997 to December 31, 1999.
- The PARTF Agreement requires that the County maintain and manage the PARTF projects for public recreation use for a minimum period of twenty-five (25) years after project completion. This period will end on December 31, 2024.
- Two agreements between the County and the Board of Education were then made:
 1. The Board of Education and County agreed that the Board of Education would assume all maintenance and operating responsibilities for the project site, as provided in a Joint Use Agreement signed by the County and Board of Education on February 3, 1997, and February 11, 1997
 2. The parties also entered into a second agreement by which the County designated the Board of Education as the operator and responsible party for recreation and parks programming effective February 4, 1997.
- These two agreements are separate from and not required as part of the PARTF Agreement.

With all that being said, the purpose of this meeting is for the County and the Board of Education to engage in conversation regarding the status of the Community Center moving forward. The PARTF Agreement must be followed until December of the year 2024. However, the two additional agreements are not tied to a specific timeframe and are not required by the PARTF grant and can be adjusted at any time with the agreement of both parties.

As a reminder, this discussion has come about now due to the need to hire a Community Center Director, the fact that the County owns and the Board of Education maintains and operates the Community Center, and the fact that the new director would be over the Community Center after the PARTF Agreement is fulfilled.

One additional point: Gates County is the only county in North Carolina where the Board of Education and not the County maintains and operates a community center. Thank you!

The following comments were made by the Board of Education and the County Commissioners:

BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMENTS

- In the deed, what does the rectangular diagram plat of land encompass?
- The language in the MOU needs to be more specific with language to address effective operations.
- The community center has several issues that need to be addressed from a maintenance standpoint.
- The Community Center is a partner with Albemarle Commissions. We have a facilitator who serves seniors in assisting with medical insurance decisions and assisting in prescriptions. There are a lot of activities the Community Center provides.
- We should consider building a Senior Center in a location that can accommodate a variety of provisions.
- The Community Center has the best disabled playground in the state. The ballfields are one of our concerns. The individuals who maintain and prepare the ballfields do a marvelous job.

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS COMMENTS

- The community center could improve upon the activities when hosting events can allow the building to be utilized with a variety of provisions.
- It was recommended that we have one more joint meeting next month; and at this meeting a decision will be decided who will operate the facility.
- The Gates County Board of Commissioners will not do anything that will adversely affect the school system because we believe in working for the good of the citizens of Gates County.

There was no further discussion. Mr. Leslie Byrum made a motion to adjourn. Mrs. Ryan seconded the motion. Chairman Felton called for a vote. Board members stated their vote, and the motion was unanimously approved.

There being no further business, Chairman Felton adjourned the meeting 5:30 p.m.

Secretary

Chairman