

The Beaufort County Board of Commissioners held a special called meeting on Tuesday, January 14, 2025, at 5:00 PM, and Tuesday, January 2, 2025 at 2:00 PM in the boardroom located at 136 W. 2nd St, Washington, NC with the following present:

Commissioners:

Chairman Frankie Waters
Vice-Chairman Jerry Langley (absent on December 9, 2024 – Attended January 2, 2025)
Commissioner Ed Booth
Commissioner Stan Deatherage
Commissioner Tandy Dunn
Commissioner Hood Richardson
Commissioner Randy Walker

Staff Present:

Brain Alligood, County Manager
Katie Mosher, Clerk to the Board

Chairman Waters: At this time we'll call this special meeting to order. The first item is the approval of the agenda. I'd like to switch and do the Washington Harbor District first and then do the elementary school project.

Motion: Vice Chairman Langley motioned to approve the agenda. Commissioner Booth seconded. The vote was unanimous.

Harbor District Alliance Grant Request

Brian Alligood: I'll take the Board back about four years ago to March 2020. The Board of Commissioners agreed to engage with the Harbor District Alliance to apply for the North Carolina Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund Grant. They were going to use those funds to upfit the Harbor District Building to put in a sprinkler system, the HVAC and work on the commercial kitchen that was there. I'm not sure if any of you have been over there. All that stuff, I think last month in December Mr. Woolard came and inspected. So, that grant, it's my understanding has been closed out so we're good with that. At the time, John Jesso, who is the interim director of the Washington Harbor District Alliance was talking with Mr. Woolard and he said you guys need to apply for this again, there's a lot of money out there and they look favorable upon folks who have gotten this grant before, continuing things so they were very interested in it. I think they were to tight on the timeframe though, with it being turned around. They found out recently that because of the hurricane in the western part of the state that the deadline had been pushed back to apply for that grant. So, last Monday Mr. Jesso called me about it and said is it something we might be able to do again. I looked at it and I said I'm not comfortable doing it without the Board at least knowing about it because there's some sign offs you all would have to do later and I didn't want, it would either be that or I'd have to poll you and come back and ratify it. Since you had this special meeting called, I wanted to add this to it to ask you about it. So, they're essentially doing the same thing. They're asking to do the same thing. The grant is actually due tomorrow. Michelle Rouse is writing the grant for them and will submit it on their behalf. They'll manage it just like they did last time. There's no County money involved. I'm not sure how much they're applying for this time. I think they applied for \$230,000 last time and they got \$100,000 but it's to help finish out that commercial kitchen for that upstairs area. So, what I would like is your approval for us to work through that process with them exactly like you did last time. So, knowing nothing unusual about it, and no county dollars are involved.

Motion: Commissioner Walker motioned to approve allowing the Harbor District Alliance applying for the grant. Commissioner Booth seconded. The vote was unanimous.

New Elementary School Project – Need for Additional 4 Acres

Brian Alligood: I'm happy to kind of give the timeline on what I know. I was at a JCPC meeting on Thursday, January 9th and at that meeting the City attorney, Franz Holscher, attended that meeting and he said to me I think the school board and the City had worked out an agreement. I said okay, I wasn't aware of that. We talked a little bit about what that was. I talked with the Chairman that day and you requested that we send out a notice to the Board. You wanted to call a special-called meeting to discuss that. So, my understanding in the email that I sent out to you, it laid out the two options that the City and the School Board had agreed upon. My understanding from the superintendent was that on Friday the 10th the School Board met and agreed to that memorandum of agreement. Then, Monday night, that memorandum of agreement was approved by the City. You got that right after I got it. I got it last night and forwarded it to the Board last night that was signed by the mayor. That essentially says they will agree to these two options pending which one the Board of Commissioners agrees with. Then, this morning, after I received it I sent to you this information, which has the plat and the revised, or not the revised drawing but the drawing that shows where the retention pond is on the City property that they need for the four acres that was sent to you this morning, as soon as I got it from the superintendent. Then I printed this one out for you so you would know about the four acres that are at the park that they're looking to swap, if the swap is what ultimately occurs, and you'll see that laid out. It is not for the entire parcel, as I think you all are aware. You see where the gravel area, it's my understanding where that gravel area is that essentially serves as a kind of parking lot area. That's part of what the City's looking to include. According to the City Manager, it would be their intent to pave that and stripe it so that people could park in that area and not have to park on the side of the street and block up the area when people were playing in the park. So, that's what I have. The County Attorney and I met earlier today to just review the legal pieces of all this and she can certainly speak to any of those that the Board may have but my understanding is that the City and the Schools have come to an agreement on one of two things. Either an outright purchase or a transfer of property between them. The statutes require that if there is a transfer of property, of school real property is to be done away with, first of all, it has to be declared surplus. In doing that, the school system would have to say we no longer believe this is needed for school purposes. They would declare a surplus. The statutes require that any real property first goes to the Board of County Commissioners for their option to say yes, we want it. If you were to say yes, we want it, you've got to pay fair market value for it. It's really interesting. There was a supreme court case in North Carolina relating to that because there's a statute that conflicts one of the other statutes. There's a statute that essentially says governments can work between themselves and transfer property and do things with any term that they feel they ought to do. We've used that statute before with some things that we've done but when it comes to the school system it's different. That was laid out in a supreme court case with Kinston and Granger Stadium, I believe, and how all that worked out. So, If you were to say we want that piece of property, if the Board declares surplus and you say yes, you want it, then you would have to pay them fair market value for it. If you decline it and say no, we don't want it then that gives them the option to proceed to dispose of that property, along the lines of the statutes, which again, would require a general acceptance that those two pieces of property are roughly equal in value so that they could be transferred between the two of them. So, that's what I can tell you with my limited knowledge of the statutes. The County Attorney can certainly speak to anything that I've missed.

Chairman Waters: I see our superintendent here, as well as some of the board members. Is there anything Dr. Cheeseman that you would like to add to how we got to this point?

Dr. Matthew Cheeseman: So, how we got to this point, just to back up, the Needs Based Public School Award, February 7th and from there RFP process and ultimately the Board selected JP Hite and Associates to design the building. So, in short, from the information we were reading, we felt as though we owned the four acres of land, especially since we've been servicing that land for 30 to 40 years. So, lots of conversation around what was in front of us, but we learned that we did not own the land. We communicated with the City of Washington about not owning the land after a professional surveyor did the work and let Jimmy Hite know that in fact we do not own that land. So, in terms of the timeline, that's May going into June. Then at the July 10th, the 12:00 PM Wednesday July 10th progress monitoring update meeting the city's mayor, mayor pro tem and also the city manager attended that meeting to listen to conversation about what was going on with the four acres of land. We had a conversation about how they could help us and so those conversations occurred over the last five to six months to the point of where we are now. So, initially it was a potential donation to potential land swap with Kugler Field but you have to get the heirs of the Kugler to agree to it. 23 heirs is very hard work to track down in that regard. One was not really proactive to it all and so then we had greater conversation around could we actually purchase it, were there other land swaps. So, we had conversations electronically through email, through text, conversations face to face have led us to this moment right now. In short, we learned essentially around May, beginning of June that in fact we did not own the four acres of land and the City of Washington has been very thoughtful in their conversations in terms of how they would like to partner with us in that regard.

Chairman Waters: So, the two options on the table are to outright purchase the four acres for \$500,000 or to do a swap or trade?

Dr. Cheeseman: Yes sir, and the Board of Education voted on that last Friday and the City of Washington voted as well last night.

Commissioner Deatherage: Of the two, which one did the Board of Education vote for?

Dr. Cheeseman: The Board voted on two options, leaving it in your court. The board does not favor one over the other at this time.

Commissioner Deatherage: Well, there's only one I'll support and that's the swap. It makes good sense because when we give up properties back to the schools we generally don't get anything for it or they don't get anything for it much so there's a playground on it, there's no need for the schools to have a playground there. It would definitely be a benefit to the City of Washington and I can understand a swap. Eventually the \$500,000 will come back against the taxpayers of Beaufort County. Right now, we don't need to be incurring that expense.

Commissioner Dunn: So, there is a park on this school property already that the city's already built?

Dr. Cheeseman: I think in collaboration and combination the City and the Board have worked on that together.

Commissioner Dunn: Was there an MOA or anything with that?

Dr. Cheeseman: There is an agreement with the city, yes.

Commissioner Dunn: This swap will not impact or affect that negatively or anything like that?

Dr. Cheeseman: That's a question only our attorney could answer and he's not present.

Brian Alligood: So, Commissioner Dunn, there's a joint land agreement and if I recall correctly, and again, it's been many years, it was either already in place when I went to work for the city or we put it in place when I was with the city. Dr. Phipps was the superintendent at the time and essentially it was an agreement that would allow the city to use that as a park area and to put infrastructure out there and look after it. It's been that way since at least 2013.

Dr. Cheeseman: The city actually contacts us when there's families in the community or others who request to use the park or events. Then, in fact, the city reaches out to our office just to confirm that our calendar is not using that area. SO there is conversation and ongoing conversation in regard to that, in that partnership. That's true. Just to be mindful that the Board of Education is prepared with the \$250,000 so that's not a concern. The Board has that money.

Chairman Waters: Is there a motion to trade or swap?

Commissioner Richardson: I'll move that. We do the trade with the City. The city's going to be on, I mean on both sides of the issue, when the city gets the property I think that agreement, they will be on both sides of the issue so the issues will disappear. I move that we do the trade.

Motion: Commissioner Richardson motioned to trade the land with the City. Commissioner Deatherage seconded.

Brian Alligood: Mr. Chairman, can I interject? I'll let the County Attorney speak to it I you need for her to do that but I don't think that the motion is actually to approve the swap. I think the motion is to decline the County's, that this Board would decline it's first right of refusal to receive the property when the schools declare it surplus.

Commissioner Richardson: I agree, I'll change my motion for it to be in proper order and that is that the Board of Commissioners decline the offer of the property and that with the understanding that in our declining that property that it is

going to be used as a swap with the City and if the Board of Education should decide not to swap with the City then we would revert to our position that we are in before the motion.

Commissioner Deatherage: I have a question concerning that caveat that Commissioner Richardson just implied. Would that, and this could be for the attorney or the county manager, would that be for the entire parcel or just for the four-acre parcel and that is known. We don't need to specify it's the four-acre parcel?

Brian Alligood: My understanding, and I think the school system can speak to that because they've had these conversations. Again, if you look at that parcel that ortho of the parcel, my understanding and you can confirm that, is the city is looking to, obviously you'd have to subdivide that parcel so that it would be taken out. What the City is looking for is to include in it the gravel area that is between the park and the gym. They're going, what the City Manager said to me was they planned to pave that and stripe it so that people could park there and they would put gates on each end so that they could keep it from being a cut through back and forth and to limit access if they needed to but there would need to be some action taken to parcel that out. If you look at the aerial, that's kind of what that shows.

Commissioner Deatherage: So, Commissioner Richardson's motion sets in stone it is conditioned entirely upon the trade being made and it only being for the four-acre parcel of the entire piece of property.

Motion Amended: Commissioner Richardson motioned to decline offering for the property with the understanding that it would be used to trade with the City only and would revert back to the County having first right of refusal if the Board of Education does not use it in the trade. Commissioner Deatherage seconded.

Yes Vote

Chairman Waters
Vice-Chairman Langley
Commissioner Booth
Commissioner Walker

No Vote

Commissioner Deatherage
Commissioner Dunn
Commissioner Richardson

Chairman Waters: We're down to the second option and I'm going to make a motion that we purchase the four acres that's adjacent to the existing. I think it's 28 acres based on the survey, for the purchase price offered by the city of \$500,000.

Commissioner Richardson: It's 28 acres?

Chairman Waters: It's adjacent to the 28 acres. Is there a second.

Vice-Chairman Langley: That's with the school board paying \$250,000 and the County paying \$250,000.

Commissioner Deatherage: Oh, so that's where the \$250,000 came from. You already talked about it. I didn't know where the \$250,000 came from.

Motion: Chairman Waters motioned to purchase the adjacent four acres of land for \$500,000, with the Board of Education paying \$250,000 and the County paying \$250,000. Vice-Chairman Langley seconded.

Commissioner Richardson: I have some discussion. I sit here as a county commissioner who was elected to protect the property and the money of the citizens of Beaufort County and I'm completely bewildered that we would take a piece of property that the County has and the school does not use and the county cannot use. The value to the county is zero and we have the opportunity to trade this for four acres of land that other commissioners are willing to spend \$500,000 for, which is grossly overvalued. I'm completely bewildered at what four of these Commissioners think they're doing. I think they were caught red handed backing up this thing and it was made, that information was made available to the public and that they're more interested in punishing other commissioners that want to do the right thing than they are in doing the right thing for Beaufort County.

Commissioner Walker: I thought from the beginning that this was a lane that we didn't need to be in. I stayed out of it and I think most of us stayed out of it and I'm glad we did because I want to congratulate the City and the school board for

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sitting down and coming up with a plan and not only a plan of how to deal with this but also how to pay for it. I think it's going to be through disbursement of sales tax so it's not like it's coming out of our coffers so what does come out will be returned. Anybody that's involved in building at this level, those delays cost money and if we can get this thing done tonight I think WIMCO would start on it at midnight. They're ready to go and I'm ready for them to go and I cannot wait for the day that we are there for the ribbon cutting for a safe, modern school. It's going to look gorgeous up there.

Chairman Waters: Are there any other comments?

Commissioner Deatherage: So, you guys negotiated outside of the meeting \$250,000 for the County, \$250,000 for the schools, which I remind you we're going to end up paying their \$250,000 eventually. I don't know where else it comes from. It comes from the taxpayers of Beaufort County. Especially when it comes to capital projects. So, we're asking the County taxpayers now and in the future at some point, probably in the very near future, to pay \$500,000, when actually you can give up four acres. I'd like to know why you four people in the center left coalition come together to swap power, you know, swap books, hold power over the county for \$500,000. That's another \$500,000 you're putting on top of this price tag when a simple, a very simple title search would've told the school board, I guess with this lawyer up in Durham that we never see or hear from, this very simple title search would've affected this whole process in the very beginning because we know that when you do anything with land, planning is the most important thing you can do. From the very beginning I've said you've got problems with the planning. You're building the school on the lowest point of the lot. This is the collection point where water comes. I know. I've coached soccer out there many years. Some games we couldn't, some matches we could not play on that pitch. We could not, it was too soggy. Now that denotes two things. Either it shouldn't be used or you're going to spend a lot of money to shape that ground up so that you can make that schoolwork, if in fact it does work. It's only going to be a foot or two outside the floodplain. Even when you do that, even if you can keep that water off that lot, since it is the lowest point of the lot I think it's untenable, incredible, downright ignorant that you guys will spend \$500,000 of the county taxpayer's money when trading four acres would suffice. I don't understand your logic and I'm going to end this by asking please, would you explain it? I know you say we've got the center-left coalition going on here, we work together, you know, we cross the aisle, spend taxpayer money, share power, we do all these things but I think you owe an explanation to the taxpayers of Beaufort County why \$500,000 has to be spent. Now Chairman Waters, you've been in this for the last number of years. You were working on this and finally brought it to us last year and talked to us about it. Why, as someone with a real estate license, why did you not understand that a simple title search would've suffice to make a better planning decision sometime ago? You can answer that as well, but please answer why \$500,000 coming out of our treasury once again, and this might not be the last time \$500,000 comes out, or a few hundred thousand here, and a few hundred thousand there. Eventually it becomes real money. At some point explain to me why you will not make that trade. That actually makes a little bit of sense to me. I had to think about it a little bit before I go along with it but it made a little bit of sense. Explain it.

Chairman Waters: We've already voted.

Commissioner Deatherage: We have not voted Mr. Chairman. There has been no vote, we've been in discussion mode. You might have voted in the back room but we haven't voted here.

Chairman Waters: Well, let me make sure the public understands. I gave up my real estate license so I'm not a realtor.

Commissioner Deatherage: That's a good thing.

Chairman Waters: My understanding is that the trade would probably end up in a delay of the project. What I understand is it would require both pieces, parcels being appraised and that if there was any difference the City would probably end up having to cough up additional money or us, depending on which one was higher, under the state statute.

Commissioner Richardson: Where in the law does it say an appraisal is required if we do a free openhanded negotiation and decide the properties value? Why do you need an appraisal?

Chairman Waters: Am I wrong Mr. Alligood?

Brian Alligood: So again, I don't want to speak for the county attorney. What I will say is that, and I don't mean this the way it may come off, but that's really not you all, and please forgive me Commissioner Richardson but it's really not your

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concern on that because it's the city that's making the trade with the county Board of Education. The attorney for the City has got to say it's an equal swap because I asked him that question and he said we believe it's about equal but the Boards action here today is simply to say we either don't take it or we buy it. We have first right of refusal. It's on the City and the County Board of Education to comply with the law that says the school board should get fair market value for that property. It's on them to do that. It's not on you to do that because it's not your piece of property. Does that make sense?

Commissioner Richardson: No, it doesn't make sense and the reason it doesn't make sense and the reason it doesn't make sense is because Commissioners have the responsibility for coming up with the money for this trade so we've got a dog in this fight whether you want to admit it or not. I want to say one other thing here too. Since this issue has been raised and Commissioner Walker raised this issue, there have been allegations and things have been said that the commissioners would do this and the commissioners would do that. All the commissioners have been polled and they would never do this or do that. That an email was sent from the county to the city that said the commissioners were not going to get involved in this trade and in this negotiation of doing this deal. I want to tell you something guys, don't ever send an email saying all of the commissioners when there's not been a vote in front of the public and the issue has not been presented to the commissioners. Don't ever do that again because we're going to have some serious problems if that ever happens again. A vote of this Board is required for anybody to speak for the Board, not somebody in the back room that suddenly decided well, we're not going to get involved in this. We are involved in this because we provide the money. The \$52 million for this project comes through the county commissioners and there is a reason for that. People want to, we have four commissioners here, we have some people with the school board and we have some people with the county manager that keep wanting to drag us out and say you have no responsibility for this. You don't have a say in this. There is nothing that is any more untrue than that.

Brian Alligood: Mr. Chairman, may I respond?

Chairman Waters: Yes.

Brian Alligood: Commissioner Richardson, I have not had any conversations with any elected officials about this with the city or the schools. That's not my job. I've talked with the city manager about what exactly it was that they wanted out of that piece of property because I didn't understand it. I wasn't sure. I thought maybe they wanted the entire piece of property, including the buildings. That was what I asked. The email that I sent to the city was because the city manager reached out to me and said we are having a meeting with the schools and we would like the city, the county manager, the county chairman and the county Vice-Chairman to attend that meeting. I reached out to the chairman of the Board and the chairman of the board said we don't need to be involved in that. So, I sent an email back to the, wait, let me finish.

Commissioner Richardson: Oh no, you go ahead and then I've got something to say.

Brian Alligood: Okay, I am. So, I sent an email to say that that's y'all's negotiation and my chair has said we're not going to that meeting. So, that's what that email was and there was nothing untoward about that. I can't consider, I don't know what kind of conversations you all have had as a board but I can tell you I haven't been in those conversations.

Commissioner Richardson: You're exactly right, you haven't been in those conversations, there have been no conversations and the Chairman is not empowered to speak for the Board unless there has been a meeting and an issue presented in public and there has been a vote on that issue. This is what my complaint is and other peoples complaint to. The deals that are done in the backroom are illegal and dishonest and unethical and that nobody has a right to speak for me unless the issue has been presented in public in front of the whole Board and has been voted by the board. Then you can speak for the board and say these Commissioners either went with it or the didn't go with it. I'm not sure that you and the manager understand what you're supposed to be doing. It's not running this county in the back room.

Brian Alligood: Mr. Chairman, may I respond?

Chairman Waters: Yes, sir.

Brian Alligood: So, Commissioner Richardson, the invitation was not to the Board of Commissioners. It was to the County Manager, the Chairman of the Board, and the Vice-Chairman of the Board. That is what we responded with. Now, if the invitation had been to the Board then the Board would've been asked to do that but they were not and we stayed out of it because that was a decision that they needed to make amongst themselves as to how they did it. You can say you understand

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the law but the law is you don't have control over that. All you can say is we want the property. If you surplus it, the County wants it. That's the only thing you've got involved in this. You don't get to get involved in the negotiation with that. It's not the County Board of Commissioners responsibility to do that. It's between two existing boards and that's what they've done. They've come to an agreement, they've asked you all to either buy it or refuse the right of first refusal. So, that's what they've come to you to do. That's all that is.

Commissioner Richardson: That's precisely what I'm complaining about. Between you and the chairman you keep disenfranchising this Board from its responsibilities, it's fiduciary responsibilities to the public. You went out and formed an illegal committee with a meeting out of the county and the chairman appointed himself to the committee and you cut this board off from having any say, any oversight whatsoever in building the new school. There's a reason why the money comes through the Commissioners. There's a reason why we control the money. We have a say. Right now you have a situation that is somewhat very corrupt in which all these commissioners have voted to do is to write checks based upon approvals from the planning from the school board to pay for the school. We don't know what we're getting for the school. We don't know what we're teaching. The proper studies were never done to build this school. The DPI cannot produce the studies because they've been asked for. In the back room a decision was made to build a new school. Chocowinity was totally disenfranchised. There were no studies, there was no look at alternatives that are required by law so we're talking about some pretty serious issues and let me tell you one other thing that you may not understand. There is no such thing as an invitation to the chairman and the vice-chairman to attend any meeting that the rest of the Board members cannot attend or are not invited to attend because that is what the regulations say. The chairman and the vice-chairman have no special powers other than to conduct a meeting. An invitation to the chairman is an invitation to every commissioner here. You're shaking your head and you should be informed. That's the corruption that's in the county government right now and that's the corruption that's going to have to be rooted out.

Brian Alligood: Mr. Chairman I would like to respond. So, Commissioner Richardson, the action that is in front of you is the action that this board is to take. You have the ability to debate that, you have the ability to discuss it and you ultimately are the ones who are voting on that. How that piece came together was negotiations with school board members, city members, county commissioners maybe. That's the way the process works and no action has been taken by anybody and nobody has bound any board to anything without it being in a public meeting, which is what it is today.

Chairman Waters: And the reason we're here, TW can come up and confirm this if he would like to, just so that every commissioner understands it, TW called me to let me know where they were at on the negotiation. I said TW, we will have to call and have a special called meeting so that's when I got the County Manager involved. That's when we sent out the notice and that's why we're here.

T.W. Allen: We called our meeting on Friday as an emergency meeting with our lawyer to discuss the MOU. Came out and did a vote and discussion in open session on Friday Afternoon at 2:00 PM because the bad weather was coming.

Vice-Chairman Langley: First of all, I'd like to clarify some things. First of all, I haven't talked to anybody about this agreement and it's sad that people say that we are making backroom deals when they don't have anything to substantiate that there was a backroom deal. My decision is my decision. It's not based upon anybody else. Let me just say this to say that those four acres of swamp land and the property that they wanted to swap for is of equal value, it doesn't take a brain surgeon to figure out that it is not. So, therefore I would never go along with something that says swamp land and that land are of equal value and you should just switch them out. I'm not doing that. I'd rather pay the money. I said it, I mean it and I'm here to represent it.

Commissioner Richardson: I want to go back when everybody else has had a go.

Commissioner Deatherage: When you had that special meeting on Friday, was it Friday?

TW Allen: Yes sir.

Commissioner Deatherage: With the attorney from Durham?

TW Allen: Yes sir.

Commissioner Deatherage: Did you all talk at all about title search? What happened, or how did this even happen? We don't own this property.

TW Allen: So, when I was in the back I looked up the GIS search. Previous to two days after the July meeting, July 15th, it was marked off on your GIS map. That's when it was registered. That means before then the County GIS map had all of that parcel of land as being owned by Beaufort County Schools.

Commissioner Deatherage: So you're saying, well that's, well your attorney, when you talked to your attorney did you ask him how did that happen and how do we remedy that considering that it sounds like a survey infraction to me. Maybe Commissioner Richardson could speak to that. It sounds kind of squirrely, doesn't it Commissioner Richardson?

Commissioner Richardson: No, not really. The surveyor discovered it and brought it to their attention but part of what's going on here is these guys don't have the competence to build a school unless you keep throwing money at it and that's what's happening here because they haven't done their homework and they haven't done what they're supposed to be doing. They don't know what they're doing. We've been cut off, the two Commissioners, those of us who have knowledge of this kind of construction and these kinds of things have been cut off from being able to participate in the process as is required because the manager, for some reason, thinks as long as the Chairman tells him something that that stands, that is not the law in North Carolina. The Board has to function as a Board. The Chairman has no authority, nor the Vice-Chairman, other than to conduct meetings. The law is very clear. All the Commissioners on this Board are equals. So, an invitation to anybody who thinks that they can go to the Chairman and he can give them an answer, it's only because he has four pocket votes up here. Himself and three other people. Two of whom whose wives serve on the school board. Are you beginning to see an ethical problem here, if not an illegal problem? This is a serious situation of disenfranchisement of elected officials. It is corrupt and it is illegal. Any time somebody asks the chairman or the manager a question it is as if he is asking all seven commissioners at the same time and for anybody to think that they can make a decision for us without going through that process, they need to wake up because they may be getting a lawsuit in their ear before it's over with for some corrupt behavior.

Vice-Chairman Langley: That has nothing to do with this motion.

Commissioner Booth: May I? This doesn't have anything to do with the motion but let me tell you something. The seven commissioners up here and anybody that calls me and wants to speak to me, I'm going to. I don't have to get anyone's permission and I don't think our Chairman or Vice-Chairman has to ask anyone for permission. They didn't ask for.... Wait a minute, let me finish. I didn't interrupt you. But if anybody wants to talk to me, whether you want me to go to your church, whether you want me to go to the Boys and Girls Club, whether you want me to go to a school, I'm not going to ask Daddy Hood can I go. I'm going.

Commissioner Deatherage: I have one question. At what point was the \$500,000 split equally into \$250,000 denominations. When was that agreed upon and how was that agreed upon? Was that done by you four or an appointment with you four?

Vice-Chairman Langley: No, no, no.

Dr. Cheeseman: I'll answer that. So, in conversations with what monies we actually have, looking back all the way to July when having conversations with the city manager, I asked him specifically what would four acres cost. He wrote back to me in that communication \$100,000 to \$150,000 per acre. So, in my conversations with the city manager, Johnathan Russel, I spoke to him about the public school system, trying to build a school right here in Washington, the economic benefits of that and could we negotiate that, what does that look like. His conversation was mostly around working in that figure range. My response, and where the \$250,000 comes from is what the balance is on my ledger sheet at the Board of Education and the unbudgeted sales tax reserve. That is the amount of money that I was able to say to the Board with confidence that in fact I could execute \$250,000 in this moment. So those were conversations that Matthew Cheeseman, Superintendent and Jonathan Russel, City Manager has in advance and even when we met with the city we still had those conversations around what a potential sale would look like. So, I will stand in front of everyone and say anyone in this room came up with \$250,000 except Matthew Cheeseman, based off of what's on the ledger at the Board of Education and the unbudgeted sales tax, that's where the number came from and I can assure you that conversation happened in August with the city manager and has been moving along as we've been working with the Kugler family, working with the heirs. I've got to give Fran

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Fulscher a lot of credit for trying to work with the Kugler heirs. A lot of credit. So, to that, I own the responsibility of where \$250,000 came from.

Commissioner Deatherage: I appreciate that Superintendent Cheeseman but I'm more concerned about where this, when this Board of Commissioners started negotiating funds outside of the Board of Commissioners having an open meeting or even a closed meeting, which this may or may not qualify. But I wasn't aware of the money piece. Commissioner Richardson were you aware of the money piece? Were you aware of the money piece? Did all of the center-left coalition members know of the money piece?

Chairman Waters: The money piece came in when Mr. Alligood sent it out.

Dr. Cheeseman: It's the option. It's \$500,000 with \$250,000 coming from the school system.

Commissioner Deatherage: I got it. I was wondering about our side.

Commissioner Richardson: Appraisals that were required, they've suddenly gone away and you're talking about valuing a piece of property and the city manager and a school superintendent decided what it was worth. I mean, the process on this and springing things on people right out of the blue and our whole problem all along is only two or three people have made decisions on this school system. What about Chocowinity? They've been totally disenfranchised.

Chairman Waters: Let's get back to the agenda.

Commissioner Deatherage: But what's the answer? When did you guys find out about the \$250,000?

Vice-Chairman Langley: The same time you did.

Commissioner Deatherage: I heard you all talking about it.

Chairman Waters: TW mentioned it to me in conversation when we agreed, I said we need to have a special called meeting and that's when.

Vice-Chairman Langley: I call the question. This is nothing but a waste of time.

Motion Restated: Chairman Waters motioned to purchase the adjacent four acres of land for \$500,000, with the Board of Education paying \$250,000 and the County paying \$250,000. Vice-Chairman Langley seconded.

Yes Vote

Chairman Waters
Vice-Chairman Langley
Commissioner Booth
Commissioner Walker

No Vote

Commissioner Deatherage
Commissioner Dunn
Commissioner Richardson

Adjourned at 5:45 PM

Respectfully submitted to you by:

Kathleen Mosher
Clerk to the Board of County Commissioners