

SPECIAL CALLED MEETING CITY COUNCIL

April 26, 2017

The City Council of the City of Albemarle met in a special called session on Thursday, April 26, 2017, at 6:00 p.m. in the Ray Allen Community Room located in City Hall at 144 Second Street, Albemarle, NC. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss Education as part of the City's Economic Development Strategic Plan. Mayor Michael presided and the following Councilmembers were present, to wit: Chris Bramlett, Benton Dry, Martha E. Hughes, Dexter Townsend and Chris Whitley. Absent, Bill Aldridge and Martha Sue Hall.

Mayor Michael called the meeting to order and discussed the development of the City's Economic Development Strategic plan that is currently in process of being updated.

Crystal Morphis, Creative Solutions representative, was introduced to help facilitate discussion. She stated the focus of this meeting is to generate discussion regarding assets, challenges, and action steps to help generate a recommendation to the school board regarding K-12 education. Prior to this meeting, there were several smaller focus group meetings which will be used to compile the City's comprehensive Economic Development Strategic Plan. She encouraged folks to participate in the online survey located on the City's website.

After citizen input, the following assets and challenges were a result of the collaboration amongst public attendees:

Assets/Strengths:

- Students (all bright, honest, hardworking, and deserve opportunities)
- Teachers
- Average class size
- Early college
- School lunch/nutrition program
- Facilities
- Caring citizens
- Historical commitment to education
- Extracurricular activities
- Administrators
- Uniforms (needs to be across the board)
- City schools are unified (parents desires are the same)
- Central location
- Kids can be successful
- Retirement of school bonds

Challenges/Obstacles

- Discussion/perception of City schools and favoring County schools
- Advanced Placement (AP) classes being removed from City schools

- Merger/Weakened City School
- School board
- Lack of financial resources
- Number of guidance counselors
- Lack of direction
- Lack of parental involvement
- Opportunities given to parents to be involved
- State funding
- Several charter/private/home schools for a community the size of Stanly County
- Districting/zoning of students
- Kids forced to go to two schools to get classes [for those taking AP courses]
- Lack of stability with school administrators
- System is too political
- [School Report Card] Grades are negative when compared to State
- Negative image perceived about Albemarle Middle and High
- Misunderstanding of cultural differences
- Economic disparity
- Capacity in schools are not well balanced
- County has a declining and graying population
- Provincialism
- Effect on housing industry
- Apathy of those not affected
- Difficulty in recruiting doctors
- Lack of enforcement to attendance
- Outdated website
- Mobile capacity with technology is needed
- Lack of open mindedness about 1 or 2 high schools
- State/federal issues impacting schools

After discussion and through participative citizen engagement, the following action steps were a result:

Action Steps

- Operate AP courses in Albemarle High School
- Consolidate high schools to one or two in an optimal location (build, renovate, or rename existing) and update technology
- Redraw lines for community schools and enforce
- Explore opportunities for municipal charter school
- Recruit people for school board
- Disseminate affordable housing into the County
- Create nonpartisan school board elections
- Foster visionaries as leaders
- Implement long range facility planning
- Operate more like early college
- Utilize the UNC College of Education to analyze school system
- Instill pride
- Encourage parental involvement and leadership development with teachers, administrators, and the business community

There was discussion of the potential for a municipal school tax to improve City schools.

Mayor Michael discussed the most recent school board meeting. One topic of discussion in that meeting was a proposed traditional school with a stem/magnet school within.

There was discussion of this concept being approached last year, but failed to go further due to a lack of participation/interest.

Mayor Michael discussed his understanding of district lines to remain the same if the stem/magnet school was implemented and all students within the County would be eligible.

After discussion, the following top priorities were established from the group to include in the City's Economic Development Plan to present to Council for consideration to recommend to the Stanly County Board of Education at a later date:

- 1) Consolidate high schools to one or two in an optimal location (build, renovate, or rename existing) and update technology
- 2) Redraw lines for community schools and enforce
- 3) Instill pride while also encouraging parental involvement and leadership development with teachers, administrators, and the business community

Ms. Morphis reported the Economic Development Strategic Plan will come back to Council for consideration in June or July.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Dry, seconded by Councilmember Hughes, and unanimously carried, the meeting was adjourned at 7: 19 p.m. until Monday, May 1, 2017, at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of City Hall for a regular session meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Christina Alphin, Assistant City Manager/Deputy City Clerk