

Salisbury, North Carolina
May 11, 2009

SPECIAL MEETING

PRESENT: Mayor Susan W. Kluttz; Mayor Pro Tem Paul B. Woodson; Councilmen William (Bill) Burgin, William (Pete) Kennedy and Mark N. Lewis; City Manager David W. Treme and Deputy City Clerk Kelly Baker.

Members of Salisbury City Council met at 3:00 p.m. in the J. Newton Cohen Room in the County Administration Building located at 130 West Innes Street for a joint meeting with members of the Rowan County Board of Commissioners and the Rowan-Salisbury Board of Education. Members of the County Commission present were: Chairman Carl Ford, Vice-Chairman Jon Barber, Tina Hall, Chad Mitchell and Raymond Coltrain along with County Manager Gary Page and Clerk to the Board Carolyn Athey. Members of the School Board present were: Vice-Chairman Jean Kennedy, Bryce Beard, Kay Wright Norman, Patty Williams, Karen Carpenter, with Superintendent Dr. Judy Grissom and Clerk to the Board of Education Bonnie Holder.

Chairman Ford, Mayor Kluttz and School Board Vice-Chair Kennedy each welcomed members of the three boards. Mayor Kluttz noted that at City Council's 2009 Retreat Dr. Suzanne Morse spoke to Council regarding a correlation between third grade reading scores and drop-out rates. She commented that City Council has wanted to assist the schools and is grateful for this opportunity to meet and discuss possible ways the Council and Board of Commissioners can help. Mayor Kluttz indicated that this is a historic event and is the first joint meeting of the City Council, County Commissioners and School Board since the school systems merged in the late 1980s.

Members of each board offered comments regarding the need to address childhood literacy, poverty and adult literacy.

Dr. Judy Grissom, School Superintendent, commented that there are two areas where educators see a gap in addressing the success of students. The first is summer break when students go for a long period with no reinforcements in literacy. She noted that the second gap is the lack of reading reinforcement in the home. She added that early

intervention is very important and noted a current initiative by Smart Start Rowan to provide books to every child in Rowan County from birth to 5 years of age.

Councilman Lewis commented that the Boards have an opportunity for a watershed moment in the community's history. He referred to the presentation by Dr. Suzanne Morse and noted that Dr. Morse indicated 25% of young people in Rowan County live in poverty. He stated that there is a correlation between poverty and a child's ability to read on grade level. He suggested a working committee be established from members of each Board to develop strategies for addressing these issues.

Mayor Kluttz agreed that a committee should meet to concentrate on a plan of action, but added that the process may be long term and she did not want to go through another summer with nothing in place. She suggested something be developed short term while studying a long term solution. Members agreed to work to establish a committee to begin identifying possible solutions to bring back to the entire group.

Dr. Grissom noted that a summer program will need to be developed soon and suggested that community centers and churches be used to bring the programs to the students rather than trying to bring the students to the programs. She stated that one idea being discussed by staff is "Barrel of Books" where large barrels could be placed around the community for book donation collections.

Vice-Chair Kennedy commented that she agreed with using community centers and churches to reach the children. She noted that the Park Avenue Community Center is available for use and the School Enrichment Program held there during the school year could be implemented at other sites.

School Board member Patty Williams suggested starting small with programs at Rowan Helping Ministries in order to reach those with the most critical immediate needs. Commissioner Jon Barber agreed and noted that Rowan Helping Ministries West is located in the western end of the County and has seen its numbers increase greatly.

Mayor Kluttz commented that since the school systems merged it has been frustrating for Council to feel as if it was not doing enough to help the schools. She stated that the comments and ideas expressed today are very exciting and Council is committed to assist.

Vice-Chair Kennedy thanked the Board of Commissioners and the City Council for working to improve the lives of students. She noted that good information was shared today and that the Boards must find a way to provide the necessary skills to empower children.

Chairman Ford stated that he would like the three Boards to also work with the other municipalities to find a way to address these problems.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:55 p.m.

Susan W. Kluttz, Mayor

Myra B. Heard, City Clerk