

Salisbury, North Carolina  
February 11, 2005

## **SPECIAL MEETING**

**PRESENT:** Mayor Susan W. Kluttz, Presiding; Mayor Pro Tem, Paul B. Woodson, Jr.; Councilmen William (Bill) Burgin; William (Pete) Kennedy; Mark N. Lewis; City Manager, David W. Tremé; City Attorney, F. Rivers Lawther, Jr.; and City Clerk, Myra B. Heard.

**ABSENT:** None.

The special meeting was called to order by Mayor Kluttz at 8:00 a.m. The invocation was given by Councilman Lewis.

## **PROPOSED REDISTRICTING PLAN**

Mayor Kluttz stated that during the Council Planning Retreat Councilmen Burgin and Lewis were appointed to serve as a Council Committee to meet with School Administrators to discuss the proposed redistricting plan.

Councilman Burgin reported that he and Councilman Lewis met with members of the School Administration and the Chairman of the Rowan-Salisbury School Board who informed Mr. Burgin and Mr. Lewis of their thought process for how the districts will be drawn. Mr. Burgin stated that he and Mr. Lewis presented Council's point of view that there needs to be value placed on community as it relates to redistricting. He noted that the School Board's position is that they are a county-wide system and they are working to divide the students in a way that reflects equality. Mr. Burgin stated that it had first appeared that Salisbury would be the only community affected by the redistricting plan but the Towns of Faith and China Grove will also be affected. He pointed out that under the proposed redistricting plan Salisbury will send students to five (5) different high schools.

Mr. Burgin stated that he still feels strongly that community and community boundaries should be considered when drawing district lines. He commented that his children attended both North Rowan and Salisbury High School and they are excellent schools. He added that this is not a discussion of one school being better than another but is an effort to build community, and noted that people love their schools. Mr. Burgin stated that if consideration is given for school choice zones it will allow the personal attachments to continue, adding he hopes the School Board will accept this idea in order to allow the transition to take place in an easier manner. He reiterated that it is an emotional attachment issue and not an issue of the quality of the schools.

Councilman Lewis stated that there has been much discussion on the proposed redistricting plan and he feels community is very important in the decision making process. He commented that teachers are dedicated to their craft and seek to be the best they can be in every school in the county. He stated that citizens of a community identify with the school in their community and many have worked to create strong Parent/Teacher Associations, Booster Clubs and to raise money for improvements that were not funded by the School System. He stated that he is proud of the way the Principal and staff at North Rowan have rallied around their school during these discussions because it demonstrates a passion of pride in their accomplishments.

Mr. Lewis stated that this issue is not unique to the Country Club Hills and Eagle Heights neighborhoods because approximately twenty (20) percent of the entire school population is being reassigned.

Mr. Lewis indicated that after meeting with the School Administrators and Board Chair, he is satisfied that they are attempting to be as fair and equitable as possible. He added that he feels there must be a way to redistribute the students which can minimize the fracturing of the Salisbury community. He commented that he feels anytime a redistricting plan fractures a community in the way this one does, it is harmful to the basic fabric of the community.

Mayor Pro Tem Woodson stated that at his business he has hired many students from all of the high schools in the County and they have all been excellent. He commented that the students love their schools and want to go to school where their friends go and where their family lives. He said that he feels the staff at all of the schools do an excellent job. Mr. Woodson noted that he agrees with School Board member Bryce Beard that the redistricting plan should be postponed until the new south area high school and elementary school are opened, adding he felt the districts should be left as they are for the time being.

Councilman Kennedy commented that he has connections with several of the high schools and feels they are all excellent. He stated that he likes the idea of community and can support that issue, but he cannot support an attempt to tell the School Board what to do. He noted that the schools will be divided and he does not know how it can be avoided, as City Council does not make the decision. Mr. Kennedy indicated that if there is any way the

School Board can keep communities within communities he fully supports that effort.

Mayor Kluttz clarified that the entire Council has great respect for the School Board and staff and for the difficult decision they have to make. She stated that Council is in no way judging any of the schools, adding that she knows from firsthand experience that every school in the Rowan-Salisbury School System is excellent.

Mayor Kluttz stated that the reason for the meeting today is to provide a recommendation to the School Board from City Council, and noted that she feels it is Council's responsibility to try to stress that they want to keep the City united as a community as much as possible.

Thereupon, Mr. Burgin made a **motion** to adopt the following as read:

**A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE CREATION OF SCHOOL DISTRICT BOUNDARIES THAT CONSIDER NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTITY AS AN IMPORTANT COMPONENT OF COMMUNITY LIVABILITY**

**WHEREAS**, the City Council of the City of Salisbury, as part of its organizational mission, is dedicated to preserving community identity and sustainable growth; and,

**WHEREAS**, the City of Salisbury is committed to the process of public participation in carrying out community educational objectives in a fair, equitable and inclusive manner; and,

**WHEREAS**, the City Council, through numerous programs, projects and policies, has demonstrated on-going support for public schools as important centers of community culture; and,

**WHEREAS**, the City of Salisbury acknowledges the vital importance of providing safe and attractive educational facilities as an integral part of community heritage.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, the Salisbury City Council hereby encourages the Rowan Salisbury School Board to adopt a school redistricting plan that recognizes:

1. The integrity of the community as source of student population.
2. The value of logical pupil assignment boundaries that help maintain neighborhood identities and social linkages.
3. The proximity, walkability, convenience and economic efficiency of neighborhood schools.
4. The benefit of school choice zones as an option for pupil assignment in areas on the perimeter of school district boundaries.

This 11<sup>th</sup> day of February 2005.

Mr. Lewis seconded the motion.

Mr. Woodson commented that he feels the benefit of school choice zones will be important to the City as an effort to give citizens a choice.

Mr. Kennedy pointed out that the Resolution does not speak in favor of any particular school but in support of community.

Mr. Lewis commented that when speaking with School Superintendent Wiley Doby he had thought that school students who have attended a particular high school would be able to remain where they are to finish their high school career, with the transition beginning with rising ninth (9<sup>th</sup>) graders. He noted that Dr. Doby indicated that because of the number of students being reassigned throughout the County this could not be part of the process. Mr. Lewis referred to the School Transfer Policy and noted that he encourages the School Board to recognize the policy and help those students that wish to transfer in order to remain at their school for their Senior year.

Messrs. Burgin, Kennedy, Lewis, Woodson, and Ms. Kluttz voted AYE. (5-0)

(The above resolution is recorded in full in Resolution Book No. 12, at Page No. 4, and is known as Resolution No. 2005- 04.)

Mr. Burgin asked how the Resolution will be presented to the School Board. City Manager David Treme recommended attending the upcoming School Board meeting. Mr. Burgin stated that he will present the Resolution but that he will preface the presentation with comments relative to the quality of all of the schools. He stated that he feels the citizens need to hear that this is not a choice between schools in the sense of quality, adding this has never been the issue. By consensus Council agreed that Mr. Burgin clarify that Council feels all of the schools are excellent as he presents the Resolution to the School Board.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion** to adjourn the meeting was made by Mr. Burgin, seconded by Mr. Woodson. All council members agreed unanimously to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 a.m.

