

County Officials Will Seek State Help On School Safety

BY SUSAN USHER

County officials will work together to seek state Department of Transportation funds to improve safety at all 11 county schools.

Following the lead taken by county commissioners earlier this month, the Brunswick County Board of Education voted Thursday to pursue a plan suggested by Rep. David Redwine.

Under the plan, N.C. Department of Transportation engineers will be asked to conduct a study and come up with recommendations for improving safety conditions at the schools.

In turn, the county and the school system would provide half the funds for implementing those suggestions. Redwine said that by offering to share the bill, the county should move to the top of the list for 50 percent matching funds from the state's "spot safety" program.

Redwine drafted his proposal after a Leland Middle School student was killed while crossing the road near the school. The incident focused attention on safety conditions at that school in particular as well as others.

Principal Clara Carter said Thursday that DOT helped to that situation have helped. Speed limits have been reduced, a crosswalk and left-turn lane marked and orange jacket provided for volunteer school crossing guards. Parking has been banned along the shoulders of Old Fayetteville Road in the vicinity of the school.

An additional measure will be in place by the time students and staff return from the Christmas holidays following board approval Thursday.

A staff parking area off the front circular driveway will be set aside for parents to load and unload their children, said Bill Turner, assistant to the superintendent for planning operations and pupil transportation. A circular driveway on the south side now used to unload and load bus passengers will be converted for staff use.

Buses will load and unload, under the same supervision as now, in their parking area.

To help ease overcrowding on county buses, three additional buses are being added on loan by the state, with a possibility of three more, said Turner. None will be assigned to Leland Middle School, however, because overcrowding is more serious at other schools, he said.

Ride reports show a total of 732 available seats on the middle school's buses, with only an average of 706 riders per day. The state allows up to 25 percent "standees." A 60-seat bus, for instance, could actually transport as many as 75 students.

The number of buses the state will help the county operate depends upon a formula based on the number of

students who actually ride the buses according to driver's monthly reports, rather than the number assigned, board members were told.

However, member James Clemmons, formerly principal at Lincoln Primary School, said Lincoln's buses weren't overcrowded because he got all the buses needed by assigning every student to a bus.

Long-Range Plan

Saying they don't agree with all the suggestions it contains, school board members Thursday night accepted building program recommendations from the state as "information only."

James Clemmons cast the only "no" vote, saying "it is contrary to everything we've done."

Chairman James Forstner and Vice-Chair Doug Baxley disagreed, saying that while the board might not agree with everything in the study, it should be accepted for information purposes and discussed.

"The people have a right to know what it says. They're paying for it and they have a right to know," said Baxley.

Approximately two years ago a prior school board had asked the N.C. Division of School Planning for its long-range planning advice.

In October the division recommended building a new primary school in the western attendance area and adding classrooms at Lincoln and Union primary schools to replace 1951 construction there, as well as classrooms at Bolivia Elementary, South Brunswick Middle, West and South Brunswick High schools.

It also recommends gradual change-over to a particular student mix—grades kindergarten through five at elementary schools, grades six through eight at middle schools and keeping high schools with grades nine through 12.

Sam Adecock, school system finance officer, said the proposal isn't entirely contrary to the board's existing four-year plan.

The main difference is that several board members—including Clemmons—want Union and Lincoln primary schools completely replaced, rather than only the oldest buildings being replaced.

Board members also had not discussed adding classrooms at several of the schools mentioned.

The board meets Jan. 6, at 5 p.m. at Lincoln Primary School, with plans

to begin interviews at 7 p.m. with architectural firms in relation to the building program. The meeting is open to the public.

Other Business

In other business, the board:

•Adopted as "information only" a draft copy of a high school curriculum guide for the 1986-87 term.

•Adopted a new time of 6:30 p.m. for regular meetings unless otherwise noted.

•Approved the following personnel actions: employment of Thomas Willets, mechanic I; Ada Joyner, custodian, South Brunswick Middle School; transfer of special education teacher Mary Abernathy from Union

Primary to Lincoln Primary, termination of Nancy Hemminger, special education aide, Shallotte Middle (Interagency Program) due to a lack of funding; medical leave of absence to Fossie Ballard, teacher's aide, Lincoln Primary; and resignation of Karen Kirk, teacher, Brunswick Interagency Program.

•Heard from Jesse Bryant, president of the Cedar Grove Branch of the NAACP, that the group is "much disturbed" by the racial makeup of those chosen from each school to lead teacher effectiveness workshops for fellow teachers. In-service coordinator L'Tanya Sloan said that four of the 29 chosen were black. They

were chosen not along racial lines, she said, but on the basis of their ability to present the material effectively.

•Adjusted the budget to reflect line-item changes in the vocational education allocation, with no overall decrease in funding. A dropout

prevention allocation was eliminated along with funds for the Jimmy Green middle school vocational project, and funds for the disadvantaged and handicapped were reduced, while funding for the regular program was increased by a similar amount.

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