

Letter To The Editor: Bond Issue, Consolidation Draws Comments From Reader

In less than 40 days, the citizens of Chowan County will be asked to approve a Bond issue for a consolidated high school. At issue is 1) a \$3.5-million facility which may cost \$8 million plus to pay off and 2) a quality education with more diversification and challenge to all county students.

First, consolidation of the two high schools is long overdue. It is not sufficient to teach our youth to read, write and do basic math. Indeed our goal must be to teach our students to read, write and do math competitively and aggressively. This goal cannot be achieved without eliminating "social promotion" and without a more demanding range of subject matter.

To put this same point personally, I spent much of my freshman year at Carolina taking subjects at a level that I should have had behind me in high school. That was in 1959. I suspect the same is true today. And the consequences of wasted time

and talent are increasingly expensive in every sense of the word.

Whether or not consolidation necessitates the construction of a new high school facility, that is a different question. It is also a difficult question.

The School Board asserts the power to consolidate schools. It would prefer to consolidate in a new facility.

If that is not possible, they will consolidate in existing facilities putting grades 7-8 countywide at Chowan and grades 9-12 countywide at Holmes. And they will spend \$1.5-million for the necessary alterations to make consolidation comfortable.

Building costs are rising approximately 10 per cent a year. But school population is declining - locally and statewide. Do you therefore spend \$1.5-million for additions and retain an "older" facility or do you spend much more for a new facility? Or, do you consolidate first and look at the issue again a few years later?

The current proposal

suffers with respect to A) demonstration of need, B) method of financing, and C) proposed location.

Agreeing that consolidation is wise does not mean that a new facility is necessarily required. Average attendance is expected to fall from 902 in '78-'79 for grades 9 thru 12 to 777 in '81-'82.

If this decrease cannot be handled constructively as the board prefers, let the 9th grade be housed with grades 7-8 countywide at one location and grades 10 thru 12 countywide at another location.

If the School Board had a track record of 3 or 4 years of consolidation experience to show the taxpayers - and - if that record was markedly lacking in educational achievements which could be remedied by a new facility, then the board would have a strong case. But at present the board has not demonstrated persuasively that the merits of consolidation mandate a new facility.

Secondly, the bond proposal suffers with regard to the method of financing.

To endorse a proposal that means paying more than double the initial cost is just a bit much. The bond issue would increase taxes \$85 per \$50,000 evaluation per year for possibly 40 years.

Many ssume that passage of the bond issue won't increase their levy much because they don't possess total taxable property worth \$50,000.

The point here is not that inflation will increase all property values.

Rather, the point is that those who invest in farmland, equipment, businesses and industry will bear a very heavy portion of this burden even though their sons and daughters make up only a small percentage of the school population.

Many of the growing demands on the schools are coming from those who have not invested in ways subject to property-taxes. Another source of revenue must be found to shoulder the burden of public schools.

The financing of this proposal would be more equitable if the next General Assembly would enact legislation to increase the local option sales tax by a penny. Such revenue generated statewide for school and other bonds would broaden the base for early repayment. In 1977 local option sales tax

brought Chowan County \$235,541.32 and the Town of Edenton \$75,216.20 or a total of \$309,757.52. An additional \$300,000 plus per year coming into the county would eliminate the ridiculous arrangement of paying more than two for one for a new school. And it would generate large sums of money at home for other future needs and opportunities which we shall surely have.

The time frame in which any indebtedness would be met is a critical point. The County Commissioners have shown themselves aware of the need to pay debts in less than 40 years. However, they cannot bind future commissioners to pay-back rate they deem prudent today. And now that the FHA has said that Chowan County's credit rating is too good for their 5 per cent loans, it is impossible for anyone to know how much money he is being asked to obligate himself and his heirs to repay. This uncertainty would still be present to a degree even with the FHA loan; with other loans, the degree of uncertainty is even greater.

Clarity on this point should have been available long before the school bonds were ever put on the ballot. Thirdly, the current proposal suffers with regard to location.

In recent years the citizenry has taken a renewed interest in the work and life of the local schools. People come for more than athletic events. They attend for drama presentations, for class plays, for music concerts, and for time with teachers. Increasingly civic functions are welcomed in school facilities. This openness is welcome and long overdue.

Better than 40 per cent of Chowan County lives in Edenton.

To put a school at the proposed location simply so that one can say that it is equal distance from the Gates County line in the north and from the farthest reaches of Yeopim in the south is false economy. A location much closer to Edenton would mean many more would provide their own transportation at savings to the school budget over the years which would be most significant.

The proposed location is a false solution because schools do not exist well in isolation. They flourish when they are in the midst of people caring for them. These facilities should be within bicycling distance of the student population most likely to use them after hours or during the summers. Just because a school cannot be within bicycling distance of every student is no reason to locate it such that it is practically within bicycling distance of no student!

A flourishing school is a community center, not a monastery. It should be much closer to the county center of population.

Indeed the School Board seems to recognize and appreciate this point about context when it states on its own "Fact Sheet" that without the bond issue, consolidation would be at Holmes. Why should it change its mind if the bond issue passes?

Conversations with friends from Bertie County are interesting on this point. Their new high school is built away from any center of population. Windsor doesn't identify with the school; Colerain doesn't identify with it; Lewiston doesn't identify with it.

Or, take Northampton County. A new school there was built in a non-populated location. How easy is it to get teachers back to school after hours? How easy is it for the supporting communities to give the extras that make the difference between a school which gets by and a school which excels? How easy is it to attract quality teachers to such a location? How sharply does student participation in extra-curriculars Decline when there is more concern to catch the bus than to stay and develop one's self after hours?

Let no one misunderstand this point on location. My sole contention is that as a county-wide resource a new school should be placed in the very best position to do the most good for the total community of Chowan County.

The proposed location does not encourage this possibility. Indeed it would be better to put a new Chowan County High School at Tyner, for example, than

at the proposed site because at Tyner it would still be part of a larger community.

To be specific I would suggest that the better location would be within eyesight of the 17 by-pass. Such a location would be more accessible to a larger number of youth. It would be more economical to the county as a whole with less expensive tie-ins for sewage and water being possible. It would benefit from city fire and police protection. It would be distant enough from Edenton to minimize traffic congestions. Yet it would be close enough for large numbers of students to provide their own transportation at some savings to the county bus system (averaging 5 or 6 miles per gallon). It would be an advantageous location with respect to future teacher recruiting. It would be a splendid advertisement that this county cares for its youth. And it would be more easily accessible to visiting teams and communities coming here for competitions.

The School Board has not seen fit to tell us why it chose the property it now recommends. We do not know what other properties were considered. And we do not know the criteria used other than a minimum of 50 acres.

But if price was the difference, if a more desirable property could be secured, perhaps a blue-ribbon committee should be selected to try to raise the difference through private and public solicitations.

Direct these funds through a non-profit corporation so that contributors can enjoy tax advantages. Pay the owner a fair price. A person should not be asked to give property away

just because it is for a school.

But since a new Chowan County High School is a considerable resource for years to come, the board should not settle for less than the most desirable location.

We are seeking a maximum benefit from a considerable expenditure for well-being of the entire county. Let us not settle for the minimum benefits which come from the proposed site. Neither let us agree to financing over too long a period of time. We will need that money for other investments in our future. Finally, let us be sure that need for a new facility has been proven, not simply asserted.

In summary, one man's opinion is in favor of consolidation. But he has definite reservations with

regard to demonstration of need, method of financing and proposed location.

John A. Mitchener, II

Centralized Lunch Menus

Centralized menus for breakfast and lunch in Edenton-Chowan Schools for the next week include:

Tuesday - Orange juice, cinnamon bun and milk. Hamburger with bun, ketchup and mustard, french fries, tossed salad, peaches and milk.

Wednesday - Apple sauce, sausage biscuit and milk. Fish sandwich, tartar sauce, cole slaw, green beans, apple pie with cheese and milk.

Thursday - Peaches, cheese toast and milk. Pizza, carrot strips, buttered corn, peanut cluster and milk.

Appointments Revealed

Gov. James B. Hunt, Jr. made three new appointments and four re-appointments to the N.C. Coastal Resources Commission.

Dr. Parker Chesson, Jr., president of College of The Albemarle in Elizabeth City, was re-appointed chairman. He has been chairman since September, 1977, when David Stick resigned.

New appointees were Mrs. Mayme W. Davenport of Creswell; Jim Sykes of Morehead City; and Williams Gibbs of Oriental.

Mrs. Davenport, a Washington County Commissioner, fills the local government appointment on the Commission. Sykes, with the National Marine Fisheries Service in Beaufort, fills the commercial and sports fisheries appointment. Gibbs, businessman and member of the Pamlico County Planning Board, fills the at-large appointment.

Members re-appointed in addition to Dr. Chesson were: DeWitt Darden of New Bern; Frank Furlough, Jr., of Columbia; and Dr. Gene Huntsman of Beaufort.

The 15-member Coastal Resources Commission provides guidelines and

policies for the orderly development and protection of important coastal natural resources under the 1974 Coastal Area Management Act.

Primer Limits Paint Problems

Using an oil based primer can help minimize the problem of paint "bleeding" on certain types of wood.

Redwood and cedar, for example, hold paint well but sometimes present the problem of bleeding. This causes the paint of discolor, explain North Carolina State University agricultural extension specialists.

The discoloration occurs when the water soluble extractives of redwood or cedar bleed to the surface of the painted wood. The problem is worse on wood that has been coated with a light colored paint.

Apply the oil based primer before painting to reduce the risk of discoloration from bleeding.



In a year's time 30 tons of barnacles can attach themselves to the bottom of an ocean-going ship.

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by
R. W. DAVIS

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