

Chowan County Board of Commissioners  
Special Joint Meeting  
With the Edenton Chowan Board of Education  
Tuesday, September 17, 2019  
6:00pm  
John A. Holmes High School  
Auditorium  
600 Woodard Street  
Edenton, NC

Archival video of the Joint Public Hearing is available in three ways:

1) Facebook Live - Link: <https://www.facebook.com/EdentonChowan/videos/734819273649785/>

2) Archival Video - The archival video is stored in a school system Google file and is available for viewing by anyone with the link.

Link: [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1W4jOI9RYv8KbC0F\\_BFfArAyUdeYUeCc1?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1W4jOI9RYv8KbC0F_BFfArAyUdeYUeCc1?usp=sharing)

3) Archival Audio - The archival audio is also stored in a school system Google file and is available for listening by anyone with the link. This was recorded through the sound system.

Link: [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1W4jOI9RYv8KbC0F\\_BFfArAyUdeYUeCc1?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1W4jOI9RYv8KbC0F_BFfArAyUdeYUeCc1?usp=sharing)

The Chowan County Board of Commissioners held a special joint meeting with the Edenton Chowan Board of Education on Tuesday, September 17, 2019, at 6:00 pm in the Auditorium of John A. Holmes High School, 600 Woodard St. Street Edenton.

County Commissioners Present Chair Patti Kersey, Commissioners Ron Cummings, Bob Kirby, Larry McLaughlin, Don Faircloth and Ellis Lawrence.

Commissioner Greg Bonner was absent.

Edenton Chowan Board of Education Members present: Jean Bunch, Eugene Jordan, Paul Clifton, Maxine Mason, Ricky Browder, Joan White and Gill Burroughs.

Edenton Chowan Schools Staff present: Dr. Rob Jackson Superintendent and Sarah Hare, Clerk

(Minutes of the Board of Education meeting are summarized below an official copy of the Board of Education minutes can be obtained through the Clerk to the Board of Education's office).

County Staff Present, County Manager Kevin Howard and Clerk Susanne Stallings

Chair Kersey called the special meeting of the County Board of Commissioners to order.

Chair Jordan called the special meeting of the Board of Education to order.

Chair Kersey on behalf of the Board of County Commissioners, thanked the public for joining this evening as the Board continues the work of addressing the facility needs of our high school. She stated that this important work will potentially impact generations of Chowan County residents. Beyond providing a place for our high school students to learn and our high school teachers to teach, the high school is an important resource for our community. She noted as we have recently experienced, it provides shelter for residents during storms, a gathering place for community events, and is in many ways the face of our county and school system. We are glad that you are here and look forward to hearing from you tonight about where you believe the new high school should be located.

Chair Gene Jordan stated he would also like to welcome the public behalf of the Board of Education to tonight's Public Hearing. Replacing the high school facility is a task that our community has worked on at various times since the 1970's. He stated we have much to celebrate in our high school community as the high school students have just posted the highest Academic Performance Score since the School Performance Grades began. He noted our high school also just celebrated the highest Cohort Graduation Rate ever as 91.6% of the Class of 2019 graduated on time. He stated our Board is grateful to be working with the County Commissioners to tackle this generational challenge and to be able to provide our high school students and teachers the building they deserve. He added we look forward to hearing from the public tonight about the location of the new high school.

Chair Kersey stated noted that this evening, we are here to hear from the public. Neither the members of the Board of County Commissioners nor the Board of Education will be responding to comments from the public. Instead, the Boards will be listening intently. It is the desire of both Boards to seek and act upon public input throughout this process.

She noted that tonight's Public Hearing is focused on the location for the new high school. Speakers are asked to limit their remarks to tonight's topic. She added that there will be other Public Hearings in the future to address subsequent topics. Tonight's hearing is being streamed live on the school system's Facebook page. It is also being recorded for future use.

She noted that speakers will have three minutes to speak. If you are representing a group, please announce the group you are representing prior to speaking and you will be given six minutes to speak. The clerk will be operating the timer. Please conclude your remarks when the time expires so that we will have ample time to hear from everyone who wishes to speak.

When you begin to speak, please carefully state your name and address for the record.

We have two microphones set-up for you to speak into. Please stand close to the microphone so that we can hear you clearly.

Chair Kersey stated she will begin by calling two names. She would ask the first two speakers to each go to a different microphone. We will follow the order that speakers signed up. After each speaker concludes, I will call another name. When your name is called, please go to the open microphone and wait for your turn to speak.

Win Dale 102 Emperor Landing Road, stated he was here to represent the Edenton Chowan Chamber of Commerce. He stated that a new high school is needed and now is the time to take action. He stated the Chamber is in favor of keeping the school at its current location and relocating the school to another location would be a detriment to the students. He discussed the impact on existing partnerships currently with the school. He discussed concerns with safety (EMS, Police, Sheriff and Fire for increased response time). He requested that the site for the new school remain at the current address.

Chris Ford 119 Heritage Point Drive Edenton, stated as a resident and business owner of Edenton. He stated that when considering the location of the future high school safety and proximity should be considered. He feels the proximity to Town is closer for a large population of students should be considered as well as the proximity to COA. He stated that the investment in Downtown is an investment in the graduates.

Jonathan Tobias 305 Country Club Drive Edenton he stated the Town needs the school to preserve history. He stated the school needs the Town to be in the center of community. He stated that students can take courses at COA and walk to school. He stated a school needs to be in an adult community that works and succeeds. He stated the high school needs to be surrounded by civic life. He stated that Edenton is essential to the area.

Roland Vaughan 209 East Water Street stated he is the Mayor and a member of the Council and was not here to speak on behalf of the Town but wanted to note that the Town supports John A. Holmes High School in Edenton. He stated the Town has worked on the Oakum Street corridor and began work on that street from Church Street north. He stated the redevelopment of Oakum Street allowed the Police Department was allowed to be relocated. He noted that the school will soon be a neighbor to the Boys and Girls Club. He stated he is the Chair of the Boys and Girls Club of the Albemarle. He stated the County is refurbishing the old DF Walker School building to accommodate more children. He stated that is over \$2.5 million investment. He stated if you were building a Town today, where would you put the school.

Bill Chesson 210 Dundee Drive stated it is smart to consider renovating the existing building and it is a philosophy which has made Edenton a desirable place to live over the years. He provided examples of neighboring Towns that have moved their high schools out of their downtown (Elizabeth City, Ahoskie, Williamston and Robersonville) and asked the Boards to consider what happened to the Downtowns in these towns. He stated he does not want that to happen in Edenton. He stated it is a wise choice to leave the school downtown.

Sonya Rinehart 300 North Broad Street shared her experiences as a student, parent and teacher at John A. Holmes. She stated that it is good to take care and pride in what you have. She stated that there are good bones in the campus of John A. Holmes with COA, jobs downtown and other walking opportunities. She stated she hoped the community would support a vision to renovate on site.

Anne Rowe 103 Blount Street Edenton shared her history with John A. Holmes High school as a student or volunteer. She encouraged the Board to not be discouraged by the cost for renovation.

She asked the Board to keep the campus at its current location. She stated that visitors love the living community and stated the high school is part of the community.

Virginia Wood 250 Greenfield Rd. Edenton stated she was a teacher at John A. Holmes. She stated she agrees with the previous speakers. She stated she grew up in Elizabeth City and it is sad to see that building sitting there. She begged the Board to keep the school where it is.

Sam Dixon 114 West King St. Edenton stated he is a resident and member of the Edenton Town Council shared a site plan from Clearscapes of a design for the current site at John A. Holmes High School. He stated the Council will support the school in any way possible to ensure safety in this Town. He asked to keep the school in Town. A copy of the site plan is in the meeting file labeled September 17, 2019.

Roger Coleman stated he did not wish to speak.

Tom Abbott 106 Hickory Lane Edenton stated his kids graduated from John A. Holmes and he taught here. He asked the Board to keep the school here in Edenton. He stated the future in education is collaboration. He stated if the school stays here will allow for more opportunities to collaborate. He asked the Board to leave the school where it is and make it better.

Jim Blount 201 Blount Street Edenton stated he is a business owner stated he felt the impact of the county offices moving out of the hotel building. He stated that his business has provided opportunities for training at his business and others downtown. He asked the Board to keep the school where it is and renovate it.

Tameka Griffin 702 Dr. Martin Luther King Drive Edenton stated she is an alumni of John A. Holmes. She stated that being able to walk to school is a convenience for people who live in the Town and encouraged the Board to leave the school here in Town.

David Ray 1214 Macedonia Road Edenton stated he is in favor of keeping the High School in its current location.

Rachael Johnson 738 Virginia Road stated that currently the soccer team has to practice at an offsite field that is one mile from the school. She stated she has to raise monies for the tennis team's travel budget. She stated she has to transport teams from one venue to the other. She stated she would vote to keep the schools at the current location and save time and money for the school system.

Mike Ervin 210 East Eden St. stated the historic presentation of the school is endangered. He stated that the older buildings are built better and last longer. He stated the utility and infrastructure is in place and if the school moves to the county that is an additional cost. He stated the school is the heart of Edenton. He stated that colleges do not tear down old buildings they remodel or restore them.

Janet Mackenzie 200 North Broad Street stated she represents the Edenton Farmers Market. She stated the Farmers Market invested in a building on Broad Street and renovated it. She stated that if the building is left vacant it would be inappropriate, and the Farmers Market Board is in

opposition to that. She provided the Board with photos of the work that has been done to the Farmers Market.

Grace Bean 104 West King Street stated the building does not educate the children. She stated the people are who do that. She stated the costs needs to be considered land, building and transportation. She stated that these things matter to determine if the school needs to stay where it is now.

Alex Kehayes 2333 Locust Grove Rd. thanked the Boards for their work. He stated that the architect told the Board that the buildings are built better for renovation. He stated he would encourage the Board to keep their options open and keep John A. Holmes High School in Edenton.

Vonna O’Niell 305 N Broad St. asked how many of the 600 students live within walking distance of the school and what impact would this have on bussing the students. She stated the building is an asset that should not be discarded. She encouraged the Board to renovate the current facility and keep it in Edenton.

Alicia Cassidy Quate 203 North Granville St. discussed connection and history with the school. She discussed the loss of opportunities for those who are no longer able to walk to the school. She encouraged the Board to keep the high school in Town.

Joanie Evans 813 Johnston St. Edenton shared historical information about the construction of Edenton. She shared a story about a small town in the state of Kansas closed its high school. She stated that Holmes High school is the life blood of Edenton.

Elizabeth Mitchell 104 West Gale St. Edenton she stated that on behalf of the Boys and Girls Club she is speaking in opposition of the relocation of the High School. She stated that the Board of Commissioners has been working since 2015 with the Club on this project and the end result will be a new state of the art club for Chowan residents that will serve 230 students. She stated that the club moved to town to be able to serve high school age kids with a focus on work first development and collaborate with COA. She urged the Board to keep the high school in Town.

Bill Whichard 201 East King St. Edenton stated he is a member of the Boys and Girls Club and they have raised almost \$1.5 million to move the club to Town. He stated the teenagers do not want to ride the bus. He stated the teens want to walk to the club and they will touch more lives. He stated he has not heard one reason why the club should move outside of Town. He stated he supports keeping the school where it is.

John Morehead 112 East Queen St. Edenton stated that his concern is over a national trend in “rootlessness” he stated that Edenton is an exception to this. He stated that Edenton has a culture civic life of community and family and it can be preserved. He gave examples of the Movie Theater, historic baseball field, and armory and town commons.

Keith Nixon 400 E King St Edenton discussed the costs and stated that renovation is cheaper than building new. He stated that the Board would lose sales tax revenues. He stated there are no

places to eat in the County after events and people spend monies here. He stated that there is a loss in farm land revenue.

Hoyle Kip Vinson 325 Gliden Rd. Hobbsville stated that while he does not have the emotions tied to the building, and that he has had to drive to the school in town from Gliden, he understands the need and supports keeping the high school in Town. He states his concern over the condition of the school currently such as the asbestos in the band room. He stated the concrete block will make renovations more expensive. He stated he feels a new high school should be built on this site.

Kermit Nixon 410 Tynch Town Rd. Edenton shared a story about a student who was able to go to college on a tennis scholarship. He discussed the condition of the tennis courts and asked the Boards to consider keeping the school in Town and renovate the tennis courts.

Darryl Adachi 108 North Granville St. Edenton stated he would like information on costs to renovate. He would like information on the costs for relocation including transportation. He asked if there are plans for the building. He asked the Board to keep the high school in Town.

Cynthia Harding 407 Court Street Edenton stated the best schools are the oldest and stated that new buildings do not equate to the best quality education. She stated she agreed with the previous comments to keep the school in Town.

Patricia White 708 North Granville St. Edenton stated that she felt that the DF Walker School was left in poor condition when it was vacated years ago. She stated she did not want Holmes to look like Walker. She stated she supported keeping the high school in town.

Regan Coxe Chowan Arts Council Edenton, NC stated that she supports a renovation of the current building.

Chair Patti Kersey thanked all in attendance for their heartfelt comments. She then declared the special meeting of the Board of Commissioners adjourned.

Chairman Jordan declared the special meeting of the Board of Education adjourned.

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Patti F. Kersey, Chair

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Susanne Stallings, Clerk