

**Dickenson County School Board Emergency Joint Special Called Meeting  
Summary Minutes**

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**June 8, 2020**

**I. ROLL CALL AND MEETING CALLED TO ORDER - 10:00 a.m.**

Josh Evans, Chairman of The Board of Supervisors called their meeting to order

**BOS Members in Attendance:** Josh Evans, Rhonda Sluss, Shelbie Willis, Ron Peters, Peggy Kiser, Bud Phillips, Board Attorney

**Dickenson County School Board** was called to order by Chairman, Dr. Lurton Lyle

**Members in Attendance:** Dr. Lurton Lyle, Chairman; Rick Mullins, Vice-Chairman; Jason Hicks; Damon Rasnick; Jamie Hackney; Tonya Baker, Clerk; and Haydee Robinson, Superintendent; Scott Mullins, Board Attorney

**Approval of Agenda**

Following a motion by Dr. Lurton Lyle and second by Rick Mullins the agenda was approved.

*Vote results*

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Aye:	5	Dr. Lurton Lyle, Rick Mullins, Jason Hicks, Damon Rasnick, Jamie Hackney
No:	0	
Abstain:	0	

**Prayer:** Jason Hicks

**Pledge of Allegiance:** Ron Peters

**II. a. Opening Remarks**

**Josh Evans BOS Chairman** - I called this meeting as chairman of the Board of Supervisors out of a burden I had in talking to fellow leaders in the community, leaders with the school system, members of the school board, the members of my board, the county administrator and legal counsel. The way I look at this is not to belabor and not to be long-winded but Dickenson County and us, both boards are like family and families are complicated. We all know that. Families can be difficult sometimes but at the end of the day, you have to live together and come with each other and work together to be a healthy happy family. We all have constituents, we all have opinions, we all have faults on different things on how things should be or shouldn't be. At the end of the day, we are family and we must work together as a family to move Dickenson County forward and make it the best that it can possibly be. All of the ten of us share that same thought and goal. Today from my perspective anyway, I don't speak for all of my members, I speak mainly from my perspective and from my discussions with literally everyone here at the table. I want to extend the courtesy to you all on the school board and just let you know that we

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want and I want to work with you the best that we possibly can. I don't want to be an enemy to you. I don't want to be an antagonist to you. I want to work with you so you all can provide the best education possible for our children. I look around and I believe each one of us here has skin in the game and that means grandchildren or children attending a Dickenson County School. I've got one and will have one soon so nobody cares more about the education of the children received here in Dickenson County but me, all of us, we all have children or grandchildren. The school system is very near and dear to me at the same time it is near and dear to me to be a responsible steward of the taxpayers' dollars in Dickenson County. Probably our number one objective is how money is being spent. How we spend Dickenson County taxpayer dollars and so the goal is to make those two things work well, be a good steward of the taxpayer dollar and have one of the best school systems in the Commonwealth. We have been doing that but at the same time money is what money is and the revenue is revenue but I want this meeting to be a cordial meeting and I want to work together. I want you all to know that we are your friend, we are not your enemy regardless of whatever happens with this 20- 21 budget. We all need to work together. I want to work together and let you know we are here as a family and again families are complicated but were nonetheless a family. You don't get to pick who your brothers and sisters are, you don't get to pick who your parents are but you're family. So that is the tone that I want to set here as I open this. At this point, I would like to open my board up for any other remarks they have to make. If they don't I want to turn it over to Dr. Lyle, Mrs. Robinson, Mr. Barton to open the dialogue up. (no remarks from BOS)

**Mrs. Robinson, Superintendent:** Mr. Evans thank you for your beginning opening comments, we certainly appreciate it and I can share with you that our board feels the very same way. My sincere thanks on behalf of the Dickenson County School Board for meeting with us this morning and for working with us to resolve these issues. Budget work between the Board of Supervisors and the school board is always challenging and it's always stressful. The school board has the responsibility to be advocates for children and is the second-largest employer in Dickenson County. By statute responsibility as a division superintendent is to request from the appropriating funds, the funds the school division requires to successfully meet its responsibilities. To teach, to provide instruction to all children. On April 1, 2020, the school board did that by its request of 6.5 million dollars. The Board of Supervisors then has the responsibility of managing the finances for the entire county, and so while situations like this may seem complicated and often are stressful ultimately what is important is always simple and that is both what is simple and important is that all elected officials within the county share three obligations. First, we should

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be honest with each other and our citizens. Second, we must work together and I think you said that very eloquently Mr. Evans and I appreciate that. Third, within our abilities, we should do what is best for our citizens and our children. It's not surprising that due to our economic conditions that the county may not be able to meet the proposed appropriations request. This is not a new concept to the school board, it is our reality. Those of us who are forced to deal with budgets know that Dickenson County has had a difficult time trying to sustain three elementary schools for many years. In fact, we would not have been able to sustain it without your significant help and your support on various occasions. As I've mentioned I have heard elected officials tell the public that they support the three elementary schools and then privately asked me when are you going to close the school. When is the school to be shut down? So I think it's very important that if cuts do come that they are done in a timely fashion, that they are done in an increment time step. In the future, if it's necessary to reduce our appropriations request then we request that we communicate early in the process. We work together and we spend time together to understand each other's concerns. In these discussions between the board members, we strongly recommend whatever we do that it's necessary we implement increment changes so that the impact on our children's lives as minimal as possible. The nearly \$1 million proposed cut of the budget that the school board faces was not incremental. It was abrupt and furthermore we received this news abruptly and its impact on her children is going to be equally abrupt. So it's critical, it's critical that we work together and we can communicate often about our challenges. We all share in this room the same goal of providing the best opportunity for our citizens and our children within a limited budget. None of us sitting on the side table want to approve drastic options to balance the budget for our neighbor's friends and family to lose their jobs or to have to move away. I just ask that we do a better job of communicating with each other with the goal of making government work and within our means in the best possible way for our children and our citizens. Now ask our board members if they have any comments.

**Rick Mullins:** I would like to give our heartfelt thanks to the chairman For calling this meeting and for each one of the Board of Supervisors that has come here because this shows that you truly care and I just want to thank each one of you for doing that.

**Dr. Lyle:** I appreciate Mr. Evan's remarks and I believe that we need to work together and will work together really we have no other choice. It would be nice as Mrs. Robinson said if we could do it gradually over time. The virus didn't attack gradually over time and I understand that but I do appreciate being able to meet with you all today. Maybe air some of our concerns and listen to your concerns too.

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**Jason Hicks:** I'll just say there's nobody more excited to be here than I am. If you have seen any of the school board meetings, I've been the one to ask out more than anybody. You guys are in a difficult situation, a difficult place and so are we. As you said, we all want what's best for the kids, what's best for our community, and we have to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars. There are some hard choices, and I don't know that any of this can be painless for anybody. All we can do is keep the lines of communication open, be willing to work with others. Do the best we can. I appreciate you being here and just by the fact that we had this meeting shows that you have a commitment and I thank you.

**Damon Rasnick:** I agree with all that. Thank you greatly for what you've done here. It is a very good tone for the beginning of this discussion. Thank you very much.

**Jamie Hackney:** I appreciate everything too and I'm glad to be here today. I'm just looking forward to seeing where this goes today. Hopefully we will make progress, hopefully, it's productive. I am ready to get going.

**b. Discussion of the FY 21 Budget:**

Discussion between Board of Supervisors and Dickenson County School Board Members.

**Adjournment: 12:10 a.m.**

Following a motion by Rick Mullins and second, by Jamie Hackney, the meeting was adjourned. All-Aye.

*Rick Mullins, Vice-Chairman*

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Dr. Lurton Lyle, Chairman

*Tonya Baker, Clerk*

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Tonya Baker, Clerk

Approved: July 22, 2020