

Merger Bulletin

of the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools

Issue 1

Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools

September 10, 2003

Commissioners Receive information About School Merger September 15

County Meetings Scheduled on School Merger

September 15	Board of County Commissioners Work Session, F. Gordon Battle Courtroom, New Courthouse, 106 East Margaret Lane, Hillsborough, 7:30 p.m.
October 16	Public Hearing, location to be determined, 7:30 p.m.
October 23	Public Hearing, location to be determined, 7:30 p.m.
November	County Commissioners expect to hold Work Session/s, date to be determined

The Orange County Board of Commissioners will begin to discuss information on the implications of a possible merger of Orange County's two school systems on September 15. The meeting will begin at 7:30 p.m. in the F. Gordon Battle Courtroom of the new courthouse in Hillsborough. The meeting is open to the public.

The commissioners will receive a report from the county manager that contains information from both school systems about their programs and an analysis of the comparison. See the box at left for opportunities to comment or to hear the discussion.

Mergers have occurred in N.C. since 1960 through five actions. Of the 43 enacted from 1960-1996, 15 were implemented through plans by the school boards, 12 by popular votes, 10 by legislative enactment, 5 by commissioners' plans and one by the state Board of Education.

Website Posts Program and Staffing Differences

Staff in both the Orange County Schools and the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools have developed a report that compares their programs and staffing. The information will be posted on the Chapel Hill-Carrboro website on September 12. Log onto chccs.k12.nc.us and click on "merger" on the homepage.

The summary information will include a comparison of the elementary program, secondary program, career and technical education, middle school courses, arts courses at the middle school and high school levels, athletic offerings, clubs, exceptional education services and staff supplements and benefits.

In contrast to most other city school districts, Chapel Hill-Carrboro is larger and has grown at a faster pace than the county district. Chapel Hill-Carrboro enrolled 10,750 students for the 2003-04 school year, and Orange County Schools enrolled 6,542 students. Both enrollment figures are based on the tenth day of school in each district.

The per student funding in each district as reported in the 2003 N.C. Statistical Profile for 2001-02 from local, state and federal sources is: \$8922 in Chapel Hill-Carrboro and \$7924 in Orange County. The 2003 Statistical Profile is the most current profile available. In the profile's ranking of the 117 school districts in N.C. based on per student expenditures, Chapel Hill-Carrboro ranks 5th and Orange Co. ranks 17th. (See the reverse for a history of the local district tax.)

Funding Leads Differences Between Two Districts

The funding of the two districts is one of the biggest differences between the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools and the Orange County Schools.

Chapel Hill-Carrboro has a long-standing district tax residents approved in 1908 when Chapel Hill formally became a separate school district. The district tax provides about \$11 million in additional funding for the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools.

Funding per student is similar in both districts from state and countywide taxes.

School Merger Study Commission in 1986 Stopped Short of Recommending Merger at That Time

A citizens merger study committee was formed in 1985 to consider the impact of merging the two school systems in Orange County:

The commission was composed of 30 members representing both school systems, various interests and geographical areas. The commission was assisted by representatives of the N.C. Dept. of Public Instruction, staff of both districts, Institute of Government

staff, area planning departments, the state School Boards Association and local legislators.

The commission concluded that a single school system will prove to be desirable in the future but that "now is not the time for merger."

The recommendations of the commission included:

1. Equalize the per pupil funding countywide.

2. Fund construction of new schools based on a cooperative facilities plan developed by the two school systems.

3. Encourage the school districts to investigate areas where economies may be affected by joint operations such as transportation, food service and maintenance.

4. Encourage the school districts to pursue areas of educational cooperation such as special services.

History of the Chapel Hill-Carrboro District Tax

1908 Chapel Hill became a separate school district within Orange County and was enabled to tax itself for additional school support along with state and county funds.

1924 Special district tax levied by the Chapel Hill Board of Aldermen.

1933 Chapel Hill school system was changed from a chartered school district to a City Administrative Unit with the agreement of the State School Commission and the Orange County Board of Education. Up to this time, the district tax had been set at 14 cents. The school system requested a district tax of up to 20 cents, levied by the Board of Education. The tax was requested to take care of necessary repairs to buildings, to supplement state appropriations and to add another month of school to the eight-month term.

1943 First teacher supplement from local district tax was funded at 7.5 percent of the state salary.

1944 Local teacher supplement increased to 10 percent of state salary.

1945- District tax rate set at 20 cents by request of the Board of Education; levied by the Chapel Hill Board of
1951 Aldermen.

1949 County Tax Office began collecting district tax.

1954 Commissioners reduced district tax rate from 20 cents to 12 cents with Board of Education opposition.

1955 Petitions circulated in community in support of 20 cent district tax.

1957 District tax of 15 cents approved.

1967 Election held raising allowable level of district tax to 35 cents.

1971 Board requested election to raise allowable limit to 50 cents but did not reach level of formal election.

1967- Allowable level set at 35 cents; rate has not risen above 20 cents.
2003

1999 Referendum approved allowing district tax to be used for capital outlay (construction or equipment).