

**Citizen's Advisory Committee**  
*for School Facilities Planning and Funding*

Final Report

to the Wake County Board of Commissioners,  
the Wake County Board of Education,  
and the citizens of Wake County

April 12, 2000

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	3
Introduction and Committee Charge	4
Committee Membership and Process	5
General Principles	6
New Schools	7
Renovations of Existing Schools	8
Technology and Other Facilities	9
Operating Budget Issues	10
Legislative Issues	12
Outline of a Capital Spending Plan	13
Strategies for Broader Inclusion of the Community	15
Conclusion	16
Appendices	17
A. Roster of the Committee Members	
B. Presenters and Their Topics	
C. Issues Raised, But Not Adequately Studied by the Committee	
D. Materials Reviewed	

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

After an exhaustive examination of the needs facing Wake County public schools, the Citizens Advisory Committee created by the county commissioners and school board came to consensus on general principles, recommendations in several specific areas of study, and the outline of a new Capital Spending Plan. Our findings can be summarized as follows:

- The dramatic and sustained growth in student enrollment in the WCPSS makes it imperative that county leaders and voters address the need for additional classroom space as well as the backlog of repairs and renovations within existing school facilities.
- The Committee believes that it is possible to address the school's immediate needs through 2003-04 without additional property tax increases or new taxing authority.
- To meet these needs, the Committee recommends that county commissioners ask voters to consider a referendum to authorize between \$470 million and \$630 million in new bonds through 2003-04 to finance new schools and renovations. Legislative cooperation and the extent of implementation of Committee recommendations in specific areas will help to determine the precise amount of new borrowing that is needed.
- In arriving at that recommendation, the Committee set firm priorities: 1) guaranteeing the health and safety of those who learn and work in WCPSS facilities, 2) ensuring adequacy of facilities for effective learning, and 3) alleviating overcrowded conditions in many schools. Other goals, such as ensuring parity of facilities across the county or adding non-classroom facilities, were assigned a lower priority.
- The Committee believes that on-going instructional and operational expenses such as school technology should not be included in a Capital Spending Plan or bond referendum. They should be accommodated within the system's operating budget.
- While the Committee believes that the Capital Spending Plan it outlined will address the immediate needs through 2003-04, enrollment growth will continue and that other facility needs must eventually be addressed. Another series of investments, probably including another bond, will be needed to provide adequate facilities beyond that year.
- In an attempt to ensure a sufficient and efficient investment in routine maintenance, the Committee recommends the creation of a Wake County Public Building Authority to oversee the construction and maintenance of schools and other public facilities.
- The Committee recommends several changes in state legislation as well as state and local policies to provide flexibility, innovation, and efficiency in providing adequate facilities for effective learning in Wake County.
- Finally, the Committee recommends that county commissioners and the school board create a broad-based advisory committee that can continue to serve as a bridge between elected officials and the community on school finance, facility, and operational issues.

## INTRODUCTION AND COMMITTEE CHARGE

The charges to the Citizens's Advisory Committee for School Facilities Planning and Funding were:

1. To recommend to the Board of County Commissioners and the Board of Education an acceptable\* capital spending plan for schools, in addressing the needs for:

- a) New schools.
- b) Renovations and repairs to existing schools.
- c) Other facilities, such as joint-use facilities, a teacher-training center, bus maintenance facilities, etc., and
- d) Technology.

2. To recommend strategies for broader inclusion of the community for future capital spending plans.

\* Acceptable is defined as broad consensus, or agreement, on the following:

- a) Assumptions used in preparing the capital plan;
- b) Priorities between the capital and operating budget of the school system;
- c) Priorities among new schools, renovations and repairs to existing schools, other capital facility needs, and technology;
- d) How the capital plan should be financed, given current local taxing authority, and
- e) What new financing options should be pursued, if any.

The Committee believes that the following report fulfills this charge by making a series of general and specific recommendations for changes in the capital plan previously devised by the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) and Board of Education. The Committee's recommendations are in the form of principles that school officials should follow in preparing a detailed list of school facility projects — new schools as well as renovation projects — to be funded by a November bond issue and annual appropriations.

This report also includes a general outline of a capital spending plan for WCPSS that comprises a 3 1/2 year time period from the assumed November passage of a bond through the end of the 2003-2004 school year. The outline provides a range of expenditures reflecting the potential for cost savings based on the extent to which the committee's principles and recommendations for state legislation are followed. The committee did not have the information, time, or resources to prepare a detailed, school-by-school capital plan, nor did it view the preparation of such a plan as necessary to fulfill the charge.

We believe that a Capital Spending Plan that incorporates the committee's recommendations will meet with voter approval, and successfully address the school system's most serious needs, while opening the door to new and creative ways to provide at an affordable cost the facilities that the students of the WCPSS require for effective learning.

## THE COMMITTEE'S MEMBERSHIP AND PROCESS

Shortly after the defeat of the June 8, 1999 referendum, Mr. Vernon Malone, who chaired the Wake County Board of Commissioners, and Ms. Roxie Cash, who chaired the Wake County Board of Education, jointly announced that before another referendum would be scheduled, a citizens committee would be formed and asked to:

1. Review the development and conduct of the failed referendum;
2. Identify and study issues involved in the need for funding and construction of school facilities; and
3. Make such recommendations as it felt appropriate to the County Commissioners and the Wake County Board of Education.

Members of the two boards set about identifying prospective members for the committee. By late July, Mr. Jim Talton, a retired managing partner of the accounting firm KPMG Peat Marwick, was appointed chairman. By mid-September, most of the members had been appointed. Care was taken to include broad representation from across the county, including some opponents of the June referendum. A roster of committee members is included in the Appendix. The Citizens Advisory Committee for School Facilities Planning and Funding held its first meeting on Friday, October 1.

The Committee set every-other-Friday afternoon as its regular meeting time. A three-hour block of time was eventually expanded to five-hour blocks. An agreement was reached that the Committee would try to develop its recommendations through a consensus approach, rather than formally voting issue by issue.

Nearly all of the 22 hours of the seven fall meetings were devoted to hearing presentations, and receiving handouts from 19 presenters. (A list of presenters is included in the Appendix.) Each member accumulated a stack of materials about a foot high, which required many hours of home reading. Each presenter was videotaped, so that absent Committee members could obtain a tape and catch up. Where time allowed, most of the presentations included time for questions-and-answers, which frequently resulted in identifying an issue needing further study.

The orientation period was rather extensive because of the diverse background which members brought to the Committee. Some had been in very few schools recently or did not have children or grandchildren currently attending WCPSS. Others were current parents, active in a PTA or other school organization, or serving as a volunteer at a school or in the central office. Still others brought to the task significant public or private-sector experience in construction, finance, management, research, or education policy.

In early January, it was suggested that the Committee split into subcommittees, so that the investigation of several issues could proceed in parallel. But a significant number of the members preferred that the Committee continue to act as a whole, because we had not had much time to talk among ourselves, and to find out how the various members thought and felt about the issues. By mid-February we were ready for subcommittees, and formed them on the following topics: legislation, financing, maintenance/construction, building, technology, final report drafting, and future presentations.

After the substantive subcommittees had completed or largely completed their work, the drafting subcommittee began work on a final report to reflect all of the Committee's agreed-upon principles, recommendations, and suggestions for future study.

## GENERAL PRINCIPLES

During the early stages of its deliberations, the Committee developed 11 general principles to shape the development of an acceptable Capital Spending Plan. The principles are listed in no particular order and apply to specific facility issues throughout the rest of this report:

- The Capital Spending Plan should ensure that Wake County will provide all children in the WCPSS a safe, orderly, clean, and healthful school that ensures an environment for effective, quality learning.
- The Plan should reflect every effort to avoid a tax increase.
- The Plan should not include a separate technology component; rather, technology should be integrated only to the extent that it will enhance the academic program.
- The Plan must identify how the school system's needs have been prioritized.
- The Plan should be prepared so that needs for renovated and new schools are fully funded before capital funds are committed to other new facility needs.
- The Plan should provide construction funding for the next 3 1/2 years, plus sufficient funding to meet site acquisition and development needs.
- The Plan will enjoy broad public support if it is prepared, presented, and implemented with input from a broadly representative group with a mandate to monitor implementation of these principles, and advise county and school officials on school finance issues.
- The Plan should reflect priorities in the following order: 1) ensuring the health and safety of children and staff, 2) providing adequate facilities, and 3) reducing school overcrowding. Only after these three goals have been accomplished should other issues, such as parity among school facilities, be addressed.
- The Plan should include managerial or legislative strategies for reducing costs through further streamlining or privatization of construction management, facilities, services, site acquisition alternatives, and project delivery.
- The Plan should provide additional teaching spaces first to handle anticipated growth, and second to provide lower student-teacher ratios, in that order.
- The Plan should allocate responsibility for school construction, renovation, and maintenance between the county government and the school system in the manner most likely to ensure the most efficient and effective operation of school buildings and other facilities.

## NEW SCHOOLS

After preparing our list of general principles, the Committee followed a similar process in devising specific principles for three main areas listed in our charge: New Schools, Renovations, and Technology. In each case, the Committee met as a whole, received “straw proposals,” broke into small groups to discuss the principles, and reported back to the full group suggested revisions or substitute principles. Finally, the Committee discussed the different principles suggested by the small groups, and in most cases referred the ideas to the Drafting Subcommittee with the charge to combine, refine, and ultimately include in our final report those principles reflecting the broad consensus of the Committee.

Based on our work, we believe that WCPSS has devised a reasonable means of siting new schools and is making use of prototype school designs to reduce up-front costs. We also concluded, however, that several changes and innovation in school construction standards and procedures would help to meet the system’s facility needs in an efficient manner.

For the New Schools component, the Committee assembled the following principles to follow when creating a new Capital Spending Plan:

- We RECOMMEND that the Plan provide seats for at least 3,500 additional students a year over a 3-year period to handle projected growth. It is our understanding that simply providing sufficient space for expected growth — not including any effort to reduce current overcrowding — will require some 140-170 additional classrooms each year, either from new construction or renovations to existing schools.
- We RECOMMEND that the capacity models for new schools — the total number of students to be accommodated — be reduced to the lowest number feasible. Current models of 650 students per elementary, 1100 per middle, and 1600 per high create schools that are too large and bureaucratic to promote effective, efficient, flexible learning environments.
- Current standards for classroom space per student are reasonable for WCPSS elementary schools, but we RECOMMEND that the space standards be reduced by 15% to 17% (to the low end of state guidelines) for middle and high schools.
- We RECOMMEND that WCPSS adopt a long-range goal of 92% permanent seats vs. 8% mobile units to provide flexibility in enrollment management while ensuring adequacy of facilities.
- We RECOMMEND that WCPSS provide more optional year-round schools, especially in areas where the year-round option does not currently exist.
- We RECOMMEND that WCPSS construct some new schools less expensively — with only selected non-classroom facilities — but make them magnet schools with unique instructional programs to attract students.
- We RECOMMEND that WCPSS try using modular (not mobile) construction, alternative contracting methods, private lease-purchase contracts, off-site food preparation, and other alternative methods to build and finance new schools at lower

cost. As discussed later, we also RECOMMEND that the Wake legislative delegation pursue all necessary state legislation to allow the system to employ such methods.

## RENOVATIONS TO EXISTING SCHOOLS

The school renovation projects included in the June 1999 bond referendum were extensive, with the total dollar amount exceeding that for new school construction. The Committee strongly believes that many of these projects were (and remain) desperately needed, and that a substantial share of a subsequent bond issue should be devoted to the repair of existing capital assets. At the same time, however, the Committee believes that inadequate attention to routine maintenance has resulted in many of the problems currently requiring expensive repair, and that firm and consistent priorities must be set within the Renovation component of a new Capital Spending Plan.

Ideas for improving the funding and administration of school maintenance needs will be discussed in a subsequent section. For the Renovation component, the Committee assembled the following principles to follow when creating a new Capital Spending Plan:

- As discussed with regard to New Schools, we RECOMMEND that the capacity models for renovated schools be reduced to the lowest number feasible, and that space standards be reduced by 15% to 17% (to the low end of state guidelines) for middle and high schools.
- We RECOMMEND that Renovation and updating of existing, inadequate facilities have a priority equal to that for new school construction, as long as the renovations are needed to meet minimum health and safety standards and a standard of minimum adequacy for education. Some renovations previously included in the Plan were based on the assumption that there should be one standard capacity model for all WCPSS schools, old and new. We do not favor the demolition or extensive renovation of older buildings just because they do not meet current space standards, or fail to meet the concept of parity across the system. Provided the repairs and renovations keep them safe and provide an adequate instructional program — and the cost of such renovations doesn't exceed their replacement value — older buildings should continue to be used as long as the WCPSS continues to have a substantial shortage of classrooms.
- As discussed with regard to New Schools, we RECOMMEND that some WCPSS schools be renovated at less expense — with only selected space improvements or non-classroom amenities — but made magnet schools with unique instructional programs to attract students.
- We RECOMMEND that the routine maintenance of WCPSS buildings be significantly improved. In addition to the Authority proposed below, we believe that the county should increase its investment in maintenance to a rate reflecting industry norms.
- We RECOMMEND that a low priority be placed on renovations that reduce the stock of classrooms as well as renovations of non-classroom facilities, such as upgrading athletic facilities or parking lots, so that high-priority needs such as health, safety, and adequate classrooms are addressed first. WCPSS must be willing to eliminate or defer low-priority renovation projects.
- As discussed with regard to New Schools, we RECOMMEND that WCPSS try using modular (not mobile) construction and other alternative contracting and construction methods when renovating schools.



## TECHNOLOGY

The previous Capital Spending Plan for the WCPSS included a proposed \$158 million in spending for computers, networking, training, and other technology that may have contributed to the defeat of the bond. While the Committee believes that the effective integration of computers and other technology into the WCPSS will improve opportunities for learning, we believe that the purchase of computers and the training of educators on how to use them are not properly considered capital expenditures.

The Committee calls on school officials to adequately provide for technology expenditures through the operating budget, not through capital outlays. The committee endorsed the following ideas about how best to invest in new technology:

- We RECOMMEND that there not be a separate “technology” component in the Capital Spending Plan. The committee believes that effective use of technology is a pivotal concern but that it should primarily be integrated into the educational program. Hardware, software, networking, and training expenditures should come from the operating budget, while designing and building schools with appropriate conduits for technology should be included in the capital budget.
- To improve the administration of WCPSS as a business enterprise, we RECOMMEND that sufficient operating funds should be provided to allow systemwide e-mail and Internet access for teachers, administrators, and other staff.
- To improve student learning, we RECOMMEND that WCPSS integrate technology into the curriculum as completely as possible, making use of the latest research and focusing resources on those grades and subjects where the greatest benefits are likely. Based on the limited research we have seen, middle and high school grades offer more opportunities for effective integration and improved learning than do elementary grades, and language arts and social studies offer more opportunities than math and science.
- We RECOMMEND that WCPSS allocate sufficient funds within its operating budget for teacher training to ensure the effective integration and use of new technology and that it actively seek financial and in-kind contributions of computers from the private sector.

## OTHER FACILITIES

The June 1999 bond contained approximately \$37 million in construction projects other than schools, including regional maintenance facilities and a teacher training center. We believe that the inclusion of this many non-classroom projects at a time of severe classroom shortage significantly erodes public support for a Capital Spending Plan. While we recognize that a growing system must grow in many ways, and that some support facilities may be inadequate, this presents another opportunity to set priorities. We RECOMMEND that so long as there is a substantial shortage of classrooms, non-classroom facility construction be deferred.

A substantial shortage of classrooms no longer exists when: a) no teacher is teaching in a non-classroom (e.g. a closet or stage), AND b) the number of mobile classrooms has been reduced to the Committee’s recommended target of 8 percent, AND c) the construction of new classrooms has exceeded the number of new students for them for three consecutive

years, AND d) the capital plan assures that the number of classrooms coming on line during the next three years exceeds projected enrollment growth.

## OPERATING BUDGET ISSUES

Part of the charge of the Committee was to examine the current mix of priorities between the capital and operating budgets of the WCPSS. A great deal of our time and energy was devoted to this task. While we have grown to appreciate the multiple and often conflicting fiscal demands faced by the county and the school system, we have concluded that the priorities should be substantially reordered. One area has already been addressed: technology. Another area of critical concern is routine maintenance.

It is our conclusion that years of underfunding of maintenance and repair work have left the school system facing a staggering list of immediate repair and renovation needs. Had sufficient funds been devoted over time to maintain facilities, many of these needs would have been taken care of on a pay-as-you-go basis, rather than requiring new debts to finance extensive renovations.

During the past few years of rapid growth in construction, the annual WCPSS maintenance budget has fallen from about 1.6% of the replacement value of WCPSS buildings in 1993-94 to less than 1% in 1999-00. Many public and private sector institutions use a 2% figure to ensure adequate maintenance.

The Committee makes two substantive recommendations to address the problem:

1. We RECOMMEND that the county devote more funding to maintenance and repair. In the Capital Spending Plan outlined later in this report, we identify savings in new schools and renovations that could free up some operating funds for this purpose. Both the county and school board should pursue other means of bolstering the maintenance budget, and should give WCPSS managers more flexibility to spend their maintenance dollars efficiently and effectively. Maintenance of the public's assets must not be sacrificed and should be funded according to industry standards. Furthermore, the new Citizen's Oversight Committee proposed later should evaluate whether the basic maintenance of facilities and the implementation of educational programs are being adequately funded by the county as compared to benchmark districts.
2. In an effort to achieve more effective and efficient use of public revenues to construct and maintain facilities, we RECOMMEND that the Wake County Commissioners and the Board of Education establish a Wake County Public Building Authority to oversee the design, construction, and maintenance of all county facilities not already under the jurisdiction of a preexisting authority. The Authority would consist of members appointed by the commissioners and the school board and would be established as a pilot, with a sunset date of 5 years from the date of inception. Its effectiveness would be evaluated by the commissioners and the school board where upon the decision to continue or terminate the Authority would be made.

A few details about this second idea should be considered:

- Educational programming specifications, space standards, and general locations of school sites would be directed by the Board of Education. Financing for design, construction, and maintenance of all county buildings would be provided by the County Commissioners.

- One intent of the Authority is to correct the imbalance in the dollars allotted to maintain county buildings vs. school buildings. With a single planning and budgeting entity, more consistent funding levels for design, construction, and maintenance services for all Wake County public facilities can be established. Furthermore, merging like functions of the county and WCPSS should allow for significant economies of scale in personnel, administration, purchasing, and planning.
- Due to its makeup, the Authority could more effectively coordinate shared site and building opportunities, thus serving the broader needs of the public. Focusing the Authority on co-location of county facilities for schools, parks, libraries, human services, etc. will maximize shared facilities and minimize costs.
- Funding for school maintenance has historically lagged behind educational programs. The authority will be able to focus solely on the design/construction/maintenance and become an effective advocacy for the annual appropriations needed to maintain public capital assets.
- The authority will enhance the opportunities for public input regarding all Wake County facilities.
- The formation of the authority allows a useful division-of-labor. The school board and WCPSS staff can focus on the educational program of the schools, the commissioners and county staff can focus on financing facility needs, and the authority and its staff on building and maintaining the facilities needed to provide educational and other services well.

## LEGISLATIVE/POLICY ISSUES

The Committee strongly believes that action by the General Assembly, the State Board of Education, and the Department of Public Instruction would increase the ability of Wake County to address its needs for adequate school facilities, routine maintenance, the effective use of new instructional technology, and other educational investments.

Many of the legislative solutions we recommend involve the process of designing and building schools. We have concluded that the county could realize significant savings in time and money if allowed more flexibility in selecting project delivery methods, in streamlining the permitting and approval process, in leveraging private investment, and IN using its state funding to meet its highest-priority needs.

- We RECOMMEND changes in state statutes to remove constraints over how the WCPSS budget the funds it receives from the state and to remove the upper limit on charter schools in Wake County, provided that all new charter schools meet basic financial criteria to ensure their long term stability. We believe that, given additional flexibility to allocate funds as they see fit, the school system and Board of Education will have incentives to pursue more cost-effective ways of delivering services and managing facilities. Through both of these changes the quality of education and support of parents will be enhanced.
- We RECOMMEND changes in state statutes to allow WCPSS a choice of delivery methods in building and renovating schools, including traditional general contracting, construction management at risk, design/build, or other methods as deemed appropriate. We believe that the evidence is strong that this flexibility will lead to lower costs and reduced project completion time.
- It is our understanding that the WCPSS currently pays some sales tax on the cost of materials for new construction (without full reimbursement), as well as for some operating expenditures. Wherever this is occurring, we RECOMMEND that the relevant statutes be changed to stop this. The school system should have the same sales tax exemption that county governments or nonprofits enjoy. Until this occurs, all transactions not already subject to tax recovery should be made through the county.
- We RECOMMEND that the Wake school board, county commissioners, and the proposed Authority encourage and provide incentives to developers and local companies make land and/or facilities available for public schools, to the extent that state statutes and state and local policies allow. Wherever statutes and/or policies prohibit or restrict the likelihood of this action, we RECOMMEND that they be changed. Leveraging private resources will allow WCPSS to accomplish more with the public funding currently available.
- We believe that WPCSS could deliver new and renovated schools more quickly (and possibly less expensively) if it faced a single, countywide process of permits and inspections. We RECOMMEND that Wake County and its municipalities form a voluntary compact to provide countywide expedited permitting and inspections of schools. Failing the formation of such a compact, we RECOMMEND changes in state statutes to consolidate those functions and provide Wake County with the authority to hire or contract with inspectors to provide such countywide permitting and inspections.

We believe that any attempt to seek legislative authority to increase funds for school capital needs via a local-option sales tax, transfer fees, or impact fees is not prudent at this time.

## OUTLINE OF A CAPITAL PLAN FOR WCPSS

The Citizens Advisory Committee is not qualified or prepared to devise a new, school-by-school capital spending plan for the Wake County Public School System. Nor do we believe that it was our role to “second-guess” each selected site, each proposed renovation, or each architectural plan. Rather, we viewed our role as assisting the WCPSS staff in setting priorities among its identifiable facility needs, and in seeking sufficient funding to address those needs in a timely fashion. We believe that the Capital Spending Plan should make every effort to deliver new schools and renovations at an economical cost in order to free up dollars for other priorities in the WCPSS and county budgets, such as technology or increased maintenance. Most importantly, we took seriously our charge to recommend an acceptable capital spending plan — one that the citizens of Wake County would wholeheartedly support.

Based on information gleaned from WCPSS staff, Wake County officials, and other sources, we have put together the outline of a capital plan that we believe fits within our general principles, provides immediate relief for the system’s most egregious facility needs, and fulfills our charge as a committee.

Here are the assumptions we used to devise this outline, in most cases derived from staff presentations from the WCPSS and county government:

- As the WCPSS now defines them, capital needs for new schools, renovations, and program management and contingency total \$664 million through the 2003-04 school year, at which time the system’s mobile inventory would be reduced to 400. Through 2007-08, the system’s defined needs total more than \$1.1 billion (see attached table). The Committee is not necessarily accepting every item included in the WCPSS estimate, only the dollar amount as an upper limit of funding.
- The system has been spending \$25 million a year in pay-as-you-go funds to complete Phase III projects. The last installment of that budgetary allocation will be in 2000-01, allowing all or part of that stream of funds to be devoted to new capital projects on a bonded or pay-as-you-go basis.
- In addition to the \$25 million funding stream, the Wake County Board of Commissioners last year enacted a property tax hike of 10 cents per \$100 valuation, of which 8 cents was earmarked for school capital needs. Assuming a revenue-neutral revaluation, this translates into 6.2 cents, which will yield \$34 million in the 2000-01 school year. If the entire amount of revenues generated from this tax increase from 2000-01 to 2003-04 were devoted to debt service, the county could issue bonds totaling as much as \$405 million. If the additional \$25 million per year capital allocation were also devoted completely to debt service, the maximum possible bond issuance would be \$655 million.
- We do not recommend an increase in property tax rates or other local tax sources for school capital needs and therefore we assume no such tax increase will be available through 2003-04. We also assume a revenue-neutral revaluation of Wake property for tax purposes as well as no additional state or federal funding for school capital needs.
- According to county officials, a good rule of thumb is that for every post-revaluation penny on the property tax rate, the county will receive \$5 million in revenues, which

can be used to service a \$50 million bond issue. These numbers do not reflect expected growth in the tax base.

The Committee's specific recommendations, including legislative relief, offer the prospect of substantial savings in the Capital Spending Plan. However, it is impossible for us to estimate these savings with precision. Instead, we have constructed a funding plan based on the extent to which the Committee's recommendations for cost-savings, innovative project delivery methods, increased budgetary flexibility for WCPSS, partnerships with private developers, and additional charter schools are adopted.

Based on these assumptions, we RECOMMEND a Capital Spending Plan for the 3 1/2 year period from November 2000 to June 2004 to range between approximately \$500 million and \$600 million, depending on the extent to which WCPSS chooses to, and is allowed to, pursue innovative approaches to school facility construction, renovation, and finance as we have recommended. The size of the bond needed for the Plan ranges from \$445 million to \$555 million and the pay-as-you-go component would be between \$50 million and \$52 million. Finally, we project that such a Capital Spending Plan, by achieving economies, would make available between \$26 million and \$55 million over the same period that could be used to increase operating funding for technology and routine maintenance or to address other WCPSS or county needs. In general, the higher the bonded amount, the less money will be available for these operating expenditures or other county needs.

The Committee believes that these numbers reflect reasonable assumptions and projections, and show how the recommendations in this report can help school and county officials meet the pressing facility needs of the school system in a manner consistent with the interests of students, parents, educators, and taxpayers.

## STRATEGIES FOR BROADER INCLUSION OF THE COMMUNITY FOR FUTURE CAPITAL SPENDING PLANS

Public support for the WCPSS is crucial to its long-term success. Becoming more aware of how our children are educated and the needs of our educational system will help build this public support.

We recommend that in order to garner additional public support, the WCPSS needs to publicize its construction and instructional successes. A wonderful opportunity for this is coming this August, when five new campuses are scheduled to open, and some renovations to existing campuses will be completed. This publicity can continue into the fall, with follow-up articles from students, staff, and parents. This could help create a positive mindset prior to the calling of the next bond referendum.

Given the daily growth in the county's population, the number of first-time parents in the school system each fall, and other persons who become aware of (and involved in) school affairs the task of informing the public of the school system's needs never ends. For that reason, the committee has volunteered to extend its work through the fall bond referendum. In doing that, it is offering to work with County Commissioners and School Board members in telling the Wake County School story and in explaining its short and long-term facility needs. We also hope to work with elected county officials in shaping a proposal that the public will understand and support.

Beyond the bond referendum, however, we believe strongly that elected officials should put in place an ongoing advisory group that will work to monitor the WCPSS's progress on meeting its growth needs, analyze unmet needs and provide the School Board and County Commissioners with a steady stream of information about the community's concerns and perceptions of the schools.

As this process has shown, Wake County has many citizens that care about the County's schools and its future. The more they are engaged in wrestling with the future of Wake County, the better that future will be.

Our hope is that our committee's work is only the first step in a process of building confidence in and a trust of schools that will enable the Wake County schools to meet their goals of being one of the top quality schools in the United States. It is that spirit that this report is submitted to you.

The community can be included in future capital spending plans at several stages:

- Inputs;
- Developing the plan;
- Disseminating information; and
- Conducting the campaign to seek passage of a bond referendum, or approval by the County Commissioners of specific requests not requiring a bond referendum.

If this School Facilities Committee is continued, or evolves into another committee, that committee could play a role in all four phases listed above. Without such a committee, the Board of Education already has in place (or has access to) several organizations that could be coordinated with additional community organizations to result in a broad, representative base of community support. Those in place include area school advisory councils school

booster clubs and special advisory councils. The Board has access to the Wake Education Partnership, the Wake Association of Classroom Teachers, and the several PTA groups.

Many non-school-focused community organizations have an interest in the WCPSS being effective, even though the schools are not their only interest. We believe that these groups would be interested in hearing presentations from the School Facilities Department staff regarding the setting of priorities. Sharing this type of information can build confidence in the public that decisions are not made frivolously.

Many actions of the Board of Education, the County Commissioners, and their staff that do not directly speak to facilities have their impact on the success of any capital spending plan. Decisions, actions, and even just statements all have a role in forming perceptions in the minds of those eligible to vote in school bond referenda. When a feeling of confidence in the Boards, their staff, and the thousands of school-level personnel pervades a community, there will be support for reasonable capital spending plans that are presented to the community.

## CONCLUSION

The WCPSS is nearing the end of a major school construction period. Whereas six new campuses opened in the Fall of 1999, and five new campuses will open in the Fall of 2000, only two new campuses will open in the Fall of 2001. After that, none. It is crucial for the community to realize that these gains are only temporary. Enrollment will continue to increase, even if not quite as rapidly. More new facilities are, and will be, needed.

Given the lag time between the scheduling of a school bond referendum, its passage, and the beginning and completion of projects, community relations efforts must be made now that will result in the passage of the next school bond referendum, to avoid another dire classroom shortage similar to the one that we are still in the process of alleviating.

We believe that by setting firm priorities, embracing innovation, and leveraging private and community resources, Wake County can address its classroom shortage and other urgent facility needs without imposing additional taxes on its citizens at this time. Such a resolution of this important and challenging issue would help to create and maintain broad public support for the Wake County Public School System, its leaders and personnel, its academic accomplishments, and its ambitious goals for future student achievement.

## APPENDICES

### A. Roster of the Committee Members

Talton, Jim  
Chairman, Citizens Advisory Committee

Diana Bader  
PTA

Forrest Ball  
Real Estate

Bob Beasley  
Mallinckrodt

Dr. Edna Black  
Education Management Consultant

John Boling  
SAS

John Boylan  
Spectrum Properties

Ferris Chandler  
Retired, Cooper Tool

Larry Dickens  
DOT

John Dornan  
Public School Forum

Susan Fonville  
PTA

Chuck Fuller  
Citizens for a Sound Economy

Brooks Gullede  
Residential Contractor

John Hood  
John Locke Foundation

Maebelle Hudson  
Wake ACT

Allen Jones  
DJB Construction Group

Randy Jones

Aventis CropScience

John Linderman  
Grubb & Ellis

Tim McBrayer  
Signature Publishing

Truman Newberry  
Architect

Ross Rhudy  
Residential Real Estate

Ann Rollins  
PTA

Joe Sansom  
State Treasurer's Office

Renee Shaw  
PTA

Nellie Tomlinson  
Attorney - Womble Carlyle Sandridge Rice

Don Walston  
Howard, Perry & Walston

Blount Williams  
Alfred Williams

Bob Williams  
Retired, NCSU

Terry Yeargan  
Bovis Construction Corp.

## B. Presenters and Their Topics

Presenter  
Topic

Bill McNeal - WCPSS  
Programs and Their Impact on Facilities

Blount Williams ñ Alfred Williams & Co.  
Work of Phase III A/B Building Program

Bob Williams ñ Retired NCSU  
Priorities

Brad Crone ñ Campaign Connections  
Review June 1999 Bond Issue

Brenda Hourigan Barker ñ WCPSS  
Overview and Update on Technology in WCPSS

Cary Mayor - Glenn Lang  
Innovative Ideas for Schools

Christina Lighthall ñ WCPSS  
Response to Bob William's Presentation

Chuck Fuller ñ Citizens for a Sound Economy

Dave Balz ñ The Haskell Company  
Alternatives to School Facilities Design, Construction and Operation

Dr. Jim Surratt ñ WCPSS  
The Schools as Necessary Infrastructure; Alternative to Continued Bond Funding

Jim Merrill ñ WCPSS  
Operating Budget

John Boling ñ SAS  
Technology

John Dornan ñ Public School Forum  
Review Cost Survey and Address Funding Limitations

John Hood ñ John Locke Foundation  
Alliance for Smart Schools facility study and public opinion poll

Karen Banks ñ WCPSS  
Progress Towards the 95% Goal School System Benchmarking Initiatives and Long-Range Plans

Marty Mitchell - WCPSS  
School Operating Costs

Michael Nicklas - Innovative Design  
Environmentally Sensitive and Cost Efficient Schools

Ray DeBruhl - Johnston County Schools  
Johnston County Schools Methodology

Raymond Boutwell-Wake County Government  
County School Finances

School Construction Plan - WCPSS  
School Construction Plan

Susan Fonville - PTA  
Maintenance/Construction Subcommittee Report

Tom Oxholm - Wake Stone Corporation  
Review Operating Spending

Tom Williams - Healthy Start Academy  
Charter Schools

C. Issues Raised, But Not Adequately Studied by the Committee. We recommend that these be referred to the subsequent Committee:

1. What are the terms of the system's contract with the Heery Corporation? What does WCPSS get for this money? Is the value received worth continuing the cost? Without the Heery contract, what of their information/services could be provided by the systems staff?
2. Discussion, analysis, and priority setting for other facilities.
3. Are the schools in Wake County too large, especially the high schools? If so, what can be done about this?

D. Materials Reviewed