

**ORANGE COUNTY  
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**AGENDA ITEM ABSTRACT**

**Meeting Date:** August 27, 2012

**AGENDA ITEM No.** 12-08-(2)-12

**ACTION ITEM: (Y/N)** N

**SUBJECT:** Joint Meeting – Boards of Education and Board of County Commissioners

**INFO. CONTACT:** G. Patrick Rhodes **PHONE:** 919-732-8126

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Letter dated March 14, 2012 to Board of County Commissioners re: Student Membership Projections, Elementary School #8 and High School Capacity.

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**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this agenda item is to allow the Board of Education the opportunity to discuss the September 13, 2012 joint meeting with the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) and the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools Board of Education.

**BACKGROUND:** Twice each year the Board of County Commissioners conducts a joint meeting with both of the county's Boards of Education. The joint meeting in the spring is devoted to the BOCC's budget deliberation process. The agenda topics for the fall meeting often involve budget, facilities, referendums, etc.

Due to student growth, Orange County Schools will be facing the need for additional classroom space. Due to the Department of Public Instruction's spring 2012 reanalysis, the capacity of Orange High School will be less than has been used by the county's planning department.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:** Unknown at this time.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Superintendent recommends the Board of Education discuss the September 13, 2012 joint meeting and provide direction to staff. The feedback will be used by staff to prepare for the joint meeting.

# Orange County Board of Education

## Board Members:

**Donna Coffey**  
Chair  
**Stephen H. Halkiotis**  
Vice Chair

**Eddie M. Eubanks**  
**Tony M. McKnight**  
**Anne Medenblik**  
**Deborah A. Piscitelli**  
**Brenda Stephens**

**G. Patrick Rhodes**  
Superintendent

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March 14, 2012

Bernadette Pelissier, Chair  
Pam Hemminger, Vice Chair  
Valerie Foushee  
Alice Gordon  
Barry Jacobs  
Earl McKee  
Steve Yuhasz  
200 South Cameron Street  
Post Office Box 8181  
Hillsborough, NC 27278

Dear County Commissioners,

Thank you for the opportunity to elaborate on our District's quickly emerging capital needs – in particular the construction of a new elementary school and the addition of a new wing and auxiliary gymnasium at Cedar Ridge High School.

### Student Membership Projections

As predicted for many years now, our district has started to see a rise in the number of students that we serve – in particular those living in the western area of the county near Mebane. While it is not possible to anticipate the number of students coming from developments located within the Mebane Planning jurisdiction, because Mebane is not a SAPFO partner, we do see evidence of growth. For example, one reliable indicator of children coming from particular areas is the number of buses that service those areas. Since this year's first day of school, our district has increased the number of buses running routes to these areas from three to seven. Assuming that the four additional buses transport at least 50 children each, we estimate the increased number of students from this area to be at least 200. The majority of these students originate from the Ashbury and Collington Farm subdivisions, and we believe that many of them live in multi-family dwellings.

Historically, single-family dwellings have generated more students than multi-family dwellings. However, we have seen a reversal of that trend during the current economic downturn, and now we are seeing more families residing in multi-family dwellings. Our Board appreciates the fact that the Orange County Planning Department recognizes the change in trend and is ready to have the current Student Generation Rates re-assessed. We look forward to reviewing the results of the planned study and using the tool to project more accurately student membership.

### **Elementary School #8**

While our Board acknowledges the fact that the Average Projection Model is the County's standard model used for student membership projections, we feel confident that our future elementary student growth will outpace the average and reflect trends we are currently experiencing which are more in line with SAPFO's Three Year Projection Model. In addition, NC DPI projects our elementary population for the upcoming school year will increase at an even higher rate than any of the SAPFO models.

### **Elementary School Student Membership Projections**

	<b>2012-13 Membership Increase Projection</b>
SAPFO - Average Model	90
SAPFO - 3 Year Model	124
NC DPI Projection	173

It is important to note that for each of the past six years, actual OCS elementary student enrollment has exceeded state projections for a cumulative total of 202 students in excess of state projections – an average of more than 33 each year.

Chart 1 (attached) compares our District's elementary student membership projections with elementary capacity. In summary:

- SAPFO's Average Projection Model projects that elementary capacity for OCS would exceed 100% in 2016-17 and exceed 105% in 2020-21.
- SAPFO's Three Year Projection Model reflects that elementary capacity for OCS would exceed 100% in 2015-16 and exceed 105% in 2018-19.

While we did not chart growth projections using the NC DPI projection, we would deduce that the need for Elementary #8 would be greatly accelerated with this model, since NC DPI's projection is much higher than either of the two SAPFO charted projections.

Our Board also feels it is important to mention that since 2007 our District has been very committed to a strong Pre-K Program. We currently serve 154 at-risk and exceptional children, ages three and four years, in nine of our elementary classrooms. Four rooms are used as regular Pre-K classrooms, three are used for the Head Start program, and two are used for exceptional children classrooms. At the time SAPFO was approved originally, Pre-K programs did not exist, and capacity numbers have never been updated to reflect the loss of

classroom space. Therefore, the current capacity numbers for our district as reflected in SAPFO are overstated, because they do not take into account classrooms dedicated to that program – i.e. classrooms that do not serve children in K through 5. Based on elementary class size mandates, we estimate this total "loss" of seats to be between 189 and 220 seats.

All of these considerations led our Board to request funding for Elementary #8 sooner rather than later. Given that the average length of time to locate suitable land and plan/design/construct an elementary school is between 36 and 48 months, our Board feels strongly that we must begin planning for Elementary #8 in the upcoming year (2012-13) in order to accommodate anticipated capacity needs that lie in our not so distant future.

### **High School Capacity**

As our Board recently reviewed the November 15, 2011 SAPFO square footage and capacity numbers for our high schools, we discovered some interesting facts.

- Orange High School's total square feet is less than both Chapel Hill High and East Chapel Hill High; however, OHS's SAPFO student capacity is almost identical to the two schools. With that said, the square feet per student is between 18 and 31 square feet *less* at OHS than at either of the two built out high schools in CHCCS. (It did not seem equitable to compare OHS to Cedar Ridge or to Carrboro High, since neither school is built out to their core capacity at this time.)

**Square Feet Per Student (per SAPFO)**

	<b>Total Square Feet</b>	<b>SAPFO Capacity</b>	<b>Square Feet Per Student</b>
<b>Chapel Hill High</b>	241,111	1,520	158.63
<b>East Chapel Hill High</b>	259,869	1,515	171.53
<b>Orange High</b>	213,509	1,518	140.65

In light of this discovery, our Board has requested that staff from NC DPI re-examine OHS to determine its current capacity. That assessment is scheduled for later this month. We plan to update you when we receive the results of the study.

- Should the assessment determine that OHS's capacity is more in line with Chapel Hill and East Chapel Hill high schools, the result would be a loss of approximately 225 high school seats for our district.

Chart 2 (attached) compares how the anticipated reduction of seats would affect our District's high school student membership projections with high school capacity. In summary:

- Using SAPFO's Average Projection Model, the anticipated loss of 225 seats would mean that OCS would exceed 100% of high school capacity year after next in 2013-14 and exceed 110% in 2019-20.
- Using SAPFO's Three Year Projection Model, the anticipated loss of 225 seats would mean that OCS would exceed 100% of high school capacity in the *upcoming school year*, 2012-13, and exceed 110% in 2015-16.

Again, our Board feels it important to keep our eye on projections generated using the Three Year Projection Model due to the factors stated earlier related to growth in the western area of the county.

In reviewing the SAPFO projections and anticipating the outcome of the upcoming OHS space re-assessment, it became clear to our Board that there is an immediate need to move forward with an expansion at Cedar Ridge High School. Cedar Ridge High School (CRHS), originally constructed in 2001, has classroom capacity for 1,000 students and core facilities, such as library, cafeteria, etc., to accommodate 1,500 students. During original construction, the site was prepped for additional classroom space (to accommodate 500 students) and an auxiliary gymnasium. Thus the reason this expansion project now is reflected in our CIP.

Evidence of the growth our district is experiencing can be found in the 2010 Census data for total housing unit changes – examples include a 36% increase in Cheeks Township between 2000-10, 21% increase in Hillsborough during that period, increase of 20% in Little River Township, etc. These trends coupled with anticipated growth promulgated by the completion of the Efland Sewer project in the near future equate to a growing number of students for our District – growth for which we all must be prepared. We look forward to an opportunity to share our thoughts and ideas about Orange County Schools' future capital needs.

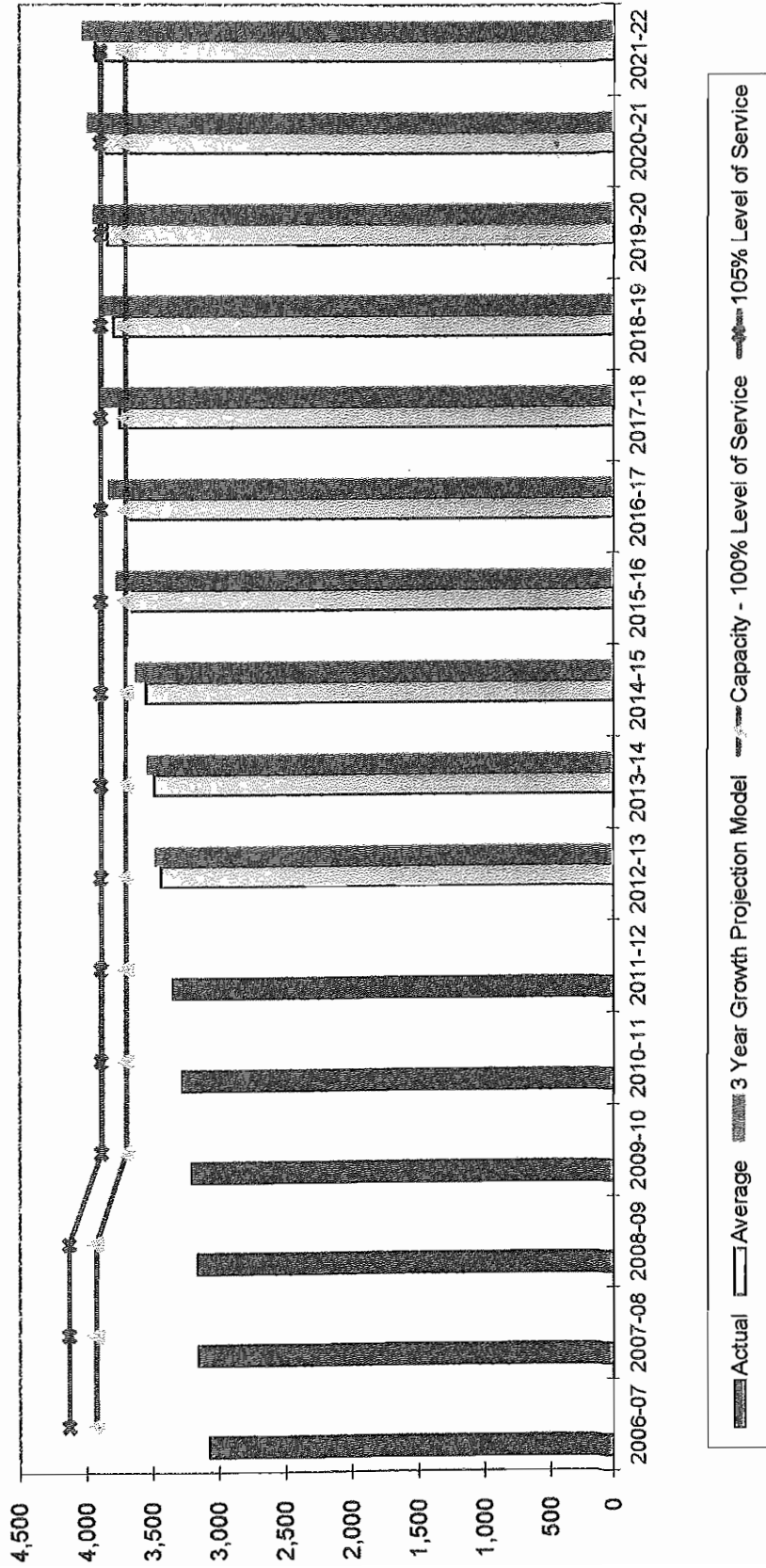
Sincerely,

  
Donna Coffey  
Chair

  
Stephen H. Halkiotis  
Vice Chair

cc: Frank Clifton, County Manager, Orange County  
Enclosures (2)

### Chart 1. Orange County Schools - Elementary Student Projections Average and 3 Year Projection Models<sup>(1)</sup>



<sup>(1)</sup> Class sizes for grades K-3 = 1:23 for school years 2006-07 and 2007-08. In accordance with 2005 School Collaboration Work Group direction, with planned opening of CHCCS Elementary #10 in school year 2008-09, K-3 class sizes for school years 2008-09 through 2015-16 reflect 1:21 as directed by past State legislative action. This results in OCS elementary capacity reduction (district wide) of 297 seats (decreasing from 4,116 [105% LOS @ 1:23 class size] to 3,819 [105% LOS @ 1:21 class size]).

### Chart 2. Orange County Schools - High School Student Projections Average Projection Model Only

