

MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Katie H. Nunez, County Administrator
DATE: August 6, 2014
RE: Report on the Renovation of the former Northampton Middle School Community Meeting held on July 10, 2014

On July 10, 2014, a community meeting was held to solicit any and all comments regarding the renovation, rehabilitation and possible demolition of portions of the former Northampton Middle School as well as to ascertain if there are any other considerations of use of the property beyond what the Board has identified and provided in the scope of services for architectural services. Twenty-two people were in attendance, including staff and your architect from DJG, Donald Booth. I am providing you a listing of the issues/comments/questions raised at this meeting.

1. Why isn't this building being returned to the School to be a middle school again?
2. Locating the EMS Department at this site/location is not in the best interests of the County when the lower end of the County is in need of improved and enhanced medical facilities to counter-act the impending relocation of the hospital.
3. What is the cost to run the former school now for the County?
4. The County owns other property, such as the old Eastville Social Services Building, that should be redeveloped and the County should not position a renovated County property in direction competition with other commercial buildings. This property (former Middle School) should be sold.
5. What are the specific costs to address the HVAC System? To address the mold remediation? To renovate the portion of the building for EMS?
6. What will happen to the building as a whole if a phased renovation approach is taken?
7. What would be the traffic patterns on the property?
8. Can the available funds be split and the EMS component peeled off from this project?

The development of this project has been a long and complicated operational and policy decision spanning over several Boards of Supervisors. According to the Fiscal Year 2009 Budget Book, the middle school was closed "due to severe funding constraints brought about through a combination of the rising composite index and declining student enrollment."

Additionally, the Fiscal Year 2009 Budget Book states:

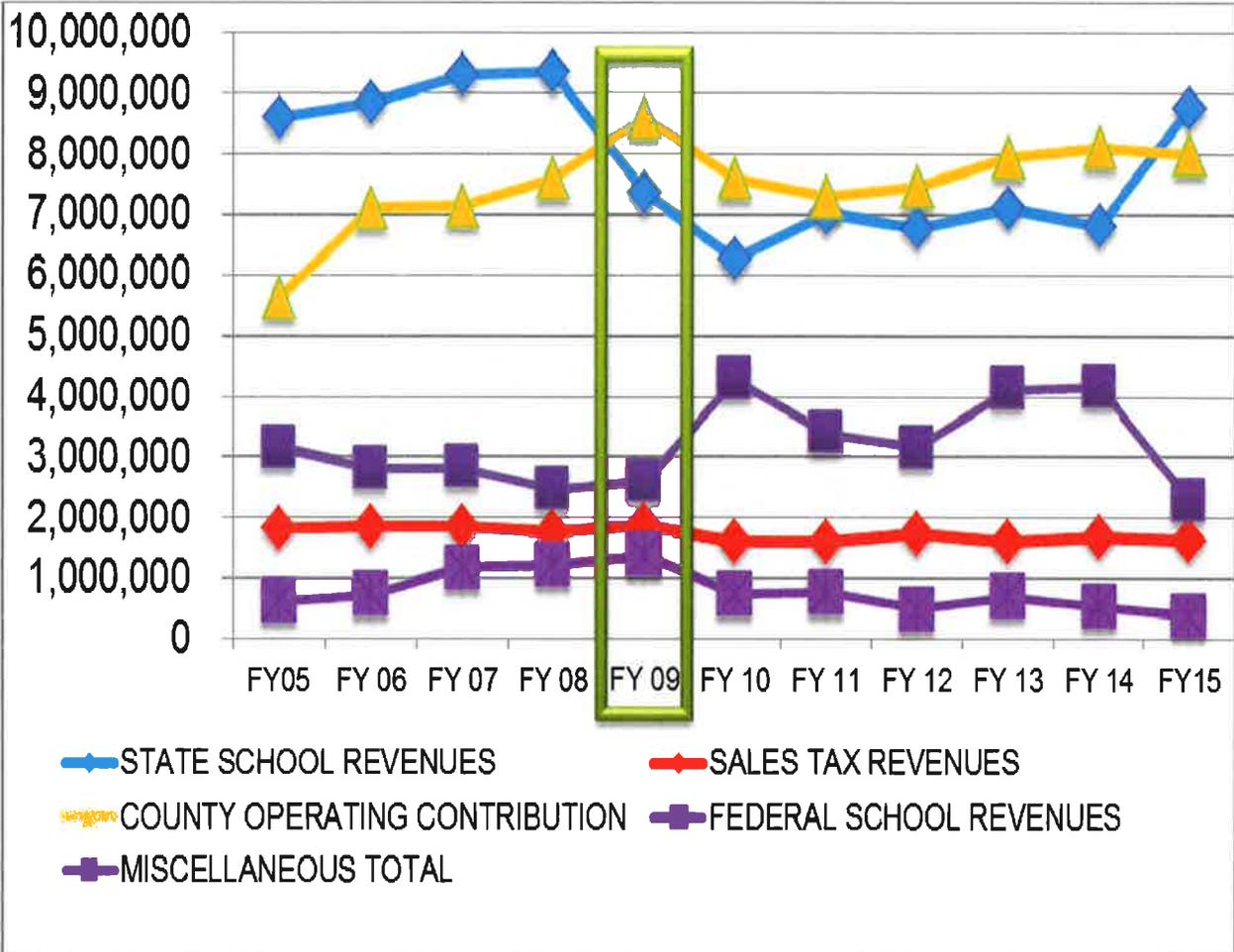
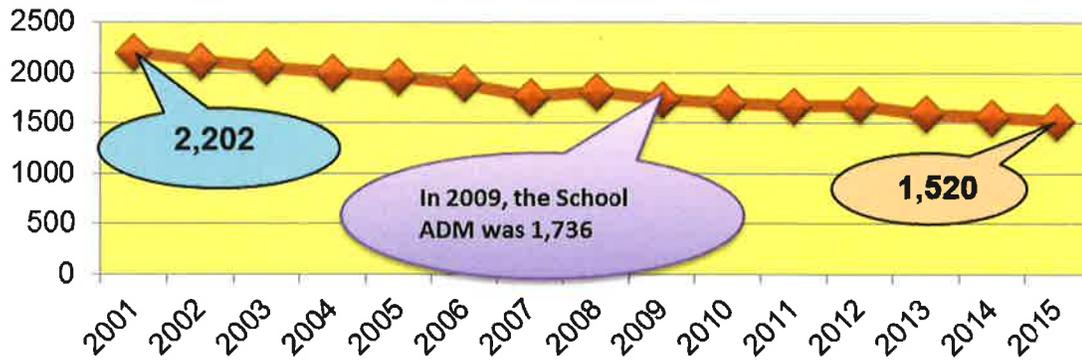
“The Northampton Middle School closure was precipitated by several factors. First, the Virginia Composite Index for Northampton increased from .3925 to .5488 resulting in a loss of over \$1.9 million in state aid. The middle school was built for 650 students and housed only 370 students. In addition to the increased composite index and declining enrollment, the 54 year old structure needed over \$2.2 million in renovations to repair the crumbling original foundation, inadequate bathroom facilities, and other structural issues. Since the elementary schools were under capacity, the decision was made to close the Middle School at the end of the 2007-2008 school year.” [REPORT ON SCHOOL OPERATIONS, UNDER THE EDUCATION TAB]

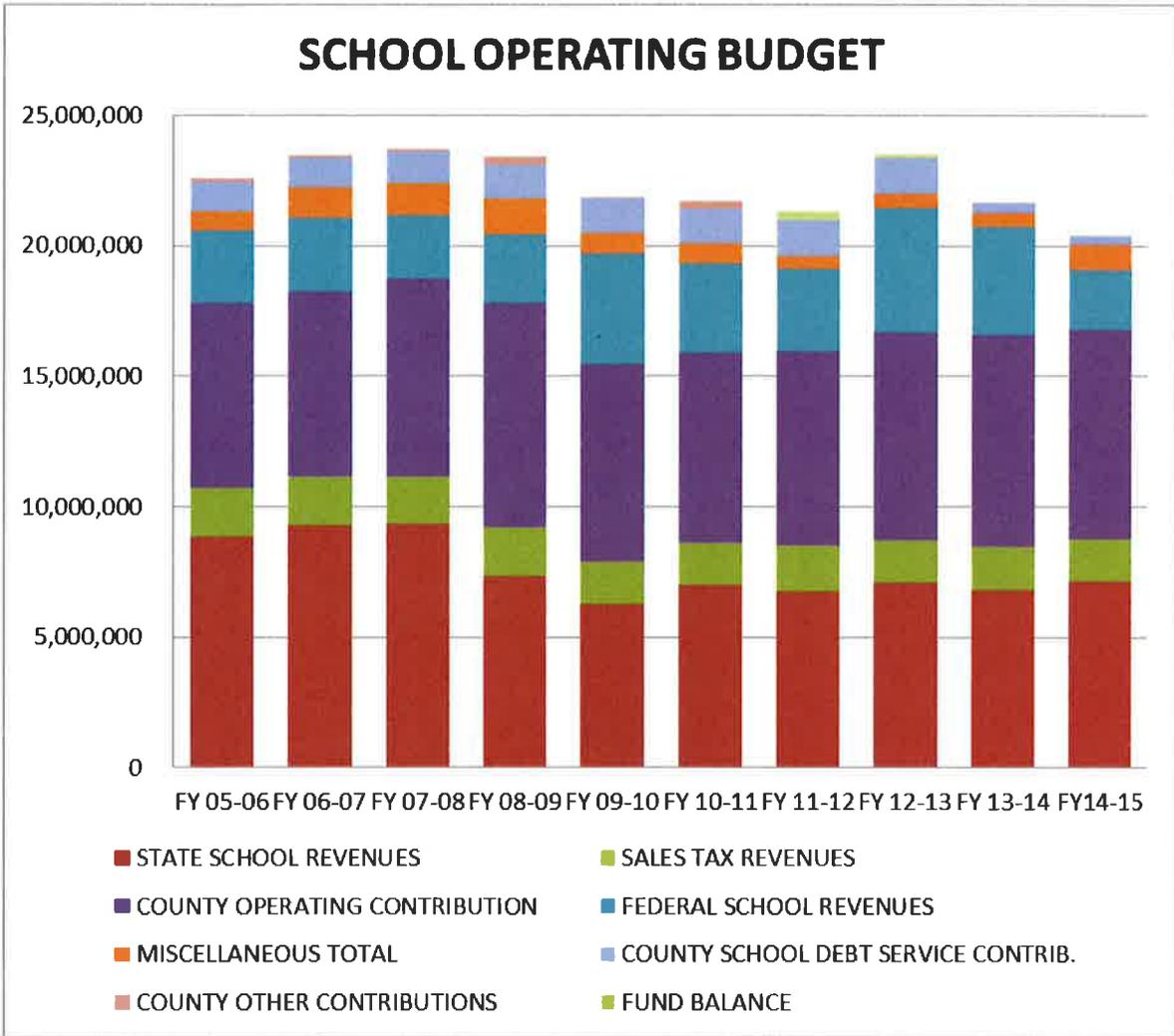
The County took management of the property in September 2009 and completed the legal transfer of the property from the School Board to the Board of Supervisors in December 2009. This was required since it is a property that continues to house school functions via the School Administration building and the law required us to segregate any “non-school used property” and return to the ownership of the Board of Supervisors.

In addition, this transfer continued the shared usage of the water and septic fields serving both the former school and the current Administration building with the County being responsible for the maintenance and management of the water & septic systems. The parking lot was subdivided but continues to serve both properties, the electric service associated with the parking lot lights has been assigned a value representative of the County’s share of said service which is transmitted annually to the School and the exterior front lights of the middle school which are tied into the electric service of the School Administration building have also been assigned a value representative of the County’s share of said service which is transmitted annually to the School. If the former Middle School is sold, then these issues would need to be addressed and resolved so that the School Administration building would have its own water and septic and the exterior electric service would need to be addressed to separate the 2 buildings.

As referenced in the FY2009 Budget Book, the financial aspects associated with this decision to close the middle school as an independent and separate facility were a driving force since the County was not able to make up the loss of the state aid as a result of the declining student enrollment. Please see the three charts below which demonstrate that the situation has not improved vastly in these areas of student enrollment and state aid.

SCHOOL MARCH 31 ADM





Following the completion of the County Administration Renovation project and our departure from the former Middle School building, the Board instructed that a letter be sent to the School Board inquiring as to their intent relative to the former Middle School (dated September 28, 2011 – see attached) and a response was received from the School Board (dated October 19, 2011 – see attached) indicating that they are not interested in re-acquiring the old middle school building and would like to pursue other options to provide an age-appropriate setting for the middle level students.

As a result of that correspondence, discussions commenced regarding how the County could utilize this space and could it resolve an outstanding obligation that the County has with the USDA. After extensive debate by the Board of Supervisor and at two separate meetings on June 25, 2012 and July 22, 2013, an intended use of the property was identified and this was communicated to USDA on December 12, 2013 (see attached letter). This scope of work has been approved by USDA (see attached e-mail dated March 27, 2014).

Relative to the cost of operating the property today, these costs are contained within the County's Facilities Management budget. Please note that the building is not running at full capacity so these costs are not fully reflective of the cost of operating this property.

Water & Sewer Costs for Repairs and Maintenance and Laboratory Testing: \$12,400
Fuel Oil: \$65,000
Electrical Service: \$18,000
Maintenance Costs for HVAC and General Building Issues: \$12,800
Custodial Supplies: \$1,500
TOTAL: \$109,700

DJG Representative Donald Booth indicated that the costs of addressing the HVAC system and the attendant mold issue is part of the work product that they are working on and will be included in the Master Plan document that will be provided to the Board of Supervisors in the near future. In addition, the consideration of the uses identified and the amount of square footage needed to support those uses will determine if the whole building should be retained or not, which will impact what the traffic flow on the property will be. As part of their work assignment, the evaluation of the building and the cost to address the building issues relative to the funds that the County has available for this project will determine if a phased concept is needed and how that phasing would be proposed.

Since there were several questions posed relative to the cost of providing an EMS Facility (including a garage building) within this building as well as independent of this building, DJG, Inc. is working on developing those cost projections for the Board's consideration. In addition, I am arranging to speak with USDA to pose the question of pulling the EMS Project out of the scope of work and the associated money for that piece of work. I am hopeful to have a response at our Tuesday meeting on this issue.

Beyond this, no comments were provided at the meeting to identify any new uses beyond what the Board has listed nor any objections or comments offered if there is any demolition of portions of the building as part of this project. However, since we have not clearly identified what portions of the building may be considered for demolition, I would not take that as a resounding backing that there is no opposition to this concept.