

MINUTES OCONEE COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING MAY 6, 1980

The regular meeting of Oconee County Council was opened by Chairman Phinney with the opening prayer by Mr. Fred Hamilton. All Council Members were present.

Motion by Mr. Frady, second by Dr. Earle and carried to approve minutes of April 22 meeting as furnished.

Mr. Bill Thompson, President of the Oconee County Education Association, addressed Council as to the achievements of the Oconee School District and how Oconee rates with regard to the operating expenses, County's ability to pay for education, etc. within the 92 districts in the State. He also stated that Oconee ranks 16 out of 92 with 48.1% of students entering junior and senior colleges. He asked Council to reconsider additional funding. (A copy of his remarks is attached.)

Mr. Fred Hamilton, Supt. of Education, requested Council fund an additional \$975,000 in addition to the approved 80-81 budget so that the school system can continue with their educational programs. This request was discussed by Council Members and School Officials. It was pointed out by Council that for the past 16 years school enrollment has had no appreciative increase, however, the cost of education has increased considerably. Council told the School Officials that to give them more funds over the amount approved in the 1980-81 budget would result in a tax increase. Chairman Phinney told school officials and concerned school personnel attending, that Council would review the request, but unless notified otherwise the school budget would stand as first approved.

Ordinance 80-4 "An Ordinance to adopt the Procedure for the Collection of Delinquent Taxes," was adopted on Third and final Reading - Motion by Dr. Earle, second by Mr. Ables. - The Vote 5 yes and 0 no.

Attorneys Danny Day and Alex McCaulay requested Council consider the funding, along with Anderson County, for a Master-in-Equity for the Anderson/Oconee circuit. The approximate cost to Oconee County would be \$20,200 with fees being returned to the county general fund in the approximate amount of \$7,000 annually. Anderson's share would be \$60,800. After discussion it was agreed to accept this as information. No decisions were made.

Motion by Dr. Earle, Second by Mr. Crain, to adopt a Proclamation (which Dr. Earle read) declaring the week of June 7th as "Oconee Community Theater Week" in observance of the Theater's 10th birthday. The vote 5 yes and 0 no.

Council approved the payment of April bills in the amount of \$1,466.89 from the Contingency account for the CCS Commission - Motion by Mrs. Jennings, second by Mr. Ables and carried by a vote of 5 yes and 0 no.

A total of \$6,434.79 for April bills for the Law Enforcement Center was approved for payment from the contingency account. Motion by Mrs. Jennings, second by Mr. Ables. The vote 5 yes and 0 no.

Mrs. Jennings moved to approve \$833.19 for vehicle maintenance for

the Sheriff's Dept. for April from the Contingency account. Mr. Crain seconded the motion which carried by a vote of 5 yes and 0 no.

Dr. Earle reported that at the Public Hearing held, April 29th, regarding an Alcoholic Beverage Ordinance, most sentiment was in opposition to it. He stated that as a result of this no action would be taken at this time. He stated that he plans to review a similar Ordinance passed by York County.

The request for a 5 year lease, from the Bantem Chef, on the Brown property, for \$150.00 a month was discussed and referred to the Buildings and Grounds Committee.

~~Council agreed for the Director of DSS to go ahead with a letter of intent to HEW pertaining to renovation/furnishing of the new DSS Office.~~

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 P.M.

ADDRESS TO THE OCONEE COUNTY COUNCIL BY OCONEE COUNTY EDUCATION ASSOCIATION,
MAY 6, 1980--Bill Thompson, President

Mr. Supervisor and members of the Council: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you tonight on a subject of deep concern to everyone in Oconee County--the future of our educational system. I, like all Oconee Citizens, am proud of the improvements made in education in the last 10 years. Our citizens need to be informed of the advances in education which have been made:

1. ~~As on 78-79, Oconee students score above the state average in all~~
achievement areas.
2. Oconee students score on or above the national average in all achievement areas.
3. Oconee's kindergarten program has the 14th highest membership in the state.
4. Oconee's membership in handicapped and homebound instruction is the 11th highest in the state.
5. 48.1% of Oconee's graduating seniors enter junior and senior colleges (rank, 16)
6. Oconee's professional staff is among the best qualified in the state with 45.9% holding Master's degrees (rank, 13) and 5.9% holding six-year certificates (rank, 4).
7. Unlike many Districts, Oconee provides instruction for its gifted and talented students through the Alpha Program and the String Instrument course.

Oconee citizens should be proud of their schools. But there is one question which should be asked. How was Oconee able to make these advancements in education? Oconee needed two elements to provide quality education.

1. A highly skilled and dedicated professional staff
2. Public support for education

The most important element in the educational process is the quality of the instruction offered. We do have a highly skill and dedicated professional staff as evidenced by the number of teachers with master's degrees--about 50%. The fact that Oconee students achieve on or above the national average is ~~proof~~ that our teachers are doing the job they were trained to do.

The other element needed for a school district to progress is "public support for education." This is where you, the Oconee County Council, must exert your leadership together with the School Board if educational progress is to continue in the Oconee County School District.

Last year the Council and the School Board realized Oconee was headed in the wrong direction. Steps were taken by both bodies to turn the district around and point it in a forward direction. I appeal to you tonight to continue that upward movement by appropriating additional funds to the school district for the 1980-81 year. As you consider your decision there are several facts which you should keep in mind. There are 92 school districts in SC.

1. Oconee County ranks 6th in ability to pay for education.
2. Oconee County ranks 65th in tax effort to support schools
3. Oconee County ranks 79th in the total tax levy in 78-79.
4. Oconee County ranks 90th out of 92 districts in operating expenditures for school plants and maintenance.

Further comparisons between Oconee and other school districts in SC show that the average SC district allots over 26 mills more to education than Oconee. Our neighboring counties allot from 11 to 55 mills more than Oconee. Based on current estimates provided by the auditor, 1 mill in taxes generates approximately \$66,000 for school purposes. One mill costs the owner of a \$50,000 house about \$1.75 a year. Five mills generates about \$330,000 for the schools. This would cost the owner of a \$50,000 house about \$8.75 or 2¢ per day. ~~The additional cost to maintain an excellent educational program is~~ relatively small, but the benefits to school children, who are the future of Oconee, will be great.

How long do you honestly think Oconee can and will maintain its achievement record without increased local support for schools? Do the citizens and leaders of Oconee County want mediocrity for our children and the future of our county? The school district is not exempt from inflation. The cost of materials, supplies, equipment, utilities, transportation, personnel expenses and school maintenance have all risen sharply during the last year. These costs demand further revenue increases in order to maintain a quality program for the people of Oconee County.