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News Release

Commissioners Approve Agreements to Purchase Mobile Classrooms and Make Roofing Repairs

February 27, 2014, Monroe, NC – The Union County Board of Commissioners at a special meeting on Thursday approved agreements to immediately appropriate \$3 million dollars to the Union County Board of Education to purchase 49 mobile classrooms and \$9.5 million for roofing projects identified by Union County Public Schools.

The original offer of \$3 million to purchase mobile classrooms was made to the Board of Education on Feb. 3. The offer was extended based on a presentation made to the Board of Education by Union County Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Mary Ellis and Dr. Mike Webb on Jan. 23 that stated one of the options that would eliminate the need to cap schools or redistrict students is the addition of mobile classrooms. The report indicated that 49 mobile classrooms would be needed.

Last week, the Board of Education declined the Union County Board of Commissioners' offer of \$3 million to purchase 49 mobile classrooms. The Board of Education was informed that accepting the Board of Commissioners' offer would decrease the trial verdict amount by \$3 million.

The offer of the \$3 million is to provide a short-term solution to redistricting to provide more time for the Board of Education to consider other alternatives. The agreement approved today clarifies to the Board of Education that the Board of County Commissioners made the offer with no strings attached other than the funds be used to purchase mobile classrooms. It also states that the agreement and appropriation of \$3 million are not intended as a compromise or settlement of either party's rights or obligations as they relate to the trial judgment or appeal.

“The Board of County Commissioners has heard from parents and the business community on the redistricting issue, and the addition of mobile classrooms provides a short-term solution to the Board of Education to allow them time to develop a long-term solution for school growth,” Vice Chairman Jerry Simpson said recently. “The redistricting issue is tearing communities apart, and the proposal to provide funds for mobile classrooms is intended to keep communities and neighbors together while still protecting the taxpayers of Union County.”

On Jan. 21, the Board of County Commissioners appropriated \$9.5 million dollars to fund roofing repairs and replacements at Union County Public Schools identified during the trial.

"The Board of Education continues to contend that the money that we've allocated has strings attached," said Chairman Frank Aikmus. "But just as a point of clarification, it was determined today that we would make this action again since we have been going back and forth for seven weeks, and in those seven weeks, not a single roof has been repaired and these are emergency needs. I again encourage the Board of Education to take action based on our clarifying statement."

The agreement states that the Board of Education will use its best efforts to expedite the repair and/or replacement of the roofs prior to the end of the current fiscal year, June 30, with the understanding that the appropriation of these funds is not contingent on the projects being completed by that time.

"The only stipulation in this agreement is that if there are funds that go above and beyond what was estimated that the Board of County Commissioners be made aware," Aikmus said. "And the reason is we want to ensure every roof that was identified is repaired."

Each agreement was delivered to the Board of Education today.