“Pulling a Fast One on the Harnett County School Board”

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Vice Chairman Gary A. House

Harnett County Board of Commissioners

I had one of the worst insults hurled at me today that I have experienced while serving you as your County Commissioner over the last eight years.

I was told that the Harnett County Board of Commissioners is “pulling a fast one on the Harnett County School Board.” When I pressed for clarification, the gentleman proclaimed that the County Commissioners only voted to put the $100 million of school bonds on the ballot to November so it would be voted down. Then the County Board could go back to the School Board and say “Well, we tried. The voters do not want it. There is nothing we can do.”

I was the one who suggested putting the school bonds on the ballot in November. I am the one who made the motion and had the resolution prepared. It was a unanimous vote to have a

bond referendum on the ballot. I cannot speak for the other commissioners but I did NOT try to "pull a fast one on the School Board." I do not operate that way. Based on conversations that I have had with Chairman Joe Miller and Commissioner Beatrice Hill, I do not believe they intended to "pull a fast one on the School Board" either.

Personally, I would never play games with the education of our children. I realize that we have a massive problem with the overcrowding of our schools. For that reason, I have been a vocal proponent of our school system for the last few years.

Some commissioners misled the public stating that if they voted to pass the ¼ cent sales tax, property taxes would not increase. I stood up in a joint meeting with the School Board and held the ¼ cent sales tax resolution up for all to see and told them it would not be a drop in the bucket for what our mounting needs are. I further stated that we could not go around telling people that it was an either/or proposition. The very next week I started getting reports that some commissioners were telling constituents that if they voted for the sales tax, property taxes would not increase.

I cannot help that some commissioners have their heads in the sand and tell the residents of Harnett County things that are not true. Those commissioners are the same ones who voted to start funding a capital reserve fund for the schools in order to pass the budget in 2013-2014. When it came time for them to transfer the money, they refused. They also refused to transfer the money for a sale of property that was intended to go into the capital reserve fund for schools.

Some commissioners may be playing games with the School Board on the bond referendum. But Gary House is not nor will he ever "pull a fast one on the School Board" or anyone else for that matter.

As I have stated in a previous blog, if the school bonds are not passed in November, a future board will be forced to use other forms of financing such as Certificates of Participation (COPS) that will likely carry a higher interest rate than the bonds.

Depending on how the election transpires in November, additional schools may not be built until other commissioners are replaced or they attempt to head to the big City of Raleigh in two

years.

Our school system cannot continue to endure the underfunding of its capital needs.

The ones hurt by “pulling a fast one on the School Board” will be our kids and ultimately our communities.