THE NEWS-HERALD

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COLLEGE VOTE SET MARCH 21

Election Is Called By Board

Commissioners In Unanimous Vote Start Machinery

After the State Board of Education approved Burke County as the site for a comprehensive community college, the board of county commissioners lost no time in beginning plans for a special election to provide the necessary local supplement for its construction and operation.

In a special meeting Friday night, the county board by unanimous vote set March 21 as election day to pass on a bond issue for approximately one-half the construction cost and authorizing the county to appropriate 15 per cent or less of the operating expenses.

The State Board of Education, meeting in Raleigh Thursday, gave preliminary approval to Burke County's application for a college which in addition to a two-year or junior college program will embody the vocational or trade courses of an industrial education center and a two-year technical institute offering instruction in various technologies.

County commissioners, whose interest in the community college movement dates back to 1962, adopted a resolution last August 9 pledging support and promising to call the necessary election as soon as feasible after the State gave its approval.

Burke became one of five strategic counties to be selected during this biennium as the site for an institution to be established under authority of the 1963 General Assembly.

Chairman Thomas N. Clontz presided over the board's special meeting, attended by Commissioners Ralph S. Woods, Joseph A. McGimsey Jr. and Word C. Earley and County Attorney J. Dickson Taylor.

Spokesmen for a county-wide community college steering committee appearing before the board included Dr. E. W. Phifer Jr., chairman, Frank C. Patton and others.

The March 21 date was approved by the board to provide the necessary time to meet all legal requirements for preparing for the election and at the same time having the referendum at the required distance from tomorrow's constitutional amendment election and the May primary elections.

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Election

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For a variety of formal resolutions, a motion for their adoption in each case was made by Commissioner Woods and seconded by Commissioner McGimsey. The only member absent was Melvin T. Harbison, and friends said he was known to be heartily in favor of a community college.

No college has yet been built under the 1963 act, but construction costs are estimated at $1 million.

Two issues will be submitted to voters under the county board's action as required by the State law. One is for a $1 million issue to cover the local share of construction. The State legislature enacted a contingency appropriation to provide up to $500,000 with the idea of matching local funds, but such money will not be available until the end of the current fiscal year and the expected general fund surplus is determined. Burke is following the pattern of the first two counties to hold community college elections by authorizing bonds for the full amount with the expectation that only about half of the amount will be necessary.

The second issue to go before the voters is the authorization for the county to appropriate from non-tax or tax revenue an amount not to exceed five cents per $100 property valuation for the support of the college, which will get its major money from the State.

The State's new Department of Community Colleges estimates that the county's share to provide largely for upkeep of buildings would be approximately $35,000 a year at the start, ranging up ot $50,000. A five-cent rate per $100 valuation would probably not be required, since it is a maximum figure, but it was adopted as ample if needed to cover possible growth if enrollment surpasses preliminary expectations, without the necessary of returning to the voters with another election.

The steering committee pointed out to commissioners that the community college movement had received the endorsement of virtually all civic clubs and many other organizations throughout Burke County, as well as major business and industrial leaders, school administrators and school boards.

A comprehensive community college would have no dormitories. Its students would live at home. A tuition fee of $120 annually has been approved by the State, and this together with book fees, laboratory fees and any others would not be expected to send the total over $200 a year.

For the operation of the college, the State would furnish 65 per cent of the cost, tuition would provide 20 per cent, with the remaining 15 per cent to come from the county.

Proposed site for the Burke college is a 150-acre tract now owned by the N.C. School for the Deaf, at the northeast interchange of Interstate 40 and U.S. 64, where a Duke Power Company substation now sits nearest the highway.

The NCSD board of directors voted September 13 to notify the State property office that it would sell the land, no longer needed for farming, for a community college. The tract is bounded on the south by I-40, on the west by U.S. 64, on the north by the NCSD campus, and on the east by the lands of Broughton Hospital.

For easy accessibility to the largest possible number of students for the drive-in college, the steering committee agreed that the site was unexcelled.

The formal action of the State Board of Education, dated January 9 and entitled "Resolution on Burke County Application", has been announced from Raleigh as follows:

"The State Board of Education finds that Burke County meets the requirements of law and the standards established by this Board for approval as the site of a comprehensive community college. The Burke County application is approved, subject to approval by the voters of Burke County of the financial support required.

"After approval by the voters of Burke County, the State Board will determine the basic instructional and administrative construction needs of the institution, will establish a reasonable average cost for such facilities, and will reserve for this institution a sum equal to one-half of this reasonable average cost. The total funds so reserved will be governed by the average cost of basic institutional needs, the requirements of other Priority One institutions, the limits prescribed by law, and the appropriations made to the State Board for this purpose. These funds will be granted on a matching basis if and when they become available to the State Board at the end of the 1963-64 fiscal year."