

# MEMO

To: Dr. Bill Flanary – Director, Washington County Schools  
Karen Childress – Jonesborough Locally Grown  
Curtis Buchanan – Jonesborough Locally Grown  
Caitlin Shew - Nutritionist, Washington County Schools  
Todd Wood - School Project Civil Engineer  
Victoria Hewlett - Drop Collaborative Program  
Jay McCusker - Ken Ross Architects  
Ken Ross - Ken Ross Architects  
Rachel Conger - Town of Jonesborough  
Dana York- Appalachian RCD Council/Jonesborough Locally Grown  
Rosie McVeigh - Appalachian RCD Council

From: Bob Browning

Date: January 31, 2020

Re: Possible Agricultural/Nutrition Program with New Jonesborough K-8 School

As we look at the building layout for the new Jonesborough School on the 48 acres of property, and how the entire 48 acres will be developed, it is important that we consider early on the educational opportunities that could be available to Jonesborough students. Also, we need to explore how those opportunities could set the school apart as one of the top educational programs in the region. One opportunity that is being discussed is an agricultural initiative that will allow interested students to learn small farming practices, and to be educated on the methods of growing healthy and nutritional produce and products that will reduce medical issues and obesity, increase food supply while teaching the skills to be self-reliant and collaborative at the same time.

The discussion is around a program that would be based on the following:

1. Setting aside a portion of the school property or a small parcel adjoining the school property in which farm related activity and training could occur.
2. Developing a program where Jonesborough students raise produce that could be used in the school cafeteria and/or could be provided to the Jonesborough Food Pantry.
3. Establishing community support through Jonesborough Locally Grown and the Drop Collaborative to provide knowledgeable personnel to implement a skill-based program in small farm practices.

Note: Jonesborough Locally Grown is Jonesborough's Farmers Market Cooperative with numerous members currently operating large gardens or small farms that incorporate sustainable and safe practices in producing high quality food products for public consumption. Jonesborough Locally Grown has discussed implementing an educational program, but there is a major time investment in planning and carrying out such an initiative.

Drop Collaborative Program – The Drop Collaborative is an existing program initiated in Carter County in association with Unaka High School that has the following goals:

- a. Provide land
- b. Teach farming
- c. Donate harvest
- d. Mentor youth

The Collaborative wants to promote workforce development through educating young people, support the local food sector, and to generate community support for the teaching of small farming skills and the growing of local food products.

The Drop Collaborative has developed a curriculum around teaching small farming skills that has been approved and adopted by the Tennessee Department of Education. The program and its curriculum have been:

- Named one of the top five Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs by the Tennessee Department of Education.
  - Given the 2017 TACD (Tennessee Association of Conversation Districts) Conservation Promotion Award.
  - Declared the 2016 Best CTE Practice Model by the Tennessee Department of Education.
  - Affiliated now with the Appalachian RC&D Council.
4. Developing financial support from the community through sponsors, donated equipment, grants, and corporate contributions. Potential sponsors could include the Washington County Farmers Co-Op, West Hills Tractor, Tractor Supply, and the Washington County Farm Bureau, all of which are located in Jonesborough.
  5. The program could be directly affiliated with David Crockett's agriculturally based programs and student organizations. It may be possible for high school students at Crockett to be mentoring participants in a Jonesborough School program, and it would certainly be in the best interest of the Crockett agriculturally based education programs to be helping younger students develop or sustain their interest and involvement in these programs.

It would appear that there is a real opportunity for the Town of Jonesborough, supporting organizations, the School System, and the community to combine forces to develop a creative, sustainable, and outstanding agriculturally based program with the new Jonesborough School. You are being requested to consider your potential involvement in planning development and to participate in a few planning meetings to explore what might be possible. If you would like to participate in these planning discussions, please let Donna Freeman or Sheila Watson know that you are interested and what meeting dates/times are best for you. We want to meet as soon as possible because we are trying to factor in key programming into the entire layout of the 48 acre school property.

Thank you for your consideration.



## Agriculturally Based Opportunities for Jonesborough K-8 School

Meeting Minutes – February 7, 2020

Present: Dr. Bill Flanary – Director Washington County Schools, Caitlin Kite – Nutritionist, Washington County Schools, Dana York – Grand Oak Farm and Green Earth Connection, Appalachian RC&D Field School, Rosie McVeigh – Appalachian RC&D, Susan McKinney, Executive Director Appalachian RC&D Council, Karen Childress – Jonesborough Locally Grown/Boone Street Market, Todd Wood – Civil Engineer on Jonesborough School Project, Jay McCusker – Ken Ross Architect – School project planning, Rachel Conger – Town of Jonesborough – School grounds design. Bob Browning –Town of Jonesborough – Town Administrator (School Project Manager)

Location: Jonesborough Visitor Center Community Room

Bob Browning discussed Jonesborough's relationship with the agricultural community in Washington County and the potential value in providing educational opportunities to students in the new Jonesborough K-8 school related to growing your own vegetables, nutrition, and small farming skills. He thanked Bill Flanary for being at the meeting who said he was really interested in what could be developed in agriculture education in the new school. Bob Browning talked briefly about the Drop Collaborative that has developed a program with Unaka High School in Carter County which includes a curriculum in farm skills approved by the Tennessee Dept. of Education

The discussion was extremely useful and comments made are summarized as follows:

Bill Flanary said the concept is great. A husbandry program would be too tough in a K-8 setting, unless it was poultry. He said raising chickens was a possibility. He suggested that the UT Extension Agent for Washington County to be added to the team because they have a focus on low-cost agriculture. He said close access to water is very important. Dr. Flanary also commented that there are crops that can be sown and harvested in the spring and some that can be harvested over-winter very well.

Karen Childress said Jonesborough Locally Grown supports the concept 1000 percent, but she said their participation would likely be in providing a market for anything raised. She said they always need eggs.

Susan McKinney said RC&D was really interested getting kids involved early and they had a Build It Up Program to help work with families, especially underprivileged families to get them involved in organic gardening and garden is at home.

Dana York said she now runs a farm that has been in her family since 1778. She has retired as the Associate Chief of the Natural Resource Conservation Service with the US Department of Agriculture in Washington. She is the lead facilitator and curriculum consultant for RC&D's Field School which is a beginning farmer training program. She talked about some of the programs through USDA that could be involved with schools. Caitlin Kite said Washington County has 14 locations in the summer they provide food where over 50% of the kids involved are on free lunch. She said they work with the Farm to School program and try to buy as much local produce as possible under the guidelines they have to follow.

Storage was raised as an issue because there was never enough planning that went into storage near an area raising crops. There needed to be multiple inside spaces and even a classroom for training could be developed within an outbuilding from the school associated with the agricultural program. Caitlin also raised concern for contamination and ensuring they're able to abide by health/food safety guidelines.

Agricultural training could be included in any other educational discipline going on in a school, and the program should be developed for all grades in a K-8 school.

With stormwater management necessary on the new school site, there could be an educational program developed in the importance of stormwater management and water quality even for young kids. Kannapolis, N.C. outside of Charlotte in Davidson County has a strong program for school age children.

Greenhouses are not something to pursue. It was hard enough to make them useful in a high school setting because they are high maintenance and labor intensive. There are better alternatives, and even areas around windows in the new school would be a good location to create some innovative plant locations. Specifically, Jay McCusker and Dr. Flanary both discussed constructing a small metal building with a concrete floor that wouldn't be labeled as a "classroom".

When asked about the size of an area for planting, an area 100 feet by 180 feet or .4 acres was recommended and was the general consensus. It was suggested that one (1) acre be set aside for a gardening/small farm program with the project starting with 40% of the area. The additional area could be used for expansion, rotating crops, adding a raised bed component for younger students, etc.

Dana York suggested team members look at a Caterpillar Tunnel in lieu of a greenhouse. She said she uses one at their farm, and she would be glad to have people visit and see how she operates with the unit. Cold frames are another good option.

A discussion took place about growing fruit trees and shrubs like blueberries. An intensive planting of fruit trees can help make them much more maintenance free. Wild flowers could also be added to the plan.



Capturing rain water was discussed and Dana York pointed out that captured rain water should not be used directly on produce, edible crops. It cannot be used on organic produce because of captured pollutants. Rain water is great on the ground with fruit trees, shrubs like blueberries, but not directly on crops. It is likely there may be some grant money to develop a system to capture surface water run-off, and a system could be established with the school building.

Cooking of crops raised was discussed and Caitlin Kite who said you could have separate tables for training set up in the cafeteria, but it could be much better to have a separate educational space for that outside of the cafeteria because of health regulations.

Compositing of food waste was discussed as was the use of solar energy. Bob Browning and Jay McCusker talked about BrightRidge's solar program to cut the heating cost of schools.

It was discussed that the architectural design of any outbuildings should be complementary with the school building. Also, the Town already had a design for a "Potting Shed" building associated with the Community Park behind the Senior Center. This building will be within the community garden area of the new park. It was suggested a somewhat similar building could be designed to be outside the actual school building but on the school property that included a classroom type area, storage, produce wash area, and even cooler space.

Participants agreed the possibility of an innovative agricultural component to the Jonesborough School was very exciting, and additional meetings needed to take place. Bob Browning said he would try to get a copy of the Drop Collaborative curriculum that is used at Unaka. Everyone was asked to think about what might be possible, and to see if there are programs some schools already have in place that are involving young people in learning farming and horticulture based skills with young students as well as nutrition training that can help generate more healthy lifestyles. It was pointed out that this type of program would teach a variety of skills, engage kids more in their community, as well as their school. A suggestion was made that existing teachers at Jonesborough Elementary/Middle Schools be surveyed on what types of programming they might be interested in implementing with the implementation of new resources that were discussed at the meeting.

With no further discussion, the meeting ended.