Gainey makes case for middle school

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Superintendent Stephen Gainey is quick to tell anyone, “I do not pass up an opportunity to talk about the Randolph County School System.”

And for a good cause. Gainey, Randolph County Board of Education members, Randolph County commissioners and a group of interested parents and citizens gathered in the media center of Archdale Trinity Middle School (ATMS) on Jan. 24 to discuss the construction of a new middle school.

Gainey told the audience a new middle school is needed in the area, given Braxton Craven and ATMS are the third and fifth most over-crowded schools in the system. The new school would replace the aging Braxton Craven Middle School.

According to Marty Trotter, Assistant Superintendent, Braxton Craven was built around 1951, and would need “extensive work and renovation to bring it up to new codes.” Because the school is two stories, an elevator would need to be installed; the school has no central air conditioning and is relying on window units; and there are no athletic facilities outside of a small baseball field.

The estimate for renovation to Braxton Craven is between $10 million-$15 million. That’s money, Gainey argues, that would be better spent on a new facility: “Repairs may not be a bargain down the road.”

The proposed new middle school would be built on 69.58 acres of property donated to the school system in 1990 located on Surratt Road, Trinity. The property is adjacent to Trinity High School.

Proposed plans are based on a model used for Uwharrie Middle School with a 650 student capacity and approximately 109,682 square feet. The projected cost to build the school is $26 million.

Gainey broke down the cost:
- Construction, approximately $21,972,400.
- Ancillary items, $2,416,964.
- Furniture and equipment, $1,950,000.

No cost for land.

“We need the community to know how much we need it,” Gainey said. “When you build these things, nothing is free.”

Funding options were also discussed.

Darrell Frye, commissioners vice-chairman, discussed two options, the first being a general obligation bond requiring a vote by the citizens. The second, Certificates of Participation (COPS), is a financial instrument that allows individuals to buy a share of the lease revenue of an agreement.

It’s the quicker option, according to Frye.

“The county is in good financial standing,” Frye said. “No school board and superintendent have been as cooperative and as open as this one we have today. We need to get it done, and get it done right.”

Gainey asked parents and citizens to get behind these efforts.

“We need a new school that will accommodate growth,” he said. “We are building this for people’s grandchildren.”