



Board Meeting

February 11, 2002

Eugene C. Chandler, *President*
Terry R. Troy, *Vice President*
David H. Galbreath
Thomas D. Hess
Robert S. Magee
Robert B. Thomas, Jr.
Karen L. Wolf
Samuel S. Fromille,
Student Representative
Jacqueline C. Haas, *Superintendent*
Secretary/Treasurer

OPEN SESSION

CALL TO ORDER

Board President **Eugene C. Chandler** called the regular business meeting of the Board of Education of Harford County to order at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, February 11, 2002, in the multipurpose room of Magnolia Middle School. Lt. Col. (Ret.) Chandler directed that a roll call of Board members be conducted with all Board members reporting present. Board Member **Thomas D. Hess** moved and Board Member **David H. Galbreath** seconded that the agenda be accepted as printed. The Board voted unanimously to support the motion. Mrs. Troy led those present in the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENTS

Susan Cook, representing the Bel Air High School PTSA, told the Board that the PTA was in favor of the installation of a fence along the border of the school property with Business Rt. 1. She said the fence would not only afford protection for Bel Air High students in crossing the busy thoroughfare, but would cut down on the clutter at the site. And, she said, there is a drainage problem in the area around the baseball and field hockey fields in that area. Mrs. Cook added the fence would cut down on loiterers. She said her one reservation is that work not begin on the project until fundraising has occurred and a civil engineer hired to plan the foot bridge connecting the school property to S. Atwood Street. Mrs. Cook, who presented the Board with a letter on the topic, was supported by Bel Air High Principal

Kevin Fleming.

David Williams, co-president of the C. Milton Wright High PTO, urged the Board to act positively on the proposed capital improvements to be made to the school in connection with the Balancing Enrollment recommendations. He said, whether the Board acts to implement the reduction in the number of students attending the school, the improvements are needed. He said he had sent a letter to County Executive **James Harkins** urging him to make the improvements a high priority.

OLD BUSINESS

ACTION ITEMS

CONSENT AGENDA

Acting on the motion of Board Member **Karen Wolf** and the second of Mrs. Troy, the Board voted 7 to 0 to approve items listed on the Consent Agenda: Minutes of the January 12 work session; and Affirmation of the Monthly Contract Awards.

PRESENTATION

SUPERINTENDENT'S STATE OF THE SYSTEM ADDRESS

Superintendent of Schools **Jacqueline C. Haas** presented the Board with an update of the State of the System address she had given the Board in October 2001. Mrs. Haas related her presentation to the Board's five goals and said that achievement is the school system's "critical mission." The Superintendent related much of her presentation to results from the recently released 2001 Maryland School Performance Program (MSPP). She said that attendance is a "big issue" in schools, noting that even a satisfactory rating on the state scale (94 percent) would mean a student could be absent 10.8 days; while excellent (96 percent) would have them being out up to 7.2 days. She said Harford's elementary and middle school students achieved the satisfactory rating while high school students, whose average attendance last year was 92.3 percent, fell short of the goal. Mrs. Haas then turned to the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP) results noting, in particular, fifth grade reading as a benchmark. She said the school system had done the "ground-level work" and was proud of the efforts being made in the classroom, but that the next steps must now be taken, which will involve intensive staff development. Mrs. Haas noted that, while the MSPAP scores in Harford had declined on the average, the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) results had shown "stable" or rising scores, particularly in the second and fourth grade areas. Mrs. Haas highlighted several School Improvement Plans noting, in particular, the performance of Edgewood Elementary School and Aberdeen High School's ninth grade plan. She told the Board schools are headed toward three central themes in the future – standards, accountability, and assessment. And, Mrs. Haas added, Maryland schools are in a transitional period, noting such movements as statewide curriculum, aligned testing, stronger accountability for individual students, better teacher preparation, qualified

teachers for all students, the need for additional resources, and the holding of all schools – not just those at the bottom – responsible for continuous improvement. Mrs. Haas said there is a need “to get a sense of urgency about closing the achievement gaps that exist between minority/majority students, socioeconomic levels, genders, and others. She said the fact the gap is not narrowing should concern all involved with the Harford County Public Schools. Mrs. Haas said there is a need to have the strongest teachers in the neediest schools and that incentives must be present to keep and attract strong teachers to those schools with at-risk students. Mrs. Haas mentioned the current efforts at balancing enrollment and said there must be adequate facilities for all students. She said school safety issues, including countywide dress codes and backpack policies, will come to the Board in March, and that a request has been made to the County to supply funds out of its surplus for two-way communications between the classroom and the school office and for secured-door equipment. Mrs. Haas said a report on the MGT of America study will come to the Board on March 18. Mrs. Haas said that, while the motto of the Harford County Public Schools has been that all students are important, “not everyone shares that vision.”

APPROVAL OF VISION STATEMENT

Board Member **Robert S. Magee** presented the Board with the proposed Harford County Public School Vision Statement, which he and a group of school and non-school people had worked on for several months. Members of the Vision Statement Committee, **John Cavanaugh**, long range planning chair of ASBO-MD/DC, and **Barbara Canavan**, Southampton principal, represented the committee. Mr. Magee said the Vision Statement is a “vital document” which requires periodic updating. The revised Vision Statement was first presented to the Board at its November 26, 2001 meeting. He said the Vision Statement needs to convey that “all children are important and that all children are unique learners.” Mr. Magee added that, five years from now, the Vision Statement or an updated version would continue to convey the “essence of the schools.” Board members made several suggestions for changes which were accepted by Mr. Magee and other members of the committee present. The final version, approved by the Board on a 6 to 0 vote (Mr. Galbreath was not present at the time of the vote), acting on the motion of Board Member Thomas D. Hess and the second of Board Member Robert B. Thomas, Jr. The Vision Statement approved reads:

Harford County is a community of learners where educating everyone takes everyone. We empower all students to contribute to a diverse, democratic, and change-oriented society. Our public schools, parents, public officials, businesses community organizations, and citizens actively commit to educate all students to becoming caring, respectful, and responsible citizens.

Mr. Magee said the next step is to define the school system’s Mission Statement.

FOLLOW UP DISCUSSION ON BALANCING ENROLLMENT

Mrs. Haas mentioned to the Board that the proposals to “Balance Enrollment” presented to the Board at a work session on February 4, 2002, will be discussed at concurrent regional

meetings on February 19th (6:30 p.m. at Bel Air and North Harford high schools); and at public hearings on consecutive Wednesdays, February 20 and 27, at C. Milton Wright High School (7:00 p.m.). She introduced Director of Secondary Education **William Ekey** who presented the Board with information members had requested including the feeder system which now exists and how it would appear if all the Technical Advisory Committee suggestions are adopted. Assistant Superintendent for Operations **Joseph P. Licata**, chair of the committee, reported that the plan – which is outlined on the school system’s web site – has resulted in many comments and questions from the public which are being answered by members of the committee.

NEW BUSINESS

PRESENTATIONS

REVIEW OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATING BOUNDARY EXCEPTIONS/STUDENT TRANSFER REQUESTS

According to the Board Policy on Boundary Exceptions, adopted in August 2001, an annual review of the process with an opportunity for the Board to make adjustments is to take place prior to the beginning of boundary exception consideration. Director of Student Services **Stephen C. Lentowski** told the Board current guidelines call for the cutoff of child care boundary exceptions to schools which have 95 percent or greater enrollment compared to its state rated capacity.

Cindy Mumby of Bel Air urged the Board not to allow child care requests to be converted into “hardship” requests as a way of avoiding the new restrictions. She said there had been more than 1,600 boundary exceptions last year with just 94 of them hardships. She said it is her hope that those figures (representing $\frac{1}{4}$ of 1 percent of the school enrollment) will not change. “Inconvenience does not represent a hardship.” She added that Ring Factory Elementary, the school where she has a child, is projected to fall below the 95 percent enrollment to capacity level next year. Mrs. Mumby reminded the Board the school has no computer room, no art room, and no music room.

Mr. Lentowski said that the proposal adopted last year by the Board grandfathered students entering grades five, eight, and 12 who were on boundary exceptions during the 2001-02 school year, allowing them to finish their final year at the level mentioned. The guidelines require that only twelfth graders would be considered for boundary exceptions after the 2001-02 school year. Some 1,007 requests – representing over 69 percent of the total requests approved for 2001-02 – had been approved prior to the adoption of the new procedures. Responding to the inquiry of Mrs. Troy, Mr. Lentowski said the 95 percent restriction applies to the Title 1 School Choice boundary exception requests. Mr. Lentowski told Mrs. Wolf that the system uses “adjusted enrollment” – counting those preschool students who attend one-half day as .5 of a student. Mr. Magee said the Board must “draw the line somewhere” and that the current school year is a “transition year.” Mr. Lentowski said 100 of the boundary exceptions were for school employees. He added that there had

been ten Title 1 boundary exceptions approved; and that 188 had been denied with 59 of those denied having been approved on appeal. Mr. Lentowski said 1,449 students are attending school on boundary exceptions this year, continuing a three-year decline (1,703 in 1998-99, 1,630 in 2000-01). By taking no action, the Board reaffirmed its support of the boundary exception guidelines as currently written.

RESTRUCTURING CAREER AND TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION

Members of the Harford County Public School System educational leadership team involved with Career and Technology Education presented the Board with a report on restructuring of the program in the local schools. Presenting the report were **Cydney Wentsel, Susan Garrett, Frank Mezzanotte, and LaVerne Pitts**, Supervisor of Guidance and Counseling, Coordinating Supervisor of Career and Technology Education, Supervisor of Technology Education and Technical Programs, and Supervisor of Business, Career and Technology Education, respectively. Mrs. Wentsel said preparing today's students for the career and educational opportunities of tomorrow requires a comprehensive system, prekindergarten to grade 12 and beyond, which is integrated and collaborative, involving a partnership among all aspects of education and community. In 2000, the Supervisors of Career and Technology Education and Guidance and Counseling, as well as the Coordinator of Business Partnerships, formed a Career Connections Committee which worked to bring the initiatives together to develop a career development plan. Five career connections objectives were developed to define the entire spectrum of career development educational services employed by the Harford County Public Schools. Mrs. Garrett reported that enrollments in the HCPS Career and Technology Education (CTE) programs have increased from 2,866 in 1997 to 5,015 this year. More than \$5 million is spent annually on CTE programs in all of the HCPS schools.

BOARD COMMENTS

Mr. Thomas said that the Maryland Association of Boards of Education Legislative session had been held that day and that Montgomery County has declared the administration of the MSPAP testing should be held up pending the transition to individual student scores. Mrs. Haas said the state plans on continuing the administration of MSPAP during the two-year transition period. Mr. Hess said MSPAP has undergone a metamorphosis from the early years from a focus on knowledge base to be more closely aligned to where education is headed. Mr. Thomas said absenteeism is of concern to him. He asked if parents are informed of the level of expectation and that it is not okay to miss school. Mrs. Haas said a letter is sent home when a student misses more than four days in a quarter. The Superintendent said that suspension is the only alternative the system has now to address chronic absenteeism. Lt. Col. (Ret.) Chandler said there is a crisis for students since there is not a makeup program in place. Mr. Magee said that the state requires young people to be in school until they are 16 but that schools need to be appealing to those students over that age to keep them in school. "A bigger hammer doesn't help," he said, pointing, instead, to the need for a viable alternative education program. Student Representative to the Board **Samuel S. Fromille IV** said that the idea of "one size fits all" education does not work. Mr. Galbreath said that elementary students are pulled from their classes for music, chorus, and

other enrichment activities. Mrs. Haas said she is in the process of collecting information on how many classes students miss for these and other purposes. Lt. Col. (Ret.) Chandler noted that Harford County is highest in the state for suspensions percentage. Mrs. Haas pointed out that some counties – such as Baltimore County – have alternative education sites where students who would normally be suspended are referred and not counted as having been suspended.

ADJOURNMENT

Acting on the motion of Mrs. Karen Wolf and the second of Mrs. Terry Troy, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 10:10 p.m.

FUTURE MEETINGS

The Board of Education will continue holding its regular business meetings at Magnolia Middle School through the month of March, meeting March 11 (7:00 p.m.) and March 25 (6:30 p.m.).

MORE INFORMATION

The school system is attempting to prevent duplications and reduce production/ mailing costs of the printed versions of B-Line. Those who are able to access B-Line on line and who would like their copy of the printed version of the document discontinued should e-mail the Director of Public Information: drmorrison.gs@hcps.k12.md.us; Or call the HCPS Customer Relations Action Line (24-hours-a-day) at 410-638-0022.

For more information on Board meetings or other matters affecting the Harford County Public Schools, contact the system's Director of Public Information, 410-588-5203; or call the HCPS Customer Relations Action Line (24-hours-a-day) at 410-638-0022.

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