



Board Meeting

February 12, 2001

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

OPEN SESSION

CALL TO ORDER

The regular business meeting of the Board of Education of Harford County was called to order on February 12, 2001, at 7:05 p.m. in the front gymnasium of Bel Air Middle School by Board President **David H. Galbreath**. Mr. Galbreath directed that a roll call of Board Members be taken which reflected all members being present. Acting on the motion of Board Member **Terry R. Troy** and the second of Board Member **Karen L. Wolf**, the Board voted unanimously to extract consideration of Item G – Affirmation of Monthly Report of Contracts – from actions to be taken on other Consent Agenda items. In addition, Board Member **Robert S. Magee** noted that the report by the Superintendent on secondary gradual entrance would be set aside for future consideration. Acting on the motion of Board Past President **Wolf** and the second of Mrs. Troy, the Board voted unanimously to accept the agenda as amended. Mrs. Troy led those present in the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENTS

Wayne Shapiro, Social Studies teacher at North Harford High School and one of two senior class sponsors at the school, told the Board that the six stones honoring those alumni of the school who perished during the Vietnam conflict, will be formally dedicated on Friday, May 4, 2001 as part of the "Garden of

Remembrance" at the school. The stones represent the gift of the NHHS Class of 2000 to the school and community and were the result of an agreement among the Class and the community, including previous senior classes at the school. Mr. Shapiro said a fundraiser is being held at the school on Saturday, March 31 to help fund the project. **Wayne Shapiro**, Social Studies teacher at North Harford High School and one of two senior class sponsors at the school, told the Board that the six stones honoring those alumni of the school who perished during the Vietnam conflict, will be formally dedicated on Friday, May 4, 2001 as part of the Garden of Remembrance at the school. The stones were represent the gift of the NHHS Class of 2000 to the school and community and were the result of an agreement among the Class and the community, including previous senior classes at the school. Mr. Shapiro said a fundraiser is being held at the school on Saturday, March 31 to help fund the project.

Donald Criss, vehicle mechanic with the school system, told the Board that the fleet of vehicles available to the system's Facilities Management office is aging. He described conditions surrounding a 1985 box truck which had broken down and for which parts were no longer available. He said it is "time to act" on replacing the high mileage, older vehicles in the fleet to improve the efficiency of the fleet.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION AND DIALOGUE -MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF BOARDS OF EDUCATION (MABE)

Carl W. Smith, Executive Director of the Maryland Association of Boards of Education, and **Sandra French**, President of the organization and member of the Board of Education from Howard County, presented the Board with a report on the functions performed by MABE, which represents all 24 Boards of Education in the state. Dr. Smith discussed the benefits to members of MABE, including representation to statewide government and information available to affiliates. Mrs. French said MABE representatives are making similar presentations to Boards around the state which request it. The representatives showed the Board a slide presentation of MABE's organization and activities, noting that Mrs. Troy is a Board member of the group.

OLD BUSINESS

PRESENTATIONS

HARFORD COUNTY EDUCATION ASSOCIATION – UPDATE ON "READ ACROSS AMERICA"

Harford County Education Association President **Paul S. Schatz**, accompanied by HCEA member and Harford Technical High School Science teacher **Stuart Chapman** (in costume as the "Cat in the Hat") told the Board that, on March 2, 2001, the fourth annual observance of "Read Across America" would occur,

coinciding with the anniversary of the birth of the children's book author Dr. Seuss. He said HCEA's parent organization, the National Education Association, is sponsoring the observance nationwide during which 30 million children and adults will take part, following the theme of "Oh, the Places You'll Go." Mr. Schatz said that **Carol Hockman** of Hall's Cross Roads Elementary School has put together a web site for HCEA with the address of www.HarfordCEA.org which contains information about the initiative and the organization. He said it is the goal of HCEA that every youngster in the county read on March 2nd in the company of a caring adult. Mr. Chapman presented each Board member with a "Cat in the Hat" hat.

PSAT/SAT RECOMMENDATIONS

Director of Secondary Education **William Ekey** presented the Board with information on efforts being made by the Harford County Public School System to provide opportunities for those Harford County Public School students taking the Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test (PSAT) or Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) to improve their scores. Mr. Ekey noted that Harford Public School System SAT scores have declined for the past two consecutive years. He reminded the Board that the tests are not intended as measures of the effectiveness of a school system and are taken voluntarily by high school sophomores (PSAT), juniors and seniors as part of their college entrance requirements. Mr. Ekey described the work of a committee under the leadership of Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction **Deborah J. Heiberger** and Supervisor of Research and Evaluation **Carolyn Wood**. Among the recommendations of the committee was the reaffirmation of recommendations made by a similar group convened in 1996 and that the Board consider providing funding for putting in place avenues intended to give students the opportunity to improve their PSAT/SAT scores, as well as funding for an electronic student database with the capacity to establish long-term achievement records for each student. The group recommended the effort have administrative and supervisory leadership and that "inclusive instruction" bringing more students in to the kinds of courses which would provide information valuable to PSAT/SAT takers be given. The group also suggested that effective curriculum development and professional development opportunities be provided as well as student practice on prototypical items be implemented.

REDISTRICTING UPDATE

Assistant Superintendent for Operations **Joseph P. Licata** provided the Board with an update on activities related to the proposed redistricting of schools in the Harford County Public School System. He reminded Board members that a timeline had been presented to them on December 18, 2000, and that the Board had approved the appointment of a consultant, **Maurice Kalin**, to assist the school system in the potential redistricting process. He said that an event has

been planned for March 6, 2001, at Harford Community College during which 120 "stakeholders" in groups of ten to 12 would be invited to consider issues surrounding redistricting. Superintendent **Jacqueline C. Haas** said that policy is being developed for Board consideration that would guide this and future redistricting, and that a change in the "culture" of public expectations is being proposed where potential redistricting is part of a yearly systemic review. Mr. Licata said the proposed redistricting, which would provide relief, especially to overcrowded secondary schools in the Bel Air area, would be implemented in the fall of 2002. He said that invitations are being sent out to members of groups which would take part in Phase I of the redistricting plan and that there would be many options for citizens in the county to become involved in the process as it moves along. Mrs. Wolf reminded Mr. Licata that the expectation from the Board is that all geographical/attendance areas in the county be represented.

NEW BUSINESS

ACTION ITEMS

CONSENT AGENDA

Acting on the motion of Mrs. Troy and the second of Mrs. Wolf, the Board unanimously approved three items on the Consent Agenda list, including the business meeting of the January 22, 2001 and the February 1, 2001 work session; the January 31, 2001 report on personnel including those who had left the school system, been placed on leaves of absence, those who were newly employed, or those who have qualified for tenure during the previous month. Acting on a separate motion by Mrs. Troy and a second by Board Member **Thomas D. Hess**, the Board unanimously (with Mr. Galbreath abstaining) affirmed a monthly report on contracts signed by the superintendent.

PRESENTATIONS

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Mrs. Haas said that C. Milton Wright Principal **Edwin Saunders** had formally requested that the Board policy prohibiting permanent advertising on school premises be set aside as it applies to an athletic field structure on the school's campus which had been funded by a business. Mrs. Haas said the topic will be placed on a future Board agenda. The superintendent provided the Board with a mid-year update on school enrollment, pointing out that elementary school enrollment has grown by 70 students between September 30, 2000 and January 31, 2001. She said that several schools stand out including: Abingdon (131% of capacity) and Church Creek (136% of capacity), Havre de Grace (76% of capacity), Hall's Cross Roads (79% of capacity), Magnolia (112% of capacity), Meadowvale (110% of capacity), Prospect Mill (116% of capacity), Hickory (86% of capacity), Ring Factory (114% of capacity), and Youth's Benefit (114%

of capacity). In the middle schools, enrollment has declined by 46 students during the same period, Mrs. Haas said, pointing to several school enrollments: Fallston (108% of capacity), Southampton (122% of capacity) and Aberdeen (74% of capacity). In the high schools, the superintendent said enrollment has declined in the period by 247 students. She outlined enrollment at the nine high schools: Aberdeen (66% of the 1,823 two-building capacity, though it would be 95% of the capacity of the replacement building once it opens in 2 ½ years of 1,262); Bel Air (107% of capacity), C. Milton Wright (104% of capacity), Edgewood (76% of capacity), Fallston (100% of capacity), Havre de Grace (70% of capacity), Joppatowne (91% of capacity), and North Harford (78% of capacity). Noting the relative enrollment to capacity percentages at Edgewood and Joppatowne high schools, Mr. Thomas suggested that the superintendent look into the possibilities of balancing the enrollments of the two schools.

Mrs. Haas noted that as many as 15 portable classrooms could be moved next year to account for shifts in enrollment (or completion of construction projects such as Edgewood Elementary School). In response to comments by Board President Galbreath about the growing enrollment at Southampton Middle, Mrs. Haas reminded the Board that suggestions which would have redistricted students to North Harford and Bel Air middle schools made by staff last year were rejected by the Board. She added that one of the recommendations made by a consultant who addressed the Board recently on safety and security issues was the reduction of students at schools where there is an over enrollment. Mr. Thomas reminded the Board that it is the responsibility of the Board to approve the movement of students from one school to another and, when recommendations are made to do so, there will be those citizens who come before the body saying that they don't want their children to move from schools, even if they are overcrowded. Mr. Galbreath reasserted that 15 portables at Southampton represents "too many." Mr. Thomas said the Board should not preempt the redistricting process which has already begun, but which will not propose to move students before the 2002-03 school year. Student Representative to the Board **Daniel E. Purcell** said that he had been impacted by the redistricting of students from the Southampton/C. Milton Wright district to Fallston in that his older sister had gone to the Bel Air area schools and he had wanted to attend C. Milton Wright. He said, however, once he was acclimated to Fallston High, he found it to be an ideal place to go to school, adding that "all Harford County Public Schools are excellent." Mr. Hess agreed, saying that it is "parents who have the most difficulty with redistricting."

DISCUSSION ITEMS

NEW BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS FROM BOARD MEMBERS

Board Member **Robert B. Thomas, Jr.** addressed the issue of recent editorials

which had appeared in "The Aegis" newspaper involving the system's last place ranking in per student funding among the state's 24 sub-divisions; and the Board's alleged "lack of vision." Mr. Thomas said the Board has established a vision and accountability measures for the superintendent and staff since the days of Superintendent **Ray R. Keech**. He said the Board is "no more happy about Harford County's 24th place ranking in spending, but the Board can only put toward per pupil spending what it receives." Mr. Thomas reminded those present that the 24th ranking reflected the last year of the Rehrmann administration, adding that, unless the Harford County government "funds public education at a much higher rate, the bottom line is the system will be close to the bottom in the state." He added that Harford will continue to lose ground to the Montgomery, Howard, and Frederick counties of the state. He cited the example of Baltimore County where the County Executive gave \$50 million in additional funding to the system above and beyond that which had been requested. Mr. Thomas said Baltimore City will get \$55 million from the state in the settlement of an education suit. He said "the books are open" to the vision and goals which have been set by the system. He called the editorials "misplaced, misguided, and misinformed," and pointed to the advice given him by his high school senior English teacher who said, "get it right before you write," adding that he wanted to go on record as urging the newspaper to do a better job in "getting it right." Mr. Thomas urged that the superintendent and members of the Board meet on a regular basis with the editorial board of the newspaper.

Board Member **Robert S. Magee** read from a letter signed by Board President Galbreath which outlined the Board's concern about two editorials which had appeared in "The Aegis" on December 20 and 27 concerning attempts to obtain funding for the expansion of Abingdon Elementary School; and its alleged failure to address the issue of redistricting. Mr. Magee, who said he agreed with Mr. Thomas' assessment of the Board's displeasure with a number of the newspaper's editorial stances, concluding from the letter that "It is our hope in the future *'The Aegis'*" editorial staff will be more accurate in its portrayal of the Board's role in dealing with overcrowding in the schools."

LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

The Board considered taking positions on several pieces of legislation pending before the General Assembly in Annapolis.

SB 171 – Acting on the motion of Mr. Thomas and the second of Mr. Hess, the Board voted unanimously to oppose SB 171 which would provide the right for parents to pass along educational guardianship to those in a school district other than the district where the family resides, essentially allowing the child to reserve education services outside that residence. Mrs. Haas said school systems in the state already provide such services in "cases of hardship."

SB 719/HB 950 – Acting on the motion of Mr. Thomas and the second of Mr. Hess, the Board voted unanimously to support SB 719 and HB 950, the Education Finance Equity Act (Thornton Commission) which would provide additional funding to school systems in the state.

HB 557 – Acting on the motion of Mr. Thomas and the second of Board Vice President **Eugene C. Chandler** the Board voted unanimously to monitor HB 557 which would alter the date required that a child turn five years of age to permit entrance into kindergarten from its current December 31st to the first day of school in the school system impacted. Mrs. Haas said the Harford County Public Schools would have preferred a fixed date in September, and that there is no money in the Governor's budget to account for the possible impact on local systems of such a change.

SB 781/HB 116 – Acting on the motion of Mr. Thomas and the second of Mr. Hess, the Board voted unanimously to oppose SB 781/HB 116 which would require that every kindergarten class have an instructional assistant. No funding has been attached to the bill and it would become an unfunded state mandate.

SB 754 – Acting on the motion of Mr. Thomas and the seconds of Mrs. Troy and Mrs. Wolf, the Board voted unanimously to oppose SB 754 which would require that each local school system institute a curriculum of character education. Mr. Magee said COMAR already requires elements of character education be included in the offerings of local school systems. Mrs. Haas said that, while the local system believes that teaching young people to be good citizens and to have positive character is desirable and is done, it continues to be the position of the system that curriculum should not be mandated by the Legislature.

SB 721 – Acting on the motion of Mr. Hess and the second of Lt. Col. (Ret.) Chandler, the Board voted unanimously to oppose SB 721, a public charter school bill which differs from HB 29, which the Board had already gone on record as opposing.

HB 1090 – Acting on the motion of Mr. Thomas and the second of Lt. Col. (Ret.) Chandler, the Board voted unanimously to oppose the full day kindergarten (by 2006-07) in each county. The bill contains no provision for funding.

HB 291 – Acting on the motion of Mr. Thomas and the second of Mr. Hess, the Board voted unanimously to oppose HB 291, which would require that graphing calculators be purchased for all students taking certain courses. Mrs. Haas said the county system already has procedures for purchasing the calculators and that there is no funding attached to the bill.

In addition, the Board announced that the hearing on the Collective Bargaining

bill (SB 378) would be held on February 21st.

APPROVAL OF TRANSPORTATION APPROVAL OF TRANSPORTATION RESERVE TRANSFER

Assistant Superintendent for Business Services **John Markowski** outlined the proposal that the Board seek the transfer of \$200,000 from the County's reserve fund to the school system's Transportation Department budget. County Executive **James Harkins** had placed the funds in reserve pending the Board's completion of a fleet management study. Mrs. Haas said a letter had been sent to Mr. Harkins confirming that the study had been completed and that she would take the proposal to obtain the funds to the Board. Acting on the motion of Mr. Hess and the second of Mrs. Troy, the Board voted 6 to 1 to support the motion (Mr. Magee dissenting). Mr. Magee said he does not feel it was proper for Mr. Harkins to place the funds in a reserve account and, since the money was not part of the school system budget originally, the Board should not be required to fulfill a certain action in order to access the money.

BOARD COMMENTS

Mrs. Troy pointed to a character education project at Bel Air High School involved with the school's improvement plan; as well as to the Bay Schools project taking place at North Bend Elementary School. Mr. Thomas reminded the Board that his motion to institute a pilot program for metal detectors remains "dormant" but that he looks forward to bringing it to the Board for consideration in the near future. Lt. Col. (Ret.) Chandler presented the Board with a summary of the committee which is looking into creating a math/science magnet at Aberdeen High School. He said the 35-member group including school, community and Aberdeen Proving Ground representatives is "the best committee I've ever worked with," adding that it includes scientists and engineers from APG. He also reminded the Board that SB 323/HB 342, the Hosanna School bond bills, are before the State Legislature and that **Christine Tolbert**, who has been the moving force behind the preservation and improvement of the former Freedman's Bureau school near Darlington, is asking that support be given for the proposal.

ADJOURNMENT

Acting on the motion of Lt. Col. (Ret.) Chandler and the second of Mrs. Troy, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 10:06 p.m.

FUTURE MEETINGS

Following a Board work session on issues surrounding High School Assessments which was to have been held at North Harford Middle School on February 20, 2001, the next regular business meeting of the Board is slated for

Monday, February 26, 2001, beginning at 7:00 p.m. at Bel Air Middle School. The Board will continue to meet at Bel Air Middle through March before moving its regular business meetings to North Harford High School for the April/May/June quarter.

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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