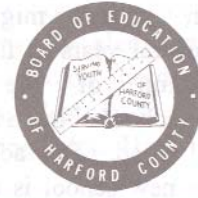


B-Line



45 East Gordon Street / Bel Air, Maryland 21014

Robert S. Magee, *President*
Robert B. Thomas, Jr., *Vice President*
Eugene C. Chandler
Ruth R. Rich
Terry R. Troy
Karen L. Wolf
Mark M. Wolkow

Jacqueline C. Haas, *Superintendent*
Secretary/Treasurer

Michael D. Morey
Student Representative

Board Meeting
November 10, 2003

CALL TO ORDER – Board of Education of Harford County President **Robert S. Magee** called the regular business meeting of the Board to order on Monday, November 10, 2003, at 7:04 p.m. in the multi-purpose room of Magnolia Middle School. Mr. Magee asked for a quorum call which revealed that all Board members were present, with the exception of **Robert B. Thomas, Jr.** who was excused due to illness. Board Past President **Terry R. Troy** moved and Board Member **Mark M. Wolkow** seconded that the proposed agenda be amended, moving the “Board Comment” portion of the agenda from its designated place near the end of the meeting to follow the General Public Comment item scheduled for 7:20 p.m. The Board voted unanimously to approve the motion and Mrs. Troy then moved and Board Member **Eugene C. Chandler** seconded the amended agenda be approved. The Board again voted unanimously to approve that motion. In honor of Veteran’s Day, to be observed the next day, November 11, 2003, an honor guard from the Harford County Sheriff’s Office posted the colors and Fallston High School senior **Michael Dunnick** sang the National Anthem. Lt. Col. (Ret.) Chandler also led those present in the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance. Lt. Col. (Ret.) Chandler told those present, as a combat veteran of two American wars, he urged that all citizens honor veterans throughout the year, but especially on Veteran’s Day. He added that the U.S. combat troops of today need the support of all citizens.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENTS

Larry English of Forest Hill questioned conclusions drawn by the 2003 enrollment projections released recently by the Harford County Public School System. He pointed to “major differences” between the 2002 and the 2003 projections, adding that each is based on “cohort survival” (stu-

dents moving up a grade) and there should not be such a fluctuation. In particular, he mentioned Southampton Middle School and Forest Hill Elementary School as showing major revisions this year compared to last. He said the projections, each well below the County government’s new 115 percent threshold for implementation of the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance, open up those areas for development.

Maggie Rohrbaugh, a member of an organization seeking approval for a charter school but pointing out that she was speaking as a private citizen, said she attended the recent Maryland Charter Network Conference and indicated the school system’s Governmental Relations Liaison **Kathy Carmello** had been singled out for praise on her leadership role in developing policy and guidelines supporting the Charter School bill passed by the Maryland General Assembly in last year’s session. Mrs. Rohrbaugh said she had told Maryland’s Lt. Governor that the Harford Board of Education was “on the cutting edge” in the charter school process.

Deb Merlock of Abingdon reported on activities of the Schools of the Edgewood Area Coalition (SEAC). She talked about the recent annual volleyball tournament (won by Edgewood High School) conducted by the schools; and about a new initiative in which the group is raising money to create home libraries in which quality books can be lent to families of at risk children.

BOARD COMMENT

Speaking from a prepared statement, Mr. Magee addressed issues surrounding The Aegis newspaper and its “alarming mean-spirited attacks on local government officials, school system employees, Board of Education Members or - it seems - anyone who happens to have an opinion or makes a decision that runs counter to the local

newspaper editor/editorial staff." Mr. Magee said "...it is time to address a 'growing cancer' that is becoming pervasive in our county," adding that "cancer that goes undiagnosed and untreated eats away at the body and eventually destroys it."

The Board president said he understood the press' first amendment rights but added that there is "a certain amount of responsibility to provide accurate and unbiased information, ensure decency and fair play that we expect of all our citizens," and to accurately report the news. Mr. Magee said he was speaking out because of the newspaper's role in the "erosion of the public's confidence in our school system and the local government" with its unwarranted "bashing" of the organizations collectively and its members individually.

He said the attacks on the Superintendent and the Board of Education as well as local government has increased and become more mean-spirited and personal in recent months. He pointed to recent coverage of the Facilities Survey done by the Maryland State Department of Education as well as an Aegis editorial in May concerning his role in planning for the replacement Aberdeen High School building.

"The editorial implied that I supported a school at Aberdeen that was to be over capacity, when, in fact, I was on the committee and the Board of Education that recommended a larger school," Mr. Magee said. "The editorial was misleading at best and became personal."

Mr. Magee described a scenario involving an Aegis reporter's call to his home on the evening of November 6 seeking comment on the Facilities Survey report which had been released just that afternoon. He said he had told the reporter he would not comment on the issue until he had the opportunity to read the report.

Mr. Magee said the article appearing in The Aegis the next day entitled "Harford schools fail tests" provided misleading information by using numbers in isolation without explanatory information. He added that the article had said he refused comment even after having been read a portion of the report. Mr. Magee said he had declined to have the reporter read a portion of the report to him, offering, instead, to comment on "Monday or Tuesday after I had a chance to read it."

Mr. Magee pointed out that The Aegis did not send a representative to a news conference held November 10 during which those staff members with direct knowledge about the report spent time explaining the findings.

"I promise you that the Board of Education and its employees will continue to serve you to the best of our ability, and I also want to assure you that mean-spirited attacks and unwarranted bashing - I did not say constructive criticism - will not be left without response," Mr. Magee said.

Lt. Col. (Ret.) Chandler said he has been puzzled why the community at large "has not taken *The Aegis* to task for its negative editorial policy." He said in other areas, parents would not allow the local press to vilify its school system when the schools were providing at least adequate services. "They will continue to be meaner in spirit until they are con-

fronted," he said. Mr. Magee received a standing ovation from most of the approximately 100 people present.

HARFORD COUNTY EDUCATION (HCEA) REPORT

Leaders of the Harford County Education Association (HCEA) make regular presentations to the Board. The November 10, 2003 HCEA report was presented by the organization's president, **Paul Schatz**, with support from the officers **Keith Goodall** of C. Milton Wright High, and **Randy Cerveny** of Bel Air High. Mr. Schatz expressed his support for Mr. Magee's comments about *The Aegis*, calling it a "sorry excuse" for a newspaper, alleging he had been quoted without receiving a call on an issue. In his report, Mr. Schatz said the Harford County Public Schools are "a less pleasant place to work and teach" for teachers and education support personnel. He said the workload has increased and nothing has been taken away. Mr. Schatz said the "working climate is deteriorating," adding that "everybody is under pressure" and noting in at least two recent cases teachers to whom he was talking excused themselves when a school administrator approached, "fearing revenge and retribution." Mr. Schatz said it is not fair that a teacher who has worked 15 years in another county cannot count that time toward his/her longevity in Harford County. He said Harford teachers are disillusioned that teachers in every other Maryland metropolitan county have pulled ahead in salary. He said that talk had occurred in the area of "transformational leadership" but the process has not been implemented. Mr. Schatz said the school system cannot continue to tolerate under compensation for its employees, that various groups must unite to get resources, and that we must stop "lip service to collaborative" leadership. The HCEA president said it is the job of teachers to teach and political leaders to come up with the revenue needed to move the school system forward. He pointed out that the percentage of county revenue going to public education (excluding Harford Community College) has declined from 56.4 percent in 1996, to 48.7 percent in 2004. He said the message must go to the State Delegation that it is their job to make sure the subsequent phases of Thornton money be funded and that authorization for a "consistent, reliable stream of revenues" is realized. He said that it is his goal to have 50 school buses full of supporters go to Annapolis on January 26 to call for full funding of Thornton. Mr. Schatz said in the 19 months he has left as HCEA president (he has served in that role for 4 ½ years), he wants to see every employee in the school system "relearn collaborative leadership." He called for "no teacher" to be left behind.

ACTION ITEMS

CONSENT AGENDA

Acting on the motion of Mrs. Troy and the second of Lt. Col. (Ret.) Chandler, the Board voted unanimously to approve items on the Consent Agenda including Affirmation of Monthly Contract Awards and Appointment of Negotiation Teams.

PRESENTATIONS

ELEMENTARY/SECONDARY SCHOOL CLASS SIZES

Pat Skebeck and **Dave Volrath**, directors of elementary and secondary education, respectively, presented the Board with the annual class size report. Mrs. Skebeck said the current Board Policy on class size will be reviewed by the Policy Review Committee this year to see if it needs to be revised since, because insufficient new teaching positions have been received in recent years, the actual class size does not match the policy at some levels. Mrs. Skebeck said the mean class size has increased from 21.1 in 2002-03 to 21.3 this school year. Her report showed that 92.2 percent of the elementary classes have 25 or fewer students; and that there continue to be no classes with more than 30 students. Mr. Volrath said, because no new teaching positions were approved for the current school year, the average class size in the secondary schools remains at 26.2. He added, it would take between 48 and 52 additional teachers to get down to the Board's policy of an average secondary class size of 25. Board Member **Ruth R. "Robin" Rich** said it is important to keep primary class sizes as low as possible to build a strong student base in reading and math. She said it would be advisable to allow fourth and fifth grade classes to increase to between 25 and 28 and use those teachers to decrease the primary enrollment. Mrs. Skebeck said the average class size in the elementary schools remains below the Board Policy numbers, though there are individual classes which are larger than the policy recommends.

NORTH HARFORD HIGH SCHOOL MODERNIZATION PHASING PLAN AND PROJECT ESTIMATE REPORT

Supervisor of Planning and Construction **Kathy Sanner**, joined by **Paul Klee** of the Grimm and Parker architectural firm, and **John Kerr** of the J. Vinton Schafer project management firm, presented the Board with an update on the progress of planning for the modernization project at North Harford High School. The report showed that a "massaging of the phasing schedule" may allow students to be disrupted for only two of the three years projected for the completion of the project. Mr. Kerr said the modernization portion of the project involving student space could be completed at the end of two years with non-student spaces and additions to be tackled during the third year. Mrs. Sanner said the issue of prevailing wage remains a factor with cost estimates provided with or without the use of labor subject to the standard. She said two months remain until bids for the construction are opened and that similar projects are receiving "favorable" proposals offering the hope that the bids will come in at or under the established budget on the local project. Mrs. Sanner said there is a continuing issue with the State Highway Department involving a proposed widening of Rt. 165 near the project to permit turning and deceleration lanes. The question revolves around whether the cost for those improvements would have to be borne by the school system or would be included in the Highway budget. Mr.

Cunningham presented a review of plans for the building. Mrs. Sanner said this "will be the biggest (school) project Harford County will ever do."

TEACHER RECRUITMENT/RETENTION REPORT

Members of the Harford County Public School Human Resources office presented the Board with the annual assessment of recruiting and retention of teachers. Led by Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources **Don Harmon**, supervisors in the office said 245 teachers were hired for the 2003-04 school year, that is 39 fewer than the previous year and traceable largely to the fact there were no new teaching positions provided. The group said applications were up by more than 500 – from 1525 in 2002-03 to 2095 in 2003-04. However, the number of certified teachers applying to teach in the "critical areas" of mathematics, special education, speech pathology, school psychologists, chemistry, physics, earth science, family and consumer science, and technology education continues to decline. The group reported that Harford continues to have a turnover rate well below most Baltimore metropolitan counties. Only 7.37 percent of the local teacher force (higher only than Frederick County's 7.35 percent) left the school system this year. Of those leaving, the largest percentage (45 percent) came from those with one to four years of experience. Sixty-seven (or 32 percent) of those leaving did so because they entered retirement last year. Supervisors **Matt Plevyak** and **Peg Goodson** outlined efforts employed in retaining teachers including the provision of coaches or mentor teachers, the use of teacher specialists, curriculum guides and other materials provided in advance of the teachers' start date, and a wide range of staff development opportunities.

PROPOSED FAMILY INVOLVEMENT POLICY (FIRST READ)

A proposed Family Involvement Policy and Procedures have been developed to replace the Parent/Community Involvement Policy adopted in 1992. The proposals are in alignment with the Maryland State Department of Education Policy on Family Involvement adopted in 2001 as well as other regulations. **Nancy Spence**, coordinator of business partnerships and volunteers for the school system, told the Board the proposed policy validates the notion that family involvement extends beyond parents and is inclusive of all adult family and community members in a child's life. The proposal will be held over for public comment (and is posted on the HCPS web site) until December 15, 2003 when the Board is expected to take action on the issue.

DISCUSSION

TRANSPORTATION PROPOSAL FOR MAGNET SCHOOLS AND PROGRAMS

Mr. Volrath discussed with the Board various methods by which students could be transported to the Science/Math Academy magnet program due to open at Aberdeen High School next school year and any future magnets which may

be developed. Mr. Volrath pointed out that door-to-door (or quasi door-to-door) transportation services are provided to John Archer School and Harford Technical High School. He said that door-to-door service would be both capital/labor intensive as well as expensive. He said an alternate method could be a county-wide "depot" system where central stops and times would be established. Mr. Volrath provided four options for the Science/Math student transportation, including no transportation; a shuttle system for students who would have been picked up by Harford Tech buses and then transported in groups to and from Aberdeen High School; a dedicated fleet similar to Harford Tech/John Archer; or the depot system. He presented cost estimates for each option. The Superintendent recommended that the Board authorize a "depot" system that would include Harford Tech, the Science/Math magnet at AHS, and any future magnet program. The Board will consider the proposals, receive public comment, and address the issue at a later date.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Because of the lateness of the hour, Superintendent **Jacqueline Haas** postponed her scheduled update on the Master Plan.

BOARD NEW BUSINESS

Mrs. Troy said the January 26, 2004 rally in Annapolis is in conflict with a scheduled Board meeting and suggested the Board consider moving that session to another date. Mr. Wolkow reminded those present of the school play scheduled for Edgewood High School.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, Lt. Col. (Ret.) Chandler moved and Mrs. Wolf seconded that the meeting be adjourned. The Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting and it was adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

FUTURE MEETINGS

The Board will continue its business meetings at Magnolia Middle School through the December quarter. The December business meetings will be held on December 8 (7:00 p.m.) and December 15 (6:30 p.m.).

MORE INFORMATION

For more information on matters involving the Board of Education of Harford County or other topics related to the Harford County Public Schools, call the school system's Director of Public Information, 410-588-5203. In addition, the public is invited to log on to the HCPS web site at www.hcps.org. Also, for those who would like to receive emergency or other important information about the school system, log on to schools-out.com and follow directions in signing up for the information to be delivered to e-mail addresses designated.

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