

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF HOWARD COUNTY

February 21, 2006

The Board of Education of Howard County held a Public Work Session on the Superintendent's Proposed FY 2007 Operating Budget on Tuesday, February 21, 2006, at 1:00 p.m., in the Board Room of the Department of Education, located at 10910 Route 108, Ellicott City, Maryland. The following were present:

Joshua Kaufman, Chairman
Diane Mikulis, Vice Chairman
Patricia S. Gordon
Mary Kay Sigaty
Courtney Watson
Jeff Lasser, Student Member

Sydney L. Cousin, Superintendent, Secretary/Treasurer
Sandra Erickson, Deputy Superintendent
Patti Caplan, Director, Public Relations
Arlene Conway, Recording Secretary

Chairman Joshua Kaufman called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m.

FY 2007 Operating Budget Review Committee Report (OBRC)

Presenter: Mrs. Ellen Giles, Operating Budget Review Committee Chairman.

Mrs. Giles presented recommendations that were developed by the OBRC after careful review of the Superintendent's FY 2007 Proposed Operating Budget. Recommendations address both the current budget and future planning.

The committee will continue to meet to discuss and evaluate the OBRC process and develop recommendations for improvements.

Mr. Kaufman noted the value that the OBRC brings to the budget process and recognized the enormous investment in time and energy involved. Board Members and the Superintendent expressed appreciation to the OBRC for their work and commented on the merit of the recommendations as well as the creativity of suggestions.

Mr. Kaufman asked the OBRC to consider how the development of a budget committee of the Board next year might impact the budget process and to provide suggestions on the roles and responsibilities of a Board budget committee.

Guidance Counselor Positions

Ms. Gordon expressed concern about the number of guidance counselors at the elementary level and suggested that additional counselors be assigned to schools with larger populations (over 750). She noted that two counselors are assigned to each middle school, regardless of size.

Mrs. Erickson explained the staffing ratios and stated that one extra half-time counseling position has been placed in the budget for both Hollifield Station and Pointers Run elementary schools. She expressed the need to meet with staff to consider a different staffing formula for the FY 2008 budget and noted that the current budget does not meet the staffing formula for high schools, which was indicated as a priority by staff.

Ms. Gordon agreed with considering a different staffing formula in the future and indicated that an inequity exists by providing additional guidance services at the secondary level rather than elementary.

Physical Education

Staff stated that resources will be developed for teachers to address ways to provide additional physical activities for students during the school day. In support of the new wellness policy, MSDE (Maryland State Department of Education) will also be providing materials to local school systems to inform classroom teachers on ways to increase physical activity for students.

Supplies for Media Centers/TV Studios

Concerns were raised through public testimony regarding the lack of reference materials in some of the elementary schools. Staff explained that funds are allocated on a per-pupil basis, with additional money available to address equity issues in older schools. All students are provided with both print and online resources.

TV Studios

Ms. Sigaty expressed concern that all schools are not equipped with TV studios and cannot offer certain classes listed in the course of studies. Students who have taken advantage of extensive programs in middle school are not always able to continue with courses at the high school level.

Staff indicated the need to conduct a thorough analysis of all high schools and to develop a thorough plan for the FY 2008 budget. Available year-end funds could also be used to accelerate that process if the analysis is complete at that time.

Related Arts Team Leaders

Fiscal impact would be \$137,000, including benefits, and would provide stipends for related arts team leaders at middle and elementary schools. Board members accepted the recommendation to not include funds in the FY 2007 budget due to fiscal constraints and additional priorities.

Hispanic Student Achievement

Mr. Kaufman suggested that the Board adopt the following staff recommendation:

- Add two additional academic transition assistants at a cost of approximately \$57,000.
- Move one Community Liaison position from ESOL to Mid-Level Administration.

Dr. Cousin explained that a great deal of time was spent determining how best to address the needs of students, and this recommendation uses existing staff to the extent possible without creating separate offices. These positions will provide direct services to parents, families, and students within the Hispanic community.

A report will be brought to the Board in April detailing the current status of the Student, Family, and Community Services department, as well as future goals.

Transportation

A considerable amount of input was received from bus contractors requesting a pay increase. Board members noted that much thought and discussion was given to this issue, but no decision was made to include additional funds beyond the increases proposed by the Superintendent. The school system currently compensates bus contractors for increases in operating costs and cannot dictate that additional funds would be apportioned for pay increases to drivers.

Co-Teaching

Funds in the FY 2007 budget will complete the current goal of implementing co-teaching in seven high schools. Additional positions requested will be used to intensify efforts. Staff will reevaluate needs based on the results of this year's High School Assessments (HSAs).

Athletic/Activities Directors

Several high school principals spoke in support of this initiative and pointed out that the positions will allow administrators to spend more time on instructional leadership. Board members expressed their support and emphasized the need to better inform the public and county officials of this concept, which will also have a small but positive impact on class size and will improve relations between the school system and the community.

Dr. Cousin recommended that these positions be moved to Mid-Level Administration upon adoption of the budget.

Fund Balance

Staff assured the Board that the school system will be in compliance with the new Fund Balance Reserve policy when it takes effect for FY 2007. This policy institutes a formula that provides for an undesignated balance in the general fund of \$500,000.

Mr. Kaufman indicated the need to address concerns with the policy outside the budget process.

Technology Contingency

Board members discussed various concerns regarding the need to include funds in the budget to address technology issues that may arise outside of the technology equalization plan. It was agreed that funds could be used from the current contingency fund if necessary.

Chinese Language

Board members and staff discussed various ways in which to provide opportunities for students to learn Chinese and other nonwestern languages. Dr. Cousin explained that staff will continue to discuss this issue and will present recommendations to the Board for the future.

Security Positions

Mr. Steve Drummond, School Security Coordinator, explained the positive aspects of converting current security staff from contracted labor to school system staff. This would allow for better quality and adequate training of employees. Board members noted the benefits and importance of proper security and supported the measure.

Board of Education Budget

Board members recommended the following changes to the office budget:

- Increase funds for Legal Fees from \$200,000 to \$300,000.
- Reduce funds for Utilities/Telecommunications from \$2,000 to \$1,000.
- Add funds for the Student Member to attend the full MABE conference (staff to determine amount).
- Include mileage reimbursement estimate for Ombudsman and Internal Auditor (staff to determine amount).

Equity Issues - Computer Programs for Interventions and Tutorials

Staff indicated that concerns regarding equal access of students to computer programs will be discussed as part of the school system's technology plan. Input will be requested from a variety of groups.

HCASC (Howard County Association of School Councils) Advisor

Mr. Roger Plunkett, Business, community, Government Relations Officer, indicated that the goal is to provide consistency and align the work of Student Government Associations (SGA) with HCASC. Staff will be developing objectives for the upcoming school year and will work to ensure active participation with HCASC. Mrs. Erickson suggested that Mr. Plunkett and Mr. Lasser meet with other staff members to develop a plan to ensure a strong program utilizing current positions in the school system.

Board members expressed appreciation to staff and the OBRC for their work throughout the budget process. Very few changes were made to the Superintendent's original recommendations, which is indicative of the exceptional work done by staff.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned by the chairman at 3:58 p.m.