

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF EDUCATION OF HOWARD COUNTY
AND
HOWARD COUNTY COUNCIL**

June 7, 2006

The Board of Education of Howard County and the Howard County Council held a joint quarterly meeting on Wednesday, June 7, 2006, at 8:15 a.m. The meeting was held in the Ellicott Room, George Howard Building, 3430 Court House Drive, Ellicott City, MD 21043.

Present:

Board of Education

Joshua M. Kaufman, Chairman
Diane B. Mikulis, Vice Chairman
Mary Kay Sigaty
Courtney Watson

Howard County Council

Christopher J. Merdon, Chairman
Calvin Ball
Charles C. Feaga
Ken Ulman

Sydney L. Cousin, Superintendent
Sandra J. Erickson, Deputy Superintendent
Raymond H. Brown, Chief Operating Officer
Mamie J. Perkins, Chief of Staff
Susan S. Shown, Executive Assistant

Sheila Tolliver, Administrator
Jeff Meyers, Legislative Assistant
Ronald Weinstein, County Auditor

Mr. Merdon called the meeting to order at 8:20 a.m. and welcomed the members of the Board of Education.

Chancery Software/SIMS

Mr. Robert Glascock, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, and Mr. Thomas Miller, Executive Director of Instruction and Business Technology, presented the report.

Mr. Glascock explained that all Howard County schools have had a student information management system for twenty years for grades, attendance, storage of data, and the ability to recall the data for reports, etc. During the past year, the software was upgraded to SIMS and was implemented in the high schools.

Mr. Glascock and Mr. Miller acknowledged that there have been problems with the new system, and they described the steps that have been taken to address the problems and concerns, including having the vendor's staff on site, contracting a third party to evaluate the network, and having checks and balances in place to ensure the accuracy of data and reports provided to the end user. Mr. Glascock stated that reports that students were denied entrance into college because of the new system is not correct.

SIMS is a very complex system. A data warehouse will be implemented to separate the data storage and reporting units to decrease the electronic competition. It is a costly system; however, it will make significant improvements to the existing system.

Approved – July 13, 2006

Rent Program for Police Officers

Mr. Kaufman referred to the program that was recently implemented to provide police officers affordable rent in Howard County, and he asked if there were other creative programs that could assist school system employees.

Mr. Ulman explained that the county worked with apartment owners to create the program as a safety consideration, but it is the apartment owners who are giving the discounts to police officers as an incentive to have them live in the apartment complex.

Mr. Feaga stated that he could not support an expanded program because there are many employees in the county that would benefit from rent discounts, and it would not be possible to provide a county-subsidized rent program for the entire Howard County work force.

Mrs. Watson pointed out that there is a program that gives preference to moderate income county government employees for the opportunity to purchase a home.

Dr. Cousin noted that he and the County Executive agree that it would benefit the county and the school system if county employees could live where they work.

Planning Process with the Department of Planning and Zoning (DP&Z)

Mr. Kaufman stated that the Board and school administration are concentrating on long-term planning. The school system will continue to experience some growth. The Board and staff are making a concerted effort to work with DP&Z to determine the areas of anticipated growth and to identify appropriate land for school sites.

Mrs. Watson described the Board's frustration when a request for a school site reservation was denied because the Board's request was sent directly to the Planning Board instead of to DP&Z. She stated that the disconnect between the two agencies needs to be resolved.

Mr. Ulman stated that some members of the County Council were looking at a plan that would create community planning areas to guide rezoning based on the vision. The plan would include the infrastructure needed to support the land use.

Mr. Feaga noted that the western part of the county was rezoned just about two years ago, and it is not advisable to change zoning too often.

Dr. Cousin explained that the school system is working to develop a comprehensive plan for the whole county using the new approach to capital planning by tying together redistricting and land use. However, the school system needs the collaboration with DP&Z because, when a piece of information is missing, the plan will continue to change, and there will no longer be a comprehensive plan.

Mrs. Watson stated that it is the role of DP&Z to ensure that adequate infrastructure is available for the designated land use. Neither the Board members nor the school system staff are experts in land use, and assistance is needed to identify appropriate school sites.

Starting Salaries for Teachers

Mrs. Sue Mascaro, Director of Staff Relations, presented a comparison of starting salaries in the state, which are known to date, and indicated that Howard County currently ranks fourth in salaries for beginning teachers. She noted that the partnership between the Board of Education and the Howard County Education Association (HCEA) was successful in improving the first five steps of the teachers' salary scale, which will be helpful in attracting new teachers to the county.

County Council members expressed their appreciation for the improvement in the starting salaries and agreed with the need to attract new and qualified teachers to the county. Mr. Feaga asked for information on the actual compensation, including benefits, and Mr. Merdon asked that the complete salary rank list be provided to the Council members when it is available.

Mrs. Watson expressed appreciation to Dr. Cousin and Mrs. Mascaro for working with HCEA and also to the County Executive and members of the County Council for funding the Board's budget request.

Policy 1801-Religious Observances and Policy 2911-Religion and Religious Materials

Mrs. Mascaro and Mrs. Min Kim, Equity Assurance Coordinator, highlighted the process to develop the proposed policies and the Board's approval process, including opportunities for public input. Handouts were provided to County Council members summarizing the proposed policy changes.

Gang Activity and Prevention

Mr. Stephen Drummond, Coordinator of School Security, and Sgt. George Belleville, Howard County Police Department, were at hand for the presentation.

Dr. Cousin stated that with the cooperation of the Howard County and Maryland State police departments, school administrators were briefed on gang activity in the county, how to identify gang-related activity, and ways to prevent incidents of gang activity.

Sgt. Belleville reported that gang activity in Howard County is not yet affecting the quality of life or the crime rate; however, indicators (drawings, graffiti, dress, hand gestures, etc.) indicate that more juveniles are experimenting with it.

Sgt. Belleville observed that there was a significant commitment by the police departments and the school system to provide training to the school administrators to help prevent the escalation of gang activity.

Mrs. Watson asked if there is data available to show the relationship between the involvement of students in extracurricular activities and their participation in gang-related activities. Sgt. Belleville responded no, but pointed out that young people get into the most trouble during the after-school hours. Mrs. Watson stated that it would be advantageous to expand after-school programs and make them available to more students.

Mrs. Linda Wise, Assistant Superintendent for School Administration, stated that the program involved training on how to identify students who are at risk of becoming involved in gangs. Gangs provide a sense of belonging and security to the loner or uninvolved student.

Mrs. Wise added that the Antibullying Task Force has been working to provide recommendations to prevent incidents of bullying in the schools. The school system is building a foundation so that the escalation of gang activity and violence does not become a sudden problem.

Council members applauded the cooperative initiatives of the school system and police departments to deter the problem of gang activity.

Adjournment

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 9:10 a.m.