

Board of Education Meeting Summary

Oct. 6, 2005

ACTION ITEMS

- Approved a consent agenda including bids and contracts and minutes of Board of Education meetings.
- Approved the 2005 Bridge to Excellence Comprehensive Master Plan Update (see: “Board Receives BTE Update”).
- Approved a change to Policy 2121, Graduation Requirements, to align with a change in state board policy that no longer requires students to take the geometry MSA in order to graduate.
- Approved a minor revision to Policy 1000 to incorporate the revised Board mission.
- Approved the FY2007 Capital Budget Request, the FY 2008-2012 Capital Improvement Program Request, the FY 2007-2016 Long-Range Master Plan, and the FY 2007 Project Priority List for the State Capital Budget Request (see: “Board Adds Funds to Budget for New Maintenance Facility”).

Board Receives BTE Update

After a brief presentation by Chief Academic and Administrative Chief Sandra Erickson, the Board approved the 2005 Update of the HCPSS Bridge to Excellence Comprehensive Master Plan. The document meets the reporting requirements of the Maryland State Department of Education and the federal No Child Left Behind Act. The update outlines practices used to support continuous improvement, such as data-driven decision-making, high leverage strategies and targeted professional development, resource alignment and ongoing monitoring.

Student Board Member Seeks Partial Voting Rights

Jeff Lasser, Student Member to the Board of Education, and Josh Michael, Student Member to the Maryland State Board of Education, presented a proposal to give the student board member partial voting rights. Students first gained a voice at the Board level in 1988 when the Board approved the position of Student Associate. The Student Associate could comment during Board discussion but did not have voting rights. In 2001, the Board changed the Student Associate position to Student Member with an opinion vote.

Students are now requesting that the Student Member be afforded rights similar to those of the Student Member to the Montgomery County Board of Education. The proposal calls for the Student Member to have the same rights as other board members except that the Student Member would not attend Closed Sessions for hearing held under § 6-202 or for collective bargaining. In addition, the Student Member would not vote on budget, collective bargaining, personnel, school attendance area adjustments, school reopening, and school closings.

The proposal would require a change to state law. The students hope to submit the proposal in the form of proposed local legislation before the Howard County legislative delegation holds its hearing in November. The Board of Education has scheduled a public hearing on the proposal for Thursday, October 27, 2005.

Board Adds Funds to Budget for New Maintenance Facility

The Board gave preliminary approval to an FY2007 Capital Budget totaling nearly \$100 million. In approving the request, the Board added \$300,000 to systemic renovations for improvements to the boardroom, \$1.1 million in planning funds for a combined maintenance/warehouse facility, and an additional \$3 million for site acquisition.

Superintendent Sydney Cousin commented that a new maintenance facility is long overdue. Maintenance offices are located in various Board of Education facilities across the county, including the Harriet Tubman Building, a former African American high school that was closed when the school system integrated high schools in 1965. The Harriet Tubman Foundation has expressed interest in preserving the building as a cultural center for the African American community.

The additional \$300,000 added to systemic renovations would provide for alterations to the boardroom to accommodate two additional members scheduled to join the Board in 2006. The renovation would include reconfiguring the dais, improving the lighting and sound systems, and enhancements to communications equipment.

An additional \$3 million was added for site acquisition to address future needs.

Recreation and Parks Agrees to Land Exchange

Manager of School Planning David Drown presented a proposal to exchange 14 acres east of Laurel Woods Elementary School for approximately 20 acres of Recreation and Parks land adjacent to Bushy Park Elementary School. The additional land near Bushy Park would provide for expansion of that school. Recreation and Parks would like to use the land next to Laurel Woods for a community park. The Board will hold a public hearing on the proposal on November 10 and take action on November 22.

Board Reviews Proposed Changes to Enrollment, Residency, and Tuition Policy

The Board held a work session on changes to Policy 3201, Enrollment, Residency, and Tuition. The Board asked that a special provision be included to give the Superintendent leeway to enroll nonresident students under special circumstances for humanitarian purposes. In response to Board questions, staff remarked that the committee did not make any recommendations to change academic eligibility but merely reflected current policy as it relates to different types of student reassignment.

Additional discussion centered on the length of time that should be granted to families who wish to enroll a child in the school system while they are constructing a home in

Howard County. The current policy allows a child to be enrolled in a school if the family has a settlement date within 60 days of the date of enrollment. The Board agreed to continue the practice.

At a public hearing on the proposed changes held before the work session, Ellen Giles, chairman of the Citizen's Advisory Committee to the Board, presented the CAC's support of the changes to the policy. The Board is scheduled to take action on the policy revisions on October 27.

In Other Action...

At Public Forum, parent Veronika Carella accused the Board and school officials of willful neglect of duties and a breach of ethics that allowed her children to be physically harmed for ten years. The Superintendent countered, saying that the school system had responded to her concerns and to the needs of her children on numerous occasions in meetings at local schools, in his office, and through various staff at the Department of Education. He called Mrs. Carella's comments inaccurate and inappropriate.

Also at Public Forum, Lynn Stiegler expressed concerns with teacher accountability for general and money collected from students. Parent Linda Turner spoke about the importance of parental involvement and collaboration for student success and the system's lack of response to her daughter's needs. The Superintendent responded to Mrs. Turner that staff had spent numerous hours with her and have attempted to address her concerns, though these attempts may not have been to her satisfaction. Parent Steve Fine spoke in favor of a continuum of services for students needing special education services required by IDEA.

In his report to the Board, the Superintendent reported that each of the 30 new schools built during his tenure have opened on time and that he has no reason to believe that the Northeastern Elementary will not open on time.

The Board and Superintendent discussed renovations to the boardroom in anticipation of the addition of two members to the Board in 2006. It was anticipated that the work would be completed next summer.

In addition, the Board scheduled several closed meetings.

The next regular meeting of the Board of Education is scheduled for 4:00 p.m. on Thursday, Oct. 27, 2005.