

Summary of the Board of Education Meeting Thursday, February 9, 2006

ACTION ITEMS

- Approved a consent agenda including staff personnel, bids and contracts, donations, and minutes of previous Board meetings; and received status reports on the operating budget and the school construction fund.
- Tabled a roofing bid for Bushy Park Elementary Replacement School in response to a bid protest.
- Approved a proclamation designating March as Youth Art Month in the HCPSS.
- Approved a proclamation designating March as Women's History Month in the HCPSS.
- Approved the Articles of Incorporation for the Educational Foundation, with amendments (see: "Board Formally Establishes Education Foundation").
- Approved Board positions on education-related legislation under consideration by the 2006 Maryland General Assembly.
- Approved the Design Report for Phase IV Additions for Full-Day Kindergarten.

Denial of Charter School Application Recommended

The Board of Education received a recommendation from the Superintendent to deny the application for the Columbia Public Charter School. A committee of school system staff and community members recommended to the Superintendent that the application be denied for two overarching reasons:

- The proposal does not meet the intent of the law to develop an alternative means to provide innovative learning opportunities and creative educational approaches to improve the education of students.
- The application has not demonstrated the applicant's capacity to establish and operate the charter school.

The committee cited several critical concerns including:

- Lack of a strong instructional approach due to a misalignment among curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
- Lack of demonstrated understanding of federal and state legislation related to student achievement and the accountability system designed to measure student progress.
- Lack of demonstrated qualifications and experiences among the founders for developing K-8 academic programs.
- Lack of clear management, facilities, and financial planning.

The Board is scheduled to take action on the recommendation on February 23.

Board Formally Establishes Education Foundation

The Board approved the Articles of Incorporation for an education foundation formed in support of public education in Howard County. The Foundation will accept gifts, grants, donations, bequests, and funds to support the work of the public schools and provide benefits to public school students.

Related bylaws call for the Foundation to be governed by a ten-member Board of Directors. The Board of Education will select four directors from the community at large, who will then choose six other county residents to fill the remainder of the positions.

Enrollment Projections More Accurate

Manager of School Planning David Drown presented information about the accuracy of enrollment projections for 1996 through 2005 and noted key findings. Data compares projections to actual September 30 enrollments. Drown reported that the kindergarten error rates showed significant improvement in recent projections and that recent organizational error rates at all levels were better when compared to past error rates.

Board members remarked that a certain error rate in projections is inevitable, regardless of how sophisticated the process becomes. Drown replied that the error rate is accounted for in capital planning and redistricting.

Positives, Needed Improvements Noted during Debriefing

Board members, staff, and members of the Attendance Area Adjustment Committee conducted a debriefing of the changes made this year to the processes for attendance area adjustment and capital budget development. Overall, participants felt alignment of the processes was an improvement that produced positive results. They were pleased with the transparency of the process and the opportunity to discuss Board priorities at the front end of the process.

Suggestions for improvement included increasing communication with the community throughout the process, establishing a means for ongoing dialog with the county planning office, and scheduling a preliminary review of proposed attendance area adjustments by the Superintendent's Cabinet. Board members said they look forward to receiving recalculated school capacities for use in the process next year.

In Other Action...

In his report to the Board, Superintendent Sydney Cousin thanked high school staff for collaborating with the Technology Department on adjustments to the Student Management System.

The Board accepted the artwork of Glenwood Middle School students Mary Kate Facchina and Rebecca Grogan for the school system's permanent collection.

Mary Jane Barbato-Grauso, PTA Council President, presented a report on PTA Council activities during an appointment with the Board. She complimented staff for their leadership of the Anti-Bullying Task Force and policy committees. She also shared concerns with the implementation of the Student Information Management System at the high schools.

At Public Forum, Stanley Daniello asked that notations in the calendar related to high school parent conferences and staff development be clarified in future calendars. Parent

Linda Turner reported on a recent incident involving her daughter and the lack of response on the part of school and central office staff.

The next regular meeting of the Board of Education is scheduled for 4:00 p.m. on Thursday, February 23, 2006.