

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

April 25, 2007

The Board of Education of Howard County and the Howard County Council held a joint quarterly meeting on Wednesday, April 25, 2007, at 8:15 a.m. The meeting was held in the Tyson Room, George Howard Building, 3430 Court House Drive, Ellicott City, MD 21043.

Present:

Board of Education

Diane B. Mikulis, Chairman
Frank J. Aquino, Vice Chairman
Lawrence H. Cohen
Sandra H. French
Ellen Flynn Giles
Patricia S. Gordon
Janet N. Siddiqui

Howard County Council

Calvin Ball, Chairman
Courtney Watson, Vice Chairman
Greg Fox
Mary Kay Sigaty
Jen Terrasa

Sydney L. Cousin, Superintendent
Sandra J. Erickson, Deputy Superintendent
Raymond H. Brown, Chief Operating Officer
Mamie J. Perkins, Chief of Staff
Linda Wise, Asst. Supt.-School Administration
Robert Glascock, Asst. Supt.-Curriculum, Instruction, and Technology
Susan S. Shown, Executive Assistant

Sheila Tolliver, Administrator
Jeff Meyers, Legislative Assistant
Haskell Arnold, County Auditor

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

Field Usage – School Programs and Community Groups

Mr. Ball requested an overview of HCPSS field usage and associated policy.

Mr. Mike Williams, Coordinator of Athletics; Mr. Charles Parvis, Community Services Specialist; and Dr. Cousin provided the following information.

- Fields are used for school athletic and physical education programs, including the number of teams and sports seasons which are dictated by COMAR, and other school groups (band, silks, drill teams).
- HCPSS currently has 239 fields, including 77 at the high school level.
- HCPSS activities have priority usage of all fields, and while a few schools must share their fields with neighboring schools, there are generally enough fields to accommodate required activity at each school.
- Community use of fields is governed by Policy 11111 and is coordinated by the Office of Community Services. The current policy, which was last revised in 2002, provides a

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system of allocations of space based on field design, program needs, and season. There is no charge to the user. Specifically:

- Fields are open for community usage year round, with the exception of December 1–March 1. During this period, all fields are closed to allow for restoration of the turf. Schools begin using the fields on March 1; however, community groups may not use the fields until April 1.
- Priority for use changes on a seasonal basis, i.e. soccer in the fall and softball in the spring.
- The office works closely with Recreation and Parks, Columbia Association, and other organizations. For spring 2007 over 18,000 daily use requests from 12 different umbrella organizations were received, of which 92% were approved.
- While there is no data to support the following, it is believed that a significant percentage of the time booked by the respective organizations (perhaps as much as 20%), is unused due to changes in program needs of those organizations.

Dr. Cousin stated that the law does not allow the school system to charge a fee for the use of playing fields. The fields are used intensely and require a lot of upkeep to maintain a safe playing surface. The Board tried to work with the state legislators to set a user fee; however, it was not successful. One of the concerns of the legislators was equity for children who may not be able to pay to play; however, it has not been a problem for Recreation and Parks.

Mrs. Mikulis pointed out that Recreation and Parks does charge a user fee for its fields, so groups naturally prefer to use school fields and not have to pay a user fee.

Dr. Cousin stated that the primary responsibility of Recreation and Parks is to provide recreation opportunities, and the school system's primary responsibility is to provide the educational program, which includes athletics and physical education.

Mr. Ball summarized his understanding that there are legal challenges with being able to charge a user fee for the fields, and (2) there are not enough fields to grant all user requests. Mrs. Mikulis clarified that there are enough fields for the school needs, but not enough for community needs.

Mrs. Watson stated that the Board tried for two years to get legislation passed to allow a fee to be charged for the use of the fields. It would make a big difference in the maintenance of the fields.

Mr. Brown added that the community use could be handled more effectively if the teams could be penalized for reserving a field and then not using it. Mr. Parvis added that Recreation and Parks has the same problem, even though they do charge a reservation fee. However, organizations would prefer to pay the fee to reserve the field and maintain the user permit even if they are not going to use the field rather than giving it up for another group to use.

Mrs. French suggested that the Board could consider instituting policy that would include a penalty other than a monetary penalty, which would encourage user groups to be more realistic in reserving the fields.

Status of Mt. Hebron HS Renovation Project and the Feasibility Study

Mr. Ken Roey, Executive Director of Facilities Planning and Management, stated that based on the Board's decision to defer its decision on the scope of the renovation project, the design team was instructed to stop work on the project. HCPSS has contracted for the performance of a program and facilities condition assessment of Atholton, Centennial, Hammond and Mt. Hebron high schools. The program assessment will utilize the CEFPI Guide for School Facility Appraisal (for High School Appraisal) and will compare the four high school facilities against the General Educational Specifications for High Schools as developed by HCPSS dated 1999 and as modified by the General Educational Specifications for New Howard County High Schools dated March 21, 2002. The facilities condition assessment will be based on the Association of Physical Plant Administrators (APPA) assessment approach and will include a review of the structural, exterior, interior, mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems at the schools.

The report will include an executive summary that will provide a brief description of the required and recommended repairs and replacements and an estimate of any additional space requirements or space modifications to meet the general program requirements of the Educational Specifications. The final reports will provide a 20-year capital expenditure forecast for each school. Status of efforts:

- Interviews with school administration and maintenance staff have been completed.
- Initial physical site surveys were completed during spring break.
- A draft report will be provided for review by HCPSS in May.
- HCPSS staff will review and provide comments in early June.
- The final report is expected to be ready for presentation at the June 28 Board of Education meeting.

In response to Mr. Ball, Mr. Roey explained that the water leak reported on April 18 was the result of a clog in the pipe caused by unnatural substances being flushed down a toilet. The lines were inspected and look good. An engineering assessment has been completed of the new system in the old addition, and it meets code in how it is installed. A relatively minor modification will be completed this summer to reroute the discharge piping about another 500 feet. Mr. Roey acknowledged, however, that an earlier problem at Mt. Hebron H.S. was not the result of a foreign substance being flushed down the toilet; it was mechanical and it has been fixed.

Ms. Gordon asked if this problem is unique to Mt. Hebron H.S., and Mr. Roey responded no. The principal has said that he would expect at least four back-ups a year caused by things being flushed down the toilet. The same problems occur throughout the school system.

Mrs. Watson stated her understanding that the Mt. Hebron H.S. project was deferred for one year. Mrs. Mikulis responded that the Board made a decision not to make a decision on the scope of the project until after the facility needs assessment is completed.

Mrs. Watson asked how the project would move forward without the funding. Mr. Brown responded that the project has been deferred for one year. Once the decision was made to

do an assessment of the high schools, the design work was frozen, so that the design team would not continue work based on the staff recommendation if there was the possibility that the Board would not approve it. Once the decision on the scope of the project is approved, then the funding will have to be identified.

In response to Mrs. Watson, Mr. Brown stated that if the construction money were in this year's budget, it could not be spent because of the decision to wait for the needs assessment to be complete. Mrs. Watson asked if it was the decision of the County Executive or the Board to wait for the needs assessment. Mrs. Mikulis responded that the Board made the decision to wait for the needs assessment to be completed before it decides the scope of the project for Mt. Hebron H.S.

Dr. Cousin stated that with deferrals, the FY 2009 capital budget request will be \$112 million, and at least \$20 million will have to be added to that. That number is unaffordable without a source of funding other than bonds. If there were an appropriation of funds in the FY 2008 budget, it would be helpful. Mrs. Watson asked for clarification that even if funds for the project were appropriated in FY 2008, it would not accelerate the project, but having the funds would allow the project to move forward when it was ready. Dr. Cousin responded yes.

Mrs. Watson commented that by deferring the funding for the project, the FY 2009 capital budget would increase by \$100 million. She asked if there has been any progress about talking with the County Executive about a sustainable funding source. Dr. Cousin responded that he has talked with the County Executive; however, it will have to go through the state legislation.

Dr. Cousin noted that the cost of construction is escalating, as well as the number of renovation projects.

Mrs. Watson stated that she wanted to convey to the Board that the public needs to be educated about the needs of the school system to support the County Executive's argument to the public that the funding is needed. Mr. Cohen commented that the Board is not the funding authority, and that the Board has advocated and said that it needs the funding. It is not just incumbent upon the Board.

Mrs. Giles recalled that the Board of Education, the County Council, and the community tried two years ago to obtain a sustainable funding source, and the legislation approved the excise tax but with a sunset clause. Mrs. Watson pointed out that there are new legislators in office who may be more willing to support the needs of the school system and county. She encouraged everyone involved to support the effort to obtain funding for the needs of the school system and students.

Financial Literacy

Mr. Ball stated that some school jurisdictions are requiring a course in financial literacy. He supported the need to educate students on financial responsibility and other economic issues. Mr. Glascock provided information on the status of financial literacy in the curriculum.

- Aspects of financial literacy are infused throughout the curriculum.
- Staff recognizes the need in this 21st Century for students to have those skills.
- A planning team is in place to solicit input, advice, and resources from community partners in order to write curriculum for an elective course.
- A request for approval of the course will be presented to the Board in the fall, and it will then be included in the catalog of courses for the 2008-2009 school year.
- Other options to providing financial literacy coursework that are being considered are: an on-line course, after-school or summer program, countywide program provided in central location (i.e. Howard Community College).
- There are 28 courses that students can take during their four years of high school, and 21 of those courses are mandated by the state as a graduation requirement.
- High school principals have requested that financial literacy be a semester course instead of a full-year course.

In response to Mr. Ball's inquiry about the Academy of Finance, Mr. Glascock explained that it is one of the academies in the Career and Technology program. There is an advisory board for each of the career academies that include business and community members.

FY 2008 Capital Budget and FY 2009-2013 Capital Improvement Program - Howard County Planning Board Recommendations

Mrs. Watson stated that she was satisfied with the response that the school system provided (letter dated March 30, 2007, to Ms. Tammy CitaraManis, Chairperson, Howard County Planning Board, from Raymond Brown, Chief Operating Officer, HCPSS).

Donations to Individual Schools

Mr. Ball asked for clarification of the information on donations to schools that was included in a newspaper article (*The Howard County Times*, April 5, 2007). Mrs. Wise and Mr. Glascock responded.

- There were inaccuracies in the newspaper.
- Donations are regulated by Board policy and must meet established criteria and enhance the academic or extracurricular program.
- Some schools are recipients of more donations than others. The school system builds in safeguards to ensure that each school has quality teachers and instruction, i.e. Title I schools get additional staffing and priority in hiring the best teachers.
- Systemwide donations may be used to provide cultural programs for schools that cannot afford special programs.
- Grant money also may be used for special programs for students and families.
- Some federal pass-through funds are targeted for specific school needs.
- Business partners are directed to schools that are less likely to receive donations.

Dr. Cousin stated that donations should not be looked at in isolation, and that schools should not be compared. Some schools have made a deliberate decision not to have fundraising activities because it takes away from the school's mission, and some schools may have a fundraiser only for a specific reason.

Mrs. Watson noted that the Annotated Code of Maryland requires the Board to provide a reasonably uniform educational program for all schools. She recalled that when one school wanted to raise funds to install stadium lights, the Board said no, and then a countywide fundraising effort was successful in providing stadium lights at all county high schools.

Mrs. Mikulis stated that the Board established the HCPSS Educational Foundation, which is totally separate from the Board, and the foundation can use the data on donations and fundraisers to help guide its decisions.

Mrs. French said that the number of students and families attending a specific school also makes a difference in the total money raised. The principals know their students and families, and know how to best meet their needs. The community and business partners work cooperatively with the schools and principals to meet specific needs.

Mr. Ball stated that all of the reports were very helpful and thorough.

Adjournment

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 9:50 a.m.

Next meeting: June 6, 2007, 8:15 a.m., Board Room, Department of Education.