

# **A Summary of the Board of Education Meeting**

## **Thursday, February 7, 2008**

### **Action Items**

- Approved the consent agenda including donations and the minutes of regular Board meetings and received status reports on the operating budget and the school construction fund.
- Approved the restricted consent agenda including staff personnel, bids and contracts, the appointment of two members to the Ethics Panel, the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Grant and the minutes of closed Board meetings.
- Approved a proclamation designating March as Youth Art Month in the HCPSS and received the work of three student artists for the HCPSS's permanent collection.
- Approved a proclamation designating March as National Women's History Month in the HCPSS.
- Approved revisions to Policy 1010, Discrimination; Policy 1020, Sexual Harassment; and Policy 7010, Confidentiality of Personnel Records (see: "Board approved revisions to three policies").
- Approved Board positions on legislation currently under consideration by the 2008 Maryland General Assembly.
- Approved the design report for Phase VI kindergarten additions.
- Approved entering negotiations with Dr. Cousin regarding renewal of his contract (see: "Board, Superintendent agree to enter contract negotiations").

### **Board, Superintendent agree to enter contract negotiations**

Board Chairman Frank Aquino reported that Superintendent Sydney Cousin has indicated his interest in renewing his contract. Board members expressed support for his leadership and voted unanimously to enter into contract negotiations with Dr. Cousin.

### **Board sees new design for Mt. Hebron HS renovation project**

Executive Director of Facilities Planning and Management Ken Roey and President of Smolen-Emr + Associates Architects Jim Emr presented the new design concept for the Mt. Hebron High School renovation project. The new plan calls for demolition of a portion of the building and reconstruction of a two-story addition. The concept grew out of discussions of the Mt. Hebron High School Planning Advisory Committee.

The new design incorporates general classroom improvements and the addition of space and improvements to support services as well as major programmatic improvements throughout the building including the fine arts, athletics, special education and administrative areas. The new design results in a gain of one teaching space. The project also includes totally renovated HVAC and electrical systems and an upgrade of the entire building to meet current fire safety codes.

Roey indicated that the project is on a tight timeline if work is to begin in FY 09. He anticipates that the schematic design will be brought to the Board within the next 60 days.

### **Methodology for enrollment projections proves reliable**

Manager of School Planning Joel Gallihue recommended that the school system continue using existing methodology for projecting student enrollments given the acceptable error rates over the past decade. Of the seventy schools for which we provide annual projections, fifty-nine had error rates below 5 percent and only one exceeded 10 percent.

The per school mean absolute percentage error (MAPE) is 2.9 percent. Gallihue remarked that the key finding is that error rates for the 2007 projection compare favorably with the experience of the past decade and demonstrate the model is providing consistent estimates.

### **Board reviews annual hiring stats**

Director of Human Resources Kirk Thompson and other members of the HR staff presented the annual report on employee hiring, employee resignations and retirements. In the one-year period ending September 30, 2007, there were 573 new teachers hired to accommodate the growth of 350 new students, as well as to replace 420 teachers who resigned, retired, took leaves of absence, or were promoted. Additionally, 28 teachers returned from leaves of absence.

During this same period, 392 support services employees were hired, which represents a slight increase from the previous year's total of 361. Eighty-five support services employees were transferred during the reporting period. There were 220 separations during the period, which is a decrease from the previous year's total of 239.

Thompson reported that there continues to be a shortage of teaching candidates throughout Maryland. As a result, 41 percent of the system's new teachers were recruited from outside of the state.

Starting teacher salaries in the HCPSS are the fourth highest in the state. In addition, signing bonuses for teachers in critical content areas continue to be an effective recruiting incentive. Howard County, one of the first local school systems in Maryland to use this incentive, continues to see signing bonuses as an asset in filling vacancies in critical content areas. Efforts continue to be made to diversify staff according to experience, age, race, and gender.

### **Board approves revisions to three policies**

The Board approved revisions to policies dealing with discrimination, sexual harassment, and confidentiality of personnel records. In Policy 1010, Discrimination, the policy standard regarding notification was revised to be consistent with similar policies. The revised policy also provides clear pathways for students, employees, and third parties to file complaints and clarifies which complaints must be reported to the Equity Assurance Coordinator.

The Board also approved a revised version of Policy 1020, Sexual Harassment, which broadens the accessibility to sexual harassment complaint forms to include employees and third parties in addition to students. Related procedures indicate forms will be available in guidance offices, on the system website and from the Office of Equity

Assurance. As with the discrimination policy, revisions to this policy also identify clear pathways for students, employees, and third parties to file complaints and clarify which complaints must be reported to the Equity Assurance Coordinator and which can be handled by school administrators.

The Board approved a revised version of Policy 7010, Confidentiality of Personnel Records, which includes an updated definition of personnel files that incorporate language from the definition of work history, employee references, evidence of background investigations, and rebuttals. The policy now includes a standard regarding confidentiality of personnel files and records and references negotiated agreements when discussing the rights of employees to review personnel files and receive copies of documents. Revisions clarify that, consistent with current practice, records of grievances and 4-205 appeals will not be included in personnel files.

At a public hearing on Policy 6000, School Site Selection, Chris Wertman, Chairman of the Community Advisory Council, testified in support of the proposed revisions.

The Board also received reports on revisions to the following four policies:

- Policy 7070, Promotion of Certificated Personnel
- Policy 5220, Criteria for Selecting School Bus Contractors
- Policy 5230, School Bus Contractors, Bus Operators and Assistants
- Policy 10040, Charter Schools

The Board also received recommendations for two new policies -- Policy 4090, Debt Management, and Policy 4100, Investments. Public hearings will be held on all six policies on March 13. The Board is scheduled to take action on the policies on April 10.

### **In other action...**

Superintendent's Report: Superintendent Sydney Cousin noted that February 4-8 is Employee Appreciation Week and thanked all HCPSS employees for their hard work and dedication. He also congratulated:

- Rockburn Elementary School first grade teacher Amy Ashmore for her selection as Howard County's 2007 Outstanding Technology Using Educator
- Elkridge Landing Middle School Principal Tom Saunders for receiving Howard County's 2007 Outstanding Technology Leader in Education Award
- Maryland Music Educators Association award winners:
  - The River Hill High School Music Department, Exemplary Music Program
  - Centennial High School Principal Scott Pfeifer, Outstanding Administrator
  - Band director at Folly Quarter Middle School Andy Spang, 2008 Outstanding Music Teacher

Public Forum: Parent Nancy Smith presented some remaining concerns related to the Mt. Hebron High School renovation project. Cindy Ardinger presented a position statement approved by the Patapsco Middle PTA and Mt. Hebron High PTSAs asking that collaboration continue and that the recommendations in the Gilbert Report be fully implemented. Mt. Hebron High School student Mahila Amjab expressed concern about

losing four classrooms as a result of the renovation at her school.

Board Member Reports: Mrs. Gordon reported on her attendance at the National School Boards Association's Leadership Conference.

Board Schedule: The Board agreed to collapse the remaining two budget work sessions into one session on February 13, 2008.

PTA Council Appointment: Mary Jane Grauso, President of the PTA Council of Howard County, reported that the PTA's Healthy School Walk Through is scheduled for the last week in February.

**The next regular meeting of the Board of Education is scheduled for 4:00 PM on Thursday, February 21, 2008.**