

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF HOWARD COUNTY

May 15, 2008

The Board of Education of Howard County held a Public Hearing and Public Work Session on the FY 2009 Operating and Capital Budgets and FY 2010-2014 Capital Improvement Program on Thursday, May 15, 2008, at 7:30 p.m., in the Board Room of the Department of Education, located at 10910 Route 108, Ellicott City, Maryland. The following were present:

Frank Aquino, Chairman
Ellen Flynn Giles, Vice Chairman
Lawrence Cohen
Sandra H. French
Patricia Gordon
Diane Mikulis
Janet Siddiqui, M.D.

Sydney L. Cousin, Superintendent, Secretary/Treasurer
Sandra Erickson, Deputy Superintendent
Patti Caplan, Director, Public Relations
Arlene Conway, Recording Secretary

Chairman Aquino called the meeting to order at 7:34 p.m., and Mr. Cohen led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Hearing – FY 2009 Operating and Capital Budgets

Mr. Steven Bassett, Chairman, Superintendent's TV Services Task Force.

- Expressed support for the TV Services budget and the five-year Strategic Plan.
- Requested that funding be restored to provide for this initiative.
- Suggested phasing in of the plan in order to save funds.

Mr. Mike Klatzkin, Operating Budget Review Committee.

- Asked that the Board restore 5 positions in the Leadership/Internship Program for a total of 15 positions.
- Asked that the Board restore the technology teacher positions in the middle schools.
- Requested that the replacement cycle plan be continued and stated that deferrals will cost more in the future.

Approved – June 12, 2008

- Stated that elimination of the bilingual liaison should not be considered. The Operating Budget Review Committee (OBRC) recommends adding another position.
- Supported elimination of the communications specialist until there is support and funding for the full recommendations of the communications audit.

Public Work Session – FY 2009 Operating and Capital Budgets and FY 2010-2014 Capital Improvement Program

Mr. David White, Budget Officer, noted that yesterday was the pre-file deadline for amendments to the budget by County Council members, unless they intend to introduce them at the legislative session. Dr. Cousin said that a scheduled work session had been cancelled, which is an indication that there may be few, if any, changes he would suggest to the operating budget.

Mrs. French noted the importance of the Board reviewing the list of potential budget reductions as they have the right and responsibility to make changes.

Mr. Aquino stated that this is a year for a conservative budget. The County budget office is waving the conservative flag from the standpoint of projected revenues and particularly trying to limit increases in new positions and the cascading effect that will have on future budgets.

Dr. Cousin said that the predictions about the 2010 budget and beyond are going to be austere. He explained that local funding will be needed to make up for shortfalls in state funding. The state's increase for FY 2008 was \$26 million. For 2009, it is \$13 million, and the projection for 2010 is \$5 million to \$8 million. The reduction list addresses the future as well as the current budget.

Mrs. French recalled a time when the Board had to approve the reduction of staff and reallocation of staff to lower or other positions. She expressed reluctance to adding new positions this year due to the impact those positions and salaries will have on future years. She said that she would like to see the middle school technology teachers approved but could not justify adding them because of the dollar impact on future budgets. She questioned the possibility of reducing the leadership interns even further.

Mrs. Erickson noted the need to build a leadership capacity and make an investment in leadership training. This was a decision to be more efficient with the dollars, ask for a lesser position than an assistant principal, and start building a new program. These positions have been presented as a new initiative. If these interns are not funded, staff may come back and request assistant principals for schools in need, which would cost the system more money.

Ms. Gordon indicated that if the interns function well, they would be the first considered for an assistant principal position when openings occur. Mrs. Erickson concurred and added that the interns will receive an administrative experience, and staff will have an opportunity to evaluate their actual effectiveness on the job, rather than through the interview process only.

Mr. Cohen noted that the original high school staffing proposal was 27.5. He asked how many more positions were created. Mrs. Erickson said 15. Mr. Cohen asked if that were to go back to 27.5 that would eliminate the 15 positions. He asked how that would impact the scheduling, and the staffing that has already been done. Mrs. Erickson said the decision was made early on in staffing to go ahead and staff based on 27. Timelines need to be followed and the staffing process starts in January.

Dr. Cousin said that this potential reduction list was developed to have the least impact on the classroom. All these items will have some impact in the classroom, but the goal is to minimize that impact. One of the things staff has looked at for years is high school staffing, and over time, this needs to be addressed.

In response to Mr. Cohen's questions regarding high school staffing, Mrs. Erickson explained that staffing a timeline must be followed, and the process of surplus teachers begins in January and February. She stated that decisions on staffing were made early because of the difficulty in changing a high school schedule. Mrs. Erickson also noted that if the Board were to eliminate positions, it would be necessary to take positions out of the staffing pool.

Mr. Cohen asked about the possibility of using the instructional pool for some of the technology education teachers as needed. Mrs. Erickson stated that the pool could be used. She also explained that the budget contains three middle school technology positions, and staff is taking a closer look at the possibility of repurposing some

positions in the future toward technology or other areas at schools that have less academic intervention needs.

Mrs. Mikulis brought up the topic of online testing and asked if it were possible to have a Central Office position look at testing across all middle schools. Mrs. Erickson said that this is currently being done. There are three resource teachers who support technology across the system. The testing office and IT staff work very closely together to implement the online testing program. That would be one of the duties of the technology teachers. The other is to do school-based professional development and low-level trouble shooting with the implementation of all laptops and technology in the building. The school system is working on getting local assessments online as the state converts from paper and pencil to online testing.

In response to Mrs. Mikulis, Mrs. Erickson stated that teachers could be clustered – one being responsible for several schools. Mrs. Erickson added that these teachers work with other teachers to identify appropriate software, which is a part of professional development, but it is more specific. There is a continuum of skills that students are supposed to master regarding technology. There is no technology course, so they work with classroom teachers to integrate that throughout the curriculum. Mrs. Giles noted that this proficiency must be demonstrated by eighth grade.

Mrs. French asked for an explanation of the cost savings of reducing four positions for the substitute bus drivers. Mr. Brown explained that the net impact of this reduction is a savings of \$36,900. When staff put this proposal together, \$120,000 was backed out for the contracted services. By providing the service ourselves, it would not be a contracted service, but it would be accomplished with system personnel.

Regarding the positions and budget for the Public Information Office, Mr. White explained that staff budgets for a turnover situation. Savings in salaries occurs for unfilled positions, delays in filling positions, and/or positions that are filled at lower salaries than budgeted.

Mr. Aquino noted that he was comfortable with the line item on legal fees.

Dr. Cousin addressed the video and TV position and supplies line item, and said staff will be working with TV services and others to look at some alternative way of getting the plan started.

Mr. Cohen asked Dr. Cousin about concerns related to keeping buildings maintained so that future capital projects will not be as severe as they might be. Dr. Cousin responded that maintenance is one of those areas that has not been fully funded in the past, and deferred maintenance compounds the situation.

Mrs. Mikulis asked if the last positions under International Student Services and Countywide are the only ones being added to this year's budget. Mrs. Erickson responded that many of these positions were additional special education positions beyond the 50.9 positions prior to this cut.

Dr. Cousin stated that the two real issues of funding for the capital budget are the County Executive's anticipated projection of state funding showing \$20 million, which turned out to be \$1.7 million short of what was anticipated. Another reduction in state funding which could have a critical impact is \$3.5 million in systemic renovations.

Mrs. Giles noted the need to find a way for the County Council to restore the \$1.7 million shortfall. Dr. Cousin advised the Board to wait until the County Council provides a final budget amount before discussing how reductions will be made.

Adjournment: The Chairman moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:32 p.m. The motion was seconded by Ms. Gordon and approved by the Board (7/0).