

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

September 14, 2007

The Board of Education of Howard County hosted a breakfast meeting on Friday, September 14, 2007, at 8:30 a.m., with members of the Howard County Delegation, the Howard County Council, and the Howard County Executive. The meeting was held in the Board Room of the Department of Education, 10910 Route 108, Ellicott City, MD 21042.

Present:

Board of Education

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

Howard County Delegation

Senator Ed Kasemeyer
Senator Allan Kittleman
Delegate Elizabeth Bobo
Delegate Guy Guzzone
Delegate Frank Turner

Howard County Council

Calvin Ball, Chairman
Courtney Watson, Vice Chairman
Jennifer Terrasa

Howard County Executive

Ken Ulman

Howard County Public Schools

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 and Instruction
Roger Plunkett, Business, Community, and Government Relations Officer
Susan A. Shown, Recording Secretary

Mr. Plunkett welcomed everyone to the meeting, noting that the Howard County Public School System is one of the main attractions of the county. He expressed the need for a cooperative effort as the county faces tremendous budget concerns this year, in particular, its capital budget needs.

Approved – October 11, 2007

Dr. Cousin stated that the meeting was an opportunity to talk about important issues impacting the county and the school system, especially the High School Assessments and the school system's capital budget needs.

Dr. Cousin displayed a newspaper headline concerning an alleged incident at Mt. Hebron High School during which rats were supposed to have fallen from the cafeteria ceiling. Dr. Cousin emphatically stated that there was absolutely no basis for the report.

Mr. Brown added that there were rats at Mt. Hebron HS, and the infestation was treated sometime ago. There was a recent sighting in the courtyard, and the problem was immediately addressed. There is no evidence at all to support the recent newspaper story.

Senator Kasemeyer and Delegate Bobo thanked everyone for the opportunity for the elected officials and the school system staff to discuss important issues facing the county and the school system.

Howard County Executive Ken Ulman

Mr. Ulman addressed the meeting concerning the budget challenges that the county will face for fiscal year 2009. Mr. Ulman stated that 53% of the county budget funds K-12 education, and 6-7% funds the Howard Community College. He expected that the same ratios would have to apply to any budget reductions. Howard County will have to be part of the solution to the state's budget deficit.

Mr. Ulman pointed out that if the county is forced to absorb the state's cost of school system employee retirement, it will have a huge impact on Howard County. He invited the state legislators to call him or his staff for any information they may need on how decisions during the General Assembly will impact the county.

Mr. Ulman stated that the county will be faced with very difficult decisions concerning the capital budget. There are \$300 million in capital budget requests now, which do not include the new county government campus or the new courthouse, and the bond spending limit is recommended not to exceed \$100 million. It is also anticipated that the county will receive less state dollars than last year for the capital needs of the school system. It is a very difficult time to explore additional revenue resources; however, without additional revenue, and continuing capital budget requests in these amounts, tough decisions will have to be made.

High School Assessments (HSAs)

Mrs. Erickson referred to the Bridge to Excellence Comprehensive Master Plan Update that was provided in the meeting information packets. She explained that the update provides information on the additional positions and supports to implement the Master Plan. The update does not represent a change in direction; next year the Maryland State Department of Education will provide direction for a new master plan.

Dr. Theresa Alban, Executive Director of Strategic Planning, Assessments, and Program Evaluation, and Mrs. Linda Wise, Assistant Superintendent for School Administration, presented an overview of the current status of the High School Assessments.

- High stakes graduation requirement in four content areas (end-of-course exam).
- Total number of students not passing the test is distorted by inclusion of students who have not even taken the course and have not taken the test.
- The HSAs are proving to be a challenge for students with special needs.
- The requirement to pass the HSAs can be met in two ways:
 - Pass all four exams.
 - Achieve a minimum score on each exam, with a combined score of 1,602.
- Plan-Do-Act-Study cycle is used for continuing improvement, constantly reflecting on best practices.
- Extended time needed to score the tests and the late receipt of test results make it difficult to put supports and interventions in place in a timely manner for those students who did not pass the test.

Delegate Bobo asked how the school system would rate the HSA program now. Dr. Alban responded that the test has always been problematic because of the constructed responses, which have to be hand scored and results in the late receipt of the test outcomes for students who need interventions. The consistency with what is being taught is beneficial to the students, and "teaching to the test" is sometimes helpful. However, there is no item analysis to identify the student's weaknesses.

Delegate Bobo asked about the schools with the most challenged students. Dr. Cousin stated that it is harder, but the school system has provided more resources to those schools. Delegate Bobo asked if the HSAs are worth the amount of time, energy, and resources required to implement the program. Dr. Cousin explained that unless the test identifies the individual needs of each student, it is only one measure of the student's achievement.

Mrs. Erickson added that one high stakes test cannot show the actual achievement of a student.

Senator Kasemeyer asked that of the 5-7% of the students who do not pass the test, how many actually will not be able to graduate even after remediation and interventions. Dr. Alban responded that it will take about another year before that question can be answered. There are still students who are required to take the test, but passing the test is not a graduation requirement for them. Senator Kasemeyer expressed his concern for students who will not be able to pass the exams and asked what will happen to them. Mrs. Wise responded that they will not be able to graduate.

Mrs. French stated that the Board took a position on the HSAs in March for the Maryland Association of Boards of Education, which recommended that the 2009 graduation requirement deadline be postponed until all of the problems are addressed. It seems unfair that the students in the class of 2009 will have to take the existing tests while later classes will have to answer only multiple choice questions.

Mrs. French continued that staff is looking at each student in the early grades to address those challenges before they get to the tests. The Thornton dollars have been used to hire additional staff to target the needs of those students.

Delegate Turner asked what alternatives are available to a structured one-year plan to help students get through the tests. Mrs. Wise explained that staff looks at each individual's needs to identify the interventions that are needed for each student to be successful. Staff is also working with parents to let them know what they can do to help their child.

Mrs. Gordon commented that the school system needs to put a lot of work into the needs of the African American students and develop a program to assist them because they are consistently falling behind.

Dr. Alban stated that *No Child Left Behind* does not give school systems an option – it mandates that by 2010, 100% of the students will pass.

FY 2009 Capital Budget

Mr. Plunkett pointed out the need to identify a sustained funding source for capital needs.

Mr. Ken Roey, Executive Director of Facilities Planning and Management, stated that the school system hopes to address the

maintenance needs of existing schools, and the Facilities Assessment Survey is beginning to shape those priorities. He noted that the capital budget does not include inflation in the dollars and, over the past few years, there has been a decrease in the buying power of those dollars.

Mrs. Watson asked what the school system can live without, and Mr. Roey responded that the capital budget represents the requirements of the school system. Dr. Cousin added that a lot depends on the level of state funding – the needs keep increasing, while the funding is expected to decrease. Each time a project is deferred, it compounds a serious position of more needs and less dollars. Dr. Cousin provided an example of even less expensive items, such as the replacement of playground equipment. If deteriorated and unsafe equipment has to be removed, it cannot be replaced without available funds. He also noted that the deferral of updating technology cannot continue without having an effect on the schools.

Mr. Brown pointed out that the Facilities Assessment Survey only includes four schools and does not reflect the completion of the total number of facilities.

Delegate Guzzone asked if the Board is at a position to renovate Mt. Hebron HS instead of constructing a replacement school. Mrs. Mikulis responded that she believed the Board is looking at the \$50 million as a cap, which is \$18 million more than what was requested last year. She pointed out, however, that the Board has not voted on the capital budget request.

Delegate Turner stated the probability that the state is not going to make the same funding commitment this year or in the next few years as it did last year. A new funding source is needed beyond the excise tax.

Mr. Plunkett stated that September 25 is the deadline for the introduction of proposed legislation. The school system does not have charter authority, and the Delegation's help is needed to provide the funding resources required by the school system.

Senator Kasemeyer stated that there are many more needs than available capital funding. He has proposed reconsidering spending limits and that Howard County needs to look at increasing its level of spending affordability. Mr. Guzzone expressed his concurrence with Senator Kasemeyer, at least for a short time.

Mr. Ball stated that maybe the county should consider it. Mrs. Watson added that additional state funding would help.

Mrs. Mikulis commented that the needs of the school system can be documented, and there is a need to go forward with a dedicated funding source.

Delegate Bobo asked for a report on the first meeting of the Superintendent and Board Chairman with the County Executive. Mrs. Mikulis responded that the school system's needs were presented to Mr. Ulman, but nothing definitive was discussed. Mr. Ulman recognized the importance of the school system to the county, but pointed out that there are other county needs as well.

Senator Kasemeyer asked why there was such a decrease in the school system's capital budget request last year, and Mr. Roey explained that the Mt. Hebron HS project was deferred for a year.

Mr. Ball stated that education is the key to success and, given the current and future challenges, these are serious issues which will require some very difficult decisions.

Representation Fee (Howard County Education Association Negotiations)

Delegate Bobo asked for an update on the status of negotiations concerning the representation fee legislation. Mr. Mark Blom, General Counsel, stated that the Board began negotiations concerning the representation fee with HCEA in May, and there are about 10-11 items that still need to be resolved. The law takes effect on October 1, 2007. .

Delegate Guzzone stated that he believes very strongly in the legislation and that the intent of the law was to implement a representation fee. Senator Kittleman noted that the legislation is enabling and not mandatory – allowing the negotiations but not requiring it.

Closing

Mr. Mikulis acknowledged that the meeting was a great opportunity to discuss the challenges faced by the county and the school system and the need to continue the discussions. She summarized that the school system is in pretty good shape with the HSAs, but there are still students who need assistance. The facilities assessment has been completed for only four schools, and the completion of the assessment for the remaining schools will increase the funding needs. She stated that she looked forward to meeting with the County Executive again.

Adjournment - There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 10:00 a.m.