

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

**Thursday, October 25, 2007**

## **Action Items**

- Approved the general consent agenda including minutes of regular Board meetings and donations.
- Approved the restricted consent agenda including bids and contracts, land acquisition by the State Highway Administration at Folly Quarter Middle School and Howard High School, and minutes of closed Board meetings.
- Approved a proclamation designating November as American Indian Heritage Month in the HCPSS.
- Approved a proclamation designating November 14, 2007 as Educational Support Personnel Day in the HCPSS.
- The Board approved a letter to the Howard County delegation outlining the impact of various aspects of the Governor's proposals to address the state deficit.
- Approved revisions to the BOE School Cluster Assignments for 2007-2008.
- Approved the HCPSS Pre-K to Grade 12 essential curriculum and curriculum-based assessments.
- Approved the addition and deletion of courses for the Catalog of Approved High School courses for 2008-2009.

## **Staff recommends no Attendance Area Adjustments for next year**

Manager of School Planning Joel Gallihue reported that no elementary or middle school redistricting is necessary for 2008. He also recommended that the Board retain the Greenbridge open enrollment exception until comprehensive high school redistricting adjustments are made in 2010.

Gallihue reviewed the attendance area adjustments approved last year in light of this year's September 30 enrollment count and indicated that a more detailed analysis of projection accuracy will be presented in February, followed by the Feasibility Study with new projections in June.

The primary thrust of elementary school redistricting was to open the new Veterans Elementary School and it was successful in achieving balanced student populations in the Northern and Northeastern regions. Redistricting from Bryant Woods Elementary to Running Brook Elementary has provided some relief. The middle school redistricting to relieve Elkrige Landing Middle School by sending students to Mayfield Woods Middle School has been successful.

The official enrollment report is still being checked, however preliminary information indicates that projections were accurate. As a result, it appears that both elementary and comprehensive high school redistricting are still needed in 2010. Middle school redistricting in 2013 is also supported. These redistricting plans have been discussed with some variation in the last two Feasibility Studies but will require further adjustment, including new plans that could include Phelps Luck Elementary School.

The "Greenbridge Exception" is an open enrollment decision by the Board that has been

in effect since 1998. Students who live in the area are assigned to River Hill High School but may attend Glenelg High School under open enrollment without transportation. At the time, staff recommended that redistricting should be contingent on completion of the addition at Glenelg. With major impediments to completing that project now resolved, it is estimated that the addition will open by spring 2008.

Some families, who made the decision to send their students to Glenelg while providing their own transportation, have voiced expectations to be redistricted with bus transportation as soon as the addition is complete. Staff does not recommend redistricting at this time because comprehensive high school redistricting plans will be considered in 2009 and take effect in 2010.

Staff has also reviewed the option of providing transportation to both schools. This would double transportation costs to serve Greenbridge and would place an additional strain on an already taxed transportation system. Staff recommends that bussing to both schools only be provided as part of an approved phased redistricting or phase-out of the exception.

#### **Board shares fiscal concerns with HC Delegation before special session**

The Board approved a letter to the Howard County delegation outlining the impact of various aspects of the Governor's proposals to address the state deficit. The letter urges the members of the delegation to pledge their support for full funding for Maryland public schools as required by the Thornton Bridge to Excellence Act, for continuing state funding of the teacher pension system, and for ensuring that we are able to meet capital project needs.

The letter indicates that amending the Thornton legislation would be detrimental for the following reasons:

- The Howard County Public School System is dependent upon the additional \$5.8 million as required by Thornton funding to continue targeted programs for intervention and student support services as required by both The Bridge to Excellence Act and The No Child Left Behind Legislation.
- Based upon the legislative commitment, the Howard County Public School System's academic programs have already included additional staffing that depends upon the committed level of funding to sustain programs directed at closing achievement gaps.
- Not providing any inflation factor increase in each of the next two years, as proposed by the Governor, would erode the progress we are making to raise student achievement by forcing us to choose between rising utility, health care, transportation and other costs – instead of focusing on investments in the classrooms.

The Governor's budget proposal includes funding for the Geographic Cost of Education Index (GCEI) to provide additional state aid to certain high cost school systems. Both the annual inflation factor and the GCEI are needed and the Board suggests one cannot

substitute for the other. Specifically,

- Howard County is entitled to an additional \$4.9 million annually, if and when the GCEI is fully funded.
- Under the Governor's recommended phase-in schedule for GCEI funding, Howard County would receive an additional \$1.5 million in FY 2009. When coupled with a freeze on funding of the inflation factor at \$5.8 million, this will result in a net loss of \$4.3 million in legislated increases
- If the inflation factor freeze continues and the GCEI funding for the second year is phased in at 60%, as proposed by the Governor last session (Senate Bill 109), then Howard County would receive \$3.1 million in FY 2010. However, total GCEI funding at these proposed levels over a two-year period represents less than 80% of the funding needed to match the inflation factor anticipated for FY 2009 alone.

The letter references the scenario of shifting 50% of such costs to local governments was included in the "Doomsday" budget briefing to the General Assembly earlier this summer and states that it would total more than \$317 million in new, unanticipated expenditures for local governments. Howard County's share of the annual costs for teacher retirement would amount to \$27.1 million dollars in FY 2009. Moreover, these costs will increase in future years based on rising pension levels and the number of retirees.

In addition, the Board notes that Howard County is in dire need of dedicated capital funding and is dependent upon state aid. For FY 2008, the Board requested \$52.2 million dollars from the Interagency Committee on Public School Construction, but received \$23.2 million. For FY 2009, the Board has submitted a capital budget request to the Interagency Committee on Public School Construction in the amount of \$50.4 million.

The letter will be forwarded to the Howard County Delegation before the special session of the General Assembly is convened.

#### **Ombudsman policy aligned with job description**

At the direction of the Board and in consultation with Policy Specialist Ellen Miller, Policy 2030 was reviewed by a work group of the Board of Education consisting of Ms. French, Ms. Giles, and Ms. Gordon. The purpose of the review was to ensure that the policy and current job description for the Ombudsman were aligned and that the new policy met the intent of the Board. Following a public hearing on November 29, 2007, the Board will take action to adopt the revised policy.

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

In his report to the Board, Superintendent Sydney Cousin announced that the school system has been awarded \$340,000 for the first year of a three-year Twenty-first Century Community Learning Centers Grant. He also reported on the Annual Student Leadership Luncheon. He congratulated Mt. Hebron High School Spanish teacher Debby Doyle, who was named 2008 Maryland Language Teacher of the Year by the Maryland Foreign

Language Association and Triadelphia Ridge Elementary school counselor Charlotte Lollis, who was named Maryland Elementary School Counselor of the Year by the Maryland School Counselor Association.

At Public Forum, Linda Turner, representing the Council of Elders, informed the Board of the formation of the Black Student, Family and Community Network, an advocacy group that will address educational continuity issues and other issues of concern.

Board Vice Chairman Frank Aquino thanked the Howard High administration and PTSA for hosting the Board's Coffee and Conversation on October 13. Board Chairman Diane Mikulis announced that three seats on the Board would be open next year. She indicated that Ms. Giles and Dr. Sidiqqi have announced their plans to seek reelection. Ms. Mikulis announced that she does not intend to seek a second term on the Board.

In separate appointments with the Board, Rose Dennison, Chairman of the Community Advisory Council to the Board, reported on recent activities of the Council and Mary Jane Grauso, President of the PTA Council of Howard County, thanked the Board for hosting the PTA President Luncheon, for partnering with PCs for Kids, and for inviting PTA members to participate in Facilitative Leadership and Cultural Proficiency training.

**The next regular meeting of the Board of Education is scheduled for 4:00 PM on Thursday, November 8, 2007.**