

Summary of the Board of Education Meeting

Thursday, January 10, 2008

Action Items

- Approved the restricted consent agenda including staff personnel and bids and contracts.
- Approved the general consent agenda including donations and minutes of regular Board meetings and received status reports on the operating budget and the school construction fund.
- Approved a proclamation designating February 4-8, 2008 as Employee Appreciation Week in the HCPSS.
- Approved a proclamation designating the month of February as African American History Month in the HCPSS.
- Approved a proclamation designating February 4-8, 2008 as National School Counseling Week in the HCPSS.
- Approved a motion supporting a state budget package that includes full funding of State aid to public education at the levels mandated by the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act; full funding of the Geographic Cost of Education Index; no cuts in the direct state aid to local school systems mandated under current law, including reduction or elimination of the inflation factor in the statute; and no shift of State responsibility for teacher retirement costs onto local governments.
- Approved the revised Board Cluster assignments.
- Approved revisions to Policy 7020, Nepotism.
- Approved revisions to Policy 9100, Educational Programs for Pregnant Students.

County Budget Administrator Reports on the State of County Finances

Ray Wacks, Howard County Budget Administrator, provided the Board with a report on the status of the County's economy. While transfer tax and recordation tax revenues are running slightly behind projections, the County is looking at a net surplus of about \$11M this fiscal year between property tax and income tax revenues. Wacks projects that Howard County will still experience fairly strong growth for FY 2009 and FY 2010 at approximately 5 to 6 percent a year.

Board Reviews Revisions to School Site Selection Policy, New Policies on Debt Management and Investments

Joel Gallihue, Manager of School Planning, reported on revisions to Policy 6000, School Site and Selection and Acquisition. Gallihue said the policy has been broadened to include school and non-school sites, requiring a change in title. The revised policy provides a definition of a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment and modifies the standard on Determination of Need to include keeping pace with program or system requirements.

Revisions to Policy 6000 also reflect current practice by referring to feeder patterns as

desirable rather than needed and removes a reference to the high school service area as the planning unit. Acreage guidelines have been moved to procedures. The policy now specifically permits consideration of school sites in mixed-use communities. The revised policy also removes a prohibition against partial site acquisition and also removes a specific standard pertaining to roads, wetlands, and storm water management.

Director of Finance Beverly Davis introduced two new financial policies. A new policy on debt management, Policy 4090, sets forth the parameters and process for issuing debt as well as managing outstanding debt. The scope of this policy is limited to lease obligations of the Board. The policy does not include or envision debt incurred on the Board's behalf by the State of Maryland or the Howard County Government to fund any planned capital improvements of the Board.

A new policy on investments, Policy 4100, establishes the investment scope, objectives, and delegation of authority from the Howard County Board of Education to the Superintendent/designee to invest school system funds, and identifies the standards of prudence to be applied to such investments.

The Board will hold public hearings on all three policies on February 7 and take action on March 13, 2008.

Kaur Foundation Asks that Sikh Holidays be Listed in School Calendar

Arvinder Gomer, representing the Kaur Foundation, testified at the public hearing on the Proposed 2008-09 Instructional Calendar. She asked that three Sikh holidays be listed in the school calendar -- Vaisakhi, Guru Nanak Sahib ji, and Guru Gobind Singh ji.

No member of the public testified at hearings on Policy 1010, Discrimination; Policy 1020, Sexual Harassment; Policy 7010, Confidentiality of Personnel Records; and Policy 8030, Graduation Requirements.

In Other Action...

In his report to the Board, Superintendent Sydney Cousin announced he has recommended, and the Board has agreed, that the school system contract with accounting firm Clifton Gunderson to conduct an independent examination of all school construction contracts since 1999 to provide more complete information related to an observation included in the 2007 Audit Report. The report noted that the auditors observed contracts without purchase orders in place, as well as project transactions paid through direct payment processing rather than through the approved procurement process. Information from the examination will be presented to the Board.

The Superintendent also congratulated St. John's Lane Elementary School, Talbott Springs Elementary School and Ellicott Mills Middle School for receiving the 2007 Governor's Citation for Superior Maintenance. Chief of Staff Mamie Perkins introduced the 13 HCPSS teachers who recently earned National Board Certification.

At Public Forum, teacher Colleen Morris identified several items in the budget she suggested did not support student achievement including Cultural Proficiency Training

and the proposed Assistant Superintendent for Communications position. Parent Jean Daniello requested that the Board improve the manner in which it responds to students with disabilities who have been victims of abuse.

Mary Jane Grauso, President of the PTA Council of Howard County, suggested that the Board hold public hearings between each work session during the operating budget process to give the public ample opportunity to comment.

Chairman Frank Aquino commented on the loss of education advocate Natalie Woodson, who died on January 1. The Board scheduled Board meetings and other activities.

The next regular meeting of the Board of Education is scheduled for 4:00 p.m. on Thursday, January 24, 2008.