

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF HOWARD COUNTY

January 6, 2009

The Board of Education of Howard County held a meeting on the Presentation of the Superintendent's Proposed FY 2010 Operating Budget Request on Tuesday, January 6, 2009, 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 J. Aquino, Esq., Chairman
Ellen Flynn Giles, Vice Chairman
Lawrence H. Cohen
Allen Dyer, Esq.
Sandra H. French
Patricia S. Gordon
Janet Siddiqui, M.D.

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

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

Presentation of the Superintendent's Proposed FY 2010 Operating Budget Request

Presenter: Dr. Sydney Cousin.

In presenting the fifth operating budget as Superintendent, Dr. Cousin characterized the FY 2010 request as "responsive, responsible, and fiscally prudent." The \$659 million budget proposal presented to the Board of Education represents a \$1.9 million (or 0.3 percent) increase over the current year's operating budget. Dr. Cousin attributed the small increase to strategic decision-making and the repurposing of existing funds to areas of critical need for next year. He indicated that this is the most conservative budget request in recent history.

Dr. Cousin said that it is important to note that the budget as presented does not include any salary increases for employees.

Negotiations are currently underway with employee groups, and it is anticipated that any additional costs associated with negotiated agreements will be submitted with the Board of Education budget request in March.

The school system relies on the county for approximately 70 percent of its operating funds. Between 25 and 30 percent of its funding comes from the state, and approximately 1.0 percent comes from the federal government and other sources.

Current state revenue estimates indicate that HCPSS will receive a \$3.5 million increase in state funding, which is substantially smaller than in recent years. In FY 2008, Howard County received nearly \$27 million more in state funds (a 17 percent increase over 2007). In FY 2009, that increase dropped to \$13.3 million (a 7.5 percent increase). For FY 2010, the school system is slated to receive an increase of only \$3.5 million from the state, which represents only a 1.8 percent increase. This projection, coupled with a predicted decrease of nearly \$4.0 million from federal and other sources, creates a bleak revenue picture.

To compensate for anticipated revenue reductions, school officials identified short-term and strategic cost savings across the budget, which includes:

- Eliminating 10.5 unfilled central administration and support positions.
- Cutting funds across the budget for meetings and conferences by 50 percent.
- Reducing contributions to the Workers Compensation Fund by \$800,000.
- Deferring the purchase of 15 replacement cars, trucks, and vans for a \$417,700 savings.
- Reducing funds for maintenance of buildings and grounds by a total of \$1 million.
- Closing all schools and offices during winter break in 2009 for a savings of \$100,000 in energy costs.

Dr. Cousin noted that the current financial downturn comes at a time when Howard schools and students are achieving at the highest levels ever. The school system's challenge for the immediate future is to protect the tremendous gains that have been made and to overcome remaining challenges with limited or no additional funding.

Dr. Cousin said, "Tough economic times do not lessen our obligations as a public school system. This budget preserves classrooms, protects class sizes, and funds small strategic improvements -- all with an eye toward maintaining the gains we have made and meeting our challenges."

Dr. Cousin stated that schools across Howard County are making great strides on both of the system's strategic goals -- academic achievement and safe schools. He singled out Hammond MS, recently named a 2008 Maryland Blue Ribbon School, and Bryant Woods and Worthington elementary schools for the academic achievement of their students and recent gains on the Maryland School Assessments. He remarked that schools across Howard County are realizing equally impressive results.

At the high school level, nearly 93 percent of the county's Class of 2009 met the High School Assessment (HSA) graduation requirement by the end of 11th grade. Students in the Class of 2008 significantly outperformed their counterparts in Maryland and across the nation on the SAT. All 12 HCPSS high schools were recently ranked in the top 7 percent of high schools nationally in the Washington Post's Challenge Index.

According to Dr. Cousin, these accomplishments are due in large part to the community's commitment to quality education and its willingness to fund education at a level necessary to achieve it. "The fiscal 2010 budget was shaped with all these factors in mind. Every effort was made to protect the initiatives and programs we know are making a difference in the academic achievement of our students while responding to fiscal realities," he said.

The proposed budget adds 44 teaching positions to address enrollment and program growth. It also funds the second year of a 2-year update of technology education labs, provides media furniture and shelving for one elementary and one high school, and upgrades Mt. Hebron High School's media collection. Funds are added to expand mastery classes and other programs to assist high school students who fail the state HSAs. Funds are also provided to cover an increase in summer school enrollments and to expand Evening School to include students age 18 and older for the first time.

The Board of Education will hold a public hearing on the proposed budget on February 3, 2009, at 7:00 PM. The hearing is followed by

four public work sessions. On February 24, 2009, the Board approves its budget request, which is then forwarded to the County Executive.

By consensus, the Board agreed to the following schedule for 2009 work sessions and the budget request adoption:

Thursday, February 5 (7:00 p.m.)

- Revenues
- Instruction (plus Health-Athletics, Special Education-Psychological)

Tuesday, February 10 (2:00 p.m.)

- Operation of Plant
- Maintenance
- Community Services
- Transportation
- Administration (plus Pupil Services – Student Accounting program)
- Mid-Level Administration
- Capital Outlay
- Fixed Charges
- Restricted Funds

Tuesday, February 17 (7:00 p.m.)

- Pupil Personnel (except Student Accounting program)
- Health Services (except Health Services/Athletics)
- Special Education (except Psychological Services)

Thursday, February 19 (1:00 p.m.)

- Unresolved issues and tentative budget decisions

Tuesday, February 24 (9:00 a.m.)

- Adoption of budget request

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned by the Chairman at 8:08 p.m.