



Board Meeting

November 13, 2000

David H. Galbreath, *President*
Eugene C. Chandler, *Vice President*
Thomas D. Hess
Robert S. Magee
Robert B. Thomas, Jr.
Terry R. Troy
Karen L. Wolf
Daniel E. Purcell,
Student Representative
Jacqueline C. Haas, *Superintendent*
Secretary/Treasurer

OPEN SESSION

CALL TO ORDER

The regular business meeting of the Board of Education of Harford County held on November 13, 2000 in the auditorium of Edgewood High School was called to order by Board President **David H. Galbreath** at 7:05 p.m. Mr. Galbreath asked for a roll call of Board Members with all members present. Board Member **Robert S. Magee** moved that the agenda be amended with Item "B" under Action Items – Action on Motion Regarding Metal Detectors Pilot Program be taken off the Action Item list and be made a discussion item. The motion passed unanimously. Board Vice President **Eugene C. Chandler** moved and Board Member **Robert B. Thomas, Jr.** seconded that the amended agenda be approved. The Board voted unanimously to support the motion. The Board led those present in the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Using the prerogative of the chair, Mr. Galbreath commented that American Education Week was underway and would continue through the remainder of the week. He said the Board and school system welcome visitors throughout the week, but provide a particular invitation during the special week.

Tony Wasilewski and **Lester Kinicki** appeared before the Board to discuss the alleged theft of an automobile belonging to their daughter/step-daughter. The

men said they had received no support from the school administration in addressing the theft or a subsequent alleged threat on their daughter/step daughter by one of the juveniles involved in the incident. Superintendent **Jacqueline C. Haas** asked that the men leave their telephone number with members of her staff and said she would have the situation addressed.

Kim Paul addressed the Board on the topic of the scheduled time of graduation ceremonies at the Towson University Center for the three Harford Public Schools – Bel Air, Fallston, and C. Milton Wright – which are scheduled to have their ceremonies at that location in 2001. The graduation time was established for 6:00 p.m. and reaffirmed by the Board this past summer after parents had urged the time be shifted to 2:00 p.m. Mrs. Paul said a petition is being circulated obtaining parent signatures to move the commencement time to 2:00 p.m. because of concerns about safety involving graduating seniors and their parents having time to return from the ceremonies, have dinner, and be back at the schools in time to board buses for post-graduation cruises leaving from Baltimore City's Inner Harbor. Mr. Galbreath said the item will be a part of the Board's agenda at the November 20, 2000 work session scheduled for Jarrettsville Elementary School (7:00 p.m.).

Barbara Yost, president of the Harford County Educational Services Council (HCEC), which represents clerks, instructional assistants, nurses, secretaries and other Harford County Public School employees in similar positions; and **Josh Barmer**, Maryland State Teacher's Association Uni-Serv representative to the organization, presented a small gift to Board Members and expressed the group's support of the Board on behalf of HCPS students and employees.

OLD BUSINESS

PRESENTATIONS

REPORT OF HEALTH BENEFITS COMMITTEE

Mrs. Haas said the school system has been attempting to find ways of containing the rising cost of health care. She said a committee composed of representatives from the unions which represent school system employees, retirees, and system administrators has been meeting throughout the past year and a half. She said the group was provided with a facilitator, **Penny Heinz**, of the Palmer and Kay firm, beginning this past summer. She asked Ms. Heinz to present a report of the committee's findings/recommendations. Ms. Heinz said the committee has been unable to reach consensus on any recommendations, but presented many suggestions which had been discussed by the group in meetings between June 12 and October 30, 2000. She said the group has met eight times during that time and noted the system has conducted an open enrollment and mandatory employee meeting process which ended November 1st. Ms. Heinz said the group

has been addressing the \$1.7 million shortfall which exists in the system's share of employee/retirees' premiums. She said there is an anticipated savings of \$643,000 which will be realized from the shift of employees from the "Traditional" plan to "Preferred Provider Network" coverage.

Paul Schatz, member of the committee and president of the Harford County Education Association which represents school system teachers, complained about the Board of Education's "unilateral" actions taken in June to change health coverage which he said was "not in the best interest of HCEA members." He said the changes had impacted the "pocketbook of families," and called the changes "highly non-collaborative." He said HCEA realizes that health care costs are rising rapidly and something has to be done to address the issue. He said his group had worked hard to support the county's proposed tax increases the previous year to provide more revenue. He called for the formation of another health benefits committee which would be truly collaborative, complaining that he had been "totally disillusioned" by the former committee's efforts.

Mr. Thomas said there is a "finite amount of dollars" available to fund health premiums and the system has to come to terms with a way to address the deficit. Board Past President **Karen L. Wolf** said any future committee has to realize that changes will be necessary in order for the Board to move forward in meeting the rising costs. Lt. Col. (Ret.) Chandler asked Ms. Heinz if the committee had looked at "disease prevention" as a way of addressing rising costs. She responded there had been talk about controlling diabetes. Board Member **Thomas D. Hess** pointed out that some other counties had taken true unilateral positions which reduced benefits to employees or increased significantly employee portions of health care payments. He said the health benefits committee had done its work well in looking at possible alternatives.

DISCUSSION ON METAL DETECTORS PILOT PROGRAM

Bernard F. Barnes, Assistant Superintendent for Education Services, presented a report to the Board on possible use of metal detectors in a pilot program at two area high schools. He said, at the October 16, 2000 Board meeting, the Board directed that the school system look at such a pilot. Dr. Barnes presented the Board with a cost analysis of the possible two pilots. Dr. Barnes said the superintendent recommends that further study be done on the possible use of the metal detectors. **Jonathan Jackson**, president of the Harford County Regional Association of Student Councils, and **Ian Hull**, vice president of the organization, told the Board that HCRASC had approved a formal resolution opposing the use of the metal detectors. **Chris Binnie**, president of the Fallston High School Student Government, and **Stephanie Ginko**, secretary of the group, said their school had passed a similar resolution against use of the

detectors. Ms. Ginko said the feeling of safety at the schools which exists now, would be destroyed by use of the detectors. She said she had "never felt threatened" at school.

Mr. Magee said that if metal detectors are to be used, they should be part of a comprehensive safety plan. "Our students have done nothing wrong to warrant" the use of metal detectors. Mr. Thomas said he concurred with Mr. Magee and thanked his fellow Board member for providing written information to the Board on metal detectors. Mr. Thomas pointed out that his motion to provide metal detectors was for a pilot program prior to a possible full implementation which would involve a full test of the system. "I've become more of a realist" in the situation, he said. He said that the vast majority of students come to school every day to learn with no intent of bringing weapons which would be harmful to others. He said he is more concerned by knives than firearms.

Student Representative **Daniel E. Purcell** thanked his fellow students for their presentation and urged that the Board listen to the students. He reminded his colleagues that a ball-point pen can be a weapon and metal detectors would not be effective in eliminating all weapons. Mr. Hess said that all stakeholders must be involved in any effort to place metal detectors in the schools and called the presence of weapons in school is like predicting the movement of the Stock Market. Mrs. Wolf added her call for a comprehensive safety plan. Mr. Galbreath said he has two children in Harford Public schools and does not feel that they are in danger.

ACTION ITEMS

ACTION ON RESOLUTION

REGARDING C. MILTON WRIGHT HIGH SCHOOL

Acting on the motion of Mr. Thomas and the second of Lt. Col. (Ret.) Chandler and **Terry R. Troy**, the Board voted unanimously to support a resolution on the support of administrators, staff and students at C. Milton Wright High School in the recent handling of a situation at the school involving fights between several individuals. The "Resolved" portion of the resolution said, "the Board of Education of Harford County, the Superintendent and her staff express their unwavering support for the C. Milton Wright High School administration, faculty, staff, and students, and be it further Resolved that the Board of Education of Harford County calls on the entire community to support the efforts of the school administration in dealing with the current tensions at the school and in maintaining the excellent tradition of education at C. Milton Wright High School."

REPORT ON SAFETY INFORMATION – POSSIBLE ACTION ON

HARFORD WOODS TRANSPORTATION REQUEST

Acting on the motion of Mrs. Wolf and the second of Mr. Thomas, the Board voted unanimously to support a compromise on the issue of providing transportation to students who live in the Bel Air neighborhood of Harford Woods. Many parents and students had asked that transportation be provided to students in the area even though the school system has certified that the students live within the mile-and-a-half minimum distance from school. Those appealing said they believe there is a safety issue involved with the students walking to Bel Air High/Middle school. The proposal calls for the school system to request the Town of Bel Air provide crossing guards at Rt. 1 and Bond Street and Idlewild Street at Rt. 924. The proposal points out that the town provides such services for elementary students at the same intersections. Mrs. Troy, who represents the area on the Board, said there are about 180 students from many sections of the town who use the routes under discussion to walk to school, and she believes there is a very real safety concern. Mr. Purcell said he is concerned that students who anticipate being late for school will use more convenient routes and may not cross major intersections where the crossing guards control traffic. Mrs. Wolf said the school system should keep a close eye on the process, if the town agrees to provide crossing guards for the secondary students.

NEW BUSINESS

BOARD NEW BUSINESS ITEMS

Mr. Magee and Mrs. Troy pointed to the recent "Harford Votes 2000" initiative which allowed more than 20,000 public and private school students in the county to vote on-line in a mock election on the U.S. Presidential/Vice Presidential; 2nd District Congress, and Maryland U.S. Senate races. Mrs. Wolf said she had worn to the polls the t-shirt given her along with other Board members by representatives from the "Harford Votes 2000" organization. Mr. Thomas said he and Mr. Magee had attended the Patriot program at Riverside Elementary School earlier in the day and reported that progress was being made on the Riverside parking lot. He added that he and other Board members had taken part in the Homestead-Wakefield Elementary School parade prior to the election.

ACTION ITEMS

CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

Acting on the motion of Mrs. Wolf and second of Mrs. Troy, the Board voted unanimously to endorse items on the Consent Agenda including approval of minutes of the October 11 and 30 Board work sessions; and the October 16 and 23 Business Meetings; as well as approval of the Monthly Report on Personnel; and the Appointment of Negotiating Teams representing the Board of

Education.

PRESENTATIONS

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Mrs. Haas told the Board that the date for the 2001 Maryland School Teachers Association (MSTA) date has been changed from October 26 to October 19, due to a change made by the organization in the date of its convention. Mrs. Haas asked Director of Secondary Education William Ekey to present information on the 2:00 p.m. versus 6:00 p.m. graduation times at Towson University. Mr. Ekey said that a compromise might be to allow schools to set their commencement time so long as there was not an early dismissal for undergraduate students. Mr. Magee said he was disappointed that principals involved had not been approached about the proposed compromise. Mr. Hess said the chemical free cruises came about as a result of parental efforts, not school initiatives. Mr. Galbreath said there are many families who like the 6:00 p.m. graduation time. Mr. Thomas suggested the Board take action at its November 20th work session. Mr. Hess said the Board made a decision on this issue this past summer. Mrs. Wolf said the reconsideration has been brought about by parental petitions. Mrs. Wolf moved that the Board direct the three high schools involved – Fallston, C. Milton Wright and Bel Air – to choose the time of their commencement ceremonies so long as the regular dismissal time at those schools does not change. Mrs. Troy seconded the motion. Mr. Thomas moved the motion be laid on the table. That motion passed unanimously.

Mrs. Haas said the Board had indicated it would be making several by-law changes but no action has been taken. She said that she had met with the County Executive and the two had mutually agreed that the time is not right for the school system to move forward with the privatization of its fleet maintenance. Mrs. Haas added that the County Executive had been asked to appropriate funds to study the business practices of the school system Human Resources office. Mr. Magee said he does not feel the Board should be involved in requesting funds which had not been appropriated to the school system.

QUARTER ENDING FINANCIAL REPORT – SEPTEMBER 30, 2000

Assistant Superintendent for Business Services John Markowski presented the Board with the first quarter financial statements. Among the findings of the report is the overspending by about 40 percent in the textbook category, an annual anomaly as books are ordered during the summer for the start of school. Under-spent categories include Instructional Salaries, Special Education, Health Services and Student Transportation. Mr. Markowski said that changes in fund balance presented in the first quarter report carry little meaning because the majority of the spending occurs between September and June.

BOARD COMMENTS

Mrs. Troy clarified that the public will be able to make comments on the graduation time issue at the November 20th work session. Mr. Magee said that Veteran's Day activities had been conducted the previous Saturday. Mr. Thomas asked whether budget review sessions have been established and was told they would be created soon. Mrs. Wolf said the Citizens Budget Advisory Committee will make a report to the Board on November 27th concerning their priorities.

ADJOURNMENT

Acting on a motion made by Mr. Thomas and the second of Mrs. Troy, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

FUTURE MEETINGS

The next regular meeting of the Board is set for November 27, 2000 in the auditorium of Edgewood High School beginning at 7:00 p.m. Business meetings of the Board will be held at Edgewood High through December. During the January through March quarter, the business meetings will be held at Bel Air Middle School. North Harford High School will host the business meetings from April through June. A schedule of all Board meetings, including work sessions, is available on the HCPS web site – www.co.ha.md.us/harford_schools.

MORE INFORMATION

The school system is attempting to prevent duplications and reduce production/mailing costs of the printed versions of B-Line. Those who are able to access B-Line on line and who would like their copy of the printed version of the document discontinued should e-mail the Director of Public Information: Drmorrison.gs@hcps.k12.md.us; Or call the HCPS Customer Relations Action Line (24-hours-a-day) at 410-638-0022.

For more information on Board meetings or other matters affecting the Harford County Public Schools, contact the system's Director of Public Information, 410-588-5203; or call the system's Customer Relations Action Line, 410-638-0022 (which can also be used as a 24-hour-a-day tip line for safety concerns).

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