



Board Meeting

May 7, 2001

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

Board President **David H. Galbreath** called the regular business meeting of the Board of Education of Harford County to order at 7:05 p.m. in the auditorium of North Harford High School. Mr. Galbreath requested a roll call with all Board members reporting present. Board Member **Karen L. Wolf** moved and Board Member **Terry R. Troy** seconded that the Board agenda be amended to add the approval of the Aberdeen High School Math/Science Magnet specifications to be addressed as Number Four under Item "E" – New Business. The motion passed unanimously. Board Vice President **Eugene C. Chandler** moved and Mrs. Wolf seconded that the amended agenda be approved and the Board voted unanimously to do so. Mr. Thomas led those present in the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENTS

John Ermetinger addressed the Board on redistricting, saying that he lives in the Bel Air community and does not want his children redistricted from that area. He said property values and the difference in standardized test results among areas in the county are major reasons he opposes any redistricting.

John Gosier, a freshman at North Harford High School, asked the Board to do something about the solid wood team locker room doors at the school. He said he and others had been

injured by having doors opened on them unexpectedly. He recommended windows be added to the doors.

HCEA REPORT

Paul Schatz, president of the Harford County Education Association (HCEA), addressed the Board in accordance with the provisions of the negotiated agreement permitting the group's leader to speak to the Board at its regular meetings. He said it was ironic that he would be speaking to the Board on the week of the 25th anniversary of the 1976 teacher strike, adding that so much has changed since then, but so much remains the same. He said it was also ironic that, during the time of Teacher Appreciation Week, the teachers and the School Board find themselves at impasse in negotiations on the latest teacher contract. He pointed out that the association continues to seek a collaborative role with the Board in the form of Interest Based Bargaining. Mr. Schatz reported that the Board had taken part in a forum co-sponsored by them and HCEA on April 30th where the topic of Interest Based Bargaining had been discussed. He said a letter has been submitted to Mr. Galbreath from HCEA's executive board which requests the Board move toward Interest Based Bargaining.

OLD BUSINESS

POLICY ON BALANCING ENROLLMENT WITH CAPACITY (REDISTRICTING)

Superintendent **Jacqueline C. Haas** told the Board that proposed policies being brought before them on balancing enrollments with school capacities are intended to ease overcrowding at schools both now and in the future. She said the school staff is seeking input from the Board leading up to its June 11th meeting where it is expected the policies would be adopted. Mrs. Haas said the name of the proposed policy has been expanded from redistricting to balancing enrollment to reflect the options that would be available to the Board in addressing overcrowded school conditions. She reminded the Board that staff had introduced the topic of balancing enrollment/managing growth in June 1999 and that the Board had been presented with a series of proposals for redistricting during the last school year, which had been rejected. The Superintendent told the Board that 16 different options for addressing the imbalance of enrollment to capacity had been presented to the Board.

Joseph P. Licata, Assistant Superintendent for Operations, reviewed the proposed timeline for proposals to balance enrollment that would be implemented if the proposed policies are adopted, pointing out that staff would review enrollments/capacities and make proposals on options for the Board to consider by December, 2001. The Board would hold public hearings from January through February, 2002, and would make decisions in February 2002 to be implemented in the March through September time period, 2002.

Mr. Licata reviewed a series of public hearings which had been held by Mrs. Haas in March and April, and said the Board has scheduled two hearings – one on May 14th at Edgewood High School and the other at Havre de Grace High School on May 17th (both at 7:00 p.m. in the respective schools' auditoriums) to receive input on the proposed policies. At the May 22nd regular Board meeting, the Board would be expected to make recommendations on

adjustments to the proposed policies which would then be adopted at the June 11th meeting. He added that the Board has received summaries of public comments which have been received at the various meetings looking at the issue, noting that property value and test scores were two of the biggest issues raised. He said that real estate values would not be considered but that varying performance on standardized test scores are not a reflection of poor teacher or school performance, pointing out that curriculum and expectations remain constant throughout the system.

Mr. Licata reviewed the proposed policy, noting that three criteria would be used to identify schools for which (balancing enrollment) options may be developed – school’s enrollment at or greater than 100 percent of state rated capacity and projections of that enrollment showing it to be at or greater than 100 percent for the following five years; school’s enrollment less than 100 percent but programs or other conditions which cause the school to be overcrowded; and school enrollment less than 60 percent of its state rated capacity.

Board Member **Thomas D. Hess** said the proposed policies seem to “mix apples and oranges” by talking about over enrollment and under enrollment (60 percent capacity), adding that the state mandated issue of looking toward the possible closing of a school which is at or below 60 percent utilization should be a separate issue. He added that each Board member should be comfortable with the language of the policy before it would be adopted. Board Member **Robert B. Thomas, Jr.** said the portion of the policy allowing for balancing enrollments in connection with programs could be open to misinterpretation. Member of the staff Redistricting Committee, Director of Elementary Education **Patricia Skebeck**, said such programs as ReAch, Launch or others may use more space in a school than would be interpreted by a simple enrollment to capacity review. Director of Secondary Education **William Ekey**, another member of the committee, said programs such as Cisco at Joppatowne High School would be an example of an offering requiring additional space.

Mr. Thomas commended the Redistricting Committee and other staff members for gathering information and moving the process forward, adding that the Board currently does not have specific parameters impacting the balancing of enrollment in place.

NEW BUSINESS

ACTION ITEMS – CONSENT AGENDA

Acting on the motion of Mr. Thomas and the second of Mrs. Wolf, the Board voted 7 to 0 to approve items on the Consent Agenda including: Award of Contract for Roof Replacement at Magnolia Elementary School; Approval of Heroin Alert Program; Requests for Budget Transfers in Maintenance and Operations, Performance Audit, Required Connection of Hickory Facilities Water/Sewer Transfers; and Approval of the Aberdeen High School Math/Science Magnet Specifications.

DISCUSSION

FUND BALANCE POLICY (ACTION ITEM FOR 5/22)

Mrs. Haas said that one of the annual goals established by the Board was to develop a fund balance policy. She introduced Assistant Superintendent for Business Services **John Markowski** who outlined the proposed policy. Mr. Markowski said the proposal relates to the undesignated fund balance in the Current Expense Fund. The proposed policy reflects a predictable, stable and reliable funding stream from county and state governments. He said that, from FY 1990 through the current year, the fund balance level has grown, but, as a percentage of the overall budget, it remains relatively small. He said it has been the practice of the Board to use excess funds to balance the operating budget, a practice that is not supported in governmental accounting. Mr. Markowski said the proposed policy would give the Board “maximum flexibility” in its execution of the fund balance. The fund balance target is to be a range between one-tenth and one-quarter of a percent of the ensuing year’s expenditures but not less than \$1 million. The Board is due to act on the proposal at its May 22nd meeting.

CAPITALIZATION OF FIXED ASSET POLICY (ACTION ITEM 5/22)

Mr. Markowski explained that the Fixed Asset Policy is a result of audit determinations, pointing out that assets have to be depreciated, and that has not been the practice by the Harford County Public Schools to this point. The recommended practice from the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) is to establish a capitalization policy by setting a \$5,000 threshold for assets and a useful life of two years or greater. That threshold would capture the bulk of the money of the assets for depreciation and financial reporting purposes, he said. Mr. Markowski added, the goal is to receive a clean audit opinion from the system’s auditors. The proposal is due to be acted upon by the Board at its May 22nd meeting.

NEW BUSINESS FROM BOARD MEMBERS

Board Member **Robert S. Magee** reported on the opening of a time capsule at Aberdeen Middle the preceding Sunday during which artifacts from 1976 were revealed, and speeches were made by those who had a role in the opening of the school. Mrs. Wolf said she attended the student council election at Havre de Grace High School, complimenting the student leaders on the process. Mrs. Troy commended Joppatowne Elementary School for its Geo-Challenge program, and complimented the Envirothon teams which took part in the annual competition the week before. Mr. Thomas noted that Joppatowne High School had once again won the Envirothon competition. Student Representative to the Board, **Daniel E. Purcell** said that each year the Maryland Association of Student Councils (MASC) has a banquet at which awards are given for student advisors and principals. He said that **Robert Pfau**, principal at Fallston High School, had been nominated for the organization's Principal of the Year award and, though he did not win, the principal’s efforts on behalf of students and their leadership roles is very much appreciated. Mr. Galbreath spoke about the Academy of Finance program at Edgewood High School, noting many of the accomplishments of the program on which he serves as an advisory board member. He said he would like to have a short presentation on the program at a future Board meeting and

apologized for the confusion surrounding a presenter not being able to be at the May 7th Board meeting even though the topic had been listed on the agenda. Mrs. Wolf noted that former Supervisor of Vocational and Technical Education **William Seccurro** had brought the program to the Board which had provided seed money.

AGENDA MODIFICATION

Acting on the motion of Mr. Thomas and the second of Lt. Col. (Ret.) Chandler, owing to the lateness of the hour, the Board voted unanimously to delete consideration of Items “I” and “J” under Discussion – Portable Communication Devices and Tobacco Products Sting Operation. The items will be considered at a future Board meeting.

SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

Mrs. Haas told the Board the school system has been looking toward establishing a reading program in the elementary schools for some time. The program being considered would involve a three-year commitment and would require 20 percent of each school’s textbook funds be committed to the program. She said there is an offer from the Harcourt Brace textbook company and she asked three elementary principals – **Michael Steeg** of North Harford Elementary, **Robin Payne** of Dublin Elementary, and **Gail Connolly** of Hall’s Cross Roads Elementary to comment on the proposal. Mr. Steeg said, since 1990, there has been a vision of having an integrated language arts program. Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction **Deborah Heiberger** said she believes the system and all elementary principals unanimously support the program, as does the General Curriculum Committee. Mrs. Haas said the program will cost \$1.3 million over the three years and said that Mr. Markowski is working on what would be a 14-month financing program. Mr. Magee cautioned that such programs are sometimes adopted and then abandoned leaving schools with materials that are not useful, adding that the company needs to make a commitment to revising the materials as needed.

BOARD COMMENTS

Mr. Thomas said, in the future, if faculty, staff, or principals are asked to make presentations to the Board, the item be moved up to an earlier spot on the agenda. He added that the second of two County Council budget hearings is coming up (May 10, C. Milton Wright High School) and that only 12 people attended the first one the week before.

ADJOURNMENT

Acting on the motion of Mr. Hess and the second of Mrs. Wolf, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 10:08 p.m.

FUTURE MEETINGS

In addition to its regular meetings scheduled for May 22, June 11 and June 25 – all at North Harford High School (auditorium, 7:00 p.m.), the Board will hold hearings on its proposed

balancing enrollment policies at Edgewood High School (May 14, auditorium, 7:00 p.m.) and Havre de Grace High School (May 17, auditorium, 7:00 p.m.); as well as a work session at North Harford Middle School on June 18 (lecture hall, 7:00 p.m.) on the Board's advisory committees.

MORE INFORMATION

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