



Board Meeting

February 10, 2003

Terry R. Troy, *President*
Robert S. Magee, *Vice President*
Eugene C. Chandler
Ruth R. "Robin" Rich
Robert B. Thomas, Jr.
Karen L. Wolf
Mark M. Wolkow
Molly P. Harris,
Student Representative
Jacqueline C. Haas, *Superintendent*
Secretary/Treasurer

OPEN SESSION

CALL TO ORDER – Board of Education of Harford County President Terry R. Troy called the regular business meeting of the Board to order at 7:00 p.m. in the auditorium of Edgewood High School. Mrs. Troy directed that a quorum call be conducted which determined that all Board members were present. The Board President directed that Board Member Robin R. Rich lead those present in the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENTS

Lisa Thom of Fallston, commenting on the balancing enrollment efforts of the school system, said this past year's decisions had shifted the over-enrollment from Southampton to Fallston Middle School. She suggested that an interim solution might be to keep sixth grade students at elementary schools such as Jarrettsville, Darlington and Youth's Benefit which have some available capacity.

Susan Cook of Abingdon, Bel Air High School PTA president, said she has not heard one parent complain about moving sex education to the middle schools. She said she has had a child in high school for the past 11 straight years and that she has noticed "far more knowledge about sex" among those who associate with her youngest compared to her oldest. She said "parents are kidding the mselves" if they believe their children are not being exposed to sexual situations that could be dangerous to them.

OLD BUSINESS

ACTION ITEMS

CONSENT AGENDA

Acting on the motion of Board Past President Eugene C. Chandler and the second of Board Member Karen L. Wolf the Board voted unanimously to approve items on the Consent Agenda including Affirmation of Monthly Contract Awards, Affirmation of Student Appeal Hearing Decisions, and Award of Contract for School Buses.

APPROVAL OF PERSONNEL APPOINTMENTS

Acting on the motion of Lt. Col. (Ret.) Chandler and the second of Mrs. Wolf, the Board voted unanimously to appoint Barbara Joan Matthews to be Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Employee Coordinator – Human Resources. Ms. Matthews had been Certification Specialist in the Howard County Public Schools from 1998 and is a graduate of the University of Baltimore.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE AND POSSIBLE ACTION

Government Affairs Liaison Kathryn Carmello presented the Board with a number of bills pending before the Maryland General Assembly which have the potential to impact education. The Board took action on many of those presented, either expressing its support, its opposition, or taking no position. On the Public Charter School Act of 2003, SB 388, Board Member Robert B. Thomas, Jr. called the proposal “atrocious – absolutely horrible,” adding that the initiative is backed by the Governor. He said the previous bill concerning charter schools had been far more tolerable. Mr. Thomas added that the local school system could be among the few to oppose the bill since it is backed by the Governor, but “we have no choice but to oppose it,” adding that there could still be an opportunity to compromise with the more acceptable bill. Mr. Thomas moved the Board oppose the bill and Mrs. Wolf seconded the motion which was supported unanimously by the Board.

Mr. Thomas’ motion and a second by Board Member Mark M. Wolkow to back HB 40/SB 55, the Budget Bill for Fiscal 2004, was supported unanimously by the Board.

Acting on the motion of Mr. Thomas and the second of Mr. Wolkow, the Board voted unanimously to support HB 93/SB 173, the Public Schools-Indoor Air Quality Inspections proposal. Mr. Thomas said the bill, which would create an indoor air quality standard guide, is an amended version from last year’s proposal. “We will be the Lone Ranger, but I recommend we support this bill,” said Mr. Thomas. Mr. Wolkow pointed out the proposal enjoys support from the Harford County Council of PTAs. Mrs. Haas said the local system uses the Lung Association’s “Tools for Schools” air quality program.

The Board unanimously supported Mr. Thomas’ motion and Lt. Col. (Ret.) Chandler’s second to support SB 7 which would create a state debt in the aging school program of

\$9,043,000.

Mr. Thomas' motion and Mrs. Rich's second on SB 80, which would raise the threshold of state contribution to school construction at which the prevailing wage requirement would be implemented to 75 percent, was supported unanimously by the Board. The state provides Harford County Public Schools with 65 percent funding for school projects, meaning the prevailing wage would not apply to Harford projects.

Acting on Mr. Thomas' motion and Lt. Col. (Ret.) Chandler's second, the Board voted 6 to 1 (Mr. Wolkow dissenting) to support SB 81 which would repeal the State Superintendent's right to fire local school superintendents. Mr. Thomas said it is the local Board which hires the local superintendent and it should be that Board which removes the superintendent if it becomes necessary. (Student Representative to the Board, Molly P. Harris abstained on the vote.)

Acting on the motion of Lt. Col. (Ret.) Chandler and the second of Mr. Wolkow, the Board voted 6 to 0 (Mr. Magee abstaining) to oppose HB 218 which would permit home schooled students to participate in certain extra curricular activities in the public schools.

FAMILY LIFE CURRICULUM REVISION RECOMMENDATIONS

The Citizen Advisory Committee on Family Life Education had made a series of proposals to the Board of Education at a public work session in November. The proposals would have the Family Life curriculum, last revised in 1983, updated and revised; and would move certain Focus Area III material (sensitive sexual education information) moved from its current place of instruction in the ninth grade to middle school. The Superintendent supported the proposals of the Family Life committee, making a series of recommendations to the Board in December. The Board has had the proposal on hold from that time in order to receive public input. A number of citizens appeared to make comment.

Rev. Lisa Ward of Havre de Grace said she has two children in the public schools and that many parents do not have the time to focus on providing essential information concerning sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) to their children. She said she intends, as a parent, to teach her children the essential information, but trusts the school system Family Life curriculum to provide support for that information.

Lisa Chenoweth of Bel Air said she has two daughters in Ring Factory Elementary School said she was shocked at how outdated the existing Family Life curriculum is, noting that AIDS had not been an issue in 1983.

James Rickey of Whiteford, a science teacher at North Harford Middle School, said he agrees the sensitive information needs to be provided at the middle school level, though he said he believes the information can be provided in sixth grade.

Katie Conn, a senior at Bel Air High School, said the curriculum needs revision, adding that it is “unfortunate but real” that students are taking part in sexual activities at young ages and that it is harmful to them not being aware of ways to protect themselves.

Ian Hull, a senior at Fallston High School, the president of the Harford County Regional Association of Students Councils, said his organization’s Executive Board had unanimously supported all three of the Family Life Committee’s recommendations and that the students found it “shocking” no changes had been made to the curriculum since before all the students in the organization had been born. He said the 150 student leaders provided their 100 percent support for the proposals.

Gay Bowen-Hull of Baldwin said she has three children from 12 to 21 years of age. She spoke in favor of the proposals, adding that the consequences today are more “virulent” and that some parents are unwilling or unable to transmit information to their children on the topic.

Stephanie Genco, a senior at Fallston High School, said Fallston High’s student government had voted overwhelmingly to support the proposals. She provided statistics on the growth of STDs among young people, adding that two of three students are sexually active before they graduate from high school. She said young people now get their information from friends, and much of it is incorrect. Ms. Genco said the information needs to be provided as early as possible in the middle schools.

Diana Taylor of Edgewood said she graduated from Edgewood High School 21 years ago and is opposed to the moving of the sensitive Family Life curriculum into the middle schools. She said the information should be discussed by parents or at church. She said much of the information is too sensitive for middle school students to hear in a mixed gender classroom.

The Board took action on four separate motions. Mr. Thomas moved and Lt. Col. (Ret.) Chandler seconded that the Family Life Curriculum including selected Focus Area III information be revised and updated reflecting changes which have occurred in the area since the last update in 1983. The Board voted unanimously to support the motion.

Mr. Thomas moved and Mr. Wolkow seconded that the school system work with the Harford County Health Department to set up parent workshops on sexually transmitted diseases. The Board voted 5 to 2 to support the motion (Lt. Col. Ret. Chandler and Mr. Magee dissenting).

Acting on the motion of Mr. Thomas and the second of Mrs. Rich, the Board voted unanimously to have the Superintendent and her staff prepare a detailed curriculum on the information that will be presented to students in the revised sexual education program and bring it to the Board for its review and approval prior to March 1, 2004, with the program to be implemented in the fall of 2004.

Acting on the motion of Mr. Magee and the second of Lt. Col. (Ret.) Chandler, the Board

voted 4 to 3 to have the revised Family Life information presented to students in the eighth grade (Mr. Wolkow, Mrs. Wolf and Mr. Thomas cast dissenting votes; as did Ms. Harris in a preferential vote.)

NEW BUSINESS

ACTIONS

APPROVAL OF ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATING BOUNDARY EXCEPTIONS/STUDENT TRANSFER REQUESTS

Director of Student Services Stephen Lentowski reviewed with the Board current regulations involving boundary exceptions in which parents may request for their children to attend a school outside the attendance area which serves their community. Mr. Lentowski reminded the Board that the threshold at which a school will normally consider the admittance of students from other districts is 95 percent enrollment compared to capacity. Mr. Lentowski presented the Board with a report showing the number of boundary exceptions which had been approved for this year. He told them that child care, curriculum, hardship and “other” are the categories under which boundary exceptions are considered, with child care as the overwhelming reason for most requests. The chart he presented showed there have been 1,036 boundary exceptions granted this year, down from a high of more than 1,500 several years ago. Mrs. Haas told the Board that new Federal guidelines in connection with “No Child Left Behind” provide that capacity is not a valid reason for the prohibition of a boundary exception.

PRESENTATIONS

SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

Mrs. Haas told the Board that, to that date, five inclement weather days had been used with three having been built into the school schedule. Director of Public Information Donald Morrison told the Board that, according to its approved calendar, the next five days to be used for inclement weather makeups – beyond the three which had been scheduled – are June 16 through June 20. He said the current situation has Monday, June 16 and Tuesday, June 17 as makeups for days four and five which have been lost to inclement weather so far this school year. Mrs. Haas told the Board that she is recommending the Board adjust the makeups to provide for two more inclement weather makeups in the third week of June – June 18 and 19 – save June 20 as the final teacher staff development day, use current staff development days of April 4 and 7 for potential inclement weather makeups eight and nine; and use the first day of the spring break, Thursday, April 17 as the tenth inclement weather makeup. Mr. Thomas said it is his opinion that, especially in those buildings without air conditioning, little is accomplished in the heat of mid-June. The Superintendent agreed with Mr. Thomas that the state can be petitioned to reduce the requirement for 180 student days, but has been reluctant to do so unless the local system has shown a serious effort at making up the inclement weather days. The proposal will come before the Board at its February 24,

2003 meeting.

BOARD NEW BUSINESS

Lt. Col. (Ret.) Chandler noted the passing of Joe Bond, former Harford NAACP President. He noted that Aberdeen Middle School educator Laura Copeland had been appointed to head up the organization.

ADJOURNMENT

Acting on the motion of Lt. Col. (Ret.) Chandler and the second of Mr. Wolkow, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn its open session and go into closed session to discuss personnel matters. The meeting was adjourned at 10:07 p.m.

FUTURE MEETINGS

The Board of Education of Harford County will continue its business meetings at Edgewood High School through March. The March business meetings will be held on March 10 (7:00 p.m.) and March 24 (6:30 p.m.). In April, the Board will move its regular business meetings to Havre de Grace Middle School for the April, May, and June quarter.

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.

In addition, for those who would like to receive emergency or other important school announcements automatically at their e-mail address(es), check the schools-out.com initiative on the home page of the HCPS web site.

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 HCPS Customer Relations Action Line (24-hours-a-day) at 410-638-0022.

The Harford County Public School System does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, age, national origin, religion, or disability in matters affecting employment or in providing access to programs. Inquiries related to the policies of the Board of Education of Harford County should be directed to the Director of Public Information at 410-588-5203.